



Quality Framework

Home based Care – Home based Education

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An Erasmus+ project

Table of contents

Background and scope.....	2
Defining Quality	3
About the framework	5
Other definitions in this framework.....	5
List of literature used to create the checklists:	6
1: Planning the course	8
1.1 Purpose and frames of the online course	9
1.2 Describing the target group/learners.....	10
1.3 Learning outcomes and assessment.....	11
1.4 Content of the course.....	12
1.5 Course evaluation.....	13
2: Planning the tuition.....	14
2.1 Learning activities and feedback	16
2.2 Learning materials	17
2.3 The Tutors.....	18
3: Planning the content delivery.....	19
3.1 Online learning environment	20
3.2 Presentation of content; order and mode	21
3.3 Uniform web design/accessibility	22
4: Communications with the learners before the course starts	23
4.1 Communication on the institution's/course's website before the course.....	24
4.2 Handling inquiries.....	25
5: Moderating the online learning environment.....	26
5.1 Support.....	27
5.2 Creating a safe and nurturing online environment.....	28
5.3 Communication and monitoring the online environment.....	29

Background and scope

The project «Home Based Care – Home Based Education» is a small Erasmus+ project that was conceived in Brussels, November 13th 2014, when all the partner organisations attended a contact seminar arranged by the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education.

Our aim was to share our experience between us, but also to contribute to a solution for the challenge of Europe ageing, and more people living at home (and wanting to live at home) with dementia and other age-related problems.

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland (ASI) is the coordinator of this project. ASI already offers a course to people who care for family members with dementia. The course is delivered face-to-face by experienced tutors to groups of 12-15 carers one night a week, approximately 2 ½ hours each time, for a period of 5 weeks. A course night will typically consist of information/lecture followed by discussion, and sometimes role-playing. While working with this project, but not necessarily because of it, ASI decided to add a sixth week to their face-to-face course, and the online course was expanded accordingly. The courses are non-credit.

Before and after the course, the attendees are asked to fill in a survey form to rate how confident they feel in their role as carer. On the average, the feeling of confidence is 15% higher after completion of the course¹.

With this quality framework, we aim to provide a scaffold for creating online, non-credit courses for people who care for loved ones with physical and/or mental challenges. The model is asynchronous to cater for the learners who need full flexibility.

The pedagogical platform for this course is that of socio-constructivism², the theory that knowledge is created in the process of communication, and reflection and sharing experience between the learners is an important aspect of the learning. The course should also have a time span that allows the attendees to try out what they learn with their family, to reflect on the results and get feedback.

Because sharing experience is a part of the pedagogy, and the experience will consist of personal information, due to the courses being about caring for own family, a closed learning platform (LMS) is a prerequisite for any course. For this course, we have used Moodle, but the framework is created to fit the generic features of learning platforms.

The target groups for the framework are institutions who run or support non-profit and non-credit courses for carers and who don't necessarily have this as their main activity.

¹ The surveys are anonymous, and as long as there is not 100% answering rate, there is an uncertainty connected to this result.

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_constructivism (Accessed 22.02.2016)

Defining Quality

Quality is often defined as one of four:

- 1) Fit for purpose
- 2) Excellent
- 3) According to standard
- 4) Good in comparison to something similar

The context determines how quality should be defined in different cases. In a complex context like education, all four elements could be relevant at the same time.

Below are some examples from dictionaries:

ISO 8402-1986 standard defines quality as "the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bears its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs."

Source: <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/quality.html> (26.10.2015)

- *How good or bad something is*
- *A characteristic or feature that someone or something has: something that can be noticed as a part of a person or thing*
- *A high level of value or excellence*

Source: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/quality> (26.10.2015)

The standard of something as measured against other things of a similar kind; the degree of excellence of something

Source: <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/quality> (26.10.2015)

In our case, it makes sense to differentiate between quality of *product*, which would be the learning outcomes, and quality of *process*, which would be the teaching, including both planning and execution of the course, or even course cycle. Although the product can be highly variable regarding both to standards and degree of excellence, we can select standards for the process.

Quality of product:

In education, the product can be the skills, knowledge and attitude the learners have achieved after completing a course or study program. In our case, we presume that the face-to-face course delivered in Ireland is of good quality, because of the satisfaction rate of 95%³.

