

RECOMMENDATIONS
TO VICE-PROVOST, DR.
KAMEL HADDAD, FOR
QUALITY ONLINE
TEACHING AND
LEARNING

Originator: Quality of Online Teaching Team

Recommendations to Vice Provost for QOLT

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Glossary

- IDS: Instructional Development Services
- IITS: Instructional and Informational Technology Services
- QA: Quality Assurance
- QOLT: Quality Online Learning and Teaching (CSU-wide initiative)
- QOTT: Quality Online Teaching Team (at CSUSM)
- RFP: Request for Proposals

Recommendations for Quality Online Teaching and Learning (QOLT) from the Quality Online Teaching Team (QOTT)

INTRODUCTION:

The Quality Online Teaching Team is comprised of the following members (in alphabetical order):

Veronica Anover (Faculty Center Faculty Fellow for Online Teaching and Learning)

Laura Makey (Faculty Center Faculty Associate)

Kendra Rivera (Faculty Center Faculty Associate)

Jodi Robledo (LATAC Faculty Liaison)

Lea Roberg-Chao (Faculty Center Faculty Associate)

Barbara Taylor (IDS)

Cherie Vinopal (IDS)

Susan Wilson (IDS)

QOTT's recommendations were drafted in consultation with Senate Standing Committee Chairs, extensive research about online teaching excellence and weekly QOTT meetings. QOTT also took into consideration past reports and surveys about online teaching and learning¹.

California State University San Marcos is joining a nationwide community of institutions (faculty, staff and administrators) who have already established –or are in the process of establishing- quality online practices. Many campuses across the nation have adopted or are developing a process to achieve online teaching excellence. We believe the recommendations in this report will help move CSUSM forward in this national conversation.

In order to create and foster a culture of excellence in face-to-face and online teaching on our campus, we believe that the process of developing and implementing QOLT practices needs to be faculty² driven. Hence the way these recommendations are presented will be

¹ Please refer to Appendices

² When QOTT refers to “faculty,” we intend to include all faculty members: lecturers, tenure-track, and tenured faculty.

key for encouraging faculty engagement and implementation. We believe this process should focus on the unique skills needed to teach online courses well, which may be different than those skills traditionally associated with teaching face-to-face courses. Many of these skills may be acquired and practiced through training and professional development.

We recommend that decisions about what courses are taught online and by whom remain the purview of the department by which they are offered. We also recommend that course content remain the purview and property of the individual faculty who create and teach online courses.

However, we believe a campus-wide conversation about quality online teaching is productive and can lead to more effective online teaching for our students. We look forward to engaging students, faculty, administration and staff in this process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

QOTT makes the following recommendations:

- We recommend Quality Online Teaching (QOLT) training and potential certification/recognition be **voluntary**, not mandatory. We recommend cultivating an organizational culture of excellence in teaching, both online and face-to-face.
- We recommend adopting the CSU QOLT Instrument as a guide in the design, delivery and evaluation of online teaching.
 - The QOLT Instrument is based on scholarly research and extensive review by many institutions and committees (See Appendix 1). The QOLT Instrument does not evaluate the content of the course, but rather serves as a guide in online course development and delivery.
 - The use of the QOLT instrument can be supplemented with materials and development processes that reflect the culture and needs of CSUSM.
- We recommend two types of QOLT Training and Certification³:
 - **QOLT Professional Development Training**: This faculty training would target faculty who have never taught online or would like to improve their online teaching skills. Ideally, faculty would take this training while deigning

³ We have based our recommendations on survey results conducted with faculty who received QOLT training who indicated (90%) that QOLT training improved the quality of their online (and face-to-face) courses; (90%) recommended QOLT training. We have also sought input from the Academic Senate Chair and Chairs of Senate Standing Committees.

new online courses. Training would include workshops, classes, summer institutes, etc. that give broader instruction. For example, training might include topics such as: syllabus geared toward online learners, course design and organization, assessing online SLOs, student engagement in an online environment and use of appropriate technologies. Faculty who complete Professional Development Training would receive a Quality Online Teaching Certificate.

