National Standards for Quality Online Teaching

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International Association for K-12 Online Learning

VERSION 2

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iNACOL
International Association for K-12 Online Learning

Acknowledgements

iNACOL organized a committee of experts with various backgrounds in the field of K-12 online learning to take the lead in refreshing the iNACOL National Standards for Quality Online Courses, Version 2. They are representatives from educational organizations that share an interest in online education and believe that it is important that students have access to the highest quality online teachers.

With their experience and the expertise of the original National Standards for Quality Online Teaching, Barbara Treacy from the Education Development Center (EDC) and Sara Baltunis and Connie Swiderski from the Texas Virtual School Network (TxVSN) chaired this project. iNACOL would like to thank them for their leadership, as well as the involvement of these experienced and knowledgeable leaders in the field of K-12 online learning:

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Introduction

The mission of the International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL) is to ensure all students have access to a world-class education and quality online learning opportunities that prepare them for a lifetime of success. *National Standards for Quality Online Teaching* is designed to provide states, districts, online programs, and other organizations with a set of quality guidelines for online teaching.

The original initiative in Version 1 of the standards began with a thorough literature review of the existing online teaching quality standards, then conducted a cross-reference of standards, followed by a survey completed by representatives of the iNACOL network to ensure the efficacy of the standards adopted. As a result of the research review, iNACOL chose to fully endorse the work of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) *Standards for Quality Online Teaching and Online Teaching Evaluation for State Virtual Schools* as a comprehensive set of criteria. The standards as identified by SREB were already in use by sixteen SREB states; they proved to be the most comprehensive among those reviewed and included guidelines set forth in the other criteria from the literature review.

iNACOL organized a team of experts consisting of online teachers, professional developers, instructional designers, researchers, course developers, and administrators to review these new standards and the new literature on the topic. They determined that there was a need to refresh Version 1 of the iNACOL standards. The same process was used in developing Version 2 of the standards, in addition to having Version 1 as a starting point in the development of the new version.

Over the past three years, iNACOL has received feedback from organizations using these standards for the development of professional development and evaluation of online teachers. In this new version of the standards, the indicators have been divided between what the online teachers should know and understand and what the online teachers should be able to do for evaluation purposes.

These guidelines should be implemented and monitored by each district or organization, as they reserve the right to apply the guidelines according to the best interest of the population for which they serve.

The National Standards for Quality Online Teaching are identified on the following pages:

Rating Scale

0	Absent—component is missing
1	Unsatisfactory—needs significant improvement
2	Somewhat satisfactory—needs targeted improvements
3	Satisfactory—discretionary improvement needed
4	Very satisfactory—no improvement needed

Standard A

The online teacher knows the primary concepts and structures of effective online instruction and is able to create learning experiences to enable student success.

Teacher Knowledge and Understanding	Teacher Abilities	Rating
The online teacher knows and understands the current best practices and strategies for online teaching and learning and their implementation in online education.	The online teacher is able to apply the current best practices and strategies in online teaching to create rich and meaningful experiences for students.	
The online teacher knows and understands the role of online learning in preparing students for the global community they live in, both now and in the future.	The online teacher is able to build learner capacity for collaboration in face-to-face, blended, and online environments and encourages students to participate as global citizens.	
The online teacher knows and understands the instructional delivery continuum (e.g., fully online to blended to face-to-face).	[This indicator can only be evaluated in the context of instructor(s) having the ability to modify the course.] The online teacher is able to construct flexible, digital, and interactive learning experiences that are useful in a variety of delivery modes.	
The online teacher knows and understands the need for continuing to update academic knowledge, pedagogy, and skills.	The online teacher is able to meet the state's professional teaching standards or has academic credentials in the field in which he or she is teaching.	
The online teacher knows and understands the subject area and age group they are teaching.	The online teacher is able to provide evidence of credentials in the field of study to be taught.	
The online teacher knows and understands the professional responsibility to contribute to the effectiveness, vitality, and self-renewal of the teaching profession, as well as to their online school and community.		