Consequently, it follows that if the online course is as good as the face-to-face course, it will be of good quality too. A part of this project is to assess the quality of the face-to-face courses along with the online course.

³ In evaluations after all courses in 2015 24% of the 172 respondents found the course "effective" and 72% found it "very effective"

Quality of process:

In education grades, scores and exam results often measure quality of the product. In this course, there is no formal assessment. (Neither can there be one as long as the learner's personal experience and emotions is an important part of the course). The outcomes of the course will be different for each individual.

Our idea is that if we can build quality into every step of the process, we will achieve a quality product. Therefore, we have a detailed checklist approach, based on the work of greater minds and collected best practice.

Quality assurance is also about being able to learn and improve, and the framework therefore stimulates to a model that allows for this. This is the reason we suggest that one finds a way to assess learning outcomes even if they are subjective.

About the framework

The framework consists of five sets of checklists. We have aimed to group them so that one or two persons would likely be responsible for each list, and in what could be a chronology of five stages in the planning and execution process.

The checklists have the form of questions, some yes/no but most open-ended. There are not necessarily any right or wrong answers to the questions, but if one does not have any answer at all, or the answer is “no” that could be an indication that something is overlooked. Each category starts with a short theoretical introduction to set the questions into a context.

Education is rarely a linear event, but the framework is intended to work as a list of elements to be completed for the specific course, and then revisited after each evaluation, creating an ongoing quality assessment process in a course cycle. However, the skilled educators will often use informal feedback to adjust her/his tutoring, and the formal evaluation will not always catch these improvements.

The checklists are based on experience from formal and non-formal education and training institutions. This includes best practice but also other quality guides and even text books. These guides and this informal experience quite often cover the same areas with the same results. Therefore, we cannot pinpoint each bullet point to a specific source. That the advices and experiences are so aligned does, in our opinion, contribute to their credibility. However, we are aware that this kind of redistribution of unspecified results can contribute to manifest poorly substantiated claims, and we want to stress that this framework is supposed to be a practical tool only. However, we aim to research the methods (or effectiveness) of this framework and publish in an article in the fall 2017.

Other definitions in this framework

- **Content:** What makes up a topic. Includes learning materials, activities, teaching process but also structure and design.
- **Cycle:** The process of planning, executing and evaluating a course. We believe continuous quality assurance demands that the cycle is completed for each course (albeit more thoroughly the first time).
- **Institution:** The organisation, school, college or university that plan and execute the course. Sometimes it is a public institution like a council that will hire or sponsor educators/volunteers to create/execute a course. The institution is responsible to the learners and the tutors.
- **Learner:** The attendee on the course. The learner is usually an individual (in our case a carer) but can also be a group (typically a family) when the course is aimed on the synergies within the group.
- **Learning activities:** Everything the learners do to achieve the learning outcomes. In this framework, it is restricted to mean the activities planned for in the course.
- **Learning materials:** Static digital information like documents, podcasts or videos. Could be interactive like a quiz.
- **Learning outcomes:** What the learner is expected to know, understand and/or do upon the completion of the course. In reality, there isn't a learning outcome until it is

actually achieved, and the terms *intended learning outcomes*⁴ or *desired learning outcomes*⁵ are sometimes used, but the shorter *learning outcomes* seems to be well established within the European area.

- **Online learning environment:** The part of the learning platform (LMS) where the course is conducted. If social media, Dropbox or other resources like external informational websites are used, they are a part of the online learning environment.
- **Tutor:** The main contact for the students. The tutor is a professional, either in the subject of the course or group facilitation, or both, and is responsible for the follow up of the group as well as the individual learner.

