Quality Matters™ Overview
The Quality Matters Program

Quality Assurance through Faculty Development and Course Design
• Quality Matters is a not-for-profit subscription service providing tools and training for quality assurance of online courses

• Developed by MarylandOnline with funding from FIPSE, it was designed by faculty for faculty and focused on improving student learning

• Adopted by a large and broad user base, QM represents a shared understanding of quality in online course design
Quality Matters is ......

- A set of standards (Rubric) for the design of online and blended courses

- A peer review process (faculty to faculty) for reviewing and improving online and hybrid courses

- A faculty support tool used by instructional development staff

- A professional development opportunity
QM is a faculty-driven, peer review process that is...

- **Collaborative**
- **Collegial**
- **Continuous**
- **Centered**
  - in academic foundation
  - around student learning
Factors Affecting Course Quality

Online Quality Pie

- Course Design
- Course Delivery
- Course Content
- Institutional Infrastructure
- LMS
- Faculty Readiness
- Student Readiness

QM ONLY Reviews Course Design

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QM’s Role in Quality Assurance

• QM looks at course design
  • The harnessing of technology to deliver instruction and promote student learning

• QM provides a process for peer-to-peer feedback for faculty in the continuous improvement of their course and certifies courses as meeting shared standards of best practice

• Quality Matters is not the complete answer to quality assurance for online education, but it can be a critical component
What QM is NOT About...

• Not about an individual instructor (it’s about the course)

• Not about faculty evaluation (it’s about course quality)

• Not about judgment (it’s about diagnosis and improvement)

• Not about “win/lose” or “pass/fail” (it’s about continuous improvement in a supportive environment)
QM as a National Standard

- 600+ current subscribers
- 46 states represented
- QM has trained 22,000+ faculty and instructional design staff
- Community Collaboration
  - Largest community collaboration on quality in online education
- Award Winning
  - Sloan-C, USDLA, WCET

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The Rubric is the Core of QM

Consisting of:

• 8 key areas (general standards) of course quality
• 41 specific review standards
  • 21 essential standards
• Detailed annotations and examples of good practice for all 41 standards
Eight General Standards:

1. Course Overview and Introduction
2. Learning Objectives (Competencies)
3. Assessment and Measurement
4. Instructional Materials
5. Learner Interaction & Engagement
6. Course Technology
7. Learner Support
8. Accessibility

**Alignment:** Critical course elements work together to ensure that students achieve the desired learning outcomes.
## Standards Supported by Research

**Literature Support for Specific Review Standards:**

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<tr>
<td>I.1 Navigational instructions make the organization of the course easy to understand. (3)</td>
<td>Janicki and Liegel (2001); Swan (2001); Shirathuddin, Hassan, &amp; Landoni (2003)</td>
<td>SREB CEOC CC</td>
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<td>I.2 There is a statement introducing the student to the course and to how student learning is structured. (3)</td>
<td>Williams (2000); Muirhead (2001); Conrad (2002); Youngblood, Trede, &amp; DeCorpo (2001); Sims, Dobbs, &amp; Hand (2002)</td>
<td>ACE LD 1 SREB CEOC CC</td>
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<td>I.3 Netiquette expectations with regard to discussions and email communication are clarified. (2)</td>
<td>Sims, Dobbs, &amp; Hand (2002); Johnson (2004)</td>
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<td>I.4 The self-introduction by the instructor is appropriate. (1)</td>
<td>Roblyer &amp; Ekhaml (2000); Roblyer &amp; Wiencke (2003)</td>
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<tr>
<td>I.5 Students are requested to introduce themselves to the class. (1)</td>
<td>Gunawardena &amp; Zittle (1997); Anderson, Garrison, &amp; Archer (2001); Roblyer &amp; Ekhaml (2000); Sims</td>
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Course Reviews and Certification

The Peer Review Process
Types of Course Reviews

- Unofficial Reviews
  - Internal/Informal subscriber reviews not required to follow QM process

- Official Reviews – follows QM policies/protocols
  - QM-Managed review - QM manages and pays review team
  - Subscriber-Managed review - Subscriber manages and pays review team
# QM = Process and Rubric

