

Using AI to Pre-Review Online Courses

Against the OEE Online Course Audit Checklist

A Resource from the Office of Educational Effectiveness and Institutional Research (OEE)

Purpose

A course export contains far more than any single reviewer can efficiently check by hand — dozens of pages, assignments, discussions, and links across a full term. Many of the issues that come up in an audit are structural and factual rather than judgment calls: content that exists but isn't linked into the week it belongs to, a link that has quietly expired, a syllabus missing one required statement, module titles left over from a previous term. These are exactly the kind of checks an AI tool can perform reliably against a full course export — work that is thorough but mechanical, and easy to miss reading page by page.

Running a course export through an AI tool before a formal audit won't replace OEE's review or the instructor/designer's own walkthrough of the live course — some things (profile pictures, live discussion activity, analytics) simply aren't visible in an export and need a direct check in Canvas. But it should catch a meaningful share of the structural and factual issues in advance, so the live review can focus on quality and judgment rather than hunting for broken links.

What This Can and Can't Do

- Can check: whether content is actually linked into the course's weekly structure (not just present somewhere in the course); broken or expiring links, including pre-signed URLs with a built-in expiration date; whether the syllabus covers each required statement; evidence of a real cadence of announcements, feedback, and Mission Focused Learning content; course type classification based on the interaction evidence found.
- Can't verify from an export: profile pictures and course card images (account/dashboard-level settings, not part of course content); actual instructor participation in discussions, monitoring, and analytics (live activity data, not exported); textbook price at the LLU Course Schedule (an external system outside Canvas).
- Always confirm the “can't verify” items directly in the live course and treat the output as a preliminary pass — not the completed, signed audit.

Recommended Workflow

1. Export the course: in Canvas, go to Settings → Export Course Content → Create Export, and download the resulting file once it's ready (Canvas will also email you when it's done).
2. If the export is large — Canvas exports can easily run 100+ MB — unzip it (rename .imscx to .zip if needed) and set aside the web_resources folder, which is typically the course's uploaded Files and the main source of large media. The course_settings, wiki_content, non_cc_assessments folders and the root manifest/xml files carry almost everything relevant to the checklist and are usually only a few hundred KB to a few MB combined.

3. Re-zip the trimmed folder and upload it to an AI tool (e.g., Claude) along with the LLU Online Course Audit Checklist.
4. Use the sample prompt below or adapt it.
5. Review the output, confirm anything marked “cannot verify” directly in the live course, and address findings before the term begins or before submitting for a formal audit.

Sample Prompt

Copy and adapt the text below. Attach the trimmed course export and the LLU Online Course Audit Checklist before sending it.

I'm preparing for an OEE online course audit and want a preliminary check first. Attached is a Canvas course export (course_settings, wiki_content, non_cc_assessments, and manifest files) for [course number/name], along with the LLU Online Course Audit Checklist.

Please review the export against the checklist and check for:

1. Whether pages, assignments, and discussions are actually linked into each week's module, not just present somewhere in the course.
2. Module or page titles that still show dates from a previous term.
3. Broken or expiring links – including pre-signed URLs with a built-in expiration date, and fragile forwarded/tracking-style links.
4. Whether the syllabus covers assessments, assignments, a dated schedule, learning activities, the communication plan, and textbook ISBN and price.
5. Evidence of a real cadence of announcements, timely feedback, and Mission Focused Learning content – not just the capability to post them.
6. Whether a self-introduction activity and a dedicated Q&A/course-questions forum exist.
7. Whether the course is correctly classified as Distance Education vs. Correspondence based on the interaction evidence found.

Flag anything unclear or that needs to be confirmed directly in the live course.

Checklist Areas at a Glance

A quick-reference summary of what each section of the official checklist is really asking for, based on the items that come up most often.

Checklist Area	What to look for
Course Completion	Check that pages, assignments, and discussions aren't just present in the course, but actually linked into each week's Module. Content that exists but

Checklist Area	What to look for
	isn't linked into the sequence won't be found by students navigating week to week.
Module / content dates	Check module and page titles for leftover dates from a prior term (a common sign of a copied course shell that wasn't fully rebuilt) — they should match the current term, not a past offering.
Course Hyperlinks	Check for dead links, and specifically for pre-signed URLs (common with library database and publisher PDF links) that carry a built-in expiration — these can expire mid-term even if they work today. Also flag email-forwarded “safelinks” style tracking URLs, which are fragile and can expose the sender's email address.
Syllabus	Confirm it covers assessments, assignments, a dated schedule (not just “due dates per assignment”), learning activities, the communication plan, and textbook ISBN *and* price — all commonly present except the explicit schedule and the price.
Regular Interaction	Look for a real cadence of announcements and feedback, not just the capability to post them — and check whether office hours are routine/scheduled rather than “by appointment.”
Substantive Interaction	Confirm a self-introduction activity and discussion prompts that call for analysis or reflection, not just recall. A dedicated Q&A/course-questions forum is often missing — worth checking for specifically.
Mission Focused Learning	Look beyond a boilerplate MFL paragraph in the syllabus for an actual weekly cadence — devotionals, values-oriented framing tied to the discipline itself, not just a general statement.
Course Type	Based on the evidence of interaction found, confirm the course is correctly classified as Distance Education vs. Correspondence per 34 CFR 600.2.

Reference

The full LLU Online Course Audit Checklist and the LLU Distance Education Instructor Guide are available on the OEE website:

<https://llu.edu/academics/office-provost/departments-and-divisions/educational-effectiveness>

Questions

Contact the Office of Educational Effectiveness and Institutional Research with any questions about applying this workflow to your course.