What is this resource?

Online teaching and learning involves a specialized vocabulary and terminology as other disciplines do. This glossary explains common terms you will likely encounter in Digital Learning.

Researchers in Digital Learning, specifically in the subdiscipline of online learning, have carefully defined terms over the years to distinguish between the highly variable design solutions that have been developed and implemented: distance learning, distributed learning, hybrid/blended learning, online learning, mobile learning, and others. However, an understanding of the important differences between them has not yet diffused beyond the insular world of educational technology and instructional design researchers and professionals. Like many technology and specialty fields, Digital Learning, instructional design and online learning has many terms and abbreviations that might seem unfamiliar or confusing at first. Hence, a proper understanding of these Learning industry jargon used in online learning as well as in other forms will help to differentiate them from other uses and accurately identify what they mean.

Accessibility - The extent to which a product, service, or facility is available to all people. In the context of the online learning environment, accessibility also encompasses special measures that may be taken to ensure learners with disabilities accessibility to all course information, instructional materials, devices, and activities used for teaching and learning.

Active Learning - Active learning occurs when learners engage by “doing” something, such as discovering, processing, or applying concepts and information. Active learning implies guiding learners to increasing levels of responsibility for their own learning.

Activity - Any form of learner participation that serves to reinforce course content and provides an opportunity for learners to further their attainment of course or module/unit learning objectives or competencies. Often, an activity allows for practice, discovery, and trial and error.
Adaptive learning - An approach to creating a personalized learning experience for students that employs a sophisticated, data-driven, and in some cases, nonlinear approach to instruction and remediation, adjusting to a learner's interactions and demonstrated performance level, and subsequently anticipating what types of content and resources learners need at a specific point in time to make progress.

ADDIE - the classic model that most instructional designers use. The five phases—Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation—represent a dynamic, flexible guideline for building effective training and performance support tools.

Alignment - Critical course elements working together to ensure that learners achieve the desired learning outcomes.

Alignment Map - (Also known as Course Design Map) A table or diagram used to organize the course- and module-level objectives or competencies so they correspond to the assessments, activities, materials, and technologies used in the course. Many course designers find mapping the objectives or competencies to the other alignment Standards useful in ensuring alignment. Similarly, course reviewers may use an alignment map to ensure alignment in a course that is under review.

Andragogy - the term coined by Malcolm Knowles. It is an adult learning theory that believes that adults learn differently from children and describes assumptions about adult learners.

Assessment (the process of) - An ongoing, systematic process of evaluating learning achievement that (1) is based on clear expectations for learning in the form of learning objectives, (2) provides sufficient opportunities for learners to achieve the expectations, (3) gathers evidence that learning has occurred, and (4) applies the information to improve teaching and learning. (The QM concept of “alignment” refers to this overall process.)

Assessments (strategies) - Instruments used to identify what students have learned; specifically, instruments used to measure the match between the learning objectives or competencies and learners' attainment of them.

Asynchronous Learning - The word "asynchronous" means not keeping time together, which refers to students' ability to access information, demonstrate what they've learned, and communicate with classmates and instructors on their own time--they don't have to be in the same classroom or even in the same time zone to participate. This is a learner centered approach and the Learning strategy usually involves self-guided online materials that learners can access on their own and where interaction between instructors and students occurs.
intermittently with a time delay. Online learners may utilize discussion boards, articles, lecture videos, journals, emails and the Learning Management System (LMS) in order to acquire new skills and knowledge.

**Behaviorism** - An educational theory focused on learning as a change in behavior that can be reinforced or discouraged by repetitive application of rewards or punishments, respectively.

**Best Practice/Effective Practice** - A method or approach that has consistently shown positive results that can inform a specific practice. In teaching and learning, effective practices are typically tied to research that serves to prove the significance of integrating the practice into the student learning experience.

**Blackboard** - CLU’s Learning Management System. Blackboard is a virtual environment system/tool that allows faculty to add resources for students to access online. Course content, PowerPoint, video, audio, animation, and other applications are created outside of Blackboard and added into Blackboard courses for students to enhance teaching and learning efforts.

**Blended Learning** - A blended learning approach is a combination of face-to-face classroom experiences with online learning which, if done well, can combine the best of both worlds. Blended learning is also referred to as hybrid learning. In this educational process, integrated instructional approaches are used to help students further their educational goals.

