

E.1.9.1 (Procedure) Online Learning

Responsible Department: Vice Chancellor for Academic Success

Based on Board Policy: [E.1.9](#) – Online Learning

Approved: 1-21-14

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The Alamo Colleges Online (ACOL) is committed to quality teaching and learning. A critical component of maintaining quality online programs is the evaluation process. All faculty teaching online, hybrid, and web enhanced courses will follow best practices based on the Quality Matters™ (QM™) Program review and the teaching and learning quality standards set forth by the Sloan Consortium.

The QM™ Program is a nationally recognized, faculty-centered, peer review process designed to certify the quality of online course design and components. The review process is a researched-based evaluation tool used to: (1) assess quality course design, (2) promote student learning, and (3) inform and guide changes toward continual improvement.

The Sloan Consortium assists institutions and faculty members in improving the quality of online education using a Quality Scorecard for the Administration of Online Programs. The benchmark standards for online teaching and learning are: (1) Course Development and Instructional Design, (2) Course Structure, (3) Teaching and Learning, (4) Social and Student Engagement, and (5) Assessment and Instructor Feedback.

Teaching and Learning Standards and Principles

The following set of standards and principles provide guidelines to ensure quality online instruction and student success. ACOL courses must use the Canvas™ learning management system (LMS) to aid in course administration and delivery of instruction.

Standard 1: Course Development and Instructional Design

All ACOL courses will share a common user interface design to facilitate clear navigation from the homepage to the learning content. Faculty shall include the following online policies on their course syllabus:

- Online office hours
- Policy and procedure specific to the online class (attendance; appropriate interaction and communication, including the rules of “netiquette,” discussion board, etc.)
- Time requirements for completing class work
- Minimum technical skills
- Technology requirements (software, hardware, and program downloads)
- How to get access technical support.

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Standard 2: Course Structure

ACOL courses must identify and communicate learning outcomes and expectations through a course overview/orientation. The course structure must be organized using a modular pattern and include unit/lesson overviews and instructional materials and resources that align with the learning objectives in order to enhance student learning.

Standard 3: Teaching and Learning

ACOL instructors must be certified in the theory and pedagogical practices, and use instructional practices, appropriate for the online environment, to include (1) understanding the differences between teaching online and face-to-face; (2) tailoring instruction to meet the different learning styles of students; (3) creating a learning community that encourages collaboration and interaction, including student-instructor, student-student, and student-content; and (4) using techniques to motivate and engage students in the learning process. ACOL instructors also must engage in professional growth activities and network with other faculty involved in online education to improve practice.

Standard 4: Social and Student Engagement

ACOL courses must use a wide range of teaching and learning activities to assist students in becoming an active participant in a learning community. Instructors must maintain an online social presence that is available, approachable, positive, and interactive. In this manner, instructors model appropriate behavior and proper interaction to create a safe environment for students to communicate and collaborate effectively and consistently.

Standard 5: Assessment and Instructor Feedback

ACOL instructors must create or select multiple assessment instruments that are appropriate for online learning and align with course objectives. Instructors are encouraged to communicate assessment criteria and standards for student performance and participation. Students must also be provided opportunities to self-assess knowledge and skill attainment. Instructors must provide substantive, timely, and constructive feedback to students including deadlines for submission of required assignments.

Standard 6: Authenticity & Privacy

ACOL courses, programs, and services must support the ideals of academic honesty and integrity. Technical means must be adopted to verify that online student submissions are authentic student work. User rights and options when providing personally identifiable

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information (PII) must be protected. To promote a common approach to authenticity, privacy, and to prevent plagiarism, ACOL must have in place technology to support continuous monitoring, authentication, and credential management.

Principles

Principle 1: Course Overview and Instructions

A sufficient overview and instructions are provided with information regarding course goals, expectations, policies, tools used in the course, technical help, and strategies for effective online learning.

Quality Matters™ Recommendations

- Post a welcome message to help students get started.
- Include an orientation for students to get familiar with the terminology and tools used in Canvas.
- Provide contact information (email, phone number, etc.) for technical help in different ways: post in syllabus, homepage, and announcements.
- Provide your contact information, standard response time, and preferred communication methods (such as email, phone, etc.).
- Provide online office hours as needed.
- Provide guidelines for online communication to help students learn more effectively, such as etiquette expectations with regard to discussions, email, and other forms of communication.
- Provide resources and strategies for online learning and explain how learning online is different than learning in a classroom.
- Include a Student FAQ (*e.g.*, common questions about courses, course materials, software, skills and knowledge requirements, plagiarism and academic integrity, etc.).
- Require students to post self-introductions to create a community of learners.
- Provide a course schedule, including lessons, reading and other assignments and deadlines, projects, quizzes, exams or papers, and/or other learning activities.

Principle 1.2: Learning Objectives

The learning objectives are measurable, observable, and focused on the learner. The objectives are articulated in the syllabus and written to promote intellectual growth and cultivate critical thinking and informed understanding of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes students should be able to exhibit following instruction.

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Quality Matters™ Recommendations

- Course learning objectives are measurable.
- Module/unit learning objectives describe outcomes that are measurable and consistent with the course-level objectives.
- Learning objectives are stated clearly and written from the students' perspective.
- Instructions to students on how to meet the learning objectives are adequate and stated clearly.
- Learning objectives address content mastery, critical thinking skills, and core learning skills.

Principle 1.3: Assessment and Measurement

The course uses multiple strategies and activities to assess student progress, applies specific assessment standards, and provides students with feedback on their progress.

Quality Matters™ Recommendations

- Use a variety of assessment strategies that measure the stated learning objectives and are consistent with course activities and resources.
- The course grading policy is stated clearly.
- Specific and descriptive criteria are provided for the evaluation of student's work and participation.
- The assessment instruments selected are sequenced, varied, and appropriate to the content being assessed.
- "Self-check" or practice assignments are provided for timely student feedback.

Principle 1.4: Resources and Materials

The selected resources and instructional materials support the learning objectives and link across other subject areas to demonstrate relevance and connectedness with what is being taught and how key ideas can apply to a range of academic disciplines and careers.

Quality Matters™ Recommendations

- Instructional materials support the stated learning objectives.
- Instructional materials have sufficient breadth, depth, and currency for the student to learn the subject.
- The selected resources and materials are explained.
- Instructional materials are logically sequenced and integrated.
- All resources and materials are appropriately cited.

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Principle 1.5: Learner Engagement

The course content is aligned with learning objectives and provides multiple ways of engaging students with learning experiences to demonstrate mastery of content.

Quality Matters™ Recommendations

- Learning activities promote the achievement of stated learning objectives.
- Learning activities foster student-instructor, student-student, and/or student-content contact.
- Clear standards are set for instructor response and availability (turn-around time for email, grade posting, etc.).
- Requirements for course interaction are clearly articulated.
- Course design prompts the instructor to be active and engaged with students.

Alamo Colleges Online Peer Review

The District Director of ACOL will serve as the primary institutional representative for the Alamo Colleges and designate the Master Reviewer or Team Chair. The Master Reviewer will select the review team from a database of trained, available online faculty. The review team will consist of three faculty members – one content expert, one outside reviewer, and one internal reviewer certified in the Quality Matters™ Peer Review Process and having online teaching experience. Each college will provide a faculty member to serve as the local institutional representative to coordinate and support online course certification and the peer review process.