Building Bridges for Buy-in:
Collaborative Communication Strategies to Spur QA Implementation

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Session Objectives

Describe the benefits of a collegial, collaborative approach to implementing online quality assurance

Strategize ways to facilitate productive inter-institutional dialogue to promote quality online learning initiatives.

Describe the impact of leadership in developing, supporting, and sustaining online QA strategies, processes, & goals

Investigate practical examples of how to collaborate across institutional units to meet strategic online learning goals.

Before we begin…

Communication is not a one-way street.

You can be a leader in promoting online quality regardless of your role/level.

You might play the role of "speaking the language" of different stakeholder groups.

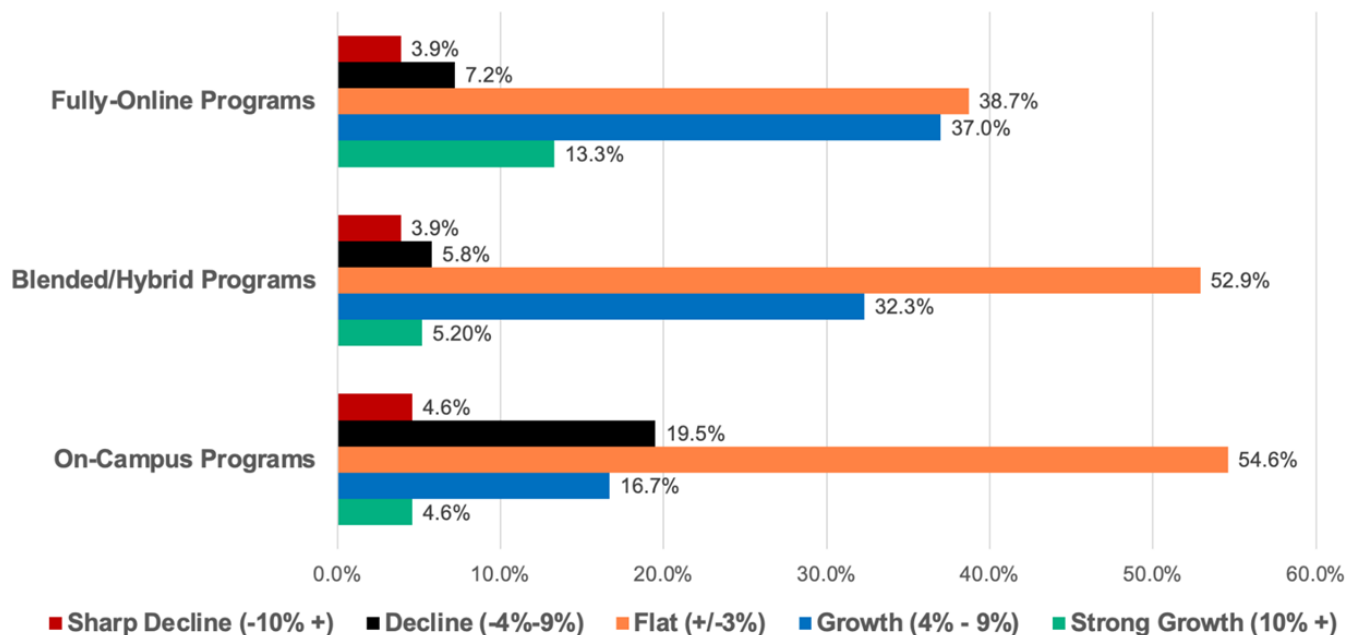**QM can help! Member resources for implementation + add'l options tailored to your needs.**

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The Why:

Why Practice QA?
Why is Communicating QA so important?

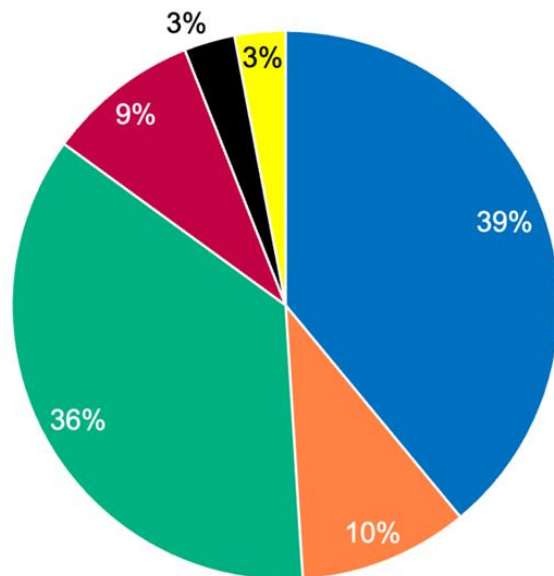Schools Report 2021–2022 Enrollment Shifts
Graduate Students (Sample = 292)

