Quality Matters Implementation Plan

University of Alabama at Birmingham
eLearning QM Task Force
Table of Contents

Table of Contents ....................................................................................................................................... 1
UAB Quality Matters Task Force Members ................................................................................................. 2
UAB Vision Statement ............................................................................................................................... 3
UAB Mission Statement ............................................................................................................................ 3
UAB Background ........................................................................................................................................ 3
UAB History of QM Use ............................................................................................................................. 4
Goals ............................................................................................................................................................ 4
Objectives .................................................................................................................................................... 5
Strategies .................................................................................................................................................... 5
  UAB Stakeholder Buy-in ................................................................. 5
  Faculty/Staff Development ....................................................................................................................... 5
Course Reviews ..................................................................................................................................... 6
Course Design ........................................................................................................................................ 6
  Communication Plan ................................................................................................................................ 6
Benchmarks ................................................................................................................................................ 7
  Academic Year 2015-2016 ................................................................. 7
  Academic Year 2016-2017 ................................................................. 7
  Academic Year 2017-2018 ................................................................. 7
Budget ....................................................................................................................................................... 8
Publicity of QM Recognition ..................................................................................................................... 8
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UAB Vision Statement

The University of Alabama at Birmingham’s (UAB) vision is to be an internationally renowned research university — a first choice for education and health care.

UAB Mission Statement

UAB’s mission is to be a research university and academic health center that discovers, teaches and applies knowledge for the intellectual, cultural, social and economic benefit of Birmingham, the state and beyond.

UAB Background

Our story is one of remarkable growth in size, quality, reputation and impact. In a little more than four decades, UAB has transformed from its modest beginnings as an extension center into a doctoral research university and academic medical center. And we have the same audacious vision that led our founders to dream big dreams: To educate, advance discovery, care for the sick, respond to the needs of our community and establish Alabama as a progressive economic center that can change the world.

Today, UAB is a comprehensive urban university with a nationally recognized academic health center covering 95 city blocks in the Birmingham metropolitan area. UAB is the only public, four-year degree granting university in the state’s largest metropolitan area. UAB is the largest research institution in the state of Alabama and the largest employer providing an economic impact of over $5 billion annually to the state.

Online education at UAB first debuted in the School of Health Professions in 1998. Other schools like the School of Nursing, School of Engineering, and the Collat School of Business followed suit. Each school operated in silos developing their own processes and procedures for online education as well as independently providing support and resources for faculty at varying levels.

The UAB Division of eLearning and Professional Studies was created in February 2013, to provide campus-wide leadership in four critical areas:

1. Administration of campus-wide quality assessments of totally online and blended educational programs for continual improvement;
2. Development of innovative, totally online and blended, degree and certificate programs which serve untapped, niche markets and produce increased enrollment and new revenue;
3. Identification of existing UAB courses and programs, which can serve largely untapped, niche markets and their conversion into online delivery formats; and
4. Development of a robust portfolio of new, unique professional study opportunities for non-degree seeking adults.
UAB eLearning embarked on a yearlong planning process driven by a campus wide Steering Committee in the development of its Strategic Plan. Additionally, the eLearning Advisory Council (eLAC) was formed to aid UAB eLearning in the achievement of the Strategic Plan as well as to advise UAB eLearning on academic, infrastructure, and technology matters relating to online education.

One objective of the UAB eLearning Strategic Plan is to “ensure online education content and delivery is aligned with SACSCOC, the Online Learning Consortium, and Quality Matters, or other standards.” To meet this objective, the UAB eLearning Quality Matters (QM) Task Force was formed with the intention of developing an implementation plan, a performance indicator on the strategic plan that schools will be encouraged to follow.

The eLearning QM Task Force is comprised of 16 members representing the following college/schools: Arts and Sciences, Business, Dentistry, Education, Engineering, Health Professions, Nursing, and Public Health. Some of the schools have been in the online space for years and others are only beginning. Participation in this task force as well as the various committees associated with eLearning is evidence of our strong and widespread commitment to quality in online education at UAB.