Standard B

The online teacher understands and is able to use a range of technologies, both existing and emerging, that effectively support student learning and engagement in the online environment.

Teacher Knowledge and Understanding	Teacher Abilities	Rating
The online teacher knows and understands the use of an array of grade-appropriate online tools for communication, productivity, collaboration, analysis, presentation, research, and content delivery.	The online teacher is able to select and use a variety of online tools for communication, productivity, collaboration, analysis, presentation, research, and online content delivery as appropriate to the content area and student needs.	
The online teacher knows and understands the use of emerging technologies in a variety of mediums for teaching and learning, based on student needs.	The online teacher is able to effectively use and incorporate subject-specific and developmentally appropriate technologies, tools, and resources.	
The online teacher knows and understands the importance of interaction in an online course and the role of varied communication tools in supporting interaction.	The online teacher is able to use communication technologies in a variety of mediums and contexts for teaching and learning.	
The online teacher knows and understands basic troubleshooting skills and the responsibility to address basic technical issues online students may have.	The online teacher is able to apply troubleshooting skills (e.g., change passwords, download plug-ins, etc.).	
The online teacher knows and understands the need to continuously update their knowledge and skills for using the evolving technology tools that support online learning.	The online teacher is able to identify and explore new tools and test their applicability to their content areas and students.	

Standard C

The online teacher plans, designs, and incorporates strategies to encourage active learning, application, interaction, participation, and collaboration in the online environment.

Teacher Knowledge and Understanding	Teacher Abilities	Rating
The online teacher knows and understands the techniques and applications of online instructional strategies, based on current research and practice (e.g., discussion, student-directed learning, collaborative learning, lecture, project-based learning, forum, small group work).	The online teacher is able to use student-centered instructional strategies that are connected to real-world applications to engage students in learning (e.g., peer-based learning, inquiry-based activities, collaborative learning, discussion groups, self-directed learning, case studies, small group work, and guided design).	
The online teacher knows and understands the process for facilitating, monitoring, and establishing expectations for appropriate interaction among students.	The online teacher is able to facilitate and monitor appropriate interaction among students.	
The online teacher knows and understands the techniques for developing a community among the participants.	The online teacher is able to apply effective facilitation skills by creating a relationship of trust; establish consistent and reliable expectations; and support and encourage independence and creativity that promotes the development of a sense of community among the participants.	
The online teacher knows and understands the process for facilitating and monitoring online instruction groups that are goal-oriented, focused, project-based, and inquiry-oriented to promote learning through group interaction.	The online teacher is able to facilitate and monitor online instruction groups to promote learning through higher-order thinking and group interaction.	
The online teacher knows and understands techniques to adjust communications to diverse perspectives.	The online teacher is able to respond appropriately to the diverse backgrounds and learning needs of the students.	
The online teacher knows and understands differentiated instruction based on students' learning styles.	The online teacher is able to use differentiated strategies in conveying ideas and information, and is able to assist students in assimilating information to gain understanding and knowledge.	

Teacher Knowledge and Understanding	Teacher Abilities	Rating
The online teacher knows and understands techniques to create an environment that will engage, welcome, and reach each individual learner.	The online teacher is able to apply strategies for engagement in online learning environments, e.g., asking questions to stimulate discussion.	
The online teacher knows and understands the participation in an online course from a student-centered approach.	The online teacher is able to apply experiences as an online student and/or group to demonstrate the development and implementation of successful strategies for online teaching environments and to anticipate challenges and problems in the online classroom.	
The online teacher knows and understands the need to establish and maintain ongoing and frequent teacher-student interaction, student-student interaction, teacher-parent interaction, and teacher-mentor interaction.	The online teacher is able to provide a variety of ongoing and frequent teacher-student interaction, student-student interaction, and teacher-parent interaction, and teacher-mentor interaction opportunities.	

