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Distance up close

NEWS FROM THE OFFICE OF DISTANCE LEARNING

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Quality course design is a critical component of online education. The term "quality" can mean many different things. For students, quality may mean that the course design or class interactions met their expectations. It may also mean they felt the course was worth the price of tuition. For faculty, a quality course may mean one that lived up to the instructor's goals or vision, engaged and inspired students, and met the learning objectives.

At the Office of Distance Learning, we feel quality is all of these things. Supporting high-quality online course development is an essential principle of our strategic plan. Everything we do, from exploring new tools and technologies to developing workshops and policies, is guided through the lens of fostering quality in our online courses and programs.

In this edition of *Distance Up Close*, we'd like to share the different ways we can help you incorporate quality in your online courses and your teaching and learning environment. We're particularly excited about new initiatives for high-quality course design where you can work one-on-one with our instructional development faculty. Among these initiatives are a revamped course development model and incentives to complete training in the Quality Matters (QM) Rubric.

FSU uses the research-based QM rubric to assess the quality of online course design and materials. We've created a course template that will help you address a majority of the rubric's standards and be on your way to achieving a quality course.

Additionally, we're excited to promote our FSU Emergency Module, which is designed to help instructors and students be prepared and stay connected in the event of an emergency. Available for both distance learning and face-to-face courses, the module includes activities that keep students engaged as well as resources for emergency preparation and assistance.

Keep us in mind as you settle into the semester and don't hesitate to let us know how we can assist you in ensuring the quality of your courses and programs.

Sincerely,
Robby Fuselier

IN THE NEWS

QM Rubric Guides Quality Course Design

ODL uses the nationally known Quality Matters (QM) Rubric to assess the quality of FSU's online courses. The rubric's eight general standards serve as building blocks to guide instructors in the creation of a high-quality course. Most of the standards are common practices of good teaching that instructors implement every day in the classroom, such as course objectives, assessments, and instructional materials. However, a challenge can arise when an instructor needs to map out the course in advance. Instructors can occasionally become overwhelmed when they have to plan an entire semester of all the moving parts of a course, from weekly objectives to assignments to accessible course materials.

The QM rubric can help provide clarity on how instructors can approach some of the more challenging areas of quality course design.

- **Module-level objectives.** Instructors typically do well writing overall course objectives. Often the greater challenge is to break down objectives into weekly or module-level elements. In online courses, module-level objectives are critical because ideally they are aligned with the materials, activities, and assessments and help students focus their learning in the way the instructor intended. In a sense, module-level objectives serve as a study guide for the unit. Module objectives should be as specific as possible. Using active verbs from Bloom's Taxonomy is a good place to start.
- **Student feedback.** Feedback is important in online courses because that is where individual instruction can really occur. However, providing all that individual feedback can be time-consuming. Course rubrics, used along with the SpeedGrader tool in Canvas, can reduce workload and help instructors provide feedback more consistently and efficiently. Rubrics can be used in assignment areas such as discussion posts, projects, and media presentations. Feedback can be given in SpeedGrader using text, audio, or video. Students respond positively to hearing and/or seeing their instructors provide feedback on individual assignments.
- **Content accessibility.** Instructors teaching both face-to-face and online courses often have inaccessible documents, including PowerPoints, PDFs and Word files. Some ways to ensure documents are accessible include using heading styles in Word and making sure that scanned documents are converted into text using optical character recognition. FSU Libraries can assist faculty in locating accessible materials including journals, textbooks, and media. Videos uploaded into the Kaltura media platform are automatically machine captioned and can be easily edited using upgraded video captioning technology. Captioning ensures courses meet accessibility standards by providing an alternate means of receiving content.

Being proactive with the above areas can go a long way in developing a quality course. ODL instructional development faculty are available to help you with the above issues or any area of course design you desire. Please contact us for assistance.

ODL Raises the Bar on Quality

FSU's faculty will be known for their expertise in digital instruction and recognized for fostering quality in programs and courses, as stated in the second goal of ODL's strategic plan. To address this goal, we'll be introducing new initiatives in the next year to expand faculty knowledge as well as quality online course offerings.

