

Course Delivery Tools Decision Matrix

Figure 1

Criteria and Rationale

Criteria	Significance Rating 1–5 scale	Rationale [For each criterion, compose 1–2 sentences about why it's a priority for you when selecting the best course authoring tool. Cite the sources you use to support your decision. Follow APA format for these in-text citations and references. Include the full reference in the References section below.]
Free vs. paid features	5	Having access to free features is essential because, as an independent instructional designer and graduate student, I need a cost-effective solution while evaluating platforms. Free access allows experimentation before committing financial resources to a long-term tool.
Accessibility features	4	Accessibility features are important because online learning environments should comply with WCAG standards and support diverse learner needs. Modern learning platforms don't often include built-in accessibility tools, making accessibility a necessary baseline requirement (Bocevaska et al., 2018).
Bonus features for learners	1	Bonus features can increase engagement, but they are less important because learners spend most of their time interacting with course content and external tools. Instructional technology should support learning objectives without introducing unnecessary distraction (Clark & Mayer, 2023).
Layout and visual appeal	3	A visually appealing course helps establish consistency, branding, and learner engagement. Effective visual design can improve learner satisfaction and support comprehension when aligned with instructional goals (Clark & Mayer, 2023).
Add-ons and integrations	5	Integrations are critical because this course relies on multiple tools and media formats to support learning activities. Seamless integration reduces extraneous cognitive load and allows learners to focus on course content rather than technology management (Das, 2025).

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Synchronous/asynchronous interaction support	2	This course must support asynchronous learning so students can complete work according to their schedules, but most online courses lend themselves to asynchronous delivery. Strong asynchronous design promotes flexibility and accessibility while maintaining engagement (Saluky & Bahiyah, 2023).
Discussion board capabilities	3	Discussion boards are important because they foster collaboration and community in asynchronous learning environments. Meaningful online discussions can improve engagement, knowledge construction, and learner satisfaction (Heaton-Shrestha et al., 2009).
Navigation (ease of use and course/module organization)	4	Clear navigation is essential because many learners may have limited experience with online coursework. Consistent and predictable organization reduces confusion and allows students to focus on learning tasks rather than finding materials (Clark & Mayer, 2023).
File size or storage limitations	2	Adequate storage is necessary because the course contains numerous literary and non-literary resources. However, storage is less critical since most course materials are text-based and the course duration is relatively short.
Feedback tools	4	Feedback tools are essential in asynchronous environments because instructor guidance replaces many face-to-face interactions. Timely, personalized feedback improves learner performance and supports continuous progress monitoring (Qadir et al., 2025).
Student/data analytics	3	Student analytics provide valuable insights into learner participation and performance, which is needed for the learning context assessing readiness. Although data can be gathered externally, built-in analytics improve efficiency and support data-informed instructional decisions (Wang & Liang, 2025).

Figure 2*Decision Matrix*

Criteria	Significance Rating 1–5 scale	Quality Score for Tool 1 1–5 scale	Tool 1: Google Classroom Weighted/Final Score	Significance Rating 1–5 scale	Quality Score for Tool 2 1–5 scale	Tool 2: OpenEdX/Sandbox Weighted/Final Score
Free vs. paid features	5	5	25	5	5	25
Accessibility features	4	4	16	4	4	16
Bonus features for learners	1	5	5	1	2	2
Layout and visual appeal	3	3	9	3	2	6
Add-ons and integrations	5	4	20	5	2	10
Synchronous/asynchronous interaction support	2	4	8	2	4	8
Discussion board capabilities	3	3	9	3	2	6
Navigation (ease of use and course organization)	4	3	12	4	1	4
File size or storage limitations	2	5	10	2	1	2
Feedback tools	4	4	16	4	3	12
Student/data analytics	3	2	6	3	3	9
TOTAL SCORE:			136			100

Summary

After completing the decision matrix, Google Classroom is the best choice. To begin, Classroom scored 36 points better than OpenedX's course delivery platform "Sandbox", mainly due to Classrooms' strong navigation, integration, and storage capabilities. OpenedX aims at modeling a typical LMS, but the poor navigation of the site makes other tools they have obsolete. The criteria with the highest significance rating were free v. paid features, integration, and navigation. In these three categories alone, Google Classroom outperformed OpenedX by 18 points. The most significant criteria with the highest quality weighted score was the free v. paid features, with both tools scoring the highest possible score of 25. While free features are an extremely important criteria that OpenedX performed well on, the reason it doesn't hold as much weight as Classroom is due to the poor design of OpenedX. The inability to use the free content makes the content itself just as irrelevant as if it were a paid platform, with both creating barriers of access (Bocevska et al., 2018). This is seen with OpenedX receiving a score of 4 for navigation, starkly contrasting from Google Classrooms score of 12 for the same criterion. While OpenedX struggled to receive strong scores for most criteria, there was a single category where OpenedX outperformed Google Classroom. For the student data / analytics criteria, OpenedX scored a 9 where Classroom scored a 6. This is in part due to OpenedX's origins versus Classroom. OpenedX was created as a free course delivery platform for educators, not as a content hosting or integration platform. Google Classroom originally began as a content host for teachers to streamline content and communicate with students (Google, 2018). From this, Classroom has developed into a standard LMS for many K-12 students. This is another reason why Classroom is the best option for my learners. The learning context is high school students with a variety of ability levels. Having a platform designed for a K-12 age group and in the best interests of educators is essential for buy-in from both the learners and the people delivering that content (Niveau & Sakdavong, 2025). Making sure this group can access content with ease and familiarity, especially in an asynchronous environment, is essential and seen in the performance differences between OpenedX and Google Classroom.

Google Classroom is the strongest choice for a variety of reasons, with high scores for accessibility and navigation opening doors to accessible content. Google Classroom has been around since 2014 and is part of a larger Google Workspace system. This system is what helps generate the high scores seen in the matrix for integration, accessibility, and visual criterion. The structure of Classroom is predictable, aesthetically pleasing, and has a clear visual brand across all platforms, reducing learner frustration and cognitive load (Clark & Mayer, 2023). With my learning context using various kinds of texts, there are a wealth of integration options and coinciding storage to support this as well. The main drawback of Classroom is the way content is sorted. When looking at a single course, content is sorted by section but the main dashboard sorts all materials, resources, videos, etc. from latest upload. Students would need to explore the platform from the classwork tab as opposed to the stream. Outside of the initial reframe of the platform, Google Classroom scored comparably to most criterias significance score, making it the strongest choice of the two platforms.

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