

ETS NEWSLETTER

The Quality Issue in Online and Blended Education

The goal of an online educational program should be to provide students with high quality education at least equivalent to that of traditional students. Like programs delivered in traditional classroom venues, online programs should focus on interactivity, pedagogy, instructional design, and learning outcomes – although the tools to accomplish goals may differ in some respects. How do you know if you are offering a quality course? One tool available to assist you in evaluating and potentially improving online and blended course quality is a program known as Quality Matters.

What is 'Quality Matters'?

Quality Matters (QM) is a nationally recognized leader of quality assurance in online education. The program is faculty-centered and utilizes a peer-based approach to continuous improvement in student learning in online and blended environments. There are three primary components of the Quality Matters Initiative: 1) the QM Rubric; 2) the Peer Review Process; and 3) QM Professional Development.

The QM Rubric

Online and blended course design is evaluated using the eight general standards of the QM Rubric. The rubric is based on research-supported and published best practices and is updated every three years. A scoring system and set of online tools facilitate the evaluation by a team of reviewers. If you would like to view the QM Rubric, you may do so at <https://www.qualitymatters.org/rubric>.

Please note: The document may not be duplicated or distributed without written permission from QM. You will be required to sign in using your MYQM Account to access the document. If you do not have an account, you will be prompted to create one.

SPRING 2015

BEST PRACTICES ONLINE LEARNING/ TECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE

Wednesday, March 11
First Floor of Stevens Hall

Please see page 4 for more details.

Contact Educational Technology Services by telephone at ext. 4208, (256-765-4208), by email at ets@una.edu, or stop by our offices on the first floor of Stevens Hall.

Need help with Canvas?
Visit our webpage at

www.una.edu/distance/help.

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The Peer Review Process

The Peer Review Process consists of either official reviews or informal/internal reviews. Official course reviews must meet the following criteria: follow the current QM Standards; review an online or blended (hybrid) course; and utilize a three-person peer review team in which all reviewers are eligible QM-certified Peer Reviewers. In addition, at least one reviewer must be external to the institution submitting the course for review, and at least one reviewer must be designated as subject matter expert. Last, the team chair must be a QM Master Reviewer.

Internal review guidelines are less stringent than the official review and follow guideline set by university administration or college deans. However, most of the official course review criteria are strongly recommended.

Professional Development

Additionally, Quality Matters offers a variety of Professional Development opportunities for faculty to improve online course design. QM professional development opportunities may occur on-campus or online. ETS faculty are certified to offer the QM workshop entitled, "Applying the QM Rubric." This workshop explores the process of using the QM Rubric to review online courses. It is a required course for individuals who are interested in becoming a QM-Certified Peer Reviewer.

ETS faculty are certified to offer the QM workshop entitled 'Applying the QM Rubric.'

ETS faculty are in the process of obtaining the license and facilitator certification necessary to offer the workshop entitled, "Improving Your Online Course." This workshop explores the QM Rubric and guides current online professors through a self-review of a pre-developed online or blended course. Participants gain an understanding of the QM Rubric Standards and develop a course improvement plan. ETS plans to begin offering this opportunity in May.

For additional information on QM professional development opportunities, please contact one or both of UNA's QM Coordinators, Mr. John McGee and Dr. Natasha Lindsey.

Why Quality Matters to Accreditation

While QM is not the complete answer to all of your accreditation and reporting needs, it can be supportive in a variety of areas if you understand how QM activities align with accreditation and reporting requirements. QM can assist your accreditation process with the following:

- 1. Accountability for the delivery and quality of online courses.**

- QM provides a framework to ensure consistent quality of online and blended courses.

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2. Institutional effectiveness.

- QM ensures the preeminence of student learning outcomes, assessment, and measurement as the foundation of curriculum content integrity.

3. Curriculum and instruction.

- QM ensures the appropriateness of the curriculum design for online and blended teaching and learning.

4. Faculty involvement in curricula development.

- QM is an instrument that facilitates faculty involvement and understanding of online content and syllabus development.

5. Technological delivery modes.

- QM ensures the appropriateness of the technology used for content delivery in supporting usability and attainment of learning outcomes and competencies.

6. Training.

- QM provides a variety of opportunities for professional development.

7. Interaction.

- QM establishes and adds to the delivery of online courses through a clear understanding and standards for ensuring adequate, quality interaction occurs in the virtual learning environment.

8. Academic resources.

- QM ensures that course development includes information and links to resources that support online learners.

9. Accessibility.

- QM ensures that course development is inclusive of all learners, regardless of any accessibility issues.

10. Course evaluation.

- QM can be provided to accrediting committees as an example of evaluating the quality of online courses.

The ETS Newsletter is a publication of Library and Educational Technology Services for the instructors at the University of North Alabama. Natasha Lindsey, Ph.D., Instructional Designer, wrote this issue. Visit our website at www.una.edu/ets and www.una/distance for more information.

Best Practices Online Learning/Technology Conference

Wednesday, March 11, 2015
First Floor of Stevens Hall

Please mark your calendars and plan to attend the **2015 Best Practices Online Learning/Technology Conference** on **Wednesday, March 11**, beginning at **9 a.m.** on the **First Floor of Stevens Hall**. This conference is developed and presented by UNA faculty for UNA faculty and brings together a host of important topics related to online learning pedagogy, process, and technology. Many of the topics are also relevant to traditional classes.

All faculty – full time and adjunct – are encouraged to attend. Staff who have responsibilities or interests in these topics are also welcome.

Topics include:

- Distance Learning Delivery to Millennials: Professor and Student Perspectives
- Incorporating Digital Instruction and Video Conferencing into your Classroom
- Simple and Effective Methods to Help Your Students Evaluate Peer-Reviewed Literature
- Increasing Information Literacy and Cultural Competence Through Structured and Creative Writing Assignments
- Using Student-Created Memes in the Classroom
- The Journey from Traditional to Online Teacher: Reconciling the Conflicts and Developing a Philosophy
- Meeting Diverse Student Needs in Hybrid and Online Courses Through Collaborative and Innovative Teaching Ideas
- Applying the QEP Rubric to Grading Assignments in Canvas

This is a free conference sponsored by Library and Educational Technology Services and the Distance Learning Advisory Committee, with support from the Office of Academic Affairs. For more information, please visit the website at <http://www.una.edu/distance/distance-learning-conference-2015.html>. The website lists key program elements of the day, including the schedule of events.

Lunch will be served; please note that reservations are required to attend the luncheon. (The presentations and workshops are open and do not require registration.) Please submit your reservation to BJ Wilson (bhwilson@una.edu) no later than Wednesday, March 4.