Standard D

The online teacher promotes student success through clear expectations, prompt responses, and regular feedback.

Teacher Knowledge and Understanding	Teacher Abilities	Rating
The online teacher knows and understands techniques to maintain strong and regular communication with students, using a variety of tools.	The online teacher is able to use effective communication skills with students.	
The online teacher knows and understands techniques for using appropriate communications in support of student engagement through prompt and regular feedback, and setting and communicating high expectations.	The online teacher is able to provide prompt feedback, communicate high expectations, and respect diverse talents and learning styles.	

Teacher Knowledge and Understanding	Teacher Abilities	Rating
The online teacher knows and understands the need to create and explain objectives, concepts, and learning outcomes in a clearly written, concise format and to explain the course organization to students.	The online teacher is able to provide clear definitions of objectives, concepts, and learning outcomes and the course organization to students.	
The online teacher knows and understands the need to define the terms of class interaction for both teacher and students.	The online teacher is able to establish and provide clear expectations of class interaction for both teacher and students.	
The online teacher knows and understands the need to define the assessment criteria for the course.	The online teacher is able to provide a clear explanation of the assessment criteria for the course to students.	
The online teacher knows and understands the need to provide clear expectations for teacher response time to student queries.	The online teacher is able to provide a clear explanation of the expectations of teacher response time to student queries.	
The online teacher knows and understands the need to establish criteria for appropriate online behavior for both teacher and students.	The online teacher is able to establish and implement criteria for appropriate online behavior for both teacher and students.	
The online teacher knows and understands the need for timely, constructive, personalized feedback to students about assignments and questions.	The online teacher is able to use student data to inform instruction, guide and monitor students' management of their time, monitor learner progress with available tools, and develop an intervention plan for unsuccessful learners.	
The online teacher knows and understands a variety of methods and tools to reach and engage students who are struggling.	The online teacher is able to use a variety of methods and tools to reach and engage students who are struggling.	
The online teacher knows and understands the process for aligning teacher and student expectations for the course, in general.	The online teacher is able to orient students to teacher's instructional methods and goals and invite students to provide feedback on their perceptions of how they are learning in a course.	

Standard E

The online teacher models, guides, and encourages legal, ethical, and safe behavior related to technology use.

Teacher Knowledge and Understanding	Teacher Abilities	Rating
The online teacher knows and understands the responsibilities of digital citizenship and techniques to facilitate student investigations of the legal and ethical issues related to technology and society.	The online teacher is able to establish standards for student behavior that are designed to ensure academic integrity and appropriate use of the Internet and online written communication; teach students that copyright laws are created for a reason.	
The online teacher knows and understands how the use of technology may lead to instances of academic dishonesty.	The online teacher is able to identify the risks and intervene in incidents of academic dishonesty for students.	
The online teacher knows and understands resources and techniques for implementing Acceptable Use Policies (AUP).	The online teacher is able to model and comply with intellectual property policies and fair use standards and reinforce their use with students.	
The online teacher knows and understands techniques for recognizing and addressing the inappropriate use of electronically accessed data or information.	The online teacher is able to provide resources for students related to intellectual property and plagiarism.	
The online teacher knows and understands privacy standards about other students and their posting and performance that are outlined in FERPA or other similar guidelines.	The online teacher is able to incorporate and comply with FERPA or other similar guidelines in AUP and course design and communicate privacy guidelines to students.	

Standard F

The online teacher is cognizant of the diversity of student academic needs and incorporates accommodations into the online environment.

