WHAT ARE ESSENTIAL QUALITY INDICATORS FOR MY ONLINE COURSE?

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Does my online course show "quality"?

- **What are the essentials for online course quality?**

Let's Do a Poll!

Meet Stearns Center Digital Learning Quality Assurance Team

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Today's Mini-Workshop

Questions We Will Address

- What are Stearns Center resources for online course quality, and where to find these resources?
- What are examples of essential elements for online quality?
- What are some of _your_ examples of online quality? (Breakout group discussion)
- How to contact QA Team for guidance?

Where to start? ·····················

Online Course Quality Website

Faculty Self-Checklist

Online Essential Elements

Online Quality Website

Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning

Online Course Quality

HOME / KNOWLEDGE CENTER / ONLINE COURSE QUALITY

The Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning at George Mason University is committed to supporting excellence in online courses and online teaching that meet and exceed research-based quality standards. The Center's Digital Learning Team has adapted standards to design a recommended inventory of quality indicators for faculty to consider when designing and teaching their online course. These guidelines provide a list of important online course design and teaching elements, reflecting online quality standards and selected examples.

Designing Your Syllabus
General Teaching Resources
Course and Curriculum (Re)Design
Teaching with Active Learning
Teaching Multilingual Learners
Student Engagement & Classroom Management
Knowing Mason Students

https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/knowledge-center/online-course-quality/

Online Course Design & Accessibility

3 quality areas
18 quality indicators

Online Teaching & Facilitation

4 quality areas
24 quality indicators

Faculty Self-Checklist

Quality Assurance Checklist & Guidelines

- Available from **Stearns Center Digital Learning QA Team**
- Use link on Online Quality website to submit your request

Online Essentials Infographic

- Use **Online Course Quality: Essential Elements** to get the most out of your course with these must-have quality elements

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ONLINE COURSE QUALITY: ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Get the most out of your course with these *must-have* quality elements. Check out our *Quality Assurance Checklist and Guidelines for Online Courses* for a complete outline!

ORGANIZATION AND NAVIGATION

Content is key! Make it easy to find with a consistent and logical layout. **Try using modules or weekly lessons.**

Start off on the right foot with our template!

BE PRESENT

Of all the possible relationships within a course, the one between you and your students is the most important! Students want to see that you are right there with them throughout their learning experience.

- Presence starts with authenticity. Don't be afraid to share a little bit about yourself with students.
- Host virtual office hours.
- Respond to student messages (ideally within 24 hrs).
- Send weekly announcements that provides an overview and helps to connect the dots.
- When in doubt, communicate, communicate, communicate!

SYLLABUS

Check out our *Designing Your Syllabus* page to discover everything you'll need to create a complete syllabus.

IT ALL LIES ON APPLICATION:

Increase engagement by focusing on real-world applications. The goal is not only for students to complete your course, but to also think about how their work has the potential to impact them and the world.

Begin with simple, low-stakes activities to get comfortable with new assessment strategies and provide time and opportunity for your students to ask questions and submit feedback. Focus on activities that apply what students are learning to real-world problems, challenges, and situations to increase engagement.

In an online environment, consider additional opportunities you might not tried in the past. The Internet is full of content, resources, simulations, data sets (and more!) that are readily available. You might even think about how to incorporate your students' community or environment so they can apply their learning locally.

PROVIDE REGULAR FEEDBACK TO KEEP STUDENTS INFORMED ABOUT THEIR PROGRESS.

When learning new skills, students need feedback that helps them determine whether or not they are doing the right thing. Feedback is most effective when presented in a descriptive and genuine manner. It should be delivered to a student in response to their work in a timely fashion to allow time and space for them to address any necessary revisions.

Utilizing a variety of multiple, low-stakes assessments throughout your course provides students a clearer picture of what they are learning. By increasing the number of assessments, you also provide more opportunities for feedback and improvement, reducing the stress associated with any single assessment.

INCLUSIVITY!

From course materials to teaching methods, the decisions you make about your course may privilege some students while disadvantaging others.

