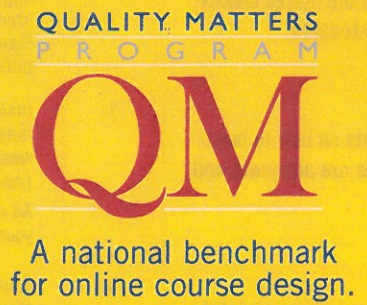


Course Overview and Introduction	1.1	Instructions make clear how to get started and where to find various course components.	3
	1.2	Students are introduced to the purpose and structure of the course.	3
	1.3	Etiquette expectations (sometimes called “netiquette”) for online discussions, email, and other forms of communication are stated clearly.	2
	1.4	Course and/or institutional policies with which the student is expected to comply are clearly stated, or a link to current policies is provided.	2
	1.5	Prerequisite knowledge in the discipline and/or any required competencies are clearly stated.	1
	1.6	Minimum technical skills expected of the student are clearly stated.	1
	1.7	The self-introduction by the instructor is appropriate and available online.	1
	1.8	Students are asked to introduce themselves to the class.	1
Learning Objectives (Competencies)	2.1	The course learning objectives describe outcomes that are measurable.	3
	2.2	The module/unit learning objectives describe outcomes that are measurable and consistent with the course-level objectives.	3
	2.3	All learning objectives are stated clearly and written from the students’ perspective.	3
	2.4	Instructions to students on how to meet the learning objectives are adequate and stated clearly.	3
	2.5	The learning objectives are appropriately designed for the level of the course.	3
Assessment and Measurement	3.1	The types of assessments selected measure the stated learning objectives and are consistent with course activities and resources.	3
	3.2	The course grading policy is stated clearly.	3
	3.3	Specific and descriptive criteria are provided for the evaluation of students’ work and participation and are tied to the course grading policy.	3
	3.4	The assessment instruments selected are sequenced, varied, and appropriate to the student work being assessed.	2
	3.5	Students have multiple opportunities to measure their own learning progress.	2
Instructional Materials	4.1	The instructional materials contribute to the achievement of the stated course and module/unit learning objectives.	3
	4.2	The purpose of instructional materials and how the materials are to be used for learning activities are clearly explained.	3
	4.3	All resources and materials used in the course are appropriately cited.	2
	4.4	The instructional materials are current.	2
	4.5	The instructional materials present a variety of perspectives on the course content.	1
	4.6	The distinction between required and optional materials is clearly explained.	1
Learner Interaction and Engagement	5.1	The learning activities promote the achievement of the stated learning objectives.	3
	5.2	Learning activities provide opportunities for interaction that support active learning.	3
	5.3	The instructor’s plan for classroom response time and feedback on assignments is clearly stated.	3
	5.4	The requirements for student interaction are clearly articulated.	2
Course Technology	6.1	The tools and media support the course learning objectives.	3
	6.2	Course tools and media support student engagement and guide the student to become an active learner.	3
	6.3	Navigation throughout the online components of the course is logical, consistent, and efficient.	3
	6.4	Students can readily access the technologies required in the course.	2
	6.5	The course technologies are current.	1
Learner Support	7.1	The course instructions articulate or link to a clear description of the technical support offered and how to access it.	3
	7.2	Course instructions articulate or link to the institution’s accessibility policies and services.	3
	7.3	Course instructions articulate or link to an explanation of how the institution’s academic support services and resources can help students succeed in the course and how students can access the services.	2
	7.4	Course instructions articulate or link to an explanation of how the institution’s student support services can help students succeed and how students can access the services.	1
Accessibility	8.1	The course employs accessible technologies and provides guidance on how to obtain accommodation.	3
	8.2	The course contains equivalent alternatives to auditory and visual content.	2
	8.3	The course design facilitates readability and minimizes distractions.	2
	8.4	The course design accommodates the use of assistive technologies.	2

Access to the web-based Quality Matters Rubric is available with a Quality Matters Subscription. Information about the subscription options and QM Professional Development trainings that support the various program components is available on the Quality Matters website: [www.qmprogram.org](http://www.qmprogram.org) or by contacting [info@qualitymatters.org](mailto:info@qualitymatters.org)



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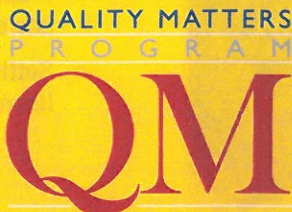
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# The Quality Matters™ Rubric for Higher Education



A continuous improvement model for assuring the quality of online courses through a faculty review process.