**Bloom’s Taxonomy** - was pioneered by an educational psychologist, Benjamin Bloom. In his taxonomy, Bloom identified three learning domains: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. Instructional designers use these domains for writing measurable and observable learning objectives using action verbs.

**Chunking** - refers to breaking learning content into small manageable pieces.

**Cognitive Load Theory** – the scientific basis for efficiency in learning developed by John Sweller. It is a set of principles proven to result in better course design. There are three types of cognitive load: intrinsic load, germane load, and extraneous load.

**Cognitivism** - a learning theory that assumes an existing knowledge structure is used to process new information and believes the information is received, stored, and retrieved.

**Competency-Based Course** - (CBL) A course whose purpose is to prepare the learner to demonstrate a number of specific competencies. The course may be structured like a traditional online course, but it allows learners to move ahead at their own pace, typically to accelerate completion; or it may consist of disaggregated content, activities, and independent
competency assessments.

**Competency-Based Learning** - (CBL) A particular approach to postsecondary education that emphasizes mastery of knowledge and skills regardless of the amount of time required and the method chosen to achieve mastery. Competency-based learning is characterized by assessment of competencies rather than course completion as the primary means of measuring academic progress. In some cases, the assessment function is completely separated from courses and formal study, and an inventory of competencies attained may substitute for traditional grades and credit hours.

**Constructivism** - a learning theory that focuses on how learners construct knowledge based on their prior experience. Constructivists believe in experiential, self-directed learning.

**Course-level Learning Objectives or Competencies** - Statements of the specific and measurable knowledge, skills, attributes, and habits learners are expected to achieve and demonstrate as a result of their educational experiences in a course. Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) are central to your course’s curriculum. They articulate to students, faculty, and other stakeholders what students will achieve in each course and how their learning will be measured.

**Course Design Document / Map** - documents the entire design process for a specific project. It provides all the necessary information about the course to instructional designers, graphic artists, multimedia

**Course Modalities** - The instructional delivery method used by a course. In the case of hybrid/blended courses, it is a mix of both synchronous and asynchronous delivery.

**Course Pack** - Bound copies of materials that instructors assemble for student use, in addition to or instead of a textbook. Course pack materials are often protected by copyright.

**Courseware** - is any digital curricular resource that contains a blend of content, study aids, and instructional expertise. Courseware is typically housed and delivered by a digital platform or application. Courseware's content is a direct descendent of the textbook, and study aids might include tools such as highlighting, commenting, and ways to interact with learners and instructors.

**Creative Commons** - The Creative Commons is a nonprofit organization that offers flexible copyright licenses for creative works, including tools and guidance for artists and authors who wish to release some rights to their material under certain conditions while still maintaining copyright.

**Differentiated Instruction** - Differentiation is responsive teaching rather than one size fits all
teaching. Teachers proactively plan varied approaches to what students need to learn, how they will learn it, and/or how they will show what they have learned in order to increase the likelihood that each student will learn as much as he or she can, as efficiently as possible.

**Digital Information Literacy** - The ability to locate, evaluate, apply, create, and communicate knowledge using technology.

**Digital learning** - The term *digital learning (adaptive learning or personalized learning)* can refer to a broad range of services, tools, and curricular models designed to create individualized learning for students. The concept intersects—and overlaps—with notions including adaptive learning, differentiated instruction, competency-based education, and analytics. It is also defined as any instructional practice that effectively uses technology to strengthen a student’s learning experience and encompasses a wide spectrum of tools and practices. The proper implementation of digital learning broadens, strengthens, and deepens student learning through the use of technology as a cognitive tool for problem solving, conceptual development and critical thinking, which allows them to interpret, organize, demonstrate and manage their knowledge.

**Digital Literacy** - The ability to use digital technology, communication tools or networks to locate, evaluate, use and create information; The ability to understand and use information in multiple formats from a wide range of sources when it is presented via computers; A person’s ability to perform tasks effectively in a digital environment. Literacy includes the ability to read and interpret media, to reproduce data and images through digital manipulation, and to evaluate and apply new knowledge gained from digital environments.

