Quality Matters FAQ

What is QM?

Quality Matters is a set of standards for the design of online and blended courses. It is a peer review process for assessing and improving online and hybrid courses in order to help faculty facilitate student success online. The QM review is intended as a constructive, collaborative process between reviewer and faculty course developer. It is not a review of a faculty member's teaching method or of course content, but of the design of the course.

What courses must be QM reviewed?

All online courses will eventually be required to pass QM review. The first semester in which this will apply is Wintersession 2016, which starts in December 2015. In order to go into the schedule in Banner, Wintersession 2016 courses must pass review by September 2015. Summer 2016 web courses must be reviewed before February 2016. Spring 2017 and Fall 2017 web courses must also be reviewed before going in the schedule. The version that is taught must be the one that was reviewed.

How do you get a course reviewed?

The faculty developer should contact one of the Instructional Designers (Mary Harriet Talbut or Kris Baranovic) at 651-2298 to schedule a review. Faculty who have not taken a course through the review process previously should join a QM cohort. QM cohort participants meet for one hour, once a week, for five weeks to learn the QM standards and how to meet them. Afterward the cohort participant submits a course for review. Upon successful review of the course, the participant receives $250 as stipend or PD. Faculty who have already had a course pass review may submit another course for review directly. No stipend is offered for additional courses for the same faculty member.

When will cohorts be formed?

Cohorts are in progress now. Future cohorts will be offered during the second 8 weeks of F14, first and second 8 weeks of S15, summer 2015, first and second 8 weeks of F15, and so on. Keep in mind that for Wintersession 2015/2016, the course developer would have to go through a cohort no later than summer 2015.

What about copyright?

The university has contracted with faculty for joint copyright in some reviewed courses, but due to the anticipated volume, this program has been suspended. We may offer contracts in a few selected cases in the future.

Who reviews courses?

We currently have 15 faculty who are QM peer reviewers, and we need more. Anyone who has taught an online course in the last 18 months is eligible to become a reviewer. The training consists of two 2-week online courses, and CSTL/OIT will pay for it. A reviewer receives $300 for each course reviewed.
Preparing your course for QM review

By Fall 2017, every online course must pass QM review. The version used online must be the one that was reviewed. Thus, if you teach an online course, eventually you’ll either need to use materials developed by another faculty member, or take your own version of your course through review. What do you need to do to prepare? Here are some of the key elements of a QM review:

1) **Course Overview and Introduction:** Most important, it should be really obvious at first glance where the student should start and what the student should do. Many courses have a big “Start Here” label that directs the students to the syllabus, which includes explicit instructions for the beginning of the course.

2) **Expectations:** Clearly state your expectations of students about communication, deadlines, late work, civility, etc., and tell them what to expect from you – especially how soon they can expect you to respond to emails, grade assignments, etc. This can prevent a lot of email nagging if it’s done up front.

3) **Navigation:** Throughout the course, it should be obvious to the student what to do next and how to find the resources needed. You want the course material to be challenging, not the course organization.

4) **Learning Objectives:** You must have measurable learning objectives clearly stated for the course as a whole, and for each unit (week or topic, as you have it set up) in the course. These can be, but are not limited to, the Student Learning Outcomes. To write measurable unit objectives, start with any of the lists of “learning outcome verbs” available online, as we did for SLOs. A course cannot even be reviewed for QM unless measurable course and unit objectives are present.

5) **Alignment:** Every activity should contribute to achievement of the learning objectives, and you should tell the students how it does. Assignments, assessments, resources, etc. should explicitly state which learning objectives they support. If you’ve numbered the unit objectives, you could list the relevant objective numbers after each activity on the main course page. The activities should be aligned with the learning objectives; if your objective is that the student will write an explanation of principle X, there should be assignments where students practice writing explanations, and assessments in which they write explanations. If the assessment for that same objective is a multiple-choice test, it’s probably not well aligned.

6) **Learner support:** It should be clear to the student what kinds of support services are available and where to get them. If your syllabus includes a description of each service (writing lab, tutoring, help desk, etc.) and a link to get more, this should be sufficient.

7) **Accessibility:** All course materials should reflect a commitment to accessibility and usability so that all learners can access equivalent course content and activities.

Syllabus templates and many other resources are available on the Moodle Collaboration page (https://learning.semo.edu/course/view.php?id=18) – click the link and enroll yourself. If you have questions or need more help, please email Instructional.Designer@semo.edu or call 651-2298.