Faculty are already benefiting from our internship program, which launched in Spring 2019. ODL and the College of Education's Instructional Systems and Learning Technologies program have collaborated on a program that pairs faculty with an instructional design graduate student for assistance with building or refreshing an online course. Interns receive a stipend and training to become certified to apply the Quality Matters (QM) Rubric. "I found that Opal Ringo was always prepared and knowledgeable about how I could design my course more efficiently and effectively for maximum student learning," said Dr. Taylor Clement, a visiting assistant professor in the English Department, who received assistance with ENC 2135: Research, Genre, and Context.

Another new initiative involves faculty receiving a stipend to complete training on quality course design and then applying the principles learned to their courses. Faculty will work with members of ODL's instructional development team to update their courses to receive the Board of Governors' (BOG) "high quality" course designation. Instructional Development Faculty Dr. Kerry Burner is earning QM online facilitator certification for the first level of QM rubric training, Applying the Quality Matters Rubric (APPQMR). This will allow FSU to offer QM rubric training, which results in the same certification by QM in APPQMR.

All FSU faculty and staff, including student employees, are eligible to enroll in the two-week, online APPQMR workshop. "Offering the training in-house not only broadens the scope of potential participants due to the greatly reduced cost of attendance, it allows us to be more responsive in meeting the needs of FSU's online course developers," said Burner. "We hope to offer a pilot toward the end of fall and will officially start our QM training the first week of the Spring 2020 semester." For more information about the internship program or QM training, contact Dr. Kerry Burner.

ODL's course development model will also receive a refresh. "Our courses have done a good job meeting basic QM quality standards, but we want to support faculty who are willing to take their courses to the highest standards of quality," said ODL Director Robby Fuselier. The BOG has defined high-quality courses as those that meet all QM essential standards, receive a score of 85/100 on the rubric, and provide accessible course content. ODL's new course development initiative will provide a one-time payment upon completion of course development and a successful QM review. More information on this initiative will follow so be on the lookout in future issues.

Q&A: Quality and Course Development

We recently chatted about course development with Dr. Annette Jones, Assistant Director of Instructional Development Faculty at ODL.

What does ODL do to ensure that online courses meet the high standard of quality of FSU courses?
Since 2012 ODL has been a member of Quality Matters (QM), which has given us license to use the QM rubric. There are eight general standards and 42 specific standards that are all grounded in research on online learning. The QM rubric has really become the standard for quality course design, and it's interesting to go to conferences and see examples of courses from institutions, both large and small, that have a similar design because we are all working off the same set of standards. In fact, the Florida Board of Governors (BOG) has developed a quality plan for online courses that uses the QM rubric as a standard for all State University System of Florida schools. I'm proud that we were ahead of the curve in adopting QM as our quality standard.

Discuss the QM review process.
For course development, it really starts with the initial meetings between the course developer and our ODL instructional development team. We have developed templates for media, the syllabus, and the course that together incorporate the majority of standards in the rubric. Our team has endeavored to make the design process easy on faculty so they can concentrate on the actual content. After the course is completed, ODL faculty review the course using the QM rubric and provide guidance on improvements. The BOG is implementing a new review process in which online courses will need to meet either a quality or high-quality threshold and provide alternative means of access to course materials. With the tools that ODL has developed and the current Ally pilot that helps address accessibility of course content, we feel we are in a good position to ensure that our online courses meet the high standards of both FSU and the BOG.

Can faculty ask for their current courses to be quality reviewed?
Absolutely! Any of our instructional development faculty would love to review courses and provide guidance on how to improve quality. In fact, look for a new ODL initiative to be rolled out in fall that provides additional incentives for having a course quality reviewed. Watch this space!

Course Template Helps Fulfill Quality Standards

ODL instructional development faculty have created a course template to help instructors develop quality online courses that reach all learners. The template, which can be imported from Canvas Commons into your course site, is designed to match the standards of the Quality Matters (QM) Rubric. The QM workflow involves development of a course, evaluation of that course by ODL instructional development faculty, and feedback that gives the instructor the opportunity to improve the course.

| AMH2000 |
| MODULE 1: OVERVIEW |

MODULE DESCRIPTION OR OVERVIEW

Place unit/week/section description or overview here.

