

BECAUSE QUALITY MATTERS: CONVERTING COURSES TO MEET QM™ STANDARDS AND STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

Kristen Schiele, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

Abstract

This paper discusses the implementation of Quality Matters™ (QM™) standards in marketing curriculum. QM™ is a nationally recognized standard for constructing rigorous hybrid, online, and other technology-enhanced courses. Most prior research has emphasized the importance of teaching online courses differently from traditional face-to-face instruction (Berge, 1995; Goodyear et al., 2001; Ragan, 2009; Smith, 2005; Varvel, 2007). For this reason it is necessary to evaluate new alternative methods and standards for online course design.

The QM™ standards were developed by a small research community under a federal grant to construct a “replicable, scalable peer review process for improving online education into a large researching, not-for-profit organization providing tools, professional development, and processes for evaluating quality in online education” (Shattuck, 2007). The standards were cultivated from a community of practice perspective, and continue to mature as a design-based research program (Shattuck, 2015). The Quality Matters Rubric™ outlines forty-one specific standards that are associated with eight general standards of quality online course design. Research in this area continues to establish the validity of these course design standards.

In Summer 2016, I was one of ten professors accepted to receive QM™ training under “DOLCE 3.0: Using the Quality Matters™ framework for multi-section courses”. After completing this training program, I converted my courses according to the QM™ standards. This paper discusses my experience implementing QM™ standards in a hybrid e-Marketing course. My preliminary findings from student surveys and faculty observations show that using QM™ increased learner satisfaction, student learning, and improved learner accessibility.

In line with prior research, my preliminary findings show a positive relationship between QM™ course design and increased learner satisfaction (Shattuck, 2007). My course learning outcomes were clearly specified according to the standards, and all course assessments and activities strategically aligned with those learning outcomes. Utilizing QM™ design also was effective in emphasizing active learning and student engagement in the course. These standards also improved student engagement and motivation by providing the class a variety of learning experiences.

One of the important items in the QM™ rubric, Standard 8, focuses on course design issues related to learner accessibility. Providing accessible course content for students with disabilities can often be problematic, especially in online or hybrid courses. Therefore, one of the important aspects of QM™ is to provide specialized adaptive services to students in the course who require assistive technologies. Some elements of this include offering equivalent alternatives to audio and visual content, and making sure that the course design facilitates readability with minimal distractions.

Lastly, utilizing the QM™ model for course design can assist professors in meeting specific course goals, such as creating a flipped classroom, incorporating problem-based or inquiry learning, and meeting accreditation goals. The QM™ standards have also proven to be effective for courses with special issues (e.g. large, multi-section courses, bottleneck courses, new programs). This framework may also provide an effective method to assist faculty in transitioning their courses to semesters, which is currently an extensive plan in the California State University system. Due to these findings, QM™ framework appears to be very beneficial for both marketing students and faculty.

References Available Upon Request