**UAB History of QM Use**

The Collat School of Business (CSOB) was the first to adopt QM at UAB in 2010 submitting the first course for a QM Managed review in 2011. The course earned QM Recognition—the first in Alabama to do so. A faculty training course, a requirement for CSOB faculty developing online courses, was the second to earn recognition in the state. As a result, Provost Lucas chose to provide a full campus-wide subscription to QM in spring 2012.

Since then, QM has gained in popularity as instructional designers introduced the rubric to faculty they support. Thirteen faculty and staff have attended various training sessions with an additional nine completing the Applying the Quality Matter Rubric (APPQMR) training; three have earned Peer Reviewer certification; and four have completed the QM Rubric Update 2014. The UAB QM Coordinator and task force chair earned Peer Reviewer certification prior to joining UAB, and recently earned Face to Face Facilitator, Master Reviewer, and Program Reviewer Certifications. UAB’s first Independent APPQMR training was held on April 10, 2015. Twenty-five faculty and instructional designers completed the training. Two courses recently earned QM recognition—HI 640 and BUS 110. One additional UAB online course is currently undergoing a QM Managed Course Review, with several others in the queue.

**Goals**

With the support of Provost Dr. Linda Lucas and UAB’s eLearning Advisory Council, the goal for this initiative is a bold one that extends the life of the three year plan. The aim is that every new UAB online course, and existing online courses when due for revisions, be designed in
alignment with QM Rubric Standards. Eventually, every course will have opportunity to undergo a formal QM review purposed on continual improvement.

Objectives

The main objective for this project is to implement a strategic QM review process campus-wide that supports quality in blended and online education by:

- utilizing the rubric standards for solid course design;
- providing professional development opportunities to faculty and staff for engaging in peer reviews and applying QM principles; and
- supporting QM and subscriber managed formal reviews for recognition.

Strategies

UAB Stakeholder Buy-in

QM has been well received at UAB perhaps because it is a grass roots movement. Use of the rubric and training opportunities spread via word of mouth from pockets of use in the schools. Some require its use. Now, it is gaining widespread momentum through the efforts of faculty and instructional designers committed to excellence in online education evidenced from their service on the eLAC and working groups created to realize the strategic plan.

Faculty have garnered support from their colleagues based on the benefits they have experienced from the program. Many attribute improvements to their traditional teaching as a result of following QM rubric standards. Now, administrators—including chairs, deans and the provost—are supporting its adoption. The challenge, we expect, will be more in finding ways we can support faculty in the time commitment that will be required.

Faculty/Staff Development

Faculty and instructional designers will be provided professional development opportunities to ensure proper application of the QM rubric and principles. Our first independent Applying the QM Rubric Training Workshop (APPQMR) occurred on April 10, 2015. This first session was an equal mix of faculty and instructional designers at the recommendation of the task force. This way, both groups became well versed in QM principles, rubric standards, and professional development opportunities, in hopes of expediting adoption of its use campus wide. One independent session will be held during each semester of the plan. Additional trainers will be identified to complete the Face-to-Face certification in the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 academic years to provide training.

Further, we plan to build a network of Peer and Master Reviewers at UAB that can mutually support one another in subscriber managed reviews. These will be primarily faculty, but will include some instructional designers that are teaching online or have within the last 18 months
and plan to do so going forward. Specific numbers of participants and professional development opportunities for each year are outlined under the Benchmarks heading that follows.

Course Reviews

A strategic approach towards course reviews will be implemented. Those with the highest enrollments, such as core courses, will be targeted first since those impact the most students. Individual schools and CAS will provide a list of any courses they plan to be reviewed near the start of each semester.

Course reviews, at least initially, will be a combination of QM managed and subscriber managed. This will provide time for UAB to build a network of peer and master reviewers. Each year of the plan will realize a decrease in QM managed reviews, while UAB managed reviews increase. Specific numbers for planned course reviews for each year are outlined under the Benchmarks heading that follows.

