

## Quality Matters Summary

The organization Quality Matters<sup>1</sup> sets the standards for online education. Their eight Standards encompass aspects of what excellence should look like for teaching and learning online.

1. Course Overview and Introduction
  - When students enter the online classroom, they should be able to find everything they need and understand everything they'll be expected to do.
  - The purpose and structure of the course should be clear and the instructor's expectations for everything the student must do should be stated clearly, including classroom policies, minimum technology requirements, expected digital competencies and literacies, and prerequisite knowledge and skill.
  - With this information at their fingertips, students will spend more time learning and less time searching the online classroom or LMS (Learning Management System).
2. Learning Objectives (Competencies)
  - Learning Objectives define what students must know and be able to do when they complete the course, as measured by assignments and assessments.
  - These should be organized in modules or units, written clearly, easy to find, and appropriate to the level of the course.
  - Students' performance improves when they understand the connections between what they must do and what they're supposed to learn.
3. Assessment and Measurement
  - Students need to know how the instructor will grade their work and how their grades on exams and assignments will factor into their final grade in the course.
  - Grading policies for the course and criteria for how the instructor will grade students' work should be clear, easy to find, and provide students with multiple opportunities to track their progress and receive feedback.
  - Students who understand the connection between their work and how the instructor will grade what they submit are better able to meet the course requirements successfully.
4. Instructional Materials
  - Lectures, readings, handouts, instructions, links, tutorials and everything else students might need in order to meet the course requirements and achieve the learning outcomes should be easily available and relevant to the course's purpose.
  - Materials should maintain standards of academic integrity, convey up-to-date information in the discipline, and engage students' interest.
  - When they have what they need, students can focus on learning, not searching.
5. Learning Activities and Learner Interaction
  - Everything students must do in the online classroom should support their achievement of the course's learning outcomes and facilitate interpersonal interactions between students and with the instructor.
  - The instructor should provide an explanation of what actions students can expect from them. The instructor should take an active role in the online classroom, interacting

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<sup>1</sup> Quality Matters Specific Review Standards from the QM Higher Education Rubric, Sixth Edition.

frequently with students. The purpose of course activities should be stated clearly, as should specific instructions for completing all requirements.

- The online classroom should be an engaging, interesting, and active environment that facilitates students' learning.
6. Course Technology
- Online education is entirely dependent on technology, so the systems, applications, and programs that comprise the online learning environment must function well.
  - Course tools should promote engaged and active learning through a variety of accessible technologies, with attention to protecting users' data and privacy.
  - When the proper systems are in place, students are able to focus on their learning rather than spending time struggling with the technologies they must use in the online classroom.
7. Learner Support
- Online learners need to know how to find and receive academic, personal, and technological help when they need it.
  - The instructor's contact information and policies should be easy to find and understand. The course should include links to available technical and academic support from the university and within the LMS.
  - Our students can experience many problems in the online learning environment. Therefore, anticipating their needs and providing access to support can help to smooth their difficulties and keep them engaged in the course.
8. Accessibility and Usability
- Many of our students face personal challenges to their learning such as physical disabilities or learning disabilities.
  - The online classroom should be easy for everyone to use. All text should be readable, and image and text files should be formatted for the needs of diverse learners. This can include closed captioning of videos, audio narration embedded in instructor's PowerPoint lectures, or providing transcripts of audio or video files.
  - Our learners come to us with different needs and abilities. Our online classrooms should serve all students as we take these differences into account so that all learners can be successful.