List of literature used to create the checklists:

Kennedy, D; Hyland, Á and Ryan, N “Writing and Using Learning Outcomes: a Practical Guide”, *Implementing Bologna in your institution C3.4-1*

<https://donstu.ru/en/Tuning%20Center/Writing%20and%20Using%20Learning.pdf> (Accessed 17.10.2017)

“Quality Standards for Online Education -Quality at every Stage” (2015) *Flexible Education Norway (FuN)* https://issuu.com/fleksibel_utdanning_norge/docs/kvalitetsnormene_netting

“Kvalitet i nettbasert undervisning -en veileder” (2017) *Flexible Education Norway (FuN)* <http://fleksibelutdanning.no/her-er-veilederen-digitalt/> (as for now only available in Norwegian)

Astray, A.A; Larsen, A.K.; Veenkamp, R. et Hole, G.H “SW-vircamp Quality Guide” *Project number 142767-LLP-1-2008-1-NO-ERASMUS-EVC*

Biggs, J. and Tangs, C. (2007) “Teaching for Quality Learning in the University”, *Open University Press*

“Quality Criteria for Digital Learning Resources” (2012) *Norwegian Centre for ICT in Education* https://iktsenteret.no/sites/iktsenteret.no/files/attachments/quality_criteria_dlr.pdf (Accessed 22.09.2017)

⁴ Biggs, J. and Tangs, C. (2007) “Teaching for Quality Learning in the University”, *Open University Press*

⁵ Kennedy,D; Hyland, Á and Ryan, N “Writing and Using Learning Outcomes: a Practical Guide”, *Implementing Bologna in your institution C3.4-1*
<https://donstu.ru/en/Tuning%20Center/Writing%20and%20Using%20Learning.pdf> (Accessed 17.10.2017)

The checklists

- 1. Planning the course**
- 2. Planning the tuition**
- 3. Planning the content delivery**
- 4. Communication with the learners before the course starts**
- 5. Moderating the online learning environment**

1: Planning the course

Even in a course with no fee to pay, the learner will invest time and emotions. Therefore, we owe it to the learners that the value the course creates should be at least worth the effort they invest. There is no easy way to measure this, but based on evidence and best practice there are steps to ensure quality of the planning process.

The book “Teaching for Quality Learning at University⁶” by J. Biggs and C. Tang has provided a basis for the check lists dealing with learning outcomes, learning activity and assessment:

*“Two factors make students (or anyone, come to that) want to learn something:
1 It has to be important; it must have some value to the learner.
2 The learner needs to expect success when engaging the learning task.
Nobody wants to do something they see as worthless. Neither do they want to do something, however valued, if they believe they have no chance of succeeding.”* (p. 32)

When the learning outcomes are understood, and accepted by the learner, the tutor’s feedback is an important part of being able to achieve the outcomes.

“Feedback as to progress also encourages beliefs in future success, which again is easier with criterion-referenced assessment: ‘This is what you did, this is what you might have done, this is how to get a better result.’” (p. 33)

In non-formal courses for carers the learning outcomes may be clearly phrased, but the individual learner will still have different perceptions of what it means to succeed within that learning outcome, so it is even more important that the feedback is a two-way communication process and that the learner’s reflection on own learning is an important part of the assessment process.

⁶ Biggs, J. and Tangs, C. (2007) “Teaching for Quality Learning in the University”, Open University Press

1.1 Purpose and frames of the online course

Name of person responsible for checking the items on this list:	
Last date for checking all the items:	

- ∇ What is the overall rationale for this course?
- ∇ How will the result of this course bring value to the learners now and in the future?
- ∇ How will the result of this course bring value the society now and in the future?
- ∇ How will this course bring enough value to the institution to be sustainable?
- ∇ What are the financial and other resources allocated/available to this course?
- ∇ What is the time frame for the course cycle?
- ∇ Are there policies that need to be taken into consideration?
- ∇ Are there laws that need to be taken into consideration?
- ∇ What is the launch date for the first/next cycle?

1.2 Describing the target group/learners

Name of person responsible for checking the items on this list:	
Last date for checking all the items:	

- ▽ Is the main learner an individual or a group (like a family)?
- ▽ What age span will the learners cover? What experience will they bring to the group? How do they prefer to communicate?
- ▽ Where will the learners be located? Is there an option for them to communicate in real time, or meet face to face?
- ▽ What will be the learners' motivation for the course?
- ▽ What prerequisites will the learners have for taking the course? On what level can we start, what progress can be expected?
- ▽ What abilities/disabilities will the students have that will influence their participation in the course?
- ▽ What preferences will the learners have regarding learning- and teaching modes?
- ▽ How will this information be collected? As requirements for enrolment, in the enrolment process or at the beginning of the course?
- ▽ Who is in charge of collecting information about the learners?