A national benchmark for online course design.



**At the core of the Quality Matters™ Program is the fully annotated Quality Matters Rubric,**

the centerpiece of a continuous improvement model for assuring the quality of online courses through a faculty peer review process.

The **Quality Matters** Rubric is a set of 8 general standards and 41 specific standards used to evaluate the design of online and blended courses. The Rubric is complete with annotations that explain the application of the standards and the relationship among them. A scoring system and set of online tools facilitate the evaluation by a team of reviewers.

Unique to the **Quality Matters** Rubric is the concept of alignment. This occurs when critical course components — Learning Objectives, Assessment and Measurement, Instructional Materials, Learner Interaction and Engagement, and Course Technology — work together to ensure students achieve desired learning outcomes. Specific standards included in Alignment are indicated in the Rubric annotations.

Institutions are using the **Quality Matters** Rubric in the following ways:

- Conducting formal reviews of existing online and blended courses
- Conducting informal/internal course reviews
- Disseminating guidelines for online/blended course development
- Providing a checklist for self-assessment by faculty members
- Contributing to broader quality assurance programs
- Preparing for regional and professional accreditation
- Setting institutional policy on distance learning standards



Courses that successfully meet the QM Rubric standards in an official course review are eligible to carry the QM certification mark.

**Example of the fully annotated General Standard 2**

With the web-based Quality Matters Rubric, you will have access to the full annotations for all the standards in addition to scoring and reporting tools.



**General Standard 2: Learning Objectives (Competencies)**

Learning objectives are measurable and are clearly stated. They establish a foundation upon which the rest of the course is based.