**Discussion Boards/Forums** - An online forum in Blackboard where students can interact with their classmates and instructor by posting and answering questions in the form of short posts. Most discussion forums are asynchronous, with requirements to post within a specific time frame.

**Discussion Norms** - Set of rules of conduct for speaking, writing, and behavior in classes.

**Distance Education** - A planned teaching/learning experience that uses a wide spectrum of technologies to reach learners at a distance. The instructor is separated by time, location, or both. Systems are designed to encourage learner interaction and certification of learning.

**Distance Learning** - The desired outcome of distance education, where instruction is provided by a human separated by place. Any learning that takes place over different places, where the students and instructor are dispersed geographically.
**Distributed Learning** - Often used synonymously with Distance Learning; distinct in that it is the desired outcome of education that combines a blend of online and traditional delivery methods.

**Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT)** - is a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode due to crisis circumstances. It involves the use of fully remote teaching solutions for instruction or education that would otherwise be delivered face-to-face or as blended or hybrid courses and that will return to that format once the crisis or emergency has abated. The primary objective in these circumstances is not to re-create a robust educational ecosystem but rather to provide temporary access to instruction and instructional supports in a manner that is quick to set up and is reliably available during an emergency or crisis. ERT support models might include basic-course design support, content development, learning management system (Blackboard) training and support for technology tools used to facilitate teaching and learning and multimedia creation in partnership with faculty experts. The shift to ERT requires that faculty take more control of the course design, development, and implementation process. The rapid approach necessary for ERT may diminish the quality of the courses delivered. A full-course development project can take months when done properly.

**Face-to-Face** - Term used to describe the traditional classroom environment. Face-to-face learning is an instructional method where course content and learning material are taught in person to a group of students in an on-ground setting.

**Facilitator** - A word used to describe the leadership role in a course in which the leader (facilitator) helps the learner, guiding his or her learning rather than dictating or delivering content. Typically, the facilitator performs such functions as answering the learner’s questions, managing discussion forums, and evaluating the learner’s work.

**Fair Use** - Fair use is a legal concept that allows the reproduction of copyrighted material for certain purposes without obtaining permission and without paying a fee or royalty. Purposes permitting the application of fair use generally include review, news reporting, teaching, or scholarly research. The idea of fair use originally arose for written works. With the advent of digital technology and the Internet, fair use has also been applied to the redistribution of music, photographs, videos and software.

**FERPA** - The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education. FERPA affords parents the right to have access to their children’s education records, the right to seek to have the records amended, and the right to have some control over the disclosure of personally identifiable information from the education records. When a student turns 18 years old, or enters a postsecondary institution at any age, the rights under FERPA transfer from the parents to the student (“eligible student”).
**Flipped Classroom** - A flipped classroom is an instructional strategy and a type of blended learning focused on student engagement and active learning, giving the instructor a better opportunity to deal with mixed levels, student difficulties, and differentiated learning preferences during in-class time. The Flipped Classroom model flips the traditional relationship between class time and homework. Students learn at home via online coursework and lectures, and teachers use class time for teacher-guided practice or projects and facilitate discussions. This model enables teachers to use class time for more than delivering traditional lectures.

**Formative Assessment** - Activities and tests of learner performance primarily oriented toward measuring the learner’s progress toward mastering learning objectives and diagnosing gaps in learning, for the purpose of improving future student achievement. Formative assessments are low-stakes, meaning they are worth few or no points toward a course grade so learners can focus on improvement rather than their score.

**Flex** - The Flex model lets students move on fluid schedules among learning activities according to their needs. Online learning is the backbone of student learning in a Flex model. Teachers provide support and instruction on a flexible, as-needed basis while students work through course curriculum and content. This model can give students a high degree of control over their learning.

**Gamification** - Gamification or game-based learning refers to the use of a pedagogical approach that utilizes gaming designs and principles but that is implemented within a nongame context, such as an instructional setting. Gamified learning environments are meant to support learner engagement and motivation, problem solving, critical thinking, and decision-making skills development.

**HyFlex** - is a course design model that presents the components of hybrid learning (which combines face-to-face with online learning) in a flexible course structure that gives students the option of attending sessions in the classroom, participating online, or doing both. Students can change their mode of attendance weekly or by topic, according to need or preference. In this “flexible hybrid” design, instructors provide course content for both participation modes and can tailor activities for each format. This is not a self-paced model, even though online sessions can be either synchronous or asynchronous.