- **QOLT Course Certification:** This is a rigorous process for evaluation and improvement of an online course using the CSU QOLT Instrument. Participation is encouraged for faculty who have completed the QOLT Professional Development Training or who have already delivered an online course. Trained QOLT Review Teams⁴ lead faculty through a process of evaluation that takes place after the course has been offered, so that online teaching interactions and the execution of the course can be explored. QOLT Course Certification will be awarded to courses that meet 85% of the QOLT Instrument objectives, including all 24 Essential Objectives.

- We recommend QOLT Professional Development Training and QOLT Course Certification be incentivized by a culture of excellence in online teaching that includes:
 - Formal recognition in the form of a meaningful letter stating what QOLT training and certification means for the professor and/or course. This may also include a “certificate,” and would be used in the RTP process.
 - Institutionalized processes for recognition of quality online teaching, as lead by administration such as Deans, Provost, and the President. This may include college and university level annual awards for Quality Online Teaching, as developed by those offices.
 - Foster a community of practice by creating opportunities through the faculty center for faculty to share their experiences and best practices. This will provide faculty with a support system.
 - Financial recognition, particularly for design of new online courses, and faculty who have not yet been trained or had a course complete QOLT Certification. This is a short-term consideration as we encourage and implement a culture of quality online teaching.

- We recommend the University proactively address student preparedness for online learning. The QOLT Instrument and Training are designed to engage students, and

⁴ QOLT Review Teams consist of faculty and IDS who have been trained in online peer review using the QOLT Instrument.

additional student preparedness increases students' success in online courses as well as their retention at the University. We recommend the following for addressing student preparedness and equity in online learning:

- Utilize a Faculty Fellow or Faculty Learning Community to research and develop data and potential online student learning resources and early intervention programs in conjunction with the Chancellor's Office's programs in this area.
- Implement a section about online learning in 1st Year Programs
- Locate or create additional materials for first time online learners; non-traditional learners; or learners with disabilities.
- Consider and address issues of equity and access, particularly with regard to access to technology and student support services for online learning. For example, online students need to have access to resources such as the writing center, math lab, student advising and real-time access to technology support systems.
- Department chairs can clearly designate courses as face-to-face, hybrid and fully online in the Class Schedule. Clear designation allows students to have accurate information for decision-making in their course enrollment.

- We recommend improved technical support and processes for Online Teaching
 - Need daily access to technical support, particularly during winter session or nontraditional academic semester periods
 - Need timely information about known updates or changes to technology systems

- We recommend the process for student evaluation of online instruction be specifically tailored towards the online instruction and learning environment .
 - Inform faculty members when the evaluations are sent to students to avoid or improve low student responses
 - Create online-specific evaluation survey questions in alignment with the QOLT Student Survey, which aligns with the QOLT Instrument for instructors

- We recommend that course enrolment maximum capacities correspond to traditional face-to-face course enrollment, with teaching support (TAs/Graders) offered for high enrollment courses.

- We recommend university-wide education of Faculty to encourage a culture of quality online teaching and provide information about on-line teaching at CSUSM.
 - Provide faculty with information about CourseMatch, and any other policy changes, CSU initiatives, or state legislation impacting online instruction

- Provide faculty with information about and training opportunities for engaging the QOLT Instrument and other quality online teaching information
- Provide department chairs and faculty with information pertaining to WASC standards and requirements specific for online courses.

- We recommend the university not contract private or public companies to deliver, train and support online courses or programs without the approval of the current review process (UCC, Senate, etc.).
 - Develop and communicate a clear rationale and decision-making process for having online courses “hosted” by either Extended Learning or stateside, etc.
 - Consult WASC standards and requirements to ensure that online courses adhere to WASC’s criteria for accreditation.

