

Quality and Online Courses

Qualities of Exemplary Online Courses

Why the Concern with Quality?

- Institutions, administrators and faculty desire to provide learning opportunities to students that result in learning as much, or more than by traditional means.
- Avoiding the “diploma mill” descriptor
- The real and perceived quality of distance learning courses will determine which programs and courses survive in an emerging fiercely competitive student consumer driven market. ¹

¹ What Quality Distance Learning Courses for an Institution?
<<http://www.zianet.com/edacyrs/tips/quality.htm>>

Why Do People View Distance Education Courses Differently?

- Instructors and students are spatially removed
- More technology is used
- Access to library resources is difficult
- Access to student support services is difficult
- Assessment is difficult
- Classes may contain different types of students



Different Campus Groups Have Different Quality Concerns

- Preserving faculty power and the tenure process
- Reputation and prestige of the university
- The business plan and profitability
- Student learning



Who Sets Quality Standards for Distance Education?

- Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions
- National Education Association
- American Federation of Teachers
- Individual Institutions



Accrediting Agencies' Standards

- Institutional Context and Commitment
- Curriculum and Instruction
- Faculty Support
- Student Support



Institutional Context and Commitment

- Distance education is consistent with the institution's role and mission
- The institution's policies and budgets reflect commitment for distance education
- The institution ensures adequacy of technical and physical facilities to support distance education role and mission



Institutional Context and Commitment

- The institution has copyright and intellectual property rights policies
- Support by telephone for students with technical difficulties



Curriculum and Instruction

- Technology is chosen that supports the curriculum
- Amount of material and the depth are the same as in face to face courses.
- Faculty make decisions about course content – not technicians
- Courses must be designed to promote faculty – student interaction



Curriculum and Instruction

- Courses should not replicate face to face courses but undergo modifications to maximize the potential of the technology
- Class size should not increase beyond the capability of the instructor to interact with all students
- Students' level of achievement should be as challenging as face to face courses



Faculty Support

- The institution understands the amount of work required to create an online course
- Faculty receive technical and design assistance
- Faculty receive training
- Faculty receive recognition for extra work of teaching online



Student Support

- The program is continued so that all students are able to complete it
- Students are informed in advance of technical requirements
- Students can receive help at a distance with the technology



Student Support

- Students receive advising online
- Students have access to library resources online
- Students can order books online



Student Assessment

- Students are assessed by comparing student performance to learning outcomes
- Exams are given in a secure manner
- Multiple methods of assessment are used



Program Evaluation

- Students do not leave the program in large numbers
- Students report that they are satisfied with the distance education
- Faculty are satisfied teaching online
- The program provides access to students who could not be educated on the campus



Helping Faculty to Create Online Courses

- Display high quality courses to everyone
- Form faculty review teams
- Create a checklist that contains design elements or content that must be present in all courses
- Ask students to evaluate courses



Indications That You Have Achieved Quality

- Reduced faculty resistance to planning, training, and creating quality courses
- Student reviews of courses are positive
- Courses have all achieved minimum quality standards set by university
- Faculty are satisfied with teaching online