Quality Assurance (QA) Checklist

This **Quality Assurance (QA) Checklist** is designed to evaluate and maintain the quality of online learning experiences. It ensures that course materials meet standards for accessibility, design, accuracy, and instructional alignment. By using this checklist, educators and designers can verify consistency, identify areas for improvement, and enhance the overall learner experience..

Section 1

Focuses on content quality, clarity, and writing consistency

Course Content

Determine whether the course contains comprehensive information and resources for successful learning and meets appropriate ethical and legal requirements.

Criteria	Criteria Met?		If No:
	Yes	No	Location and Summary of the Issue
All course materials and activities explicitly support measurable learning objectives. Each resource contributes directly to the stated outcomes (Quality Matters, 2023).			
Content integrates diverse perspectives, examples, and case studies to promote inclusivity and relevance for a wide learner audience (CAST, 2018).			
Text is written in clear, concise language at an appropriate reading level for the target audience, free of jargon or unnecessarily complex terms (Merrill, 2020).			
Spelling, grammar, headings, fonts, and styles are consistent across the course to promote professionalism and reduce cognitive load (Mayer, 2021).			

Proofreading

Ensure the course is free of mechanical errors and consistent in voice.

Criteria	Criteria Met?		If No:
	Yes	No	Location and Summary of the Issue
There are no grammatical or spelling errors.			

Section 2

Covers course structure, flow, visuals, and engagement.

Course Design

Ensure the course utilizes a logical progression of learning activities and engaging learner experiences.

Criteria	Criteria Met?		If No:
	Yes	No	Location and Summary of the Issue
Home page provides a brief course description or introduction, clear instructions for students (e.g., where to begin), and quick and easy navigation to start.			
Backward design alignment. Each module's objectives map directly to course objectives, and every activity/assessment aligns to a stated objective (include an alignment map or tags). (Quality Matters, 2018; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005)			
Consistent module pattern. Modules follow a predictable sequence (overview → objectives → content → practice → assessment → wrap-up) to reduce cognitive load. (Mayer, 2021)			
Chunking & signaling. Long pages are segmented into short sections with descriptive headings; key ideas are highlighted via cues. (Mayer, 2021)			
Learner guidance. Each module opens with a brief "What to do first / estimated time / tech needed" panel to support self-regulation. (Quality Matters, 2018)			

Multimedia

Determine whether the course provides high-quality audio, video, and interactive elements.

Criteria		Criteria Met?		If No:
		Yes	No	Location and Summary of the Issue
Audio:	Accessible AV. All audio/video include accurate captions and transcripts; images have meaningful alt text; diagrams include text descriptions. (WCAG 2.1, 2018; CAST, 2018)			
Video & Interactivity:	Usable media. Media controls (play/pause, volume, captions, speed) are exposed; file sizes are optimized for low bandwidth. (OSCQR, 2020)			
Images:	Apply CTML principles. Avoid extraneous media (coherence), place words and graphics near each other (contiguity), use cues (signaling), and avoid on-screen text that duplicates narration (redundancy). (Mayer, 2021; Clark & Mayer, 2016)			

Navigation and Technical Functionality

Ensure the course incorporates seamless navigation and functionality appropriate for the learner.

Criteria	Criteria Met?		If No: Location and Summary of the Issue
	Yes	No	
Technology is appropriate for the audience.			
Clear, consistent navigation. Primary menus and page layouts are consistent across modules; link text is descriptive (no "click here"). (Nielsen Norman Group, 2020; Quality Matters, 2018)			
Link & file integrity. All links work; files open in expected apps; external links warn if opening new tabs. (OSCQR, 2020)			
Device and browser support. Course renders responsively; critical tasks tested on at least two modern browsers and mobile. (ISO 9241-210, 2019; OSCQR, 2020)			
Technical orientation. A "Start Here/Technology" page states minimum tech requirements, support contacts, and privacy notices for any third-party tools. (Quality Matters, 2018)			

Module 3

Ensures inclusivity, usability, and fair, aligned assessments.

Accessibility

Determine whether the course reflects the principles of universal design and ensures inclusivity and accessibility of all learners.

Criteria	Criteria Met?		If No:
	Yes	No	Location and Summary of the Issue
Course meets all WCAG and POUR standards.			
Pages meet WCAG 2.1 AA for contrast, text resize, keyboard navigation; no keyboard traps. (W3C, 2018)			
Headings (H1–H3) reflect a logical outline; lists and tables use true semantic elements. (WCAG 2.1)			
All images/graphics include meaningful alt text (or are marked decorative); complex charts provide long descriptions. (WCAG 2.1)			
Video/audio provide accurate captions and a transcript; auto-captions are human-edited for accuracy and speaker labels. (WCAG 2.1)			
Links use descriptive text that states destination/action (no "click here"); document link purpose for screen reader users. (WCAG 2.1)			
Documents (PDF/Word/Slides) are tagged for accessibility; reading order and bookmarks verified. (WCAG 2.1)			
Motion/animation is minimal, purposeful, and user-controllable; no auto-play with sound. (WCAG 2.1)			
Language is set for each page; foreign terms tagged with correct language attribute. (WCAG 2.1)			
Provide multiple formats where feasible (HTML + downloadable doc), and avoid image-only text. (CAST, 2018)			

Assessment

Determine whether the course's assessments prioritize clarity, engagement, and alignment.