- We recommend a pilot program to establish a peer review process for online teaching excellence using the QOLT Instrument. This pilot program will be administered in three phases over 18 months:
 - **Phase One⁵**: Fall, 2014
Faculty Associates begin QOLT Peer Review process for CSUSM. Pilot peer review process will be completed on 2-5 different courses. In addition, ten faculty members will conduct self-evaluations of their online courses using the QOLT Instrument.
 - **Phase Two⁶**: SPRING/SUMMER, 2015
Faculty Associates discuss how first peer and self-review pilot went during Phase One. Revisions and refinements will be made. Faculty Associates will send out a “Call for Proposals” to faculty University-wide. Based on applicants from CFP, approximately 6-10 courses from a variety of disciplines will be peer-reviewed.
 - **Phase Three**: Fall, 2015
Faculty Associates will discuss and evaluate Phase One and Phase Two, making any needed revisions to the process. Based on these refinements, a process will be finalized and recommendations for adoption will be made.

⁵ For this Phase One, we followed what was requested in the RFP

⁶ The Faculty Center and IDS are currently putting together a second proposal requesting funds for this phase

APPENDICES

1. QOLT Instrument Research and Background

The following information is taken directly from the CSU [QOLT website](#).

“The Quality Online Learning and Teaching (QOLT) evaluation instrument was developed after review of related research and literature, as well as careful consideration of existing models for assessing effective online teaching and learning.”

- [Rubric for Online Instruction](#): Designed to assist development and evaluation of online courses while promoting dialog about student learning. Developed at CSU Chico in 2003, ROI is now adopted at over 100 institutions of higher education. Chico has just recently chosen to adopt QOLT as their campus evaluation instrument due to the huge success they have had in its use on campus.
- [Quality Matters](#): Developed through a FIPSE grant from 2003-2006, QM is a faculty-centered, peer-review process designed to certify the quality of online and blended courses. It has an [extensive scholarly research article database](#) of evidence that supports each objective.
- [Quality Online Course Initiative](#): An online course rubric and evaluation system developed in the state of Illinois to help colleges and universities improve accountability of their online courses.
- [National Survey of Student Engagement](#): Hundreds of four-year colleges and universities surveyed since 2000 about student participation in programs and activities provided for their learning and personal development.
- [Community of Inquiry](#): Addresses course quality on three aspects: Social Presence, Teaching Presence, and Cognitive Presence.

“QOLT was also informed by research on effective teaching and learning that pre-dates, yet greatly informs, modern online teaching and learning (e.g., “7 Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education” by Chickering & Gamson, 1987).”

“In addition, the QOLT instrument and process were greatly informed by a pilot that took place from August – December 2011 and was shaped by the input of several CSU groups and individuals. The following groups were consulted on weekly-to-monthly bases. QOLT was revised in September 2012, based on input from these groups, as well as from Campus Coordinators and faculty participants from the 2011-2012 program cycle.”

- CSU, Learning Management System Services (system representation; weekly)
- CSU Moodle, Common Interest Group (10 campuses represented; bi-weekly)
- CSU BlackBoard, Common Interest Group (11 campuses represented; bi-weekly)
- CSU QOLT Advisory and Review Board (5 participants from 5 campuses; twice)
- CSU Directors of Academic Technology, Online Teaching Certification sub-group (twice)
- CSU Faculty Development Council (twice)

2. QOLT Objectives – enclosed

3. Report on Online Instruction at CSUSM (by Veronica Anover)- enclosed

4. RFP for QA (Spring 14)-enclosed

5. CSU Academic Senate Online Education White Paper:

[http://www.calstate.edu/AcadSen/Records/Reports/documents/Online Education White Paper.pdf](http://www.calstate.edu/AcadSen/Records/Reports/documents/Online_Education_White_Paper.pdf)

6. Link for the RFP call and Ongoing Programs to Support QA:

<http://courseredesign.csuprojects.org/wp/qa/>

7. Enrollment Bottleneck Solutions Initiative (CourseMatch information):

<http://courseredesign.csuprojects.org/wp/>