1.3 Learning outcomes and assessment

Name of person responsible for checking the items on this list:	
Last date for checking all the items:	

- ▽ What should the learner know, understand and be able to do upon the completion of this course?
- ▽ Are the learning outcomes achievable for the target group within the frames of the course?
- ▽ Will the learning outcomes be perceived as relevant to the target group?
- ▽ Are the learning outcomes mainly objective or subjective?
- ▽ Are the learning outcomes “active”, i.e. do they tell what the learner should be *able to do* rather what she/he *has been doing/shown/told* during the course?
- ▽ How and when will the learning outcomes be communicated to the learners?
- ▽ How will the learning outcomes be assessed?
- ▽ Is the form of assessment aligned with the learning outcomes, learning activities and general tone of voice in the course?
- ▽ Will there be issued some sort of certificate to the learners? If so, will it be based on the result of the assessment?
- ▽ How are the assessment criteria made clear to the learners?
- ▽ How and when is the planned assessment communicated to the learners?
- ▽ Who is in charge of the assessment?

1.4 Content of the course

Name of person responsible for checking the items on this list:	
Last date for checking all the items:	

- ▽ What subjects/topics need to be covered to achieve the learning outcomes? How and when will these be communicated to the learners?
- ▽ Is some of the content more suitable for special learning activities than other? E.g. are some topics more suitable for discussion, for reading about or for practical exercises?
- ▽ How will the learners perceive the content as relevant?

1.5 Course evaluation

Name of person responsible for checking the items on this list:	
Last date for checking all the items:	

- ▽ How will the institution evaluate the course?
 - Effect and quality of the tuition
 - Effect and quality of the content
 - Effect and quality of the learning activities
 - Degree of alignment between course and learners' expectation
- ▽ If learner activity data is part of the evaluations –is this communicated to the learners?
- ▽ Who is in charge of evaluating the course?
- ▽ How will the institution use the information to improve quality?
- ▽ Who is in charge of using the evaluation results?

2: Planning the tuition

In the before mentioned book “Teaching for Quality Learning at University” Biggs and Tang divide the teachers into three levels, and about teaching on the highest level they write:

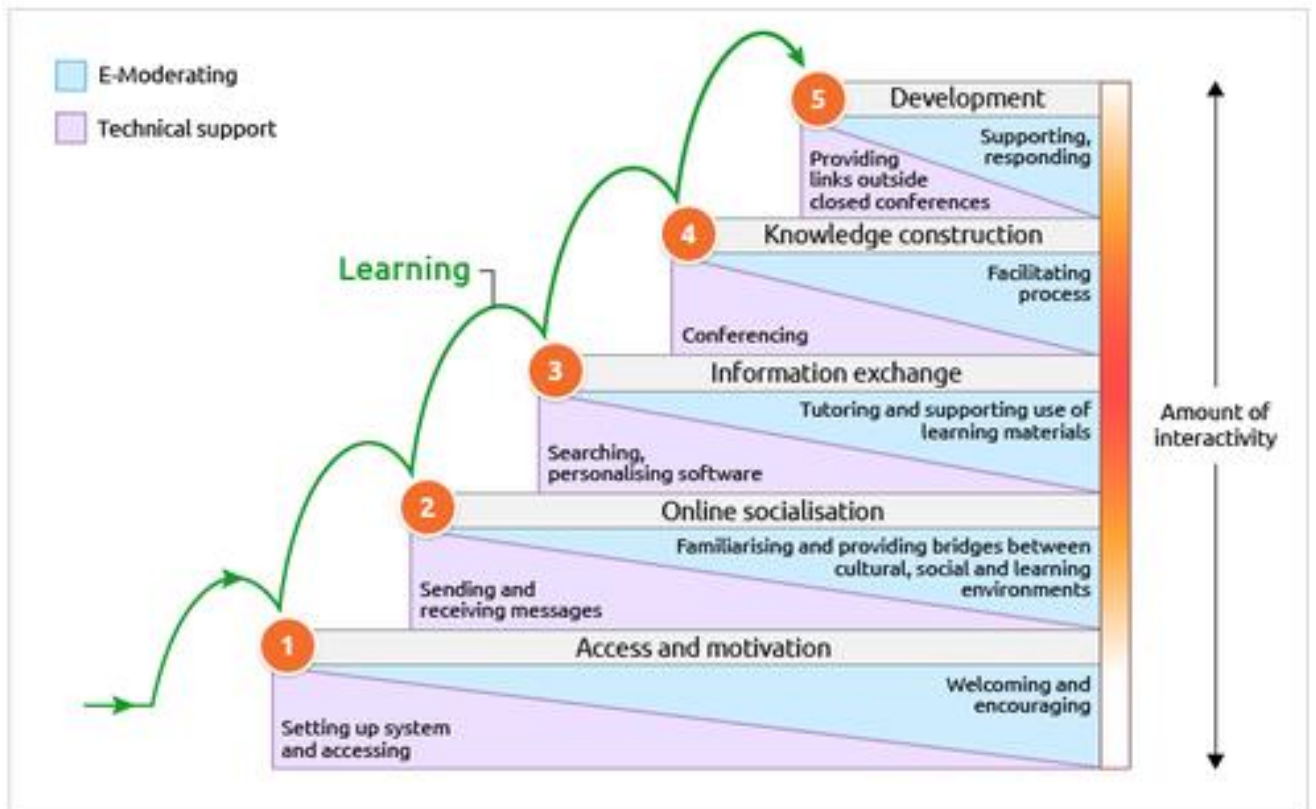
“Teachers at Level 3 focus on what the student does and how that relates to teaching. Level 3 is a student-centred model of teaching, with teaching supporting learning. No longer is it possible to say: ‘I taught them, but they didn’t learn.’ Expert teaching includes mastery over a variety of teaching techniques, but unless learning takes place, they are irrelevant; the focus is on what the student does and on how well the intended outcomes are achieved.” (p. 19)