- Set Expectations
- Iteratively Improve
- Communicate & Collaborate

Iterate on your course design and solicit student feedback to maintain an engaging course. Consider diversity in your content selection and provide multiple assessment opportunities to keep students informed about their progress.

Create an inclusive space by setting expectations for conduct early - consider DEI policies, preferred pronouns, and promote confidence!

An inclusive environment starts with you! Plan out group formation, invite diverse contributions, and allow time for reflection.

LEARN MORE!

Visit the Stearns Center's website to discover even more tips and resources for designing your next online course!

SPEAKING OF INCLUSION

What to see how accessible your course is? Turn on Blackboard Ally and check the gauges - it's as easy as that!

- Low (0-34%) Needs help!
- Medium (34-66%) A little better
- High (67-99%) Almost there
- Perfect (100%) Perfect

<u>Must-Have</u> Online Quality Essentials

Organization and Navigation

Evidence of clear course structure, navigation and organization

- Organized Blackboard course menu
- Getting Started information
- Orientation video
- Folders or Learning Modules
- Weekly schedule
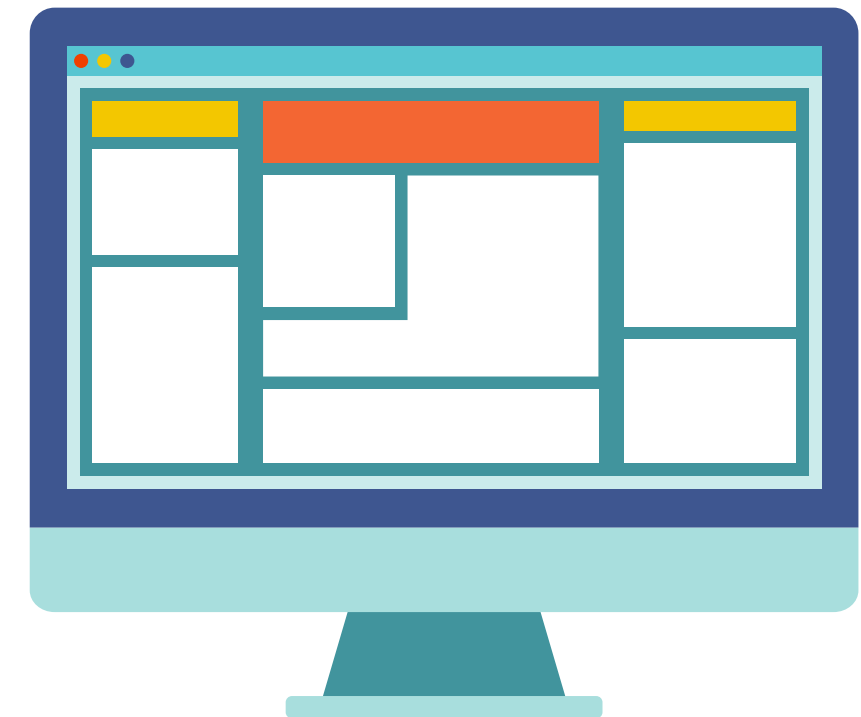
Recommend use of Stearns Center Blackboard Template

Must-Have Online Quality Essentials

Clear and Comprehensive Syllabus

Evidence that Syllabus is learner-centered, clear, transparent and comprehensive

- Include basic course info, course description, instructor contact infomation, assignment information
- Include institutional services and policies, academic integrity policies, links to FERPA and privacy policies, student services, and technology support information
- Consult your department for any departmental syllabus requirements