Teacher Knowledge and Understanding	Teacher Abilities	Rating
The online teacher knows and understands legal mandates stipulated by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Assistive Technology Act, and Section 508 or other similar guidelines/requirements for accessibility.	The online teacher is able to monitor student progress and apply activities and tools that are relevant to the needs of all students, including those with learning or physical disabilities, in collaboration with appropriate staff or resources.	
The online teacher knows and understands that students have varied talents and skills and make appropriate accommodations designed to include all students.	The online teacher is able to address learning styles, needs for accommodations, and create multiple paths to address diverse learning styles and abilities.	
The online teacher knows and understands appropriate tools and technologies to make accommodations to meet student needs.	The online teacher is able to use appropriate tools and technologies to make accommodations to meet student needs.	
The online teacher knows and understands how adaptive/assistive technologies are used to help people who have disabilities gain access to information that might otherwise be inaccessible.	The online teacher is able to apply adaptive and assistive technologies in the online classroom where appropriate in the instruction to meet student needs.	
The online teacher knows and understands options to expand student thinking, address styles of learning, and provide avenues for enrichment or intervention.	The online teacher is able to identify students who are struggling with various learning obstacles, such as ELL or literacy issues, and apply appropriate strategies to support student thinking, address styles of learning, and provide avenues for enrichment or intervention when needed.	
The online teacher knows and understands the process for connecting with local support personnel to verify student's IEP requirements or 504 accommodations needed for student success.	The online teacher is able to communicate with the appropriate school staff regarding specific accommodations, modifications, or needs as listed in a student's IEP or 504 accommodations, and work in collaboration with others to address student needs.	
The online teacher knows and understands the diversity of student learning needs, languages, and backgrounds.	The online teacher is able to demonstrate awareness of different learning preferences, diversity, and universal design principles.	

Standard G

The online teacher demonstrates competencies in creating and implementing assessments in online learning environments in ways that ensure validity and reliability of the instruments and procedures.

Teacher Knowledge and Understanding	Teacher Abilities	Rating
The online teacher knows and understands adequate and appropriate assessment instruments to measure online learning that reflect sufficient content validity (i.e., that adequately cover the content they are designed to measure), reliability, and consistency over time.	The online teacher is able to create and implement assessments in online learning environments in ways that ensure validity and reliability of the instruments and procedures.	
The online teacher knows and understands the implementation of online assessment measures and materials in ways that ensure instrument validity and reliability.	The online teacher is able to develop and deliver assessments, projects, and assignments that meet standards-based learning goals and assess learning progress by measuring student achievement of learning goals.	
The online teacher knows and understands multiple strategies for ensuring the security of online student assessments, academic integrity, and assessment data.	The online teacher is able to implement a variety of assessments that ensure the security of student assessment data and accurate measures of student ability.	

Standard H

The online teacher develops and delivers assessments, projects, and assignments that meet standards-based learning goals and assesses learning progress by measuring student achievement of the learning goals.

Teacher Knowledge and Understanding	Teacher Abilities	Rating
The online teacher knows and understands the reach of authentic assessments (i.e., the opportunity to demonstrate understanding of acquired knowledge and skills, as opposed to testing isolated skills or retained facts) are part of the evaluation process.	The online teacher is able to apply authentic assessments as part of the evaluation process, assess student knowledge in a forum beyond traditional assessments, and monitor academic integrity with assessments.	
The online teacher knows and understands the process of continuous evaluation of students to include formative and summative assessments and student feedback, including polls and surveys that reflect student learning progress throughout the course.	The online teacher is able to create or select and implement a variety of formative and summative assessments that assess student learning progress and utilize student feedback to improve the online learning experience.	
The online teacher knows and understands the relationships between the assignments, assessments, and standards-based learning goals.	The online teacher is able to create, select, and organize the appropriate assignments and assessments, and align curricular content with associated and standards-based learning goals.	

Standard I

The online teacher demonstrates competency in using data from assessments and other data sources to modify content and to guide student learning.