According to Biggs and Tang this implies that the tutor understands the levels of understanding the learner is meant to achieve. They also claim that understanding the learning outcomes can be an activating factor in itself. Biggs and Tang describe two student archetypes: the highly motivated deep learner who will work to achieve knowledge and understanding and the surface learner who will work for good exam results. In our kind, of course one could expect that all the learners were driven by an intrinsic motivation to learn how to improve their situation, but that doesn’t mean that they know what to do and how to do it. Therefore we believe that the importance of quality teaching does not decrease with the increased motivation of the learners.

Depending on type of course, some insights will be demonstrated to, or shared with, the learners by the tutor. Other insights will be subject to self-study from texts, videos etc. We have therefore placed “Learning materials” in this category.

The scope of this framework is not to suggest specific teaching methodologies, but we aim to align the checklists to the theory we present. For planning the tuition, Gilly Salmons 5-step model⁷ can be useful. It shows how learners increase their skills in, and by, learning online, and how the tutors (moderators) can help and support this process (Salmon 2013). The steps represent an increasing degree of online learning competence from: 1) access and motivation, 2) online socialisation and 3) information exchange to 4) knowledge construction and 5) development. Salmon writes that the learners must be allowed the required time at each step, and provides tips for the tutoring roles (moderating and technical support) as showed in the illustration on the next page. In this model the tutor’s support doesn’t necessarily decrease when learners become more mature. It adapts to the new needs, catering for quality learning at every step.

⁷ Salmon, G. (2013) «e-tivities» Routledge



<http://www.gilysalmon.com/five-stage-model.html>

«The five-stage model of teaching and learning online»

2.1 Learning activities and feedback

Name of person responsible for checking the items on this list:	
Last date for checking all the items:	

- ▽ How are the learning activities suited to achieve the learning outcomes?
- ▽ How do the learning activities allow the learners to build on their own experience?
- ▽ How are the learning activities likely to motivate the students to communicate with each other?
- ▽ How will the learners receive feedback in and on their learning process?
- ▽ Who is in charge of the feedback?
- ▽ How will the learning activities stimulate reflection on own learning as well as the topics?