STANDARDS	POINTS	ANNOTATIONS
<div>2.1 The course learning objectives describe outcomes that are measurable.</div> <div>Alignment</div>	3	<p>Measurable course learning objectives precisely describe what students are to gain from instruction and provide the criteria instructors need to accurately assess student accomplishment. Objectives describe student performance in specific, observable terms. If this specificity is not possible (e.g., internal cognition, affective changes), check for clear indications that the learning objective can be meaningfully assessed. Note that at some institutions, learning objectives may be referred to as learning outcomes.</p> <p><b>Examples of measurable objectives:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Select appropriate tax strategies for different financial and personal situations.</li><li>2. Develop a comprehensive, individualized wellness action program focused on overcoming a sedentary life-style.</li><li>3. Describe the relationship between the components of an ecosystem.</li><li>4. Explain the factors that contribute to economic inflation.</li></ol> <p>In a course in which students are expected to demonstrate analytical skills and/or ability to express themselves effectively in writing or in other forms of communication, the learning objectives should include reference to these objectives in addition to objectives that relate to mastery of content.</p> <p>In addition to measurable objectives, a course may have objectives or desired outcomes that are not measurable, such as increased awareness, sensitivity, or interest in certain issues or subjects; but they do not substitute for measurable objectives when determining whether the standard is met.</p> <p><b>Special situations:</b> In some cases (check the Instructor Worksheet), the course objectives are institutionally mandated, and the individual instructor does</p> <p>not have the authority to change them. If the institutionally mandated learning objectives are not measurable, make note of it in the "comments" box. Write specific suggestions for improvement so the institution has the information needed to improve the objectives. If the course objectives are institutionally mandated, then the reviewer may need to consider Standard 2.1 in conjunction with Standard 2.2, as follows:</p> <p><i>Standard 2.1 is considered as being MET under the following circumstances:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The course objectives are measurable, whether set by the institution or by the instructor.</li><li>2. The institutionally mandated course objectives are not measurable, but the faculty-written module/unit objectives are measurable.</li></ol> <p><i>Standard 2.1 is NOT MET under the following circumstances:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. There are no course objectives.</li><li>2. The course objectives set by the instructor are not measurable.</li><li>3. The institutionally mandated course objectives are not measurable, and the faculty-written module/unit objectives are either not measurable or not present.</li></ol> <p><b>Alignment:</b> The concept of alignment is intended to convey the idea that critical course components work together to ensure that students achieve the desired learning outcomes. Measurable course and module/unit learning objectives form the basis of alignment in a course. Other elements of the course, including those addressed in Standards 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 4.1, 5.1, and 6.1, contribute to the accomplishment of the learning objectives. <i>It may not be possible to complete the course review if measurable learning objectives are not present. In such a case, the review team chair should first consult the instructor to clarify whether measurable objectives are absent and whether the matter can be quickly addressed so the review can continue.</i></p>
<div>2.2 The module/unit learning objectives describe outcomes that are measurable and consistent with the course-level objectives.</div> <div>Alignment</div>	3	<p>Measurable module or unit learning objectives are important. They precisely describe the specific competencies, skills, and knowledge that students should be able to master and demonstrate at regular intervals throughout the course. The learning objectives make clear to students learning expectations and outcomes on a weekly, modular, or unit basis.</p> <p>Module or unit objectives may be written by the instructor or come from the textbook. Regardless of origin, these objectives are prominently stated in the corresponding module or unit so that they are accessible to the student from within the online classroom. Module/Unit learning objectives enable instructors to</p> <p>accurately assess student accomplishment. Objectives describe student performance in specific, observable terms. Note that at some institutions learning objectives may be referred to as learning outcomes.</p> <p>The module/unit objectives are consistent with the course objectives, either implicitly or explicitly. For example, the module/unit objective "<i>Students will write sentences that demonstrate correct use of commas, semicolons, and periods.</i>" is consistent with the course objective "<i>Students will demonstrate a mastery of rules of punctuation.</i>"</p> <p><b>Alignment:</b> See the statement in the annotation for Standard 2.1.</p>
<div>2.3 All learning objectives are stated clearly and written from the students' perspective.</div>	3	<p>The learning objectives are stated clearly in the online classroom for all course delivery formats. The learning objectives are written in a way that allows students, including non-native speakers, to easily grasp their meaning and the learning outcomes expected. The use of educational jargon, confusing terms, unnecessarily complex language, and puzzling syntax is avoided. The learning</p> <p>objectives are clearly stated by the instructor, verbally during face-to-face meetings, if applicable, and electronically in the online classroom.</p> <p>As a reviewer, consider both the course and module/unit learning objectives in your assessment of this standard.</p>
<div>2.4 Instructions to students on how to meet the learning objectives are adequate and stated clearly.</div>	3	<p>Instructions may take various forms (e.g., narratives, bulleted lists, charts) and may appear at different levels within the course, such as module-based or in weekly assignment sheets. Instructions are stated clearly, are complete, and are provided electronically in the online classroom.</p> <p>Reviewers may look for information indicating which learning activities, resources, assignments, and assessments support specific learning objectives. Students may be given a list of steps that guides them in meeting the learning objectives for each week. An example would be weekly assignment pages in narrative, bulleted list, or chart form.</p>
<div>2.5 The learning objectives are appropriately designed for the level of the course.</div>	3	<p>Examine the course and module/unit learning objectives as a whole to ensure they describe knowledge and skills appropriate to the course level. All knowledge and skills need not be present in both the course and module/unit objectives, nor in every single objective.</p> <p>Content mastery is appropriate for the type and level of the course. Lower-division courses address content mastery, critical thinking skills, and core learning skills. Upper-division and graduate courses may focus on objectives more closely related to the specific discipline. Taxonomies that describe levels of learning can be helpful in categorizing learning objectives by level. Evaluating the appropriateness of content mastery expectations may be difficult for reviewers whose expertise is not in the course discipline. Reviewers should consult with the SME (subject matter expert) on the review team.</p> <p>Core learning skills, including critical thinking, are typically those that transcend an individual course and are integrated across the curriculum. Core learning skills are sometimes called "core competencies."</p> <p><b>Core learning skills may include</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Proficiency in written and oral communication</li><li>2. Ability to perform mathematical operations</li><li>3. Ability to organize and use information in various ways, with different tools</li><li>4. Understanding what one knows and how one knows it, and also understanding what one does not know and what one needs in order to find it out</li></ol> <p><b>Critical thinking skills may include the ability to</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Distinguish between fact and opinion</li><li>2. Distinguish between primary and secondary sources</li><li>3. Identify bias and stereotypes</li><li>4. Evaluate information sources for point-of-view, accuracy, usefulness, timeliness, etc.</li><li>5. Recognize deceptive arguments</li></ol> <p><b>Upper-division and graduate course objectives might include</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Mastery of the professional standards of the field</li><li>2. Ability to communicate using the specialized terminology and methods of discourse appropriate to the field</li></ol>