MODULE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the completion of this unit/week/section, students will be able to:

1. Objective...
2. Objective...
3. Objective...
4. Objective...

MATERIALS

For this unit/week/section, you must complete the following material:

Required

- Doe, Jane (2015). *Example Title: example subtitle*. (Place in required citation format)

Optional

- Doe, Jane (2015). *Example Title: example subtitle*. (Place in required citation format)

ASSIGNMENTS & DUE DATES

- Assignment ...
- Assignment ...
- Assignment ...
- Assignment ...

We've crafted a quality checklist that identifies the areas where standards can be met, such as the syllabus, course template, or course introduction video. The template contains placeholders for 23 of the 42 standards. For example, the Basic Overview template has sections for a module description, learning objectives, materials, discussions, assignments, and videos. ODL instructional development faculty work with instructors to ensure their learning objectives align with the activities and assessments in the course. In addition, headers and language for links are prebuilt into the template to allow students with special needs to navigate the course site.

"By designing a template and matching it to the Quality Matters standards, we've made it much easier for instructors to develop quality online courses," said ODL Instructional Technology Faculty John Braswell. "And when we work with programs, the templates promote consistency across courses."

Universal design and accessibility are important elements of quality course development. By applying the principles of universal design to the template, we provide all students an opportunity to learn in a way that best matches their preferences. Materials can be viewed on a wide range of devices, including iPhones, laptops, and desktops.

ODL is piloting Blackboard Ally, a tool that evaluates course materials for accessibility and provides options for remediation. After materials have been remediated, instructors can use Ally to deliver their content in a variety of formats, increasing accessibility for all students. Ally also makes it easy to add alt-tags to images embedded in the course.

To learn more about using the course template or quality checklist with your course site, please contact ODL instructional development faculty.

Enrich Your Online Teaching with These Tips

A recent article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* offers advice on improving your online teaching skills by connecting what you do in the classroom with what you do online. By following the 10 principles listed below, you can enhance the quality of your online classes, making them more effective and engaging:

1. **Show up to class.** Teachers have a lot of up-front work to do to build an online course, but it's also important to have a strong presence online throughout the course. To maintain an active presence, participate in discussions, post announcements, and communicate with students.
2. **Be yourself.** Online classes may feel structured, but there is room in written and recorded communications to let your personality come through. Students will appreciate these glimpses of humanity. Developing a course introduction video is a great way to connect with your students. For assistance, contact ODL Media Production Administrator D.D. Garbarino at 850-644-7574.
3. **Put yourself in students' shoes.** Online students can feel isolated and it may take time for them to get help with a problem. To minimize confusion, design your course for clarity. For example, include a grading rubric, details on citing sources, and instructions on the length of discussion posts.
4. **Organize course content intuitively.** Be sure the sequence of content and learning activities is methodical and purposeful. Students will appreciate having a clear path through the course.
5. **Add visual appeal.** A pleasant work environment can help students maintain interest in the course. Pay attention to the design of your course and incorporate interesting visuals when possible.
6. **Explain your expectations.** Clear instructions and grading procedures will help students feel confident in completing assignments. For example, create a brief video to explain the details of an assignment.
7. **Scaffold learning activities.** Break down complex tasks into several steps. Provide opportunities for students to become comfortable with technologies before they are required to complete an assignment.
8. **Provide examples.** Offer multiple perspectives for course content. Provide assignment examples to clarify expectations. Model the proper writing style during discussions.
9. **Make class an inviting place to be.** Use media and interactive tools to engage your students. Be positive and compassionate.
10. **Commit to continuous improvement.** Develop your online teaching skills through pedagogical best practices, professional development opportunities, and self-learning strategies.

Library Pilots Streaming Media Reserves Service

FSU Libraries is piloting a new service for faculty – streaming media course reserves. Under the provisions of the Technology, Education and Copyright Harmonization (TEACH) Act and Fair Use, the Library can host physical media items (e.g., DVD, Blu-ray) to Canvas course pages using the Kaltura media player. This service gives students streaming access to content while leveraging Kaltura's pedagogical tools such as time-stamped comments and downloadable transcripts.

