

Use of Quality Matters in Online Nursing Courses: Perspective of the Professor

Dr. Kristy Oden

Associate Professor, Chair – Graduate Programs, University of North Alabama, Anderson College of Nursing and Health Professions, 1 Harrison Plaza, Florence, AL 35632, USA.

kooden@una.edu

**Corresponding Author: Dr. Kristy Oden, Associate Professor, Chair–Graduate Programs, University of North Alabama, Anderson College of Nursing and Health Professions, Florence, AL, USA.*

Abstract

Quality Matters (QM) helps professors develop and present online courses that exhibit alignment between the course objectives and the course delivery. The QM Rubric, when applied to online course delivery, allows for academic freedom while striving for quality in the courses. It also provides nursing professors with the opportunity to incorporate QSEN, the essentials, and other competencies into their curriculum in an organized fashion.

Keywords: *Quality matters; Quality Matters Certification; Online Nursing; Professor; QSEN.*

INTRODUCTION

Quality Matters (QM) has a grassroots beginning dating back to 2003 (1). As online learning began to expand and grow, the questions of how to not only measure the quality of online courses but how to guarantee it evolved. As educators, nurses, and humans, we know that technology is every changing and it is certainly a challenge to keep up. When technology combines with education, the challenge grows exponentially. Higher education professors were being tasked with creating online courses from scratch and from existing courses. The demand for online education continues to rise (2) and with that demand comes a higher demand for quality education. By 2006, QM had received a grant to develop the first rubric (1). The goal of the rubric was three-fold:

- Train and empower faculty to evaluate courses against these standards
- Provide guidance for improving quality of courses
- Certify the quality of online and blended courses across institutions (1)

In 2006, QM became nationally recognized and began impacting the quality of teaching at many levels

(1). Over the years, the QM rubric has evolved, but remains true to the overall mission, to improve online education (1).

As a professor entering the world of higher education from a predominantly practice background, online teaching and the concepts that surround it was foreign. There are best practices for online teaching such as communication with students, best approaches to active listening, diversity, and many learning opportunities (3). Not only were there best practices to follow, but nurse competencies. As a result of the Institute of Medicines Report and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Quality and Safety Education for Nurses (QSEN) was developed as a set of competencies for nursing programs to follow (4). There is also the American Associations of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) Essentials that are the basis for building nursing programs on (5). How does all of this tie together? How can a professor and a program ensure that they are meeting all the requirements set forth by the essentials and competencies? The answer came in the form of quality matters!

DISCUSSION

Introduced to Quality Matters (QM) in 2015 through the Applying the QM Rubric course nursing

professors now have a way to link or tie all of these elements together (1). The QM process begins with course development (1). Whether the professor is experienced or inexperienced, he or she can learn from the QM process and from applying the QM rubric to their course (1). Understanding the rubric and seeing how alignment of course objectives to activities in the course is of extreme importance (1). Then being able to tie those course objectives to the program and university goals is also essential (1). The process is a multi-step process beginning with development of the course, submission of the course, pre-conference call, review period (with or without amendments), and the decision (1).

The professor should use the QM rubric to help in guiding the development of their course. In many instances, the institution in which the professor is employed at has instructional designers available to assist with course development. Professors should use all available resources that QM has on their website (www.qualitymatters.org) along with their institutional resources. Remember, the professor is responsible to course content; the QM rubric just helps with delivery of the content. QM does not take away academic freedom.

Let's discuss the rubric for a moment. Since the development of the QM rubric, it has gone through six revisions, with the most current in 2018 (1). The QM rubric is broken down into eight general standards, 42 specific review standards (23 essential review standards, 12 very important specific review standards, and seven important specific review standards) (1). The rubric is worth 100 points and an individual must score a minimum of 85 points to have a successful review (1). Decisions are made based on a met or not met basis. For a course to be met, it first has to meet the 23 essential review standards (1). If an essential element is not met, the course will need amending. If the amendment is minor, or can be achieved quickly, the master reviewer may allow the change to be made and the course review to continue. If the amendments are time consuming and/or major, the initial review will continue and the course will enter an amendment phase. The essential standards are worth three points each for a total of 69 points (1). The minimum number of points needed to achieve a met review is 85 (1). The difference between the 69 points and the 85 points can be obtained by meeting a combination of very important and important specific

review standards. Very important specific review standards are worth two points each and important review standards are worth one point each (1).

The review process is peer review based. The team consists of a master reviewer (someone who has had obtained a Master Reviewer certificate), a subject matter expert, and a peer reviewer (1). Both the subject matter expert and the peer reviewer must, at minimum, hold a peer reviewer certificate. All certificates are obtained through Quality Matters professional development courses. The team begins the review process with a conference call with the professor of the course and the schools instructional designer or representative (1). The pre-conference call helps to set the tone for the entire review and allows the reviewers an opportunity to ask questions of the professor. It also allows the professor the opportunity to explain about their course and point out any details they feel would help the reviewers.

The three reviewers are charged with ensuring that the course meets the essentials established in the rubric. Each reviewer must provide the professor with meaningful comments related to each essential. If the essential is not met, the reviewer should provide feedback on ways to meet the essential. If the essential is met, the reviewers should then provide the professor with meaningful feedback on potential improvements or changes. The professor can then take the reviewers feedback and incorporate it into their course, ultimately leading to a course that fully emerges the Quality Matters Rubric into their online course (1).

Once the professor receives a quality matters certification for his/her course, then they can proudly display it in their course shell. Certification is valid for three years (1). Courses can undergo minor revisions and updates during this three-year period and the institutions instructional designer can help in guiding the professor in making acceptable changes that maintain alignment of the course.

What does QM mean for students? Students enrolled in a course that has been Quality Matters Certified should be able to visually see how their course objectives align with their course assignments, activities, and discussions. These students may have a course map that allows them to follow their progress and track their progression throughout the course. Thanks to QM, students can no longer say they are doing "busy work."

Use of Quality Matters in Online Nursing Courses: Perspective of the Professor

For the nursing professor, obtaining Quality Matters Certification of one or more courses is an academic achievement. It means that he/she has taken a subject that he/she is a subject matter expert in and created the course content. Then, he/she has applied the QM rubric so that his/her course shows alignment, and that a student will achieve the expected outcome in the end. The professor has taken pride in his/her course and has excelled in developing and implementing a quality course! Within the nursing profession, there are many different standards, essentials, and outcomes that must be met. If Quality Matters is utilized, it makes the application of QSEN, AACN essentials, and other required outcomes much easier and provides a mapping or tracking system for accrediting bodies. A nursing professor can certainly not go wrong by learning the Quality Matters process and applying it to their courses!

REFERENCES

- [1] Quality Matters. 2018. Retrieved from www.qualitymatters.org[Accessed 19th June 2018]
- [2] Inside Higher Ed. (2018). Retrieved from www.insidehighered.com [Accessed 19th June 2018]
- [3] Alexander, R. (2017). *Best Practices in Online Teaching and Learning Across Academic Disciplines*. George Mason Press, Fairfax, Virginia.
- [4] Quality and Safety Education for Nurses. (2018). Retrieved from www.qsen.org[Accessed 19th June 2018]
- [5] American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2018). Retrieved from www.aacnnursing.org[Accessed 19th June 2018]

Citation: Dr. Kristy Oden. *Use of Quality Matters in Online Nursing Courses: Perspective of the Professor*. *Open Access Journal of Nursing*. 2018; 1(1): 30-32.

Copyright: © 2018 Dr. Kristy Oden This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.