



# Practice Exercise

## Using the *Ethical* Checklist Items to Evaluate an Existing Site

Use these sample items from the Ethics Checklist to evaluate a course of your choice.

We also recognize that you may not be able to answer all items with the information at a given website, but still wanted you to have the opportunity to consider elements from this checklist.

The Ethics section of the checklist covers these topic areas:

Social and Political Influence  
Cultural Diversity  
Bias  
Geographical Diversity  
Learner Diversity  
Digital Divide  
Etiquette  
Legal Issues

**Tip:** You may want to use the site Search tool and enter a key word (for example, “accessibility” Or “diversity” to more quickly locate information to answer a survey item.

### ***Social and Political Influence***

Does the institution have to get approval from any external entities (**that** can serve as political barriers) to implement its e-learning or the use of any e-learning tools?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

If *yes*, please list the entities:

Is there a social/political preference for any particular instructional method? (Note: for an example, apprenticeship model is preferred by Norwegian political tradition.)

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

If *yes*, please list e-learning strategies most preferred:



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### ***Cultural Diversity***

To improve cross-cultural verbal communication and avoid misunderstanding, does the course make an effort to reduce or avoid the use of jargons, idioms, ambiguous or humor, and acronyms? (Note: We should avoid using jokes or comments that can be misinterpreted and misunderstood by some.)

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

If yes, does the course have or link to resource site(s) where interpretations of cross-cultural jargons and idioms are available?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

To improve visual communication, is the course sensitive to the use of navigational icons or images? (Note: For example, Reeves & Reeves in 1997 noted that a pointing hand icon to indicate direction would violate a cultural taboo in certain African cultures by representing a dismembered body part. Also, pointing finger that indicates a hyperlink would be problematic too. Right arrow for the next page may mean previous page for Arabic and Hebrew language speakers as they read from left to right).

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

Does the course use full name for acronyms used in the body of the text?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

If yes, are the acronyms used for terms globally understood? (Note: Acronyms for terms such as identification numbers used in different parts of the world can be confusing to learners. Many countries of the world have identification or record keeping mechanisms for their citizens. For example, the United States government uses the acronym SSN for Social Security Number; the Canadian government uses the acronym SIN for Social Insurance Number, etc. Therefore, it will be problematic when a course offered by an US institution asks for SSN number from non-US students.

- Yes
- No



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Not applicable

Could a student find the course to be discriminatory)? (Note: It is difficult to judge on certain things that may not offend one person, but can offend others.)

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

If *yes*, please describe:

Is the course sensitive to learners who come from an oral culture?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

Does the course promote cross-cultural interaction among students and instructor(s)?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

Is the course offered in multilingual format? (Note: Text in buttons or icons is harder to change. Hornett in an a an article entitled “Culturally Competent” written in 2000 advised us not to include text in graphics for e-learning content that have potential to be translated into other languages.)

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

If *yes*, indicate the names of languages:

How does the course address cultural diversity from a learning perspective? (check all that apply):

- Course is tailored to specific cultures
- Course is designed to be culturally neutral
- Not applicable

Does the course use any icons, images, graphics, etc. which may have offensive meanings for learners of various cultures?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable
- Not sure



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Not applicable

Does the course use terms or words that may not be used by the worldwide audience? (Note: People use the term "sidewalk" in the US and "pavement/footpath" in the UK. When such a term is needed, we should include both forms for a diverse audience, such as "students should use the sidewalk [or pavement] rather than trample the grass." The Website [http://www.eurotexte.fr/translation/tips\\_brit\\_vs\\_amer.shtml](http://www.eurotexte.fr/translation/tips_brit_vs_amer.shtml) provides some of the differences between American and British English.)

Yes

No

Not applicable

Does the course use signs or symbols that may not be used by worldwide audience?

Yes

No

Not applicable

Does the course use culture-specific analogies, metaphors, or expressions? (Note: For example, "Be sure to save your work frequently, remember *a stitch in time saves nine.*")

Yes

No

Not applicable

### **Bias**

Does the course present more than one viewpoint on controversial issues?

Yes

No

Not applicable

Are the course contents bias-free?

Yes

No

Not applicable



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### ***Geographical Diversity***

Is the course offered to geographically diverse populations?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

If yes, is the course sensitive about students from different time-zones (e.g. synchronous communications are scheduled at reasonable times for all time zones represented)?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

For assignment due dates, is the instructor sensitive to national and religious holidays observed by students (not observed by the instructor)?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

Is the instructor sensitive about scheduling synchronous learning activities (such as chat) during national and religious holidays observed by students (not observed by the instructor)?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

**Are** the Internet connection fees a deterrent to participation in certain online activities by learners? (Note: Learners who pay "by the minute" connection fees, or long-distance charge may be affected by online discussion activities requiring heavy connections hours.)