Fully-Online Programs
- 3.9%
- 7.2%
- 38.7%
- 37.0%
- 13.3%

Blended/Hybrid Programs
- 3.9%
- 5.8%
- 52.9%
- 32.3%
- 5.20%

On-Campus Programs
- 4.6%
- 19.5%
- 54.6%
- 16.7%
- 4.6%

Legend: ■ Sharp Decline (-10% +) ■ Decline (-4%-9%) ■ Flat (+/-3%) ■ Growth (4% - 9%) ■ Strong Growth (10% +)

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Schools Report 2021–2022 Enrollment Shifts
Traditional Age Undergraduates, Less than 25 Years (Sample = 292)

Fully-Online Programs
- Sharp Decline: 2.0%
- Decline: 9.0%
- Flat: 41.8%
- Growth: 32.3%
- Strong Growth: 14.9%

Blended/Hybrid Programs
- Sharp Decline: 2.7%
- Decline: 9.6%
- Flat: 58.5%
- Growth: 24.5%
- Strong Growth: 4.8%

On-Campus Programs
- Sharp Decline: 5.0%
- Decline: 19.6%
- Flat: 53.8%
- Growth: 15.8%
- Strong Growth: 5.8%

Legend: ■ Sharp Decline (-10% +) ■ Decline (-4%-9%) ■ Flat (+/-3%) ■ Growth (4% - 9%) ■ Strong Growth (10% +)

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Fewer than 40% of Institutions have Aligned Strategy
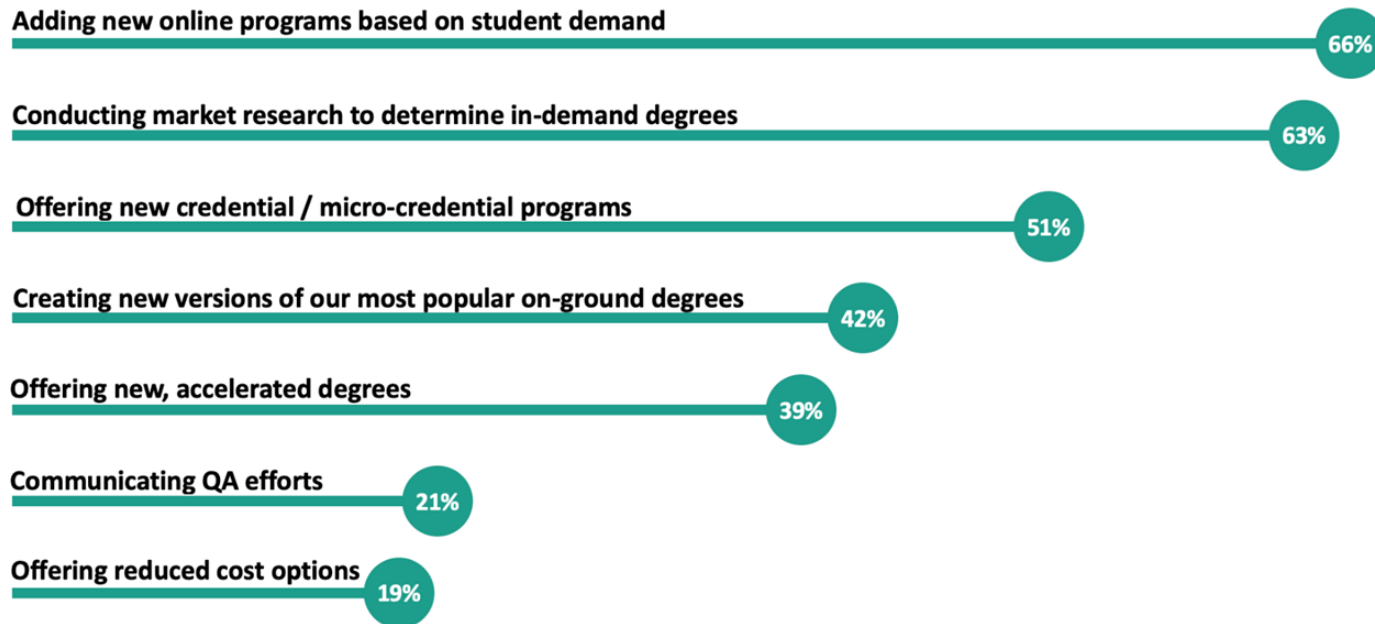
(Sample = 287 schools; fall 2022)

- 39% say ,"Our strategic priorities are consistent with rising online demand"
- 10% say "Our strategic priorities are consistent but it's difficult to keep up"
- 36% say, "We are reexamining our strategic priorities in light of demand"
- 9% say, "We are not revising strategic priorities but still trying to meet demand"
- 3% say, "We are not attempting to accommodate increasing online demand"
- 3% say, "We do not see rising online demand now or in the future"

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How Institutions are Pursuing Future Online Student Audiences
n=264