Teacher Knowledge and Understanding	Teacher Abilities	Rating
The online teacher knows and understands techniques to plan individualized instruction incorporating student data.	The online teacher is able to use student data to plan instruction.	
The online teacher knows and understands how data is used to modify the content, instruction, and assessment to meet student needs.	The online teacher is able to use observational data (e.g., tracking data in electronic courses, Web logs, e-mail) to monitor course progress and effectiveness.	
The online teacher knows and understands how instruction is based on assessment data.	The online teacher is able to customize instruction, based on assessment data, in order to personalize the learning experience per student needs and performance.	
The online teacher knows and understands the importance of self-reflection or assessment of teaching effectiveness.	The online teacher is able to create opportunities for self-reflection or assessment of teaching effectiveness within the online environment (e.g., classroom assessment techniques, teacher evaluations, teacher-peer reviews).	
The online teacher knows and understands varied assessment strategies that address levels of ability through a variety of alternative interventions.	The online teacher is able to address levels of ability through a variety of alternative interventions.	
The online teacher knows and understands the use of effective learning strategies data for an individual student to formulate detail-specific changes in future instruction, based on assessment results and research study (data-driven and research-based).	The online teacher is able to evaluate instructional strategies to determine their accuracy and usefulness for presenting specific ideas and concepts.	
The online teacher knows and understands the process for maintaining records of relevant communications.		

Teacher Knowledge and Understanding	Teacher Abilities	Rating
The online teacher knows and understands effective time management strategies.	The online teacher is able to provide consistent feedback and course materials in a timely manner, and use online tool functionality to improve instructional efficiency.	
The online teacher knows and understands online course management tasks.	The online teacher is able to track student enrollments, communication logs, attendance records, etc.	
The online teacher knows and understands ways for teacher and students to assess student readiness for course content and method of delivery.	The online teacher is able to employ ways to assess student readiness for course content and method of delivery.	
The online teacher knows and understands that student success (e.g., grade, level of participation, mastery of content, completion percentage) is an important measure of teaching and course success.	The online teacher is able to employ ways for students to effectively evaluate and assess their own readiness for course content and method of delivery.	
The online teacher knows and understands the importance of student self-assessment.	The online teacher is able to create opportunities for student self-assessment within courses.	
The online teacher knows and understands the role of student empowerment in online learning.	The online teacher is able to empower students to independently define short- and long-term learning goals and monitor their personal progress.	

Standard J

The online teacher interacts in a professional, effective manner with colleagues, parents, and other members of the community to support students' success.

Teacher Knowledge and Understanding	Teacher Abilities	Rating
The online teacher knows and understands the need for professional activity and collaboration beyond school (e.g., professional learning communities) to update academic skills and knowledge and collaborate with other educators.	The online teacher is able to engage in professional development activities and collaboration beyond school.	
The online teacher knows and understands the need to coordinate learning experiences with with other adults involved in providing support to the student (e.g., parents, local school contacts, mentors) to support student learning.	The online teacher is able to provide ongoing communication with parents or guardians concerning student learning.	

Instructional Design

The following section outlines standards for instructional design skills for the online teacher of record, where applicable. These standards are considered optional, as instructional design does not always fall under online teaching responsibilities.

Standard K

The online teacher arranges media and content to help students and teachers transfer knowledge most effectively in the online environment.

Teacher Knowledge and Understanding	Rating
The online teacher knows and understands critical digital literacies and 21st century skills.	
The online teacher knows and understands appropriate use of technologies to enhance learning.	
Teacher Abilities	
The online teacher is able to modify and add content and assessment, using an online Learning Management System (LMS).	
The online teacher is able to create and modify engaging content and appropriate assessments in an online environment.	
The online teacher is able to incorporate multimedia and visual resources into an online module.	
The online teacher is able to use and incorporate subject-specific and developmentally appropriate software in an online learning module.	
The online teacher is able to review materials and Web resources for their alignment with course objectives and state and local standards and for their appropriateness on a continuing basis.	
The online teacher is able to create assignments, projects, and assessments that are aligned with students' different visual, auditory, and hands-on ways of learning.	
The online teacher is able to arrange media and content to help transfer knowledge most effectively in the online environment.	