2.2 Learning materials

Name of person responsible for checking the items on this list:	
Last date for checking all the items:	

- ∇ How will the learning materials contribute to learners achieving the learning outcomes?
- ∇ Are the learning materials free from offensive elements? If not; are the offensive elements serving an educational purpose?
- ∇ Is all information in the learning materials updated and evidence based (where applicable)?
- ∇ How will the learners be able to relate the information to their own experience?
- ∇ Is the language and complexity of the information suitable for the target group?
- ∇ From what devices are the learning materials accessible, and what software requirements do they present?
- ∇ How long will it take the learner to access and interact with all the learning materials⁸? Is this expected time span communicated to the learners?
- ∇ Who is responsible for keeping the learning materials updated, and are there separate strategies for updating websites, files and links to external material?

⁸ As learning materials are not only instructional text and video, but also discussions and communication contributed by the learners, it can be difficult to estimate how much material the learners will interact with and consequently how long time they will spend on each module. Our advice is to run a full-scale pilot, and adjust expectations according to the results from this.

2.3 The Tutors

Name of person responsible for checking the items on this list:	
Last date for checking all the items:	

- ∇ Are there enough tutors to conduct individual guiding, feedback and other teaching activities according to course description?
- ∇ Are the tutors sufficiently skilled in their respective subjects?
- ∇ Have the tutors received sufficient training in how to deliver online tutoring (and first line support if applicable)?
- ∇ Are the tutors motivated for the online course?
- ∇ Is there a written agreement between the institution and the tutor regulating work hours and scope?
- ∇ Is there a plan in place to secure that the students can complete the course should one or more of the tutors get sick or leave the course for other reasons?

3: Planning the content delivery

This set of checklists concerns the technical and design choices to be made when creating an online course. An instructor led face-to-face course can be flexible and adapt to the needs, wishes and cognitive levels of the participants then and there. An online asynchronous course is designed before the first participant enter, and so it needs to be simple to understand and navigate and unambiguous in its instructions. It also need to be accessible from the devices and applications the learners have access to, and to cater for a variety of cognitive and physical levels of functioning.

An important resource for designing widely accessible online resources and learning environments is the WCAG 2.0 standard's guidelines for making online content perceivable, operable, understandable and robust⁹. As the target group for this framework is not professional content makers and programmers, and usually confined to the restrictions of the LMS, we have simplified the advices.

Even if everything is set up according to plan, and seems to work, most courses will appear differently according to role (and from different operative systems, browsers and devices). To be able to check all the bullet points in this category with confidence it can be a good idea to have one or more external persons to navigate through the course with the same accesses as the intended learners, and just observe/survey the process.

The premise for this framework is a course for carers on their caring role, which is obviously sensitive. We therefore require a closed online learning environment in an LMS. For less personal subjects, for example a knitting course, open platforms like blog or YouTube can be suitable.

When selecting a learning platform there are two main concerns: sustainability and suitability. For the course to be sustainable, so must the total cost of the LMS so that the institution can afford to keep and maintain it. The price models differ, but there is not only the price of license/hosting to consider. Is the learning platform easy to administer and support or are these extra services which the institution will have to pay the provider to perform? How much training is required to administer, support and utilise the LMS? Is the training free? After being trained by the platform provider, will the institution be able to maintain the required competence internally over time?

The following check lists mainly relate to user friendliness. Walking through them with the platform provider can be a way of assessing if the features of the learning platform meet the requirements of the course as it is intended to look and feel.

⁹ <https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/#guidelines> (Accessed 22.08.2017)

3.1 Online learning environment

Name of person responsible for checking the items on this list:	
Last date for checking all the items:	

- ∇ How does the learning platform allow for learner initiated learner-to-learner communication?
- ∇ How will the learner navigate within the platform? How many levels/clicks to get from login to a learning item like a discussion or a video?
- ∇ Does the learning platform provide a one gate entry to all the communications and resources necessary for completing the course?
- ∇ If external resources are used; are they accessible from the designated area of the learning platform?
- ∇ Are the learners encouraged to share materials? If so; is there any quality assurance, and what channels are provided for this?

