Creating a High Quality Online Training Program

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Issues

- Why worry about quality?
- What is a quality program?
- What are the elements of quality?
- What goes into a quality program?
- Creating the components of a program.
- Evaluating a program.

Why Worry about Quality?

- All levels desire to provide learning opportunities for students that work.

- Avoid correspondence course descriptor.

- Avoid diploma mill descriptor.

- The real and perceived quality of a program determines which survive in an emerging competitive market.

What is Quality?

Different Campus Groups Have Different Quality Concerns

- Administration
  - Reputation and prestige
  - ROI
- Faculty
  - Preserving faculty power and the tenure process.
  - Reputation and prestige.
- Student
  - Learning effectiveness.
  - Bang for the buck.

External Definitions

- American Heritage Dictionary
  - Having a **high degree** of **excellence**
- My definition
  - Better than (or as good as what) everyone else (is doing).

Elements of Quality

OLC Pillars

- **Learning Effectiveness**
  - Good Practice: Interaction, Timeliness, Support
  - Personalizing Instruction
  - Learning Community
- **Cost Effectiveness**
  - Benefits: Teaching, Learning, Discovery, Growth
  - New Costs: Infrastructure, Training
- **Access**
  - Scaffolding: Infrastructure and Course Management
  - Support Services
- **Faculty Satisfaction**
  - Faculty Benefits: Diversity, Reach, Interdisciplinary, Rewards
  - Faculty Resistance: Time, Authority, Recognition
- **Student Satisfaction**
  - What Learners Want
  - Retention
  - Immeasurable Benefits

NEA and Blackboard Benchmarks

- Institutional support
- Course development
- Teaching / Learning
- Course structure
- Student support
- Faculty support
- Evaluation and assessment

Quality Matters, CoI & QOCI Benchmarks

- Course Design
- Interaction and Collaboration
- Technology
- Assessment
- Learner Support

Key Elements – Another View

- Taking the People into Account
  - The Student
  - The Facilitator
  - The Administration
  - The Designer
  - The Support Staff
- The Technology
- Curriculum and Instruction
- Evaluation and Assessment

Everyone Is Responsible

- Administration
  - Some issues are campus-wide
- Faculty
  - Some issues are determined by individual faculty on a course by course basis.
- Staff
  - Support must exist for students and faculty.

What Goes into a Quality Program?

Designing the Program Itself

- Analyze your needs. Once one knows one's needs one can design a program that will meet those needs.
- Consider the entire context and all key elements to design your program.
  - Needs
  - Supportability
  - Administration
  - Curriculum and Instruction
  - Etc.

Finding Out What You Need

- Assess widespread professional development and student learning needs.
  - What needs are not being met?
  - What needs are not being met to their fullest?
- Connect your program with ongoing face-to-face programs.
- What technology, support, funding, etc. willbe needed to meet this need.

When Designing the program, take ALL key elements into account.

The Online Student Should…

- Communicate well through writing.
- Be self-motivated and self-disciplined.
- Think critically.
- Work well in the proposed environment.
- Have good time management skills.

Focusing on the Student

- Tell the students the expectations and requirements placed on an online student. [the online student should…]

- Do the students understand how to register?

- Are the courses that the students need being offered? Do they know where the courses are listed? Do they know what the courses are about? Do they know the course requirements such as time commitments, posts/week, etc.

- Are the students learning the objectives? Do they know what the objectives are?

- Are the instructions personalized? Do they want them personalized?

- Are the students supported? Do they know that they are supported?

- Are the students satisfied? How do you know?

- Are the students retained or coming back for more?

The Facilitator ("Virtual Prof.")

- A quality program requires quality instructors who are
  - Open, concerned, flexible, sincere, and believe in the quality of online learning.
  - Able to Communicate well through writing.[Communication is key]
  - Facilitators of learning in a student-centered environment.
  - Content experts familiar with program objectives.
  - Knowledgeable about the CMS and the online environment.

The Quality Facilitator

- Does more than just lectures with text.
- Introduces active learning and keeps the students involved.
- Introduces critical thinking into the process.
- Encourages contact between students and faculty.
  - Develops reciprocity and cooperation among students to create a synergistic community.
- Emphasizes time management and time on task.
- Respects diverse talents and ways of learning.
- Gives timely, quality feedback.

Faculty Partnerships

- The faculty are not left alone.
- Create a partnership between instructors, support staff, and the administration.

The Administration

- How will program be administered?
- How will the program be publicized?
- How will the students be handled?
- How will the faculty be handled?
- How are the servers and other technology services administered?
- Do you have a long term plan?

Administering the Program

- Degrees earned at a distance must be comparable to those earned through on campus study.
- Distance education programs are the product of regular faculty governance and review process.
- Create copyright and intellectual property policies.
- Evaluation of all courses and programs to insure that overall retention rates, learning outcomes, and student satisfaction are comparable to on-campus courses.
- Make everyone, including the library staff, a part of the process.
- Provide faculty training and support including Web resources, one-on-one consulting, pedagogy training, online training courses (wink wink).

Publicity

- Publicize the program.
- Involve local and wide area stake holders.
- Build upon the reputation of your school rather than considering the online realm a possible setback.
- Determine where and when to publicize.
- Be ready for possible influx of students.

Administering the Students

- Toll-free help numbers should be available or some means of communication when computer networks are not working.

- Technology training and prerequisites should be available.

- Students must have access to support services such as advising, counseling, as well as textbooks and online registration.

- Students must have access to online reference materials and database equivalent to access of on-campus students.

- Accessibility issues must be addressed.

- Provide for the needs of the student.

Administering the Faculty

- Understand the work involved in creating and teaching anonline course.
- Develop incentives.
- Give the faculty a voice in the development of the program.(Teacher buy-in and building ownership) Listen to thestatements or questions people make about the innovation.
- Maintain a reasonable student/online course ratio.
- Staff development must include
  - Skill development.
  - Attitude change.
  - Knowledge acquisition.
  - Altering the norms of the culture.
  - Follow-up activities.
- Provide for the needs of the faculty.

The Long-Term Plan

- Use early adopters as champions and mentors.
- Think big: develop strategic and financial plans.
- Think small: templates, pilot projects, and incremental implementations.

The Designer

- May be the facilitator or someone familiar with Web-based teaching/training.

- Should work hand-in-hand with facilitator and/or content expert, ESPECIALLY when the designer is not a content expert.

- Needs to be thoroughly familiar with support structure, technology, and methodology being employed.

The Support Staff

- Includes student and faculty support staff as well as networking personal, programmers, admissions, etc.
- Need to be thoroughly familiar with support structure, technology, and methodology being employed.
- Are there for the students AND the instructors.
- Feel like a part of a team because they are.
- Comforting and informative.
- Most cost-effective if integrated with existing support structures, but not necessarily pedagogically effective if staff is unaware of effective online learning methods and online technologies.

The Technology

- Packages of online course delivery tools, registration systems, Web servers, student tracking, etc.

- Selection based on best technology to deliver course content and needs assessment / analysis of audience.

- Provide reliability, robustness, and ubiquity.

- Accessible and affordable.

- User friendly and reliable.

- Seamless and transparent.

- Orientation availability.

The Curriculum

- Meets a specific need in the student body or emerging/existing market.

- Start with the pedagogy and NOT the technology. Use the technology to meet your needs, do not adjust your needs to the technology.

- Clear, achievable learning objectives.

- Content available online in some manner.

- Can use an appropriate WBT methodology.

The Instruction

- Directed at learning objectives or appropriate learning theory.
- Uses appropriate technologies.
- Reflects the collaborative nature of online learning when appropriate.
- Can take on many forms.

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