

Rubric: Writing a Welcome Letter

Description:

The welcome letter is designed to create a connection between the instructor and the learner early in the course process. It is the first step in establishing social and teaching presence. The welcome letter precedes the start date of the course by at least one full week, and gives the learner an opportunity to reflect on the upcoming course, where to find and how to access the course, and how the course will be conducted. It should not, however, be as detailed as the course syllabus, nor attempt to cover every aspect of course logistics. It does not replace the syllabus or the welcome/orientation module of the course. It is the official “first impression” of the instructor and the course.

Alignment:

This rubric would provide guidance on the elements to include in a welcome letter as well as permit learners to self-assess or to have others assess their performance. In addition, the tool could be used by an instructor to provide feedback on the adequacy of the welcome letter.

Criterion	Exemplary	Effective	Baseline
Message Content	<p>The message provides a short instructor bio connecting the course to instructor experiences and qualifications.</p> <p>The message provides a brief course description, course goals, and connects to possible learner interests or experiences.</p> <p>The message provides operational details including time to allocate each week, how to access the course, text book information, how to get started, and how to contact the instructor.</p> <p>The course design and instructor’s teaching philosophy is mentioned.</p>	<p>An instructor bio is provided but lacks the connection to the specific course.</p> <p>A course description and goals are provided. There is no statement connecting to learner interests or experiences.</p> <p>The message provides all the suggested components of operational details but provides too much information or too much detail.</p> <p>Either a course design statement or instructor’s teaching philosophy is present, but not both.</p>	<p>Instructor bio contains information not relevant to establishing credibility for teaching this course.</p> <p>Only a course description is included.</p> <p>Operational details are lacking in one or more of the suggested components.</p> <p>There is no statement on course design or the instructor’s teaching philosophy.</p>

Tone	Message is personal, encouraging, and is written to reduce student anxiety. Uses terms like <i>us</i> , <i>our</i> , <i>we</i> . Message ends with an encouraging remark.	Message is welcoming but distant. Message does not use terms like <i>us</i> , <i>our</i> , <i>we</i> , or end with an encouraging remark.	Message is stiff, impersonal, and sterile, and makes no connection with students.
Response	Message requests that students reply with a brief acknowledgment of the welcome letter.	-	-