3.2 Presentation of content; order and mode

Name of person responsible for checking the items on this list:	
Last date for checking all the items:	

- ▽ Is the learning environment basically static (all content is pre-published and learner navigates between modules) or basically dynamic (what the learner sees when she/he logs in differs from week to week allowing the currently most relevant content to occupy top/first page). If it is dynamic; who is responsible for updating the environment during the course?
- ▽ How does the layout (placement, colours and size) demonstrate importance and relevance of the different items?
- ▽ Is the layout and presentation inviting and attractive?
- ▽ How does the design of the learning environment communicate to the learners what actions she/he is expected to perform, and in what order he/she is expected to perform them?
- ▽ To what degree does the learning environment allow the learner to choose what content to access, in what order, what to skip and what to share or create?

3.3 Uniform web design/accessibility

Name of person responsible for checking the items on this list:	
Last date for checking all the items:	

- ▽ Can all content and functionality be accessed via the keyboard?
- ▽ Can all content and functionality be accessed with a screen reader?
- ▽ Is there a visual alternative to auditive content?
- ▽ Are all messages in a clear and simple English?
- ▽ Can the size of the text be customised by the reader on any device?
- ▽ How strong is the contrast between text colour and background colour?
- ▽ How does the page design help the learner to stay focused on the relevant tasks?
- ▽ Is the content accessible from all broadly used platforms/devices?

4: Communications with the learners before the course starts

Communication is not only what happens in the LMS or other communication areas for the learners and tutors in a course. It is also the institution's web site and even flyers, posters and how employees talk about the course in different contexts. Of this follows that the communication is not confined to the formal course period. This means the quality assurance of the course is not confined to the course itself, and the fact that communication starts before the course can even be an advantage.

The Norwegian university college Diakonhjemmet (now: VID specialized university) experienced that many online students never finished their courses and did not participate in the communication. They were concerned that their students should collaborate and participate in group activities, so among other means they initiated an introduction program; a warm welcome to engage the students before the actual course start. They called it *The Christmas calendar*¹⁰ because it took place before Christmas, and it was based on the three first stages of Gilly Salmon's five stage model (see checklists 3)

H.M. Bingen writes that the introduction program consisted of 24 advent calendar-like events like short movies and little tasks. In the first stage the students got a personal email from the tutor, and access to the LMS. They were encouraged to write a post in a discussion forum about how the weather was where they currently were and could watch videos of faculty giving them useful information. In the second stage the communication within the study groups was facilitated, and the students got small assignments to work together in getting to know the LMS. The activity "We share and help each other" and the movies from the teachers prepared the students for the study. The last stage was "We study and learn" where the students could share study techniques and get more tips.

The students felt more secure and prepared for the study, both technically and regarding communication.

In the project "Home Based care – Home Based Education" the learners could access the induction page of the course one week in advance of course start to familiarize themselves with the LMS and the tutors. Live support via email was available and learners would receive an answer within 24 hours.

¹⁰ Bingen, H.M. (2013) "Trygt læringsmiljø på nett for å lære gjennom skriftlige dialoger i diskusjonsfora" (The article is in Norwegian)

4.1 Communication on the institution's/course's website before the course

Name of person responsible for checking the items on this list:	
Last date for checking all the items:	

- ∇ How is the course positioned on the web site?
- ∇ What information regarding the course needs to be on the web site?
- ∇ Who is responsible for the content on, and maintenance of, the web site?
- ∇ Is the web site subject to the same strict quality assurance as the course?
- ∇ How is it communicated who will benefit from and have access to the course?
- ∇ How is it communicated who stands responsible to the learner?
- ∇ How is it communicated what the learner can expect to gain from taking the course?
- ∇ How is it communicated what the learner is expected to contribute?
- ∇ How is it communicated what software, hardware and infrastructure is required for attending and completing the course?

4.2 Handling inquiries

Name of person responsible for checking the items on this list:	
Last date for checking all the items:	

- ▽ Where can the learners direct inquiries about the course before enrolling?
- ▽ Where can the learners direct inquiries during the course?
- ▽ Will there be more than one channel for inquiries?
- ▽ How is this communicated to the learners?
- ▽ Who is in charge of responding to the inquiries?
- ▽ What is the expected/acceptable response time?