**Hybrid/Blended Learning** - A course in which students learn in multiple course modalities. Blended is another term commonly used to describe hybrid courses. There is no set formula for hybrid or blended courses. The underlying idea is to match learning objectives to the best delivery medium to support student learning. A hybrid approach to course delivery combines face-to-face classroom instruction with online activities. This approach reduces the amount of seat time in a traditional face-to-face course and moves more of the course delivery online.
During classroom instruction time, students can be engaged in authentic, collaborative learning experiences. The online components can include multimedia-enhanced content, video lectures, and channels for ongoing discussion.

**Instructional Design** - is the process of planning, creating, and deploying eLearning content that expands an online learner’s understanding of the subject matter. Instructional Designers have the ability to work closely with subject matter experts by developing immersive and interactive eLearning courses that remove geographic limitations.

**Instructional Designer (ID)** - An individual who applies a systematic methodology based on instructional theory to create content for learning events.

**Learning Activities** - Activities that help learners meet the learning objectives. All "learning activities" are "course activities"; however, not all "course activities" are "learning activities." Some activities, such as downloading software or creating presence through introductions, would be "course activities" that are not necessarily "learning activities."

**Learning Analytics** - applies the model of analytics to the specific goal of improving learning outcomes. Learning Analytics collects and analyzes the “digital breadcrumbs” that students leave as they interact with various computer systems to look for correlations between those activities and learning outcomes.

**Learning Management System (LMS)** - This is a platform that allows you to develop, deploy, and manage your eLearning course content. A Learning Management System (Blackboard) gives you the ability to host virtual events, assess your online learners, and integrate multimedia elements into your eLearning experiences, as well. LMS is not to be confused with Learning Content Management System (LCMS) which is typically used for eLearning content creation. However, a LCMS can also be used to store data and deliver eLearning content.

**Learning Objectives** - A Learning Outcome (LO) is a measurable, observable, and specific statement that clearly indicates what a student should know and be able to do as a result of learning. The statement that captures specifically what knowledge, skills, attitudes learners should be able to exhibit following instruction. It is the measurable and observable statements that define the scope of the course and help learners focus on specific outcomes. Objectives should be written using the A-B-C-D format. The A-B-C-D format stands for Audience, Behavior, Condition, and Degree. Learning objectives should be brief, clear, specific statements of what learners will be able to do at the end of a lesson as a result of the activities, teaching and learning that has taken place. They are sometimes called learning outcomes. Learning objectives define learning outcomes and focus teaching.
**Lecture Capture** - An umbrella term describing any technology that allows recording of a presentation as it happens, ranging from just audio to slides with narration, videos of the presenter, and on-screen activity such as cursor movement. Recordings can be viewed via the web or in formats for portable audio and video devices. CLU uses VidGrid for Lecture recording.

**Mobile Learning** - Mobile learning is a term that is used to describe the process of getting educational content through mobile devices. While smartphones are the most commonly used mobile devices, iPads and wearable devices can also help students to engage in mobile learning.

**Module/Unit** - A learning module, or unit, is a sequenced collection of subject-related materials designed to teach a topic or skill.

**Module/Unit-level Learning Objectives or Competencies** - Statements of the specific and measurable knowledge, skills, attributes, and habits learners are expected to achieve and demonstrate as a result of their educational experiences in a module.

**MOOCs** - Massive Open Online Course are mostly free online courses available for anyone to enroll. MOOCs provide an affordable and flexible way to learn new skills and deliver quality educational experiences at scale. In this web-based usually large classes, students watch video lectures and interact with the educators and other students in online forums.

**Moodle** - PLTS' Learning Management System. Moodle is a learning platform in a virtual environment that allows faculty to add resources for students to access online. Course content, PowerPoint, video, audio, animation, and other applications are created outside of Moodle and added into Moodle courses for students to enhance teaching and learning efforts.

**Non-Cognitive Competencies** (also referred to as social and emotional learning) - A range of skills, habits and attitudes that facilitate functioning well in school, work, and life. They include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship skills as well as perseverance, motivation and growth mindsets.

