S.I.P

STANDARDS IN PRACTICE

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR QUALITY
NSQ
DLC · QM · VLLA

STANDARD HIGHLIGHT

National Standards for Quality Online Courses Standard E

Standard E: Accessibility & Usability

Indicator E1: Online course navigation is logical, consistent, and efficient from the learner's point of view.

STANDARD OVERVIEW

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LOW COUNTRY VIRTUAL

During our preparations for the start of the new school year, one of our colleagues was working with an architect to build a new home. During our conversations, we realized that the design process for a high-quality online course has many parallels to the architectural design process. Architectural plans do not allow contractors to jump in and immediately construct the roof or walls (You would fire your contractor and architect if that were to occur!); the overall architectural design or blueprint and the necessary supports needed to make the home sturdy must be in place. Likewise, In the virtual learning world, we do not want our students jumping headfirst into an online course without the benefit of navigation that is logical, consistent, and efficient. Just as a set of blueprints can provide logical information for the building contractor, course design can reflect a commitment to accessibility so that all learners can access all content and activities and easily navigate and interact with course components.

Before we launched school year 2023, the Low Country Virtual team reflected upon and refined our strategies that support logical, consistent, and efficient learner navigation.
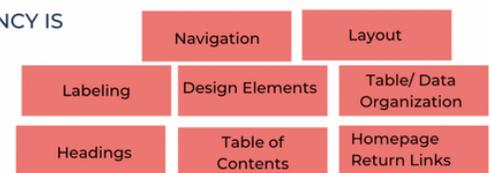
Online Courses Standard E

NSQ- Quality Online Courses Standard E
The course design reflects a commitment to accessibility so that all learners can access all content and activities and to usability so that all learners can easily navigate and interact with all course components.

E1 -Online course navigation is logical, consistent, and efficient from the learner's point of view.
https://www.nsqol.org/the-standards/quality-online-courses

QM STANDARD 8.1 T -
Course navigation is logical, consistent, efficient, and intuitive
Quality Matters K-12 Rubric

CONSISTENCY IS KEY

Navigation	Layout
Labeling	Design Elements	Table/ Data Organization
Headings	Table of Contents	Homepage Return Links

[Download image](#)

HELPFUL HINTS for putting standard into practice

Consider how the learner moves from place to place throughout the course. Build in features that are consistent, logical, and efficient. Be intentional about the navigation strategies you will utilize to assist the learner. Since we serve K-8 students in Low Country Virtual (LCV), we strive for consistency and repetition across our courses and grades. Just as an architect puts careful thought into a building design that can be easily understood by the building contractor, so should virtual course designers put careful thought and planning into strategies that ensure ease of navigation, consistency, and repetition for the learner and learning coach.

- **Design Elements** - overall course and module layout (organization and structure) - Does it promote accessibility and usability? Is it consistent? The LCV team utilizes a branding document to standardize components.

- **Color contrast ratios**: Use color and contrast tools such as WebAIM's Contrast Checker, WCAG Color Contrast Checker and Adobe Color to ensure contrast ratios support learner accessibility.

- **Standardized course landing pages** builds familiarity across courses and grade-level spans for our LCV K-8 students - it helps learners understand expectations.

- **Navigation options** for returning to the key course components - Be intentional about links that take students back to module pages, course overview pages, and key course components from anywhere in the course. Homepage return links are especially helpful for learners.

- **Hyperlinks** that are labeled with meaningful names and posted in prominent locations - at LCV, the student login hyperlink takes students to the login portal on our home page. "Student Login" is the text description and is always included because it is more meaningful than just a web address or a complex portal name.

- **Icons** that include a descriptive phrase in addition to the standardized images can be helpful for learners. At LCV, we have emphasized consistency across our K-8 grade levels and in our courses.

- **Headings** that suggest the course hierarchy by using consistent heading styles and sizes for specific course features assist learners.

- **Tables of Contents** are included throughout our course documents to support student navigation so that students can easily access to specific content.

- **Data/Tables** utilize appropriate headers and labels so that learners can navigate and understand the data.

- **Working Links** - Ensure all internal and external links work. Broken links are frustrating for learners and the learning coach.

Author/Organization Bio

Meaghan Barber, Edi Cox, and Cindy Ambrose are members of the Low Country Virtual administrative team and have worked in the virtual learning space for over a decade in multiple school districts and states. They are certified as Quality Matters Course Reviewers and currently facilitate the Design and Refine Community of Practice for the Digital Learning Collaborative. Meaghan, Edi & Cindy love learning with and from others. Connect with them on the following social media channels and through the LCEC Podcast - Please Raise Your Virtual Hand.

@LCVirtualSchool   @lowcountryvirtual

lowcountryvirtual   low-country-virtual

Check out the NSQ Professional Learning Portal and NSQ Website for more resources at www.NSQOL.org

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