



HLC Accreditation 2016-2017

## Evidence Document

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Academic Affairs

Office of Online Learning

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### Faculty Development and Quality Review Process and Standards

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**Additional information:** The document describes methods, programs and processes established at WSU to ensure high quality of distance education courses and unified standards of faculty training. For more information visit the Office of Online Learning Faculty Resources web page:

<http://webs.wichita.edu/?u=onlineed&p=facultyresources/> (accessed August 19, 2015.)

## **Wichita State Online Faculty Development and Quality Review Process and Standards**

Wichita State University understands the importance of providing quality courses by reviewing online courses regularly and providing faculty opportunities to participate in online teaching development programs.

As our online programs grow, we see the increased need for creating unified quality standards for online courses and a process to review them, as well as a method for involving faculty in that process. As we have been working on improving our online infrastructure, we noted the following:

- Each year the number of courses offered online increases by about 10%
- Prior to the establishment of the Office of Online Learning, none of the online courses had any sort of mandated institution quality assurance or oversight
- As problems have arisen from poor course design in some courses, it has become clear that quality controls are necessary to ensure minimum quality standards are met in all online courses
- Faculty development for online teaching, though regular, has not been well attended, except for faculty-lead training events.

### **Improving Quality in Online Courses through Regular Systematic Course Review and Faculty Development**

To correct any existing shortcomings we have with online course quality in an increasing number of courses as well as faculty preparedness to teach online, Online Learning in conjunction with the Media Resources Center has adopted the following process:

1. The Online Learning Faculty Fellows (OLFF) along with the MRC staff will review all online courses based on Quality Matters standards according to the levels indicated below; with each course being required to adhere to a baseline standard
2. The OLFF will act as mentors to other faculty, and work with MRC staff to lead and create in-person and on-demand faculty development workshops for online teaching

### **Quality Matters**

Quality Matters is a nationally recognized, faculty-centered, peer review process designed to certify the quality of online course design and online components. The Quality Matters Rubric is used in course reviews that result in continuous improvement and faculty development. Quality Matters is based on a continuous improvement model.

Quality Matters has some limitations; the official peer review process requires trained peer reviewers, can take as much as two months to complete, and there are fees associated with the official review. Also, while some of the standards are considered best practice in online instruction, there is not yet substantial research to support those standards. This can create opportunities for resistance that need to be addressed while we work towards adding to that research.

## **Online Faculty Fellows and Professional Development**

In early 2014, Academic Affairs, working through the Office of Online Learning and the Media Resources Center, has worked to develop a faculty-driven program that will promote quality online course design at WSU. One of the key components of that program is developing competency in Quality Matters.

### **Development of the Online Faculty Fellows (OLFF)**

- Cadre of instructional staff with online experience
- Provided with Quality Matters Training to become Quality Matters Peer Reviewers
- OLFF Alumni can do Wichita State Online Peer Reviews of four courses /semester
- 2014-15 Cadre = 24 Members
- 2015-16 Cadre = 15 Members

### ***The Role of a Faculty Fellow***

1. **Influencer.** We engage with Faculty Fellows as thought leaders/influencers on campus. We make sure that the Fellows know about services and resources that are available through the Media Resources Center, about good ideas for instruction, and so on — so that those ideas can be brought back to their colleges and departments. At the very least, we expect that fellows will make the effort of using department meetings as opportunities to share ideas and resources they have learned about through the Faculty Fellows.
2. **Developer.** We use the faculty fellows to develop new Capabilities among our faculty. Currently, our goal is to build the capacity among our Fellows to conduct formal and informal **Quality Matters** reviews of our content goal, but future fellows groups will take on different capacity development.
3. **Expert.** Our Faculty Fellows bring expertise to the table, and as part of their year as a Faculty Fellow, they share that expertise in one of a variety of ways with other faculty.

### ***Accountability***

At the end of the term, each OLFF Member will submit a portfolio that demonstrates their completion of several key OLFF deliverables. Completion of the portfolio will be a

requirement for earning the last half of the OLFF Stipend.

- QM training 1 complete (certificate)
- QM training 2 complete (certificate)
- Training/Blog/Podcast/Webinar delivery
- OLFF Applicant review (for coming year)
- Meeting Attendance (50% or better)

### ***Regular Monthly Meeting Agenda Topics:***

Each monthly meeting will include:

1. **Tech 10** – a few minutes to hear about new tools or training available through Instructional Design and Technology
2. **According to the Research** – presentation of some research or study related to online instruction
3. **Conversation** -- Applying a Standard
4. **Open Discussion** – Topics as they arise
5. **OLFF Business** -- Selecting new members, etc)

### ***The Alumni***

OLFF Alumni are not quite as active on a monthly basis, but we continue to engage with them through meetings each semester and through a variety of activities.