**Objective (learning)** - A statement of the specific and measurable knowledge, skills, attributes, and habits learners are expected to achieve and demonstrate as a result of their educational experiences in a program, course, or module.

**On-Ground** - A traditional classroom instructional setting.

**Online Course** - A “fully online” course offers all content via the web; students are not required to physically attend class, though there may be synchronous elements to the online course. (Online courses that are designed with a rigorous process within Digital Learning that meets fully Quality Matters Standards).
**Online Learning**: Instruction takes place via a web-based educational delivery system that includes software to provide a structured learning environment. It can be a teacher-led education that takes place over the Internet, with the teacher and student separated geographically (also cyber learning, e-learning, distance learning).

**Open Air Teaching** - Under this model, the university would designate covered outdoor areas where faculty could teach courses.

**Open Educational Resources** - (OER) are freely accessible, openly licensed documents and media that may be useful for teaching, learning, assessing, and research. OER are used in various learning settings including online, face-to-face, and blended, as well as structured learning environments such as college courses and self-paced, student-driven learning.

**Outcome (learning)** - A demonstration of the level of attainment of the knowledge, skills, attributes, and habits expected as a result of the educational experiences in a program, course, or module. A learning *objective* states what learners should be able to do, while a learning *outcome* is a learner’s demonstration of the actual ability to do so.

**Pedagogy** - The art, science, and craft of teaching. Technically, this term refers to the teaching of children only, whereas the term andragogy refers to the teaching of adults. Since pedagogy is a more common and widely-understood term, Digital Learning uses it instead of andragogy even though university students are adult learners.

**Problem-Based Learning** - Student-centered pedagogy in which students learn about a subject through the experience of solving an open-ended problem. It is an Inquiry-based instructional approach that utilizes projects as a central organizing strategy for educating students.

**Podcast** - A podcast is an audio file published on the Internet with an RSS feed, allowing users to subscribe to automatic downloads of a series of such programs. Podcasts are a collection of files, audio MP3 files for example, that are then included in an RSS 2.0 news feed as enclosures. Instead of headlines in a news feed, each item in a podcast RSS feed represents a single MP3 file.

**Point Values** - In the context of Quality Matters Standards, point values are the numbers assigned to each Specific Review Standard in the QM Rubric. The number 3, 2, or 1 corresponds to the level of importance of the Specific Review Standard. 3 = Essential; 2 = Very Important; 1 = Important. All Essential Standards must be met for a course to pass QM review.

**Program Learning Outcome** - Program learning outcomes are the skills, competencies, and “big ideas” students should be able to articulate, put into action, or utilize (theoretically or pragmatically) after the completion of a degree or certificate.
**Reduced Seat Time:** In a mixed Hybrid Mode, the course will have significant elements of virtual instruction so that in-person instructional time is reduced. In hybrid courses, instructors redesign some traditional course content into new online learning activities that may involve chat, discussion boards, quizzes and exercises, simulations, and/or group collaborations. The goal of a hybrid course is to combine the best features of face-to-face teaching with the best features of online learning to promote active, independent student learning and reduce class seat time.

**Remote Teaching** - occurs outside of a physical classroom. Instructors are separated from their learners in time and distance. Remote teaching is typically facilitated through technology, such as video conferencing software, discussion boards or LMS. This type of teaching may be synchronous, where students watch instructors deliver their lectures live, or asynchronous, where students watch lecture recordings at a later point in time. Both students and instructors interact via two-way communication technologies. Best practices for remote teaching include: providing ongoing feedback, making assignment guidelines clear, and making effective use of online resources.

**Remote Learning** occurs when the learner and instructor, or source of information, are separated by time and distance and therefore cannot meet in a traditional classroom setting. Information is typically transmitted via technology (email, discussion boards, video conference, audio bridge) so that no physical presence in the classroom is required; otherwise, it would be Hybrid or Blended Learning. Remote learning can occur synchronously or asynchronously. Also referred to as Distance Education, Virtual Instruction, or Remote Training.

**Rubric** - An evaluation tool used to articulate the expectations for an assignment and how the instructor will determine a grade for student work. Rubrics usually contain evaluative criteria, quality level descriptions for those criteria at particular levels of achievement, and a scoring strategy.

