



THE  
**le@rning**  
FEDERATION

schools online curriculum content initiative

# EDUCATIONAL SOUNDNESS SPECIFICATION

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# 1 Introduction

Within the context of this specification, educational soundness refers to the capacity of online curriculum content to successfully promote student learning.

The Le@rning Federation Specification for Educational Soundness is based on exemplary practice in the planning, design, development and use of online curriculum content. It is the critical measure of the pedagogical quality of the Initiative's online curriculum content.

Teachers will use online content to provide enhanced learning experiences for individuals or groups of school-age students. Students will use it to enrich their learning. The Specification for Educational Soundness will help ensure that the online curriculum content developed or endorsed by The Le@rning Federation is fit for its educational purpose.

The Le@rning Federation is committed to maximising the educational soundness of all its learning objects. This is done by carefully specifying content development requirements for each project and putting in place a rigorous quality assurance process. The principles of the educational soundness specification are implemented through its measures and specifications. These will vary according to the intention of each content development project and the specific educational purpose of the learning object.

## 1.1 Purpose

The Le@rning Federation Specification for Educational Soundness will ensure the pedagogical quality of its online curriculum content.

## 1.2 Obligations of The Le@rning Federation

Curriculum Corporation and the shareholders will fulfil the following obligations in undertaking and delivering the Initiative's project outcomes.

- to work towards the governments' policy vision of achieving high quality online curriculum resources which foster the essential skills and knowledge that young Australians need for the 21st century
- to consult with relevant organisations and user groups in establishing, implementing and reviewing this educational soundness specification
- to draw on relevant domain expertise, stakeholder representation and users in the formulation and enactment of the content design methodology and quality assurance processes
- to proactively review and, as appropriate, evolve the educational soundness specification to reflect the body of knowledge and practice derived from the quality assurance framework of the project
- to contribute to national and international standards development in the area of educational multimedia through the evolving body of knowledge and practice generated under the auspices of the project.

## 1.3 Monitoring and Usage

The Le@rning Federation Specification for Educational Soundness is the specification for content development, deployment and delivery proposed for use at the time of publication. This specification applies to all learning objects commissioned as part of the Initiative during the timeframe in which this specification is current.

The Le@rning Federation Specification for Educational Soundness will also apply to non-commissioned content that is proposed for inclusion in the Initiative's Exchange. The version of the specification used is the one that prevails at the time that non-commissioned content is proposed for inclusion. The Le@rning Federation realises, however, that not all of this specification may be applicable to non-commissioned content. The Le@rning Federation will not necessarily exclude non-commissioned content that deviates from this specification.

The quality assurance processes applied during content development, deployment and delivery will enable continuous monitoring of the applied specifications in terms of their relevance and reliability. Specifications and related guidelines will be documented and published via a variety of project templates. The specifications documents will be published on the Initiative's website <http://www.thelearningfederation.edu.au>.

The Specification will be reviewed twice annually.

## 1.4 Conformance

All content developed for The Le@rning Federation must adhere to the principles described in Section 2 of this specification and the measures and requirements described in Section 3 of this specification.

## 2 Principles

The Specification is underpinned by four principles:

- learner focus
- integrity
- useability
- accessibility.

### 2.1 Learner focus

This principle recognises that the learner is central to the concept of educational soundness.

- The design of online curriculum content will respond to a detailed profile of the students for whom the content is intended. This profile is derived from relevant demographics and educational data.
- The design will recognise that no two students learn in the same way. Across and within the same profile group, learners vary greatly in the ways they communicate (see, hear, speak, move), relate, think, behave, experience, feel, act, reflect, create, engage and remember.

Online content will have learner focus when it has purpose, meaning and relevance for the learners and it:

- enables learners to interact with, organise, represent, interpret and manage the process of learning and the information flow
- makes explicit the intended process(es) of learning
- contextualises student learning by making connections with prior learning and likely future learning.

### 2.2 Integrity

This principle recognises that the integrity of the content is a critical component of educational soundness. Integrity will be achieved when the content is authentic and when learning object design takes account of:

- the ways knowledge is conceptualised within the domain
- the skills and competencies of the domain
- the ways of communicating both within and outside the domain

and is inclusive of the knowledge and understandings valued by various user groups and communities.

## 2.3 Useability

This principle recognises that useability in the educational context is fundamental. Useability means that the learning object:

- is relevant in terms of the curriculum
- supports the process of learning
- enhances the ability of the learner to engage with its content.

## 2.4 Accessibility

This principle recognises the range of contexts in which teaching and learning take place and the diversity of teacher and student populations.

The Le@rning Federation accessibility principle is informed by the Center for Applied Special Technology's concept of Universal Design for Learning <http://www.cast.org/udl/>. Online Content across The Le@rning Federation initiative is designed, developed, evaluated and delivered so that students have access to educationally sound content regardless of age, socioeconomic status, race, culture, disability, gender or geographic location.

# 3 Measures and requirements

## 3.1 Learner focus

Measures that will achieve learner focus include the following.

*Learning object design* that reflects the relevant learner profiles based on intended users, including:

- age and stages of schooling
- community and cultural affiliations
- languages and dialects they speak, read and write
- socioeconomic status
- existing skills, knowledge and understanding.

*Learning object design* that enables learners to interact with, organise, represent, interpret and manage the process of learning and the information flow through:

- making choices and decisions
- inquiring, investigating and problem solving
- eliciting and receiving relevant, timely and informative feedback
- interpreting, developing and presenting meaningful and useful products
- applying knowledge in a range of contexts.

*Learning object design* that makes explicit and consolidates the process of learning through:

- structuring informational content in order to scaffold student learning
- enabling students to engage at varying levels of complexity
- reflecting an awareness of the varying educational environments in which learning sequences and objects may be used
- facilitating assessment of how learning is progressing.

*Learning object design* that contextualises student learning through:

- establishing connections with prior and likely future learning

- making explicit to the learner the connections between the online content and the learning intention
- supporting communication, activity and collaborative action, both online and offline
- allowing the input of data collected offline to directly affect the responses, behaviour and product of the learning object
- using authentic situations where appropriate.

*Learning tool design* (such as content assemblage, generation, conversion and publishing) that maintains learner focus through the interaction between users and the learning content.

### 3.2 Integrity

Measures that will achieve content integrity include the following.

*Learning object design* that:

- accurately represents the ways of knowing and conceptualising the content domain
- uses the language and symbols of the content domain and its ways of representation and supports students in developing and using them
- presents controversial issues with balance and fairness and in accordance with mandated curriculum policies, where these apply
- supports students' deepening of knowledge within the content domain
- assists the learner with identifying and differentiating between different points of view and perspectives presented
- incorporates content area advice supplied by expert representatives from relevant domains and practice areas.

### 3.3 Useability

Measures that will achieve useability include the following.

*Learning object design* in which:

- the purpose, process and intended outcomes of the learning are explicit
- learning and information design is intuitive (that is, the user knows what to do and how to do it)
- the time and effort needed to use it is reasonable
- the medium is exploited to maximise the opportunities for learners to achieve the learning outcomes
- content is constructed in manageable and meaningful concept chunks to facilitate learning.

### 3.4 Accessibility

Measures that will achieve accessibility include the following.

Online content will be accessible when it:

- complies with accessibility standards for students with disabilities and for rural and remote communities
- utilises the capacity of multimedia to support student acquisition of standard Australian English or standard New Zealand English

- provides specific language support for students whose first language is not English
- is appealing to and inclusive of students of all genders, socioeconomic groups, ages, races and cultures.