

Quality Assurance in Online Courses
Procedure Statement
Prince George's Community College Distance Learning Center

In 2005, the Distance Learning Center, in collaboration with the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs adopted the Quality Matters (QM) rubric as the college's measure of online course quality. The QM rubric is based on national standards of good practice and was developed under the Quality Matters Grant (FIPSE) between 2003-2006. As a public document, it is available on the Quality Matters website <http://www.qualitymatters.org>. It focuses on the design of online courses that allows for the effective translation of course content to the online domain. The QM rubric does not address course content specifically, but rather the extent to which material is presented in a clear, well-organized and learning-focused manner, in accordance with accepted best practices.

The Distance Learning Center's (DLC) quality assurance process aims to achieve the institutional goal of offering and maintaining high quality online courses by:

- Helping online course developers/facilitators to establish and maintain high-quality online courses.
- Implementing a faculty peer review process.
- Conducting peer reviews of all online courses for quality assurance.

The course review process:

- Provides constructive suggestions about how to improve the course to align with the quality standards of the rubric.
- Reports to the course developer/facilitator the results of the peer review.
- Provides professional development training for online faculty to become trained Quality Matters peer reviewers.
- Focuses on a peer review of the course, not evaluation of the faculty developer/facilitator of the course.

I. THE ONLINE COURSE REVIEW PROCESS

A. **Review Scheduling**

1. Online course reviews are initiated based on a schedule determined by department chairs. The schedule will be reviewed yearly and submitted to the Distance Learning office at the prompting of the Director, Distance Learning, to make adjustments. All online courses will eventually be reviewed using the Quality Matters process. Online faculty, department chairs, or deans may request that a course be reviewed in a particular semester. Courses are not typically reviewed more often than once every five years if they have met quality standards.
2. New online courses will be taught for at least two semesters before they are reviewed.
3. Faculty members, along with their department chairs, will be informed of their course review in the semester prior to the semester in which the course will be reviewed.

4. Faculty members whose course will be reviewed are strongly encouraged to attend the Quality Matters Orientation offered by Distance Learning. Faculty are also encouraged to take the peer reviewer training in order to better understand the review process and to become eligible to participate in future course reviews conducted on campus.

B. Review Period

1. The entire review period will be no more than six-weeks during an academic semester.
2. The course review will begin approximately 1 month into the semester of the review and will be completed no later than 1 month prior to the end of that semester.
3. Upon completion of the review, a report will be generated by the review team.
4. The review team report will indicate the course review outcomes. The possible outcomes are: “Course Meets Expectations” or “Course Does Not Meet Expectations”.
5. The review team report will be sent to the faculty member, with a copy to the department chair, the Director, Distance Learning Center and the dean.

II. COURSE REVIEW OUTCOMES

A. Course Meets Expectations

1. Courses that “meet expectations” have met the rubric standards for quality in an online course.
2. Courses that meet expectation will be recognized by the Distance Learning Center as a course that meets national standards of best practice in online learning. This recognition will be communicated with the faculty member, department chair, dean and VP for Academic Affairs.

B. Course Does Not Meet Expectations

1. Courses that “do not meet expectations” have not met the rubric standards for quality in an online course and do not meet national standards of best practice in online learning.
2. The review team report will be sent to the faculty member, with a copy to the department chair and the academic dean.
3. The report will indicate what course improvements and revisions should be made to meet rubric standards.
4. Course revisions must be made to ensure the course meets the rubric standards and demonstrates national standards of best practice in online learning.

III. COURSE REVISIONS (for courses that do not meet expectations)

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B. The Distance Learning Center will provide up to five hours of instructional design assistance to course developers/facilitators upon request.

1. The course developer/facilitator must complete the course revisions and Course Amendment Form indicating how expectations have been met.
2. The course developer/facilitator will notify the team chair and the Director of the Distance Learning Center of completion of course revisions.
3. The review team chair or Director, Distance Learning must review the Course Amendment form and course revisions prior to the next semester the course is taught online. Under special circumstances, a one-semester extension for completion of course revisions may be granted by the academic department chair and dean.
4. The review team chair must review and certify that the mandated revisions have been satisfactorily completed. This review of revisions will be completed within two weeks after notification of completion by the faculty developer.
5. If the course is successfully revised, it will be designated as “meets expectations” and will follow procedures stated in II.A. above (“Course Meets Expectations.”)
6. If the course is not successfully revised by the faculty member in adequate time to offer the course again, the relevant academic department chair, in consultation with the course developer/facilitator, will decide how to effect the needed changes to the course so that it will meet the rubric’s standards of good practice.
7. The department chairperson and academic dean will take whatever actions they deem appropriate to ensure that all reviewed courses meet acceptable standards in quality online instruction as defined by the QM rubric. This may include: requesting design assistance from the Director, Distance Learning, having another instructor teach it once the appropriate revisions are made, or withdrawing the online course. Whichever action is selected, the Director, Distance Learning Center will be kept updated of the progress of all work on the course.