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable
- Other

### ***Learner Diversity***



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Does the institution conduct a survey to assess the learning style of target population?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable
- Other

Does the course provide flexibility to accommodate diverse learning styles?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

Does the course allow students to remain anonymous during online discussions?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

Does the course foster mutual respect, tolerance, and trust? (Note: Such environment depends on what instructor, teaching aids and all support staff do during the course duration.)

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

Does the course allow students to lurk during online asynchronous discussions?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

Are participants required to assume roles or participate in scenarios that might be culturally and religiously offensive (Note: An e-learning course can ask learners to join in multi-person interactive worlds such as MOOs, MUDs and MUSHes to play and talk under a variety of personae. However, the topic and the roles that learners are asked to play may be culturally offensive. For instance, asking learners to play homosexual and bisexual characters in a MUD session may be ethically and religiously offensive to some learners.)

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable



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Is the course designed to accommodate the needs of visually impaired learners?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

If yes, check all that apply:

- Learners can use "text-to-reader" software to participate in the course
- Other (specify)

Does the course offer audio version for visually impaired learners?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

### **Digital Divide**

Is the digital divide issue considered in designing the e-learning content?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

If yes, check if any of the following measures all that apply

- Only essential multimedia elements are used in the course to reduce bandwidth problem
- Multimedia elements (graphics, audio, video) are accompanied by text equivalents to be accessible by people with disabilities
- Other (specify)

Is the course sensitive to diverse student population's accessibility to the Internet?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

### **Etiquette**

Does the institution have etiquette guidelines?

- Yes



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- No
- Not applicable

Does the course provide any guidance to learners on how to behave and post messages in online discussions so that their postings do not hurt others' feelings?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

If a student fails to follow the etiquette of the course more than one time, how does instructor work with students to promote compliance? (check all that apply):

- The student receive final notice for consequences
- The student is under probation
- Penalize the student by lowering his/her grade or points
- Remove the student from the discussion forum
- Other
- Not applicable

### ***Legal Issues***

Does the course comply with the institution's policies and guidelines (if any) regarding all Web page development?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

Does the institution provide privacy policies and guidelines on online postings?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

If yes, does the course comply with the institution's privacy policies and guidelines online postings?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

Does the course provide ethics policies that outline rules, regulations, guidelines, and prohibitions?

- Yes





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- No
- Not applicable

Does the course get previous students' permission to use their online discussions postings or any other data that belong to them?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

Does the course provide institutional policies and guidelines regarding fraudulent activities in course-related testing, assignments and projects?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

Does the course clearly inform students about the consequences (e.g., in terms of course grade and academic status) of any forms of plagiarism?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

If *yes*, check all that apply:

- Receives failing grade in the course
- Receives failing grade on that particular paper
- Dismissal from the institution
- Name shows up in the list of cheaters in the institution
- Institution shares the student's cheating record with other academic institutions
- Other

Does the course provide a mini lesson on plagiarism?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

If *yes*, check all that apply:

- Learners can identify example of plagiarism
- Learners are advised how to cite or give credit to the source
- Other

Does the course require students to sign an agreement on plagiarism?

- Yes
- No



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Not applicable

Does the institution have legal office where faculty members can get answers to legal matters concerning online courses?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable
- Other (specify)

Check if the institution provides training sessions with up-to-date information on copyright issues relevant to e-learning? (check all that apply):

Role of Individual	Training Session Format			
	<i>Online</i>	<i>Face-to-Face</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Not Applicable</i>
Learner				
Instructor (full-time)				
Instructor (part-time)				
Trainer				
Trainer Assistant				
Tutor				
Technical Support				
Help Desk				
Librarian				
Counselor				
Graduate Assistant				
Administrator				
Project Manager				
Instructional Designer				
Graphic Artist				
Programmer				
Multimedia Developers				
Other (specify)				

Does the course acquire permission to use copyrighted information and materials from appropriate copyright holder?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable



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Does the website contain examples of student work and is there evidence the institution has posted it with the student's permission?

Yes

No

No materials are posted

Check all that apply:

Student Materials	Permission			
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>Other</i>
Students' projects				
Students' Webfolios				
Students' photographs				
Students' email addresses				
Students' telephone numbers				
Students' mailing address				
Other				

Does the course provide information about the institutional policies and guidelines about copyright?

Yes

No

Not applicable

Other (specify)