

10 Steps to Building a Course Quality Program

In spring of 2018, NC State piloted its first program dedicated to the improvement and recognition of quality designed online courses. Using the Quality Matters (QM) Standards and Rubric for Higher Education, a small cohort of faculty and instructional support staff embarked on a journey to improve the quality of online courses. The group's efforts culminated in an official QM review and certification for six online courses.

To date, there have been four cohorts with a total of 20 faculty participants and 16 certified courses. The success of the Online Course Improvement Program has paved the way for the establishment of an official Course Quality Program at NC State. Upon reflection of what led to the success and creation of the program, we created 10 steps that any institution could use to encourage a culture of online course quality.

Step 1: Find your firestarters

- Build a team internally. Include instructional support staff if possible.
- Identify a program leader and a faculty leader. Both roles are crucial.
- Get everyone trained in QM foundations: APPQMR, PRC.

Step 2: Secure leadership buy-in

- Create a project plan and include: vision statement, goals and milestones, timeline and budget.
- Take it to your leadership!

Step 3: Know your faculty audience

- What is the culture of your institution? Is professional development required for instructors or voluntary?
- Target online programs and faculty who teach existing online courses.
- What do your faculty value? Use those values to determine incentives.

Step 4: Build excitement

- Offer "teaser" professional development training and resources. For example, a "Course Mapping" workshop.
- Use common language and terminology when referring to course design. Tie it back to quality.
- Develop resources and share it with faculty. Syllabus templates, course map templates, etc.

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Step 5: Do your research

- Are you a part of a system? What are the other institutions doing?
- Explore what all types of institutions are doing. (2 and 4 year, public and private).
- QM-based research.

Step 6: Plan the program

- Program objectives.
- Method of delivery.
- Requirements, schedule and time commitment.
- Participant selection.
- Development.

Step 7: Deliver

- Faculty as students, guide them through the online student experience.
- Build a learning community.

Step 8: Evaluate

- Plan early. Can be conducted in phases.
- How will you use the information? What do you want to know? How do you get the information?

Step 9: Scale and sustain

- Compose a 5-year plan.
- Dedicate instructional support staff.
- Incorporate QM principles and language into all you do.

Step 10: Celebrate and recognize

- Letters to deans and department heads.
- Article published about participants.
- Website recognition.
- Celebrate with your team!