Designing Effective Online Courses: Practical and Proven Organizational Structures and Models

An EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative and Quality Matters Partnership Webinar

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POLL Question

Does your institution have a peer review process in place?

• Yes, professional process such as Quality Matters
• Yes, internally developed
• No
A Process that can Scale

- Course
  - Course Meets Quality Expectations
  - Peer Course Review
    - Feedback
      - Course Revision
        - Instructional Designers
      - Faculty Reviewers
        - Rubric
          - National Standards & Research Literature
          - Training
        - Faculty Course Developers
          - Institutions
Quality Matters Peer Review Process

Benefits
- Objective perspectives on course design
- Alignment check
- Helpful Recommendations

Alignment as defined by QM- critical course elements work together to ensure learners achieve the desired learning outcomes
Cognitive Load Theory

- “Technology applications may pose additional processing demands on learners' cognitive resources, which may negatively affect the construction of new knowledge” (p.2).
- “Cognitive load could be defined as working memory resources required for completing a learning task” (p.2).

Course Design

- Learners can focus on content rather than navigation
- Aligned courses provide a focused pathway for learning

The Importance of Instructions

What Students Say:

• 72% of students rate “having clear instructions about how to get started in the course and find various course components” as Essential to their success.

• Other highly rated items:
  • Consistent and efficient navigation.
  • Pre-requisite knowledge and skills clearly stated.
  • Explicit criteria for evaluating student work & grading policy spelled out.

What Faculty Say:

“Students now tend to understand much more fully what they are required to do as part of the class. The effect of designing a course to meet QM standards has reduced the "What do I do?" questions to practically zero.”

“I am getting fewer questions in regards to expectations, where to find "stuff", and navigational confusion.”

POLL Question

Does your institution offer course design or best teaching practices for online delivery professional development?

• Yes, both types
• Yes, course design
• Yes, best teaching practices for online delivery
• Not at all
Backwards Design

Start with the end in mind...

- Identify desired results
- Determine assessment evidence
- Plan learning experiences and instruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Blueprint Components</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course Description</td>
<td>• What does the course cover?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Goals</td>
<td>• What are the overarching targets and focus of the course?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Objectives</td>
<td>• What knowledge, skills and abilities will students master upon course completion?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Outcomes</td>
<td>• How will students demonstrate proficiency of the learning objectives?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubrics</td>
<td>• What are the key dimensions and levels of mastery for learning outcomes?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Curriculum Map

Focus #1
- Measurable outcome #1.1
  - Assignment #1.1.1
  - Assignment #1.1.1a
  - Assignment #1.1.1b
- Measurable outcome #1.2
  - Assignment #1.2.1
  - Assignment #1.2.1a

Focus #2
- Measurable outcome #2.1
  - Assignment #2.1.1
  - Assignment #2.1.1a
  - Assignment #2.1.2
  - Assignment #2.1.2a

Source: Blended Learning Toolkit. Available at: http://blended.online.ucf.edu/process/building-your-course/
Facilitating Quality Matters Workshops

• “Bake the cake then ice it”
  • Focus on alignment standards first- 2.1 (course objectives), 2.2 (module objectives), 3.1 (assessments), 4.1 (materials), 5.1 (activities), 6.1 (instructional technology)

• Next work on the remaining specific standards in general standards 2-6
Chairing Reviews for Quality Matters: 3 Typical Scenarios
2016 Course Review Impact Study

(July 1, 2013 - June 30, 2016)

330 QM Certified Courses

195 Faculty

27 Institutions
Study Questions

• What are faculty reported impacts of involvement in the QM official review process on
  • course design
  • teaching strategies
  • student learning
  • course completion

• What methods were used to improve teaching practice across ALL course formats?

• What types of changes were made in f2f, online and blended courses as a result of design expertise gained through involvement in an official course review process?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>89%</td>
<td>More than 6 years teaching experience F2F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69%</td>
<td>More than 6 years teaching experience online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79%</td>
<td>Full-Time Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18%</td>
<td>Part-Time or adjunct Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Certified Peer Reviewers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17%</td>
<td>Certified Master Reviewers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“What were some of the key changes you made to your course for it to meet QM standards?”

(n=92)
Top 3 Changes That Impact Student Learning

Alignment

• Ensured key course elements were aligned.

“Start Here”

• Added information, such as a “start here” section so students know how to begin.

How to Use Materials

• Ensured that information about how to use the course materials for course activities was explained.
Top 5 Changes That Impact Course Completion/Student Persistence

“Start Here”

Added student interaction
• Created additional activities for student interaction.

Course organization
• Improved course organization

How to Use Materials

Alignment
Reflected on my teaching goals and objectives
Redesigned a learning activity or assessment
Added or eliminated course elements
Became aware of the way I communicate
Added between class activities (videos, quizzes, discussions)

Type of Impact

- All
- 2-yr Faculty (n=52)
- 4-yr Faculty (n=29)
Restructured sequencing of course elements
Questioned assumptions about how students learn
Changed the way I conduct course sessions
Added more group activities
Not experienced any of these listed

Impact on F2F Teaching

Type of Impact
- Restructured sequencing of course elements
- Questioned assumptions about how students learn
- Changed the way I conduct course sessions
- Added more group activities
- Not experienced any of these listed

Impact on F2F Teaching

- All
- 2-yr Faculty (n=52)
- 4-yr Faculty (n=29)
Summary - Primary Impacts

• Primary Course Design Changes
  • Alignment
  • Getting Started
  • How to Use Course Materials

• Positive Impacts on F2F, online and blended design and teaching after learning about QM Standards and participating in course review
Course Development Models

- Individual
- Structured
- Collaborative
- Standardized
Individual

• Faculty autonomy to determine content, structure, appearance and format

Structured

• Faculty autonomy to determine content; templates and guidelines to inform structure, appearance and format

Collaborative

• Faculty autonomy to drive decision-making; input and guidance from instructional designers and instructional technologists

Standardized

• Collective course design by content expert, curriculum specialist, instructional designer, instructional technologist and relevant professionals
Chat: Indicate the number where your institution lies on the continuum.