1. QM Peer reviewers (paid, full-spectrum QM review)
2. QM Qualified Reviewers (unpaid, brief review)
3. Engage in online community with other OLFF members and alumni
4. Continue to be an Influencer, Developer, and Expert.

### **How Will WSU Use the Quality Matters Review Standards With Faculty and Staff Reviewers**

WSU will develop a program of quality review for online courses that is based on the Quality Matters rubric. The program's end goal will be developing a list of courses that has been reviewed and determined to be ready for the full Quality Matters Peer Review process.

One of the goals of this program is to provide a path to quality design that is accessible to all faculty, and that walks them towards Quality Matters standards. Budget concerns limit the number of courses which can be submitted for a full quality matters review, but our internal program can be open to and reward all faculty.

Also, there has been some concern about the lack of research that supports some of the standards. While we work to develop and publish our own research in these areas, we need to create a program that steps instructional staff through at least those standards that we can clearly support.

For that reason, we have developed a three-tiered plan for the “Wichita State Online Review Process.”

### **Who Performs Reviews**

Wichita State Online Reviews are conducted in two stages.

1. **The Peer Review and Silver stage:** the review is conducted by the alumni of the Online Faculty Fellows, or other faculty who have completed the Quality Matters Peer Review course. Reviews will be anonymous, and conducted by a reviewer outside the department of the course being reviewed.
2. **The Gold review stage:** which is performed by the Instructional Design and Technology team.

### **WSU Baseline Standards for Online Instruction**

Any course offered completely online depends upon the Blackboard environment to provide the student experience – there is no face-to-face component to provide the student with context.

Because of that greater weight, it is important to make sure any course offered online meets some basic requirements.

1. The course syllabus – approved by the department as usual – is provided in the course from the first day of class (if not before)
2. There is a schedule of activities (at least a general schedule)
3. Content for at least the first week of class is posted before the first day of class.

It is the responsibility of the department to ensure that online courses offered by the department meet these standards.

### **Wichita State Review Levels**

The Wichita State Online Review Standards represent an effort to take steps beyond the baseline requirements to promote and ensure quality instruction and a continual improvement model.

- **Wichita State Online Peer Reviewed**
  - The course has been peer reviewed

- The instructor receives feedback, but the class has not yet passed the Silver standard.
- **Wichita State Online Silver**
  - The course has been awarded “Wichita State Online Silver” by the peer reviewer
  - Silver standards are a subset of the Quality Matters standards (see below)
- **Wichita State Online Gold**
  - After the peer review phase, the course has been reviewed by the IDT team. This certification indicates that Wichita State Online believes this course is ready for and would pass a Quality Matters Review.
  - Courses that have passed Wichita State Online Gold will be added to a pool of courses from which the Office of Online Learning selects courses for full Quality Matters Peer Review.

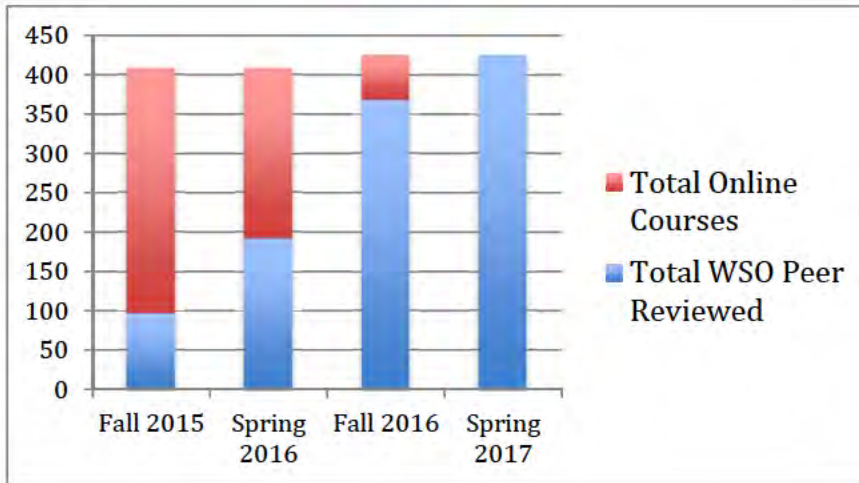
### **Wichita State Online Review Lifecycle**

1. Instructor requests Wichita State Online Peer review
  - a. Should be after teaching the course at least once
2. Peer Reviewer Reviews course
  - a. If the course meets the Wichita State Online Silver standards, the course is awarded the Wichita State Online Silver badge, and the reviewer provides feedback on the course design
  - b. If the course does not meet the Wichita State Online Silver standards, the course is awarded the Wichita State Online Peer Reviewed badge, and the reviewer provides feedback. The course can be resubmitted for review the following semester.
3. The instructor of a Wichita State Online Silver course may submit the course for Wichita State Online Gold review
4. IDT Team reviews course
  - a. If the course meets the Wichita State Online Gold standards, the course is awarded the Wichita State Online Gold badge, and the reviewer provides feedback on the course design.
  - b. If the course does not meet the Wichita State Online Gold standards, the reviewer provides feedback. The course can be resubmitted for review the following semester.
5. The instructor of a Wichita State Online Gold course may submit the course for Quality Matters Peer Review.
  - a. The Office of Online Learning selects courses for Quality Matters Peer Review from the available pool of submitted Wichita State Online Gold courses.

