

# QUALITY MATTERS EVALUATION

## 1. STANDARD OVERVIEW & EXAMPLES

### *QM Standards # 1: Course Overview and Introduction*

*(Extracted from the Quality Matters Rubric Workshop for Higher Education, 2011-2013 Edition)*

QM Standards #1 is the most important of all the QM standards. It talks about the first impression. What students expect once they log in to the course. It should provide the guidelines to them so that they are ready for a good start. If students know what to do from the beginning, then there is a great chance they will perform better in the course. This standard consists of 8 sub standards:

#### 1.1 Instructions make clear how to get started and where to find various course components.

Instructions provide a general course overview, present the schedule of activities, guide the new students to explore the course website, and indicate what to do first, in addition to listing details and navigational instructions for the entire course. It should clearly mention *Start Here* so that students see it first once they log in to the course. They will know exactly where to get started.

Examples:

- A course “tour”
- Clear statements about how to get started in the course.

#### 1.2 Students are introduced to the purpose and structure of the course.

Information is provided to help students understand the purpose of the course and how the learning process is structured and carried out, including course schedule, delivery modalities whether online or blended, modes of communication, type of learning activities, and how learning will be assessed.

Examples:

- Welcome from the instructor, Start Here, Course Schedule, Course Outline, Course Map and Course Calendar.

#### 1.3 Etiquette expectations (sometimes called “netiquette”) for online discussions, email, and other forms of communication are stated clearly.

As an instructor, how do you want things to be handled in your course? This can be done in the first week of the course. You might insist that in the first week of the course every student should post an introduction of themselves. This could be by uploading a word document in the discussion board. The intention here is to create the learning environment. Once students get used to it then automatically they will be doing the task in the following weeks. Everybody becomes familiar of what to do.

Examples:

- By engaging students in discussion in an online class.
- By letting students send you a confirmation email that they managed to log in the course for the first time.

- 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.

Here policies have to be implemented by providing a link to student conduct, academic integrity, late submission of assignments, the grade of incomplete, confidentiality in the classroom etc. Important links like the library and Bursar's Office should also be included.

- 1.5 Prerequisite knowledge in the discipline and/or any required competencies are clearly stated.

The information about prerequisite knowledge and/or competencies is found within the course and linked to information students need to know.

- 1.6 Minimum technical skills expected of the student are clearly stated.

General as well as course-specific technical skills students must have to succeed in their course are specified in this standard.

Examples:

- Using the learning management system
- Using email with attachments
- Copying and pasting
- Using spreadsheet programs

- 1.7 The self-introduction by the instructor is appropriate and is available online.

The self-introduction by the instructor creates a sense of connection between the instructor and the student. It represents the instructor as a professional as well as approachable and includes the essentials.

Examples:

- Instructor's name and title
- Field of expertise
- Email address, phone number and times when the instructor is available

- 1.8 Students are asked to introduce themselves to the class.

This helps to create a welcoming learning environment and also creates a sense of community.

### **CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING QM STANDARD**

- Some instructors do comply with this standard but they put the Getting Started page along with the syllabus page. Students get lost by not knowing what to do and this results in an increase number of drop outs especially in an online class.
- Depending on what LMS the instructor will be using. Other LMS creating the Getting Started Page might require some skills. This frustrates the instructors and they decide to do the course without updating the Getting Started page.

### **SUGGESTIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS ON QM STANDARD IMPLEMENTATION**

I would recommend that QM #1 be implemented in all the online courses. This is because it is one of the important QM standards of all the other standards. The QM reviewers will be looking very careful at this QM standard when reviewing the course. To be able to pass the criteria, all online courses should pass QM #1.

### **HIGH QUALITY EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATION**

I would highly recommend QM #1 to be implemented. By applying the QM in all the online courses will assure students that they achieve quality education which is dynamic and reflect research findings that meets the national standards of best practice in their course.