Here are details about the service and how to access the request form:

- For the pilot phase of the project, the Library is limiting requests to three titles per course, per semester. Instructors may also request clips of particular titles if an entire work is not necessary to meet the teaching goals of the course or assignment.
- All requests should be made through the Streaming Media Reserve Request button found on the Library's Course Reserve page. You will be prompted to sign in with your FSU credentials and then directed to the request form.

- More information about streaming media options available through the Library can be found in the Streaming Media LibGuide, including links to the request form and more information about other platforms such as Kanopy or Swank.

For questions, please contact Extended Campus & Distance Services Librarian Lindsey Wharton or Dave Rodriguez, Resident Media Librarian in the Office of Digital Research and Scholarship, who created the service.

Testing Center Hours Updated for Fall

The FSU Testing Center will offer the following hours beginning the fourth week of the Fall 2019 semester:

- Mondays through Thursdays: 8 am-8 pm
- Fridays: 8 am-5 pm

Exam appointments will be available through RegisterBlast. For the first three weeks of Fall 2019, the Testing Center will keep an 8 am-5 pm schedule. After that, hours will be as listed above.

Please note that hours during finals week will be extended beyond those listed above. For more information, contact the Testing Center at 850-644-3017 or testing@campus.fsu.edu.

CANVAS FYI

Module Helps with Emergency Preparation
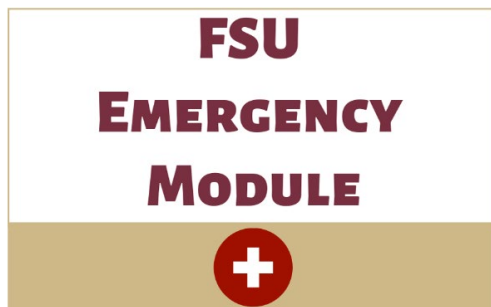
ODL is excited to share a new course management tool with faculty – the FSU Emergency Module. Following Hurricane Michael in 2018, ODL designed the module to help faculty and students stay connected and navigate an emergency event. It can be used in both distance learning and face-to-face courses. The benefits of using the module include:

- **Connecting both students and instructors with critical FSU resources** for main campus and Panama City locations, as well as local, state, and national emergency resources.
- **Accessing faster, streamlined communication** by offering instructors easily adapted sample announcements to keep students informed during a prolonged university closure.

- **Gathering data to help instructors determine the level of impact** an emergency event has had on their students' ability to finish the course. Students are encouraged to share their concerns about course completion with their instructor.
- **Encouraging community building** by giving students a space to process the emergency event and reach out to each other for support.

Here's how you can get started with the module:

- Read more about the module and how to use it.
- Import the module from Canvas Commons into your course or development site. If your department uses a custom departmental course shell, we encourage you to import both your departmental shell and the module into your course sites.
- Review additional emergency preparedness measures such as creating an asynchronous course module and assessing instructional needs.

Please note that using the FSU Emergency Module is optional. You may use all or parts of the module to fit your course design.

If you have any questions, please contact ODL Technical Support at 850-644-8004 or submit a support ticket.

Fall Training

Whether you're new to Canvas or want to update your current course site, ODL offers a variety of sessions to help you enhance your skills in the Canvas learning environment. You can register for in-person workshops or noon webinars on our Workshops & Appointments page.

If you're seeking individualized Canvas support, our in-person and online consultations can target your particular needs. Our media team can help you develop course videos, use the One Button Studio, or record a lecture using the lightboard. For instructors currently participating in the Ally accessibility pilot, we're offering one-on-one assistance in remediating inaccessible course documents.

If you would like to arrange departmental training, contact John Braswell at 850-645-0469 to schedule a session.

Canvas Community Feedback

Through the Canvas Support Center community feedback list, instructors can vote for feature ideas that will help improve Canvas for the FSU community. Check out our "Vote Up" recommendations for July and August. To subscribe to the list, visit the community feedback page.

