Identifying Quality Course Materials

When selecting course materials—especially those offered with no upfront cost—the following questions may be helpful in determining whether materials are sufficiently high quality to be considered for use.

1. When downloading “freely available” content can you determine if the material is protected by copyright?
   - Is all of the content (e.g. photograph, art/graphical illustrations and text) licensed for free use, modification and sharing?
     - If this is not clear, seek legal or professional counsel on appropriate use.
   - Are there costs for using these materials other than personal use?
     - For example, there may be no cost for personal use but restrictions for use in other ways including within an academic institution.

2. Are materials current?
   - Some course materials created with funding from grants or charitable donations may only be produced once. Is there a date listed so you can determine when the content was produced and/or last updated?
   - Can you determine if the material will be updated or revised in the future?
   - Does the material reference the latest research?

3. Are materials expertly authored and reviewed?
   - Are the author’s qualifications and expertise in the subject area listed?
   - Is the author associated with a reputable organization?
   - Is there an editor, faculty expert or contractor who has verified and fact checked the information?
   - Has the material been reviewed by a faculty expert, curriculum committee or course coordinator for potential bias and suitability or is determination of suitability left to the individual faculty member’s discretion?

(Continued on next page)
4 Are materials recommended by people or organizations that you trust?
   • If the materials are new, can you examine the author’s or publisher’s track record?

5 Are supplementary materials available? Are study guides, tutorials, homework resources, tests and quizzes available to support the course materials?
   • Can supplementary materials be integrated with your institution’s learning platforms?
   • Is there a cost to students or to the institution either for acquiring supplementary materials or for integrating them within a learning management system?

6 Are the materials designed for all students?
   • Does the content incorporate features that help make it accessible to students with disabilities?
   • Does the publisher or OER provider offer a Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT)?
   • Has the publisher or OER provider identified supplementary materials that are accessible to students with disabilities?

7 Have materials been field-tested?
   • Have the materials been demonstrated to be effective in the university classroom?

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