What online course design model is currently used at your institution?

1. Individual
2. Structured
3. Collaborative
4. Standardized
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Structured</th>
<th>Collaborative</th>
<th>Standardized</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resources allocated to faculty</td>
<td>Resources allocated to courses</td>
<td>Governance in centralized online learning department</td>
<td>Governance in departments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance in departments</td>
<td>Course development autonomous process</td>
<td>Course development a standardized process</td>
<td>Course development autonomous process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course development autonomous process</td>
<td>Combined roles for course development and instruction</td>
<td>Separated roles for course development and instruction</td>
<td>Combined roles for course development and instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined roles for course development and instruction</td>
<td>Course revision process flexible</td>
<td>Course revision process fixed</td>
<td>Course revision process flexible</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The Challenge...

Faculty & Departmental Autonomy

Course Development

Teaching

Consistency, Scalability & Cost
Gaining Campus Buy-In

Personal Value

Faculty
- Development time
- Teaching time
- Course Quality
- Expertise

Program
- Course quality
- Program consistency
- Assessment
Shifting Perspectives...

Course Development
- Content expert / Faculty
- Curriculum specialist
- Instructional designer
- Instructional technologist

Teaching
- Faculty
Key Factors

Funding
• Policies for funding initial course development and ongoing maintenance
• Interaction between funding and policy

Faculty governance
• Interaction between course development processes and faculty governance bodies (Senate, Union, Bargaining Unit, etc)
• Role of academic freedom

Organizational structure
• Oversight for guidelines, review and approval of online courses

Policy
• Expectations and guidelines for standards, teaching, updates, etc.
• Role of intellectual property
POLL Question

• Which of the following are barriers to implementing a more standardized course design model at your institution? Select all that apply.
  • Faculty resistance or desire for autonomy
  • Lack of centralized online learning department
  • Lack of funding
  • Lack of online course development staff (curriculum specialists, instructional designers, instructional technologists, etc)
  • Institutional policy surrounding academic freedom or intellectual property
  • Limited campus interest or desire
  • Other
Theory to Practice

Course development models in action:

Grand Canyon University

UNOH Virtual College

Minnesota State
Grand Canyon University

- Standardized model
- Centralized administration
- Course development team
- Separation of development & teaching
Virtual College Support Department

Faculty Opt-in

2015 1-stop-shop Faculty/learner support

QM Standards, content development, accessibility, planned instructional time

Course Redesign Project

2-4 faculty per course

1 Instructional Designer per course

Required Professional Development
About Our QM Subscription

• Statewide Subscription through Minnesota Learning Commons since 2008

• Public Higher Education
  • Colleges and Universities of Minnesota State (35 institutions)
  • University of Minnesota (5 campuses)

• Department of Education (K-12)
Learn More about MOQI @ http://minnesota.qualitymatters.org

Minnesota Online Quality Initiative
Promoting Quality Course Design Through Statewide Collaboration

Home

On the Calendar...

STAR Symposium – Call for Proposals is Open
The STAR Symposium (virtual conference) will be held on February 10, 2017. Call for Proposals is open.

Official MOQI-Managed QM Course Reviews
Next application deadline: October 31  More info

Professional Development Opportunities

- Peer Reviewer/ Master Reviewer Mini-Retreat – October 7
- JYOC Workshop (Rochester Community & Technical College) – October 14

MOQI promotes quality course design through statewide collaboration and shared expertise.
“Every review that I participate in has a positive impact on my own courses. I see something that doesn't work as well as I would like from a student's perspective or I see something wonderful I think I could modify for my class or I simply get a new idea from the course or from the suggestions of the other reviewers.”
Peer Review: Professional Development & Course Improvement

Professional Development
- Learn from other reviewers
- Gain in-depth knowledge of QM Rubric
- Gain leadership experience
- Exposure to what others are doing

Course Improvement
- Reviewers provide feedback to improve the courses of others
- Reviewers improve their OWN courses
Inter-institutional collaboration on course reviews increases course quality and builds a network of shared expertise.
3 reviewers from 3 different institutions review Course A.
6 more reviewers from 6 different institutions review Course B & C
3 more reviewers from 3 different institutions review Course D
6 more reviewers from 6 different institutions review Courses E & F (6 courses/18 reviewers)
Individual who had courses reviewed participates on review teams for 6 different institutions.
POLL Question

- Which model best represents your institution or the direction it intends to take?
  - Grand Canyon University - Established structured infrastructure
  - University of Northwestern Ohio - Recent transition to a structured infrastructure
  - Minnesota State System - 34 institutions; course design primarily individual (Collaborative DIY model)
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