## Process

| OFFICIAL | **Outcome:** Earn QM recognition  
Must follow official QM guidelines and procedures |
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<td><strong>Outcome:</strong> Improve courses, meet institutional goals, demonstrate commitment to quality</td>
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| INFORMAL | **Outcome:** Improve courses, meet institutional goals, demonstrate commitment to quality  
Institutions determine use and procedures |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

## Rubric

| OFFICIAL | **Outcome:** Earn QM recognition  
Tool to assess online courses during formal QM review |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|          | **Outcome:** Improve courses, meet institutional goals  
Guide to develop new online courses AND review and update online courses |

| INFORMAL | **Outcome:** Improve courses, meet institutional goals, demonstrate commitment to quality  
Guide to develop new online courses AND review and update online courses |
On an official review, Review Teams consist of:

- Three QM-Certified Peer Reviewers
  - Pre-requisite: Current online teaching experience & training
- Master Reviewer as Team Chair
  - Peer Reviewer with additional experience and training
- One reviewer must be a subject matter expert
- At least one reviewer must be external to the institution sponsoring the course

**AND**

- Faculty course developer:
  - access to rubric prior to review
  - involved in pre-review discussions
  - consulted during review
The peer feedback provided in a course review is collegial in tone and language; however, the reviews are rigorous and even courses that meet standards will benefit from the detailed, specific, and relevant feedback provided.
QM Certification of Courses

- Course reviews take 4-6 weeks; 20-week window for reviews, including any amendments, to be completed.

- QM recognition is provided by year recognized.

- QM logo on course and catalog; registry on QM Web site.
Capacity Building: QM Roles & Criteria

Peer Reviewers
- Current Online Instructor
- Applying the QM Rubric Workshop (online or F2F)
- Peer Reviewer Course (online)
- Submission of application & MOU (for certification)

Independent Trainers
- Applying the QM Rubric Workshop
- Peer Reviewer Course (certification not required)
- Certified Trainer Workshop
- Institution on Full or Statewide Subscription

Master Reviewers
- Certified QM Peer Reviewer
- Experience on 2+ course reviews
- Master Reviewer Workshop
- Annual Re-certification

Institution Representative
- Applying the QM Rubric Workshop
- Institution Representative Course
- Institution may designate additional IRs

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Quality Matters: 
By Faculty for Faculty

What’s In It for Faculty
What’s In It For Faculty?

• Improvement of online courses
• External quality assurance
• Participation useful for professional development plan and portfolio
• Faculty development trainings
• Review other courses and gain new ideas for own course; expand professional community
Roles for Faculty in QM

Peer Reviewers
- Applying the QM Rubric Workshop
- Peer Reviewer Certification (online)
- Current online instructor

Master Reviewers
- Certified QM Peer Reviewer
- Experience on 2+ course reviews
- Master Reviewer Certification
Tools in the Spirit of the Academy

- Standards grounded in the research literature and best practices
- Tools and process developed by faculty and instructional design experts for faculty support
- Peer review and other opportunities to collaborate and mentor around quality in online learning
Sample Comments from Faculty Developers

• “I was too close to see what could be improved.”

• “Provides a great way to get an objective view of your course.”

• “It made all of my online courses better.”

• “It provides a view from a more student oriented perspective.”

• “Many elements that might contribute to a student withdrawing can be eliminated.”
Sample Comments from Peer Reviewers

- “I always learn new wonderful approaches from viewing other courses and working with expert peer reviewers.”
- “Whenever I read the annotations, I make changes to my courses.”
- “I always find reviews to be a learning experience.”
- “This experience was very rewarding for me as both an educator and course developer.”
- “It’s a great tool for honing your own course.”
Multiple Uses of QM

Reported Uses of QM Tools:

• Guidelines for initial online course development
• Quality assurance of existing courses
• Ongoing faculty professional development
• Institutional re-accreditation packages
• Focus attention on distance learning policies & steering committees
• **Create a campus climate and structure that promotes teaching and learning**
QM is Continuous Improvement

- Improved courses
- Engaged faculty
- Reduced course development time
- Ongoing faculty development
- Quality benchmarking
- Awareness & support for online learning
- Institutional improvement