**SCORM** – an acronym that stands for Shareable Content Object Reference Model. SCORM is a set of technical standards that ensure the course works well with other eLearning software.

**Screen Reader** – Computer software that speaks text on the screen. Often used by individuals with visual impairments.

**Social Learning:** When you learn through other people. Sometimes it’s interacting with them, discussing ideas and sharing projects to improve your collective knowledge, and sometimes it’s learning from them, from their activities and ideas.

**Split Meeting** - The total number of students will be split in such a way that only a certain percentage (for instance one half or a third, depending on number of students and size of
classroom) of students attend at one time in the physical classroom (e.g. Tuesday vs. Thursday groups; or Mon-Wed-Fri groups).

**Student-Centered Learning**—A wide variety of educational programs, learning, instructional approaches, and academic-support strategies that are intended to address the distinct learning needs, interests, aspirations, or cultural backgrounds of individual students and groups of students.

**Storyboards** – visual organizers that instructional design and eLearning professionals use to illustrate ideas and communicate these ideas to other team members.

**Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)** - As the name suggests, the SME is an expert in their field and works closely with an instructional design and development team in order to create meaningful eLearning content. The SME typically helps to identify the key takeaways of the eLearning course, and determine which skills or information is associated with the task.

**Synchronous Learning** - A real-time, instructor-led online learning event in which all participants (group of learners) are logged on at the same time and communicate directly with each other. This is an eLearning environment that involves simultaneous participation. In other words, every online learner must be logged into the eLearning platform, accessing the eLearning content at the same time. An example of this would be an online training event wherein all of the learners watch a live presentation and interact with their peers via the comment section. Synchronous eLearning is highly immersive, engaging, and social, due to the fact that everyone has the chance to share their feedback and ideas immediately. There are some drawbacks, however, such as online learners not being able to go at their own pace and scheduling conflicts.

**Summative Assessment** - Tests of learner performance measuring the learner’s mastery of learning objectives. While instructor feedback on summative assessments may promote improvement of future learner performance, the focus is on determining a course grade.

**Taxonomy** - A classification schema, usually hierarchical, that allows identification of stages or phases of a phenomenon or relationship. For example, Bloom’s taxonomy provides a system for identifying types of learning, moving from less to more complex, and is a useful framework for describing learning objectives.
**Threaded Discussions** - A common feature of online discussion forums that allow students and faculty to display posts and responses in such a way as to visualize the thread of conversations. In some cases, the term “threaded discussion” is used in place of “discussion forum” in online courses.

**Tools** – Types of software and applications that enable learner interaction and may be used for content delivery or providing feedback in the course; they may be included in or external to the learning management system (LMS).

**Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** - A scientifically valid framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how humans learn. (CAST) (A) Provides flexibility in the way’s information is presented, in the ways students respond or demonstrate knowledge and skills, and in the ways students are engaged; and (B) Reduces barriers in instruction, provides appropriate accommodations, supports, and challenges, and maintains high achievement expectations for all students, including students with disabilities and students who are limited English proficient.

**University Learning Outcomes** - A University level learning outcomes broadly describe expected and desired consequences of learning through integrated curricular and co-curricular experiences. The outcomes become an expression of the desired attributes of an educated person and guide coherent, integrated and intentional educational experiences. They provide a basis for ongoing assessment to continuously improve teaching and learning.

**Usability** - Ease of use and learnability. In the QM context, usability refers to the ability of learners to easily navigate and interact with course components.

**Virtual Classroom** - An area where students and instructors interact online.

**Virtual Instruction** - is defined as a course which is taught solely online or when components of face-to-face instruction are taught online such as with Blackboard. Instruction includes digitally transmitting class materials to students using various educational technology tools.

**Vodcast** - a video-based podcast.

**Webinar** - A small synchronous online learning event in which a presenter and audience members communicate via video, text chat or audio about concepts often illustrated via online slides and/or an electronic whiteboard. Webinars are often archived as well for asynchronous, on-demand access
Note: The Digital Learning department updates the glossary of terms regularly as needed.

Sources used to develop some of the above definitions:

Quality Matter
Educause
Online Learning Consortium (OLC)