Course Design

A course template is provided that was designed through a joint effort of the schools of Business, Health Professions, and Education with UAB eLearning. All schools and CAS were invited to collaborate on this project. The intent of the template is threefold. First, navigation of the learning management system, Canvas, becomes transparent directing student focus on learning the content. Second, the template ensures that certain accreditation and quality standards, as well as federal regulations are met such as SACSCOC, QM, and ADA 508 regulations. Third, the template ensures that there is room for faculty creativity while minimizing their workload in the development of online courses. Use of the template is optional but strongly encouraged. Forty-two percent of the QM standards are built-in to the UAB eLearning template, which align with SACSCOC and ADA 508:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.1</th>
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<th>1.7</th>
<th>3.2</th>
<th>7.2</th>
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<td>1.9</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>8.3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Beyond the template the QM rubric will be encouraged for use as a design tool by instructional designers and faculty during the development of online and blended courses to ensure alignment of the various course components—objectives, assessments, learning materials and interactivity, and technologies. Following the QM principle of continual improvement, this will aid in faculty in preparing courses for formal reviews while also ensuring that courses are higher quality in the interim. Only mature courses, those that have been taught at least once, will be submitted for formal reviews.

Communication Plan

Once the implementation is approved by all stakeholders, it will be placed on the UAB eLearning site providing access to the UAB community at-will. As-needed notifications about training events and courses earning recognition will be communicated via:
1. eReporter
2. Email blasts to deans and UAB eLearning distribution list
3. Faculty and UAB eLearning sites
4. BlazerNet

Progress will be documented annually for each of the three years and adjustments made as needed. Reports will be publicized in the UAB eLearning Annual Report as well as on relevant sites outlined above.

**Benchmarks**

**Academic Year 2015-2016**
- 5 Faculty Peer Reviewers certified
- 5 Faculty Master Reviewers certified
- 2 Face-to-Face Facilitators certified
- 60 faculty APPQMR trained
- 15 instructional designers APPQMR trained
- 5 courses submitted for QM Managed Review
- 20 courses submitted for UAB Managed Review
- 21 courses QM recognized

**Academic Year 2016-2017**
- 7 Faculty Peer Reviewer certified
- 7 Faculty Master Reviewer certified
- 2 Face-to-Face Facilitators certified
- 60 faculty APPQMR trained
- 7 instructional designers APPQMR trained
- 5 courses submitted for QM Managed Review
- 20 courses submitted for UAB Managed Review
- 25 courses QM recognized

**Academic Year 2017-2018**
- 10 Faculty Peer Reviewer certified
- 10 Faculty Master Reviewer certified
- 60 faculty APPQMR trained
- 3 instructional designers APPQMR trained
- 0 courses submitted for QM Managed Review
- 50 courses submitted for UAB Managed Review
- 47 courses QM recognized
Budget

UAB eLearning will provide funding to support implementation of QM. The budget follows. Professional development and reviews beyond those outlined above will be the responsibility of individual schools/college.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>2015-2016</th>
<th>2016-2017</th>
<th>2017-2018</th>
<th>Plan Totals</th>
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<td>Peer Reviewer Course ($200 per participant)</td>
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<td>(5 certified)</td>
<td>(7 certified)</td>
<td>(10 certified)</td>
<td>(22 certified)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Master Reviewer Course ($300 per participant)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(5 certified)</td>
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<td>(10 certified)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Face-to-Face Facilitator Course ($500 per participant)</td>
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<td>$ 1,000</td>
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<td>(2 certified)</td>
<td>(2 certified)</td>
<td>(2 certified)</td>
<td>(4 certified)</td>
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<td>Online Facilitator Course ($500 per participant)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2 certified)</td>
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<td>APPQMR Course Materials ($20 per packet)</td>
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<td>(60 trained)</td>
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<td>Totals</td>
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<td>$65,500</td>
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</table>

Publicity of QM Recognition

With QM recognition of the proposed implementation plan, the following statement will be used to publicize our efforts:

_UAB is committed to implement the Quality Matters standards for the design of online and blended courses, and we are systematically building and evaluating our courses based on these rigorous, research-supported standards. The Quality Matters standards assure that the online components of these courses promote learner engagement and provide students with all the tools and information they need to be successful learners. For more information about the Quality Matters Program, go to_ www.qualitymatters.org.