### **Online Course Coverage Timeline**

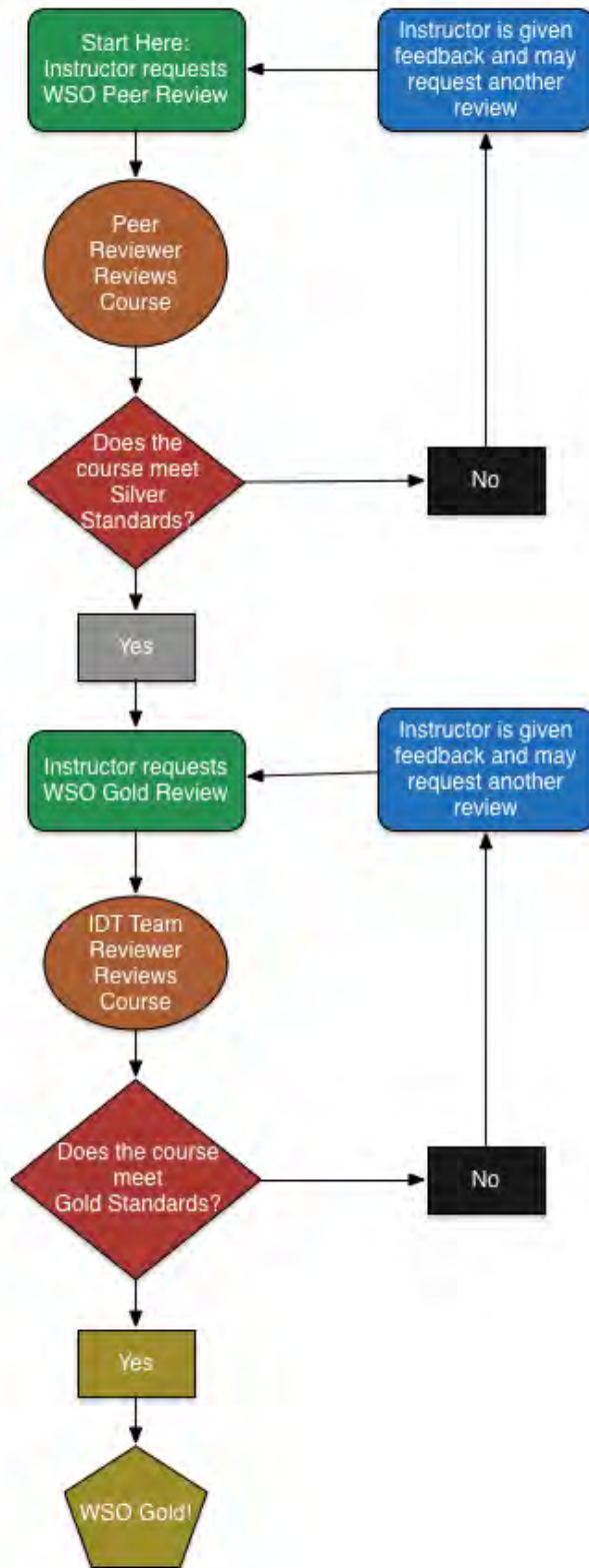
It will take some time before we can expect that all courses taught online will have been reviewed at least once as a part of this program.

We intend to ask that all Online Faculty Fellow alumni review four courses per semester. With 24 alumni from the first year of the program, and 15 from the second, we expect to be able to have all courses covered by the end of the Spring 2017 semester.



### Wichita State Online Certification Expiration

Wichita State Online Peer Reviewed, Silver, and Gold levels of certification expire five years after there are issued. Courses should be resubmitted for review after five years. They should also be resubmitted after major redesigns, major textbook changes, or other dramatic events that change the design of the content of the course.





## **Wichita State Online Baseline Standards**

Any course offered completely online depends upon the Blackboard environment to provide the student experience – there is no face-to-face component to provide the student with context.

Because of that greater weight, it is important to make sure any course offered online meets some basic requirements.

- The course syllabus – approved by the department as usual – is provided in the course from the first day of class (if not before)
- There is a schedule of activities (at least a general schedule)
- Content for at least the first week of class is posted before the first day of class.