Criteria	Criteria Met?		If No: Location and Summary of the Issue
	Yes	No	
Assessment instructions are clearly written.			
Each assessment aligns explicitly to stated module/course objectives (alignment map or objective tags visible). (QM, 2018; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005)			
Assessments honor UDL—multiple means of expression (e.g., written, oral, multimedia, performance), with equivalent rigor and clear options. (CAST, 2018)			
Instructions & criteria are plain-language, chunked, and accompanied by exemplars and rubrics with observable performance descriptors. (Mayer, 2021)			
Formative checks (low-stakes) are embedded to provide timely, specific feedback tied to criteria. (Hattie & Timperley, 2007)			
Time limits, retakes, and item types are appropriate to the construct; avoid construct-irrelevant barriers (e.g., speed for conceptual tasks). (CAST, 2018)			
Accessibility of assessments is verified (keyboard operability, screen reader compatibility, alt text in stem/stimuli). (WCAG 2.1)			
Academic integrity is supported through authentic tasks, item pools, randomized order, and clear citation expectations. (QM, 2018)			
Accommodations (extended time, alternative format) are documented and available without stigma or undue burden. (CAST, 2018)			
Analytics/item analysis are reviewed to detect confusing items or unintended difficulty; improvements are logged. (QM, 2018)			
Privacy of learner data for e-proctoring/third-party tools is disclosed, with opt-in/alternatives when feasible. (FERPA/GDPR principles)			

Consistency and Branding

Determine the course is cohesive in its design and utilizes organizational branding.

Criteria	Criteria Met?		If No: Location and Summary of the Issue
	Yes	No	
Course design is cohesive throughout.			
A style guide governs typography, color, iconography, and tone; usage is consistent across modules. (OSCQR, 2020)			
Color palette meets contrast ratios (normal text 4.5:1; large 3:1) and is not the sole carrier of meaning. (WCAG 2.1)			
Templates (module overview, lesson pages, assessment shells) are reused to create predictable patterns and wayfinding. (QM, 2018)			
Navigation labels are consistent and descriptive (e.g., "Overview," "Practice," "Check Your Understanding"). (NN/g, 2020)			
Brand elements (logos, marks) include alt text, don't crowd headers, and never impede readability. (WCAG 2.1)			
Voice and tone guidelines promote inclusivity and plain language; avoid idioms/jargon that may hinder multilingual learners. (CAST, 2018)			
Iconography is used sparingly with text labels; icons are consistent in meaning across the course. (OSCQR, 2020)			
File naming and versioning conventions are standardized (e.g., Module##_Topic_v1.2) for maintenance and auditability. (QM, 2018)			
Microcopy (button labels, alerts) is concise and consistent; error messages are constructive and actionable. (NN/g, 2020)			
Brand vs. accessibility conflicts are resolved in favor of accessibility (e.g., adjust brand colors to meet contrast). (WCAG 2.1)			

Module 4

Verifies legal, ethical, and branding consistency.

Copyright Compliance

Ensure the course complies with all copyright laws and standards of practice.

Criteria	Criteria Met?		If No: Location and Summary of the Issue
	Yes	No	
Facts have been checked and referenced appropriately.			
All course materials (text, images, videos, and audio) are verified for proper licensing and attribution before publication.			
Open Educational Resources (OERs) are prioritized when available and used under appropriate Creative Commons licensing.			
A visible copyright statement and citation list are included for all course materials.			
Faculty and designers receive periodic training on copyright and fair use guidelines.			

Other

[Use this category for any additional criteria relevant to your specific context.]

[1-sentence description to define/describe what to look for in this section]

Criteria	Criteria Met?		If No: Location and Summary of the Issue
	Yes	No	
Facts have been checked and referenced appropriately.			
Course design includes inclusive examples, case studies, and imagery reflecting diverse cultural and social identities.			
Discussion prompts and assessments encourage multiple perspectives and respect for differing viewpoints.			
The course includes mechanisms for learners to provide accessibility and inclusion feedback.			
Designers ensure consistent tone, culturally responsive language, and equitable assessment standards across all modules.			

References

CAST. (2018). Universal Design for Learning guidelines version 3.0 http://udlguidelines.cast.org

Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. Review of educational research, 77(1), 81-112. https://doi.org/10.3102/003465430298487

Mayer, R. E. (2022). The future of multimedia learning. *The Journal of Applied Instructional Design*, *11*(4), 69-77. https://edtecharchives.org/journal/423/10349

Nielsen, J. (2023). Nielsen Norman Group: 10 Usability Heuristics for User Interface Design. URL: https://www.nngroup.com/articles/ten-usability-heuristics/

Waterman, D. (2020). Utilizing the VARK Learning Modalities to Include Learner Preferences in the Open SUNY Course Quality Review Rubric (Doctoral dissertation). https://soar.suny.edu/handle/20.500.12648/1675

Matters, Q. (2018). The Quality Matters Higher Education Rubric . Maryland Online. https://www.qualitymatters.org/

W3C. (2018). Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1. https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/

Wiggins, G. P., & McTighe, J. (2005). Understanding by design. Ascd. https://www.google.com/books/edition/Understanding_by_Design/N2EfKlyUN4QC?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=Wiggins,+G.,+%26+McTighe,+J.+(2005).+Understanding+by+Design+(2nd+ed.).+ASCD.&pg=PR6&printsec=frontcover