** Recommend check out Stearns Center Designing Your Syllabus page **

Must-Have Online Quality Essentials

Content, Activities & Assessments Support Learning & Engagement

Evidence of learner engagement and focus on real-world applications

- All content, activities, and assessments support the course learning outcomes
- Activities and assessments apply what students are learning to real-world problems, challenges, and situations, *e.g.,* authentic assessments
- Assessments are varied, sequenced, and paced throughout the course
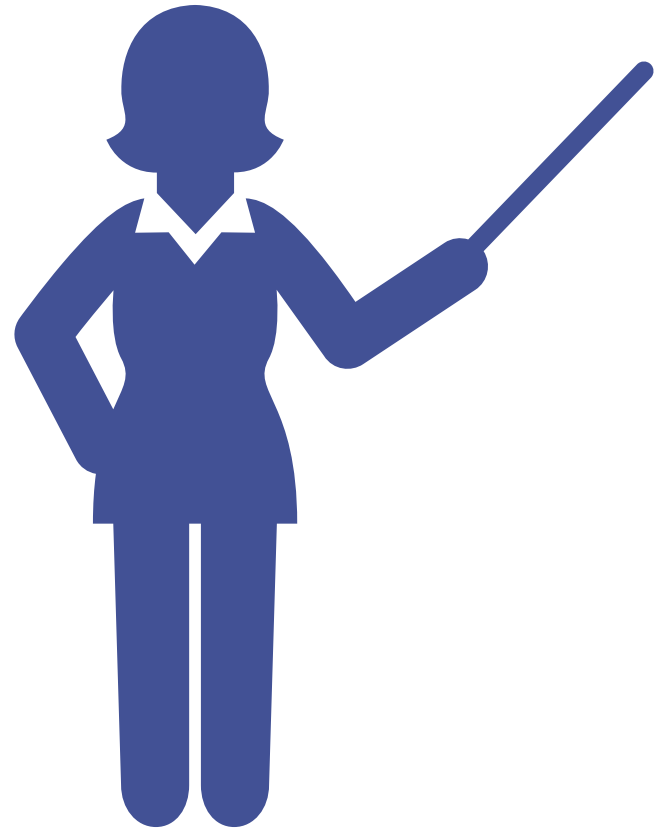
Recommend to check with Mason Subject Librarians for help finding digital content, resources, videos, images

Must-Have Online Quality Essentials

Instructor Presence

Evidence that instructor checks on the course regularly & participates in the course per departmental standards

- Post a welcome video and introduce yourself to your students
- Host virtual office hours; be available for individual consultations
- Post weekly announcements to provide overview, reminders & to make connections
- Reach out to students who are not participating or who've fallen behind

** Recommend use of Blackboard Retention Center to identify at-risk students **

Must-Have Online Quality Essentials

Feedback

Evidence that instructor provides regular, constructive feedback

- Feedback should be specific, transparent, timely, actionable, and frequent
- Use of various tools and strategies for effective and efficient feedback, *e.g.*, written, audio, and video feedback
- Assign a variety of multiple, low-stakes assessments throughout your course, so that students can get feedback about their learning

**Recommend use of Blackboard rubrics to supplement instructor feedback **

<u>Must-Have</u> Online Quality Essentials

Inclusivity

Evidence of an inclusive classroom environment in which all learners are welcomed, respected, and supported.

- Develop community principles, together with your class, so that students' ideas and viewpoints will be heard and respected
- Consider diversity in your content selection
- Use Universal Design for Learning Guidelines

Recommend use of inclusive language, students' names, and their preferred personal pronouns