5: Moderating the online learning environment

To create a safe and nurturing environment is essential in online courses that is based on learners sharing their experience and learning from each other. Especially if the experiences are sensitive and emotional. We have previously mentioned how Gilly Salmons five stage model provides a good structure for this. The same writer also gives tips to how the online tutors can conduct themselves to promote good communication, for example summarize learners' discussion frequently, use private email for private communication (e.g. over eagerly participations in the forums, or lack thereof), acknowledge participation, praise sincerely and constructive, "see" all participants, summarize and close discussions that should naturally end and refocus discussions that stray. For the full set of tips, se the article "80:20 for E-moderators" by Gilly Salmon¹¹.

The article mentioned above mostly deal with direct moderating, but even an active tutor will find it can be hard to get all learners to participate in the discussions.

The Scandinavian professors Morten F. Paulsen and Christian Dalsgaard write that:

"Social networking does not necessarily involve communication, dialogue, or collaboration. Instead, the authors argue that transparency is a unique feature of social networking services. Transparency gives students insight into each other's actions."¹² (p.1)

Of this follows that we cannot focus exclusively on the online discussions, questions and comments between the learners when we build and assess the online environment. Learners openly sharing their journals, blogs and assignments and learners creating profiles is also a part of the online learning environment and networking.

In their article the authors explain the difference between *collaborative learning* which take place in *groups*, and *cooperative learning* which take place in *networks*, the latter being the more flexible one. We believe that he courses we aim to support are in their core cooperative, as each learner search to solve their own individual challenges, but they also have strong collaborative elements as the sharing of experience within the groups is one of the main learning activities.

We borrow three pillars from Dalsgaard and Paulsen:

- 1. Voluntary but attractive participation,*
- 2. means promoting individual flexibility, and*
- 3. means promoting affinity to learning community."* (p.3)

¹¹ Salmon, G. (2006) "80:20 for E-moderators" <http://edoc.hu-berlin.de/cmsj/29/salmon-gilly-39/PDF/salmon.pdf> (Accessed 29.09.2017)

¹² Dalsgaard, C. and Paulsen, M.F. (2009) "Transparency in Cooperative Online Education" *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*
<http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/671/1267> (Accessed 16.02.16)

5.1 Support

Name of person responsible for checking the items on this list:	
Last date for checking all the items:	

- ▽ How can the learners get help to access/log in to the learning area if necessary?
- ▽ How can the learners get help if they encounter a software related problem, like not being able to read a pdf or dealing with an excessively protective firewall?
- ▽ Will there be personal support online or via phone, and if so; how to be available when the students are actually logging in/trying to log in?
- ▽ How is the support system communicated to the learners?
- ▽ Who is responsible for the student support? Will it be the same person(s) before and during the course?
- ▽ If the tutor is not also an admin; how is the tutor supported technically?

5.2 Creating a safe and nurturing online environment

Name of person responsible for checking the items on this list:	
Last date for checking all the items:	

- ▽ How will the learners introduce themselves to each other?
- ▽ What sort of information about themselves will the learners be expected/encouraged to provide?
- ▽ How can the learners be sure that the other learners are who they claim to be?
- ▽ How will expectation of behaviour in the group (netiquette) be established?
- ▽ Will there be some sort of non-disclosure agreement between the learners? (whether the answer is yes or no, what would be the reason?)
- ▽ In what ways will the tutor interact with the learners to make everybody feel safe?
- ▽ How is the learners' personal information kept safe?
- ▽ To what degree can the learners create and share content in the online learning environment?

5.3 Communication and monitoring the online environment

Name of person responsible for checking the items on this list:	
Last date for checking all the items:	

- ∇ How is the communication based on the learners' needs rather than the institution's needs?
- ∇ What channels are made available for the learners to communicate online? How is each channel designed to promote a specific kind of communication?
- ∇ To what degree are the learners encouraged/discouraged to communicate "off platform" e.g. in social media or via email?
- ∇ How often, when and for how long time will the tutor be available to the learners online?
- ∇ How will the tutor communicate with the learners, mainly in group discussions or mainly one to one?
- ∇ Who will be moderating the learners' online discussions and when?
- ∇ How and when will the policies for online tutor presence and guiding be communicated to the learners?
- ∇ What will happen with the learners' access to the learning environment after the course is completed?
- ∇ Who is responsible for the learning environment and possible communication after the course is completed?



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