Release Notes

The August production release notes from Canvas describe feature options, including the ability for administrators to display or hide featured content in Commons. An additional feature covers the Conferences interface (BigBlueButton), which supports live closed captioning and breakout rooms as conference groups. You can access the complete release notes on the Canvas Community page.

California Canvas

Instructional Technology Faculty John Braswell, Business Analyst Dewel Lindsey, and Instructional Development Faculty Dr. John Crow (left to right) represented ODL at InstructureCon in July in Long Beach, California, where they learned about the latest Canvas technologies.

TOOL TIME

Flipgrid Provides Video Discussion Board

Flipgrid is a video-based web discussion platform that instructors and students can use within their Canvas sites to conduct discussions. This application works much like Canvas's built-in discussion tool, except users create video recordings – rather than written posts – for discussions, assignments, and feedback.

The tool provides the following benefits:

- **Increase in student engagement**. You can offer your students an intimate and engaging peer-to-peer discussion experience.
- **Use of guest speakers.** The Guest Mode allows you to invite guest speakers into discussions. You can also add teaching assistants to Flipgrid assignments.
- **On-the-go communication.** Flipgrid is compatible on any device, anywhere: laptops, tablets, and mobile devices via a free Windows 10 app, iOS app, or Android app.
- **Online public speaking requirements.** You can easily grade Flipgrid assignments using SpeedGrader.

To locate the Flipgrid app in Canvas, find your course and select Settings in the left navigation menu. Within Settings, click on the Apps tab to pull up the External Apps finder. Search for Flipgrid, click on the Flipgrid icon, and click Add App.

For more information about Flipgrid, including a how-to video on using the tool in your Canvas courses, please see our support article. For questions about the tool, please contact ODL Technical Support at 850-644-8004 or canvas@fsu.edu.

TECHNOLOGY TIPS

Kaltura Video Display Bug Fix

As the fall term gets under way, ODL would like to inform you of an important bug fix for videos in Kaltura. Over the summer, our Kaltura integration was upgraded to incorporate improved caption creation and caption editing technology. The upgrade has significantly improved the accuracy of auto-generated captioning for videos in Kaltura and has enhanced opportunities for students to engage with video content.

Since the upgrade, we have received some reports of display issues when viewing videos along with their transcripts:

- The video is viewable only in full-screen mode.
- The video size is significantly reduced to accommodate the transcript.
- The video is viewable without full-screen mode, but the transcript is not.

If you use Kaltura for video in your Canvas course or org site, you'll want to be aware of these issues and the solution: Re-embedding video in your Canvas course or site will fix the display issues. Please see our Canvas Support Center article, Kaltura Video Display Bug Fix, for more information.

While we are pleased that this upgrade has improved captioning and the ability for students to interact with video content, the introduction of the display issues is unfortunate. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause. ODL Technical Support is available to provide additional assistance. Please don't hesitate to call us at 850-644-8004 or submit a support ticket.

Support Articles

Check out the latest articles from our Canvas Support Center.

- Update to Gradebook's "mute column" function
- How to request new closed captions for your Kaltura media
- How to embed Kaltura playlists in Canvas content page

ODDS & ENDS

OLC Innovate Proposal Submission

The deadline for submitting a proposal to present at OLC Innovate 2020: Education Reimagined is September 11, 2019. The conference, sponsored by the Online Learning Consortium and MERLOT, will be held March 31–April 3, 2020, in Chicago, Illinois. The conference theme is "Building Bridges in Digital, Blended, and Online Learning." Track themes cover effective tools, toys, and technologies; leadership and advocacy; lifelong learning and workforce partnerships; open learning; process, problems, and practices; research: designs, methods, and findings; and teaching and learning practice. For more information and to submit your proposal, visit the OLC website.

Conferences and Events

- National Distance Learning Week, November 4–8, 2019. The U.S. Distance Learning Association sponsors a weeklong series of webinars.
- Online Learning Consortium (OLC) Accelerate, November 19–22, 2019, in Orlando, Florida. Onsite and virtual registration options are available.

LET US HEAR FROM YOU!

We are eager to receive your feedback on what you would like to see in future issues of the newsletter, so please send us your suggestions about ways ODL can better serve you.

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