Must-Have Online Quality Essentials
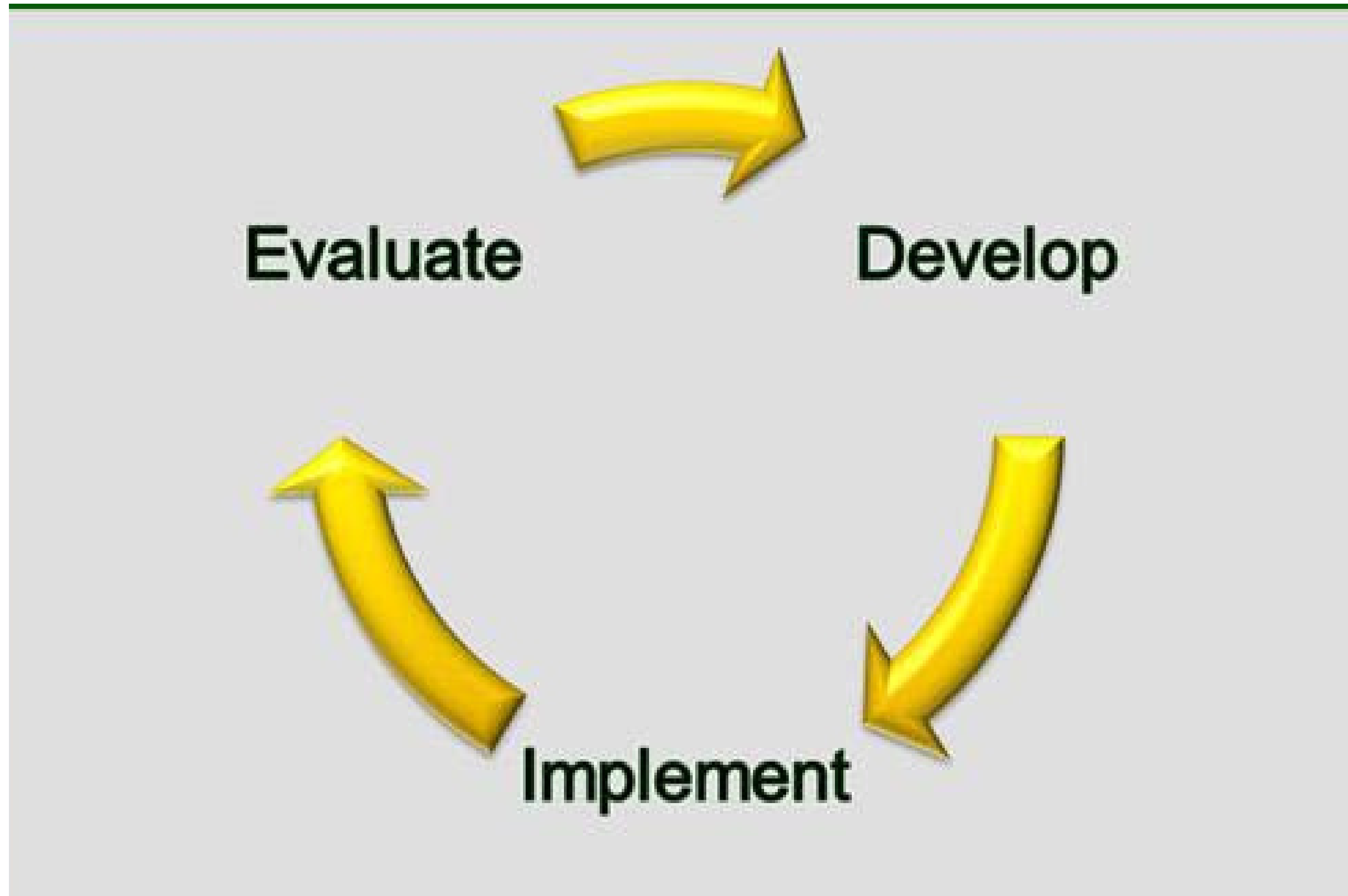
Accessibility

Evidence that course is accessible to all learners

- All documents, course materials, media, and tools are 508 compliant
- All videos have captions and transcripts
- Use Blackboard Ally to check on accessibility of documents and images
- Contact ATI for help with accessibility of your online course

Recommend use of Blackboard Ally to check and remediate documents and images

Low (0-36%)
Needs help!

Medium (34-66%)
A little better

High (67-99%)
Almost there

Perfect (100%)
Perfect

Cycle of Continuous Improvement

Does my online course show "quality"?

- What are YOUR practices for quality?
- What do you want to explore?

Break-Out Groups

Your Next Steps Toward Quality

1

**Use Faculty
Self-Checklist**

2

**Request &
Review QA
Guidelines**

3

**Check
Essential
Infographic**

Need Guidance?

Contact Stearns Center
Digital Learning
Quality Assurance
Team at
qateam@gmu.edu