These standards are a baseline expectation for all classes offered online by WSU; it is the responsibility of each department to ensure that courses they offer meet these standards.

## **Wichita State Online Silver Standards**

The Standards are broken down in to five key review topics

- Syllabus
- Organization
- Buttons or Links
- Content/Assessment
- Design Recommendations (Optional)

Standards are listed with the Quality Matters standard number on which they are based in parenthesis.

### **Syllabus**

- Course and/or institutional policies with which the learner is expected to comply are clearly stated, or a link to current policies is provided. (1.4)
- Minimum technology requirements are clearly and accurately stated and instructions for use provided. (1.5)
- Prerequisite knowledge in the discipline and/or any required competencies are clearly stated. (1.6)
- Minimum technical skills expected of the learner are clearly stated. (1.7)
- All learning objectives or competencies are stated clearly and written from the learner's perspective. (2.3)
- The course grading policy is stated clearly. (3.2)
- The instructor's plan for classroom response time and feedback on assignments is clearly stated. (5.3)
- The requirements for learner interaction are clearly stated. (5.4)

### **Organization**

- Instructions make clear how to get started and where to find various course components. (1.1)
- Learners are introduced to the purpose and structure of the course. (1.2)
- Etiquette expectations for online discussions, email, and other forms of communication are clearly stated. (1.3)
- The self-introduction by the instructor is appropriate and is available online. (1.8)
- Learners are asked to introduce themselves to the class. (1.9)
- Course navigation facilitates ease of use. (8.1)

## **Buttons or Links**

- The course instructions articulate or link to a clear description of the technical support offered and how to obtain it. (7.1)
- Course instructions articulate or link to the institution's accessibility policies and services. (7.2)
- Course instructions articulate or link to an explanation of how the institution's academic support services and resources can help learners succeed in the course and how learners can obtain them. (7.3)
- Course instructions articulate or link to an explanation of how the institution's student services and resources can help learners succeed and how learners can obtain them. (7.4)

## **Content/Assessment**

- The course learning objectives, or course/program competencies, describe outcomes that are measurable. (2.1)
- Both the purpose of instructional materials and how the materials are to be used for learning activities are clearly explained. (4.2)
- All instructional materials used in the course are appropriately cited. (4.3)
- Course tools promote learner engagement and active learning. (6.2)
- Information is provided about the accessibility of all technologies required in the course. (8.2)
- The course provides alternative means of access to course materials in formats that meet the needs of diverse learners. (8.3)

## **Design Recommendations (Optional)**

These points are extensions and recommendations based on the Quality Matters standards. They may be part of the reviewer's comments, but are not required for Wichita State Online Silver.

- Course appears to be as fully ADA compliant as it can be at the time of the review. (extension of Quality Matters standard 8.3)
- All images/artwork/materials appear to be used legally. (extension of Quality Matters standard 4.3)
- Course has a WSU look and feel.
- Course fits into its academic program clearly. (extension of Quality Matters standard 2.1 and also a visual design issue)
- "Extra" tools have been turned off. (extension of Quality Matters standard 8.1)
- "Extra" buttons have been removed. (extension of Quality Matters standard 8.1)

- Files are offered in .pdf or .htm format where appropriate. (extension of Quality Matters standard 8.1)
- Library resources are linked in using the library link generator. (extension of Quality Matters standard 4.3 and also critical for budgetary reasons)
- All assignment tool links contain the same instructions as are provided in the primary tool area (eg: course links to discussion boards contain the instructions provided in the discussion board itself). (extension of Quality Matters standard 8.1)
- The grade book is set up with no columns for “old” or deleted assignments. (extension of Quality Matters standard 8.1 and also a usability issue for professors)
- Course test files (test, survey, pool) are used, and course does not contain duplicate or old test files.
- Assignments contain grading rubrics. (extension of Quality Matters standard 3.2 and 3.3)
- Choice of landing page for the course makes sense and is put to use. (extension of Quality Matters standard 8.1)
- Course looks fine on both large and small screens and has been checked on a mobile device. (extension of Quality Matters standard 8.1)

<u>Section</u>	<u>Stds</u>	<u>Pts</u>	<u>Req</u>
Syllabus	8	14	9
Organization	6	13	9
Buttons/Links	4	9	6
Content/Assessment	6	16	12
<b>Total:</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>36</b>

To pass Peer Review Silver, the course must earn 44 of 55 points and must include all required standards.

## **Wichita State Online Gold Standards**

The Wichita State Online Gold Standard review is a review a course the evaluates whether the course can be expected to pass an Official Quality Matters Review.

The review is conducted by a Quality Matters Peer Review certified member of the Instructional Design and Technology team, and uses the Quality Matters standards as the basis for this review.