

Podcast Topic: Evaluating the quality of online courses

Criteria for evaluating quality	http://www.imd.macewan.ca/imd/content.php?contentid=36
Effective use of online tools	http://www.edtech.vt.edu/edtech/id/ocs/index.html

Last week my topic was “How to create an exemplary online course” and I referenced a series of guidelines that faculty can use to help them develop an online course. Today I want to talk a little more about that site and also reference another site that presents “criteria for evaluating the quality of online courses” to use the title of one of their publications. And finally I’ll mention another resource for faculty that addresses the effective use of online tools.

When online instruction began to really take off a few years ago, the CSU system became convinced that online classes would become extremely popular. Of course now we know they were right - Palomar College’s growth has been impressive. A number of people within the CSU system wanted to develop a rubric that would help them assess the quality of online classes. A group of faculty, administrator, students, and staff at CSU-Chico took the lead by developing a 6-category instrument that could be used to develop exemplary online courses – this is what I mentioned last time. This instrument or group of guidelines, called the ROI (Rubric for Online Instruction), is now used across the CSU system and other colleges and universities. I am using this ROI and some other guidelines to develop something that I think we can use at Palomar College. My first version has been met with constructive criticism and I am revising it – I had hoped to have it ready for today’s talk but no such luck. Next time.

The issue of evaluation or assessment of online courses can be problematic to faculty. I like to think of it the way Clayton Wright puts it in his paper about evaluating the quality of online classes. If we think of using a guideline like the ROI as a tool for formative evaluation – that is, a tool I can use to improve my course, then I think most faculty would welcome it. That’s what I’m working toward with the instrument I’ll come up with.

The Effective use of online tools site discusses how to use certain online educational tools such as Discussion Boards. What I like about this site is that it presents some very practical information in a very easy-to-digest way. It actually serves as a good model to chunk information.