21st Century Best Practice and Evaluation for Online Courses

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Abstract

Although distance learning is increasingly becoming more common across institutions of higher education, the evaluation of online courses and programs lags behind. The first purpose of this study was to examine the reliability and validity of a tool to measure students' evaluation of online courses. A second purpose was to examine students' evaluations of our online courses. A principal components analysis revealed six underlying factors that appear to have high validity: appropriateness of readings and assignments; technological tools; instructor feedback and communication; course organization; clarity of outcomes and assignments, and content format. Cronbach's alpha of .98 indicated high inter-item reliability. Feedback from 281 students showed an overall satisfaction with online courses, with somewhat lower satisfaction regarding aspects pertaining to instructor feedback and technology. Students rated content organization and formatting of the content more favorably than other aspects of the course.