

The Online Course Evaluation Project (OCEP)

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The **Online Course Evaluation Project (OCEP)** identifies and evaluates existing online courses in higher education, Advanced Placement® and high school. The goal of OCEP is to provide the academic community with a criterion-based evaluation tool to assess and compare the quality of online courses. OCEP course evaluations are made available to the public through a partnership with WCET and EduTools at www.edutools.info.

OCEP was developed by the Monterey Institute for Technology and Education (www.montereyinstitute.org) in 2004-5 through a grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. Its construction was based on a review of existing online course evaluation models plus the Institute's extensive experience in online course development. In 2005 the evaluation was submitted to a panel of US and Canadian instructional design specialists who refined the instrument. A list of reviewers is provided at the end of this document. For about eleven months, the process has been used to examine AP as well as other specialized courses.

The focus of the evaluation is on the presentation of the content and the pedagogical aspects of online courses, yet OCEP also considers the instructional and communication methods so vital in a successful online learning experience. However, it does not examine and evaluate student outcomes or use by individual faculty.

OCEP uses a team approach in evaluating courses. Subject matter experts evaluate the scholarship, scope, and instructional design aspects of courses, while online multimedia professionals are used to consider the course production values. Technical consultants are employed to establish and evaluate the interoperability and sustainability of the courses. .

The Intended Audience for Online Course Evaluations

The target audiences for the evaluations of online courses are decision makers in the K-12 and higher education community, course and instructional designers, and online instructors. OCEP is designed to support decision making about selecting online courses that will work in the user's educational setting. Students and parents will also find the site useful for the review of online courses and gain some insight into the quality of courses being offered across the country.

The Reviews Process in Detail

A number of evaluation methods have been researched and considered for the course evaluation process. A team approach is used, including academic, instructional design, and technology expertise for specific portions of a single online course evaluation.

The Project Coordinator makes an initial evaluation to determine whether a course meets the OCEP selection criteria and will be included in the evaluation process. The Project Coordinator works with the course developers to provide access and information, locates qualified evaluators, and acts as the final editor for each evaluation. .

Each member of the evaluation team completes a thorough review of the OCEP evaluator training documents and of the EduTools site and data entry tools. The evaluator also performs a detailed review of

the evaluation categories and definitions, the researcher guidelines providing guidance on each category, and participates in evaluator training sessions.

The Course Evaluator completes approximately 60% of each course evaluation. The Course Evaluator reviews the instructional design elements of each course. The tasks include performing a general review of the course before beginning formal evaluation, then conducting a detailed evaluation for categories such as: user interface, course features and media values; assessments and support materials, and communication tools and interaction. Course evaluators are instructional designers working actively with online courses at institutions throughout the country.

The Academic Evaluator is a Subject Matter Expert and completes the evaluation section on Scope and Scholarship and a review of pedagogical features and media values. The academic evaluator also does a general review the course before beginning formal evaluation and then examines categories related to content.

The Technology Evaluator completes the section on technology requirements and interoperability. He or she performs a general review the course before beginning formal evaluation, and then conducts a detailed evaluation and provide detailed comments. Technology evaluators are generally instructional technologists who are involved in the technical aspects of online course development.

Current Status

Roughly two dozen courses have been evaluated during the past year. The evaluations and the categories are available on the EduTools website (www.edutools.info). Since funding for the evaluations has come from various organizations, the courses tend to be related to specific interests. The OCEP categories continue to be refined and improved regularly and the Monterey Institute appreciates any feedback on the process.

Contributors and Reviewers

- Terry Anderson, Professor and Canada Research Chair in Distance Education, Athabasca University
- Todd Nicolet, Manager, Online Instruction Group, University of North Carolina
- Stanley Varnhagen, Associate Director, Center for Academic Technologies for Learning, University of Alberta
- Larry McPhee, Director, Center for Technology Enhanced Learning, Northern Arizona University
- Dale Vorhees, Coordinator of Course Development (Course Development and Web Services), University of Central Florida
- Michael Anderson, Manager of Course Development and Technology (UT TeleCampus), University of Texas System
- Lisa Cheney-Steen, Academic Dean and Interim Director, CCCOnline
- Kathy Keairns, Senior Instructional Designer, Center for Teaching & Learning, University of Denver
- Jason McDonald, Manager Instructional Media Center, BYU Center for Instructional Design
- Rhonda Epper, Director of Online Program Development, Community College of Denver
- Mike Rumley, CAL-Online Instructor and Course Design, Clovis Unified School District
- Ed Adams, Instructional Development Director, Colorado Online Learning
- Jesse Sanchez, Web Development Specialist
- Kathy Winograd, English Faculty, Arapahoe Community College

For more resources

click here -> <http://www.uwex.edu/disted/conference/>

- Francisco Hernandez, Dean of Student Affairs, University of California , Santa Cruz
- Moises Torres, Director, UCCP College Prep Online
- Gary Brown, Director of the Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology, Washington State University

Biographical Sketch

Robert Threlkeld is senior research associate for the Monterey Institute for Technology and Education, Monterey, California. He is the former dean of Learning and Technology for California State University, Fresno. In 1999 he co-directed the creation of CalStateTeach, a hybrid program for teacher certification produced by the California State University and the Open University, UK.

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