- Adding new online programs based on student demand — **66%**
- Conducting market research to determine in-demand degrees — **63%**
- Offering new credential / micro-credential programs — **51%**
- Creating new versions of our most popular on-ground degrees — **42%**
- Offering new, accelerated degrees — **39%**
- Communicating QA efforts — **21%**
- Offering reduced cost options — **19%**

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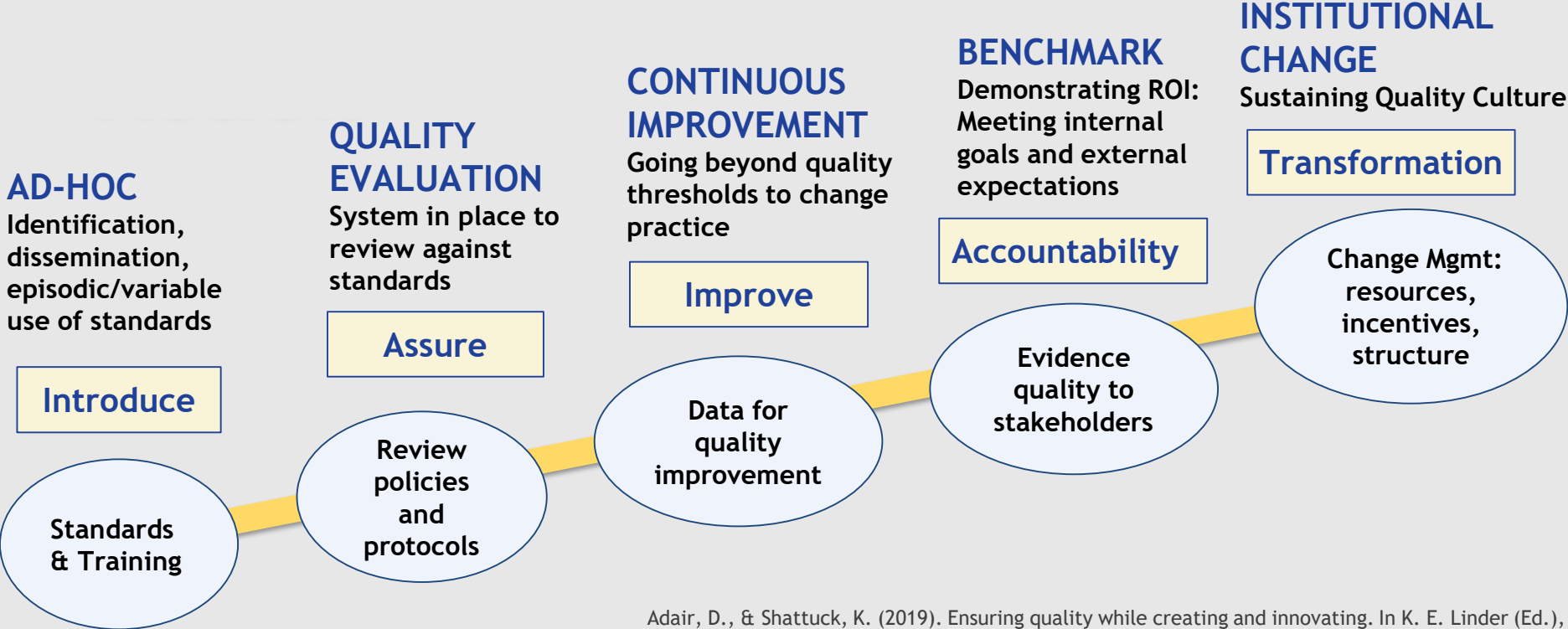
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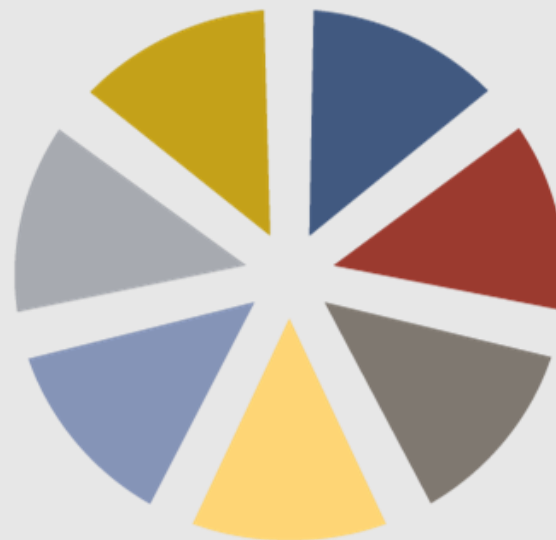
Because Online Quality Impacts Online Retention and Completion

- Lack of time/poor time-management [*Student Readiness*]
- Lack of motivation/lack of student engagement [*Design, Content, & Delivery*]
- Issues with technology/lack of technology skills [*LMS/technology*]
- Lack of student support/online student resources [*Inst. Infrastructure*]
- Inexperienced instructors/disconnected from instructor [*Faculty Readiness & Course Delivery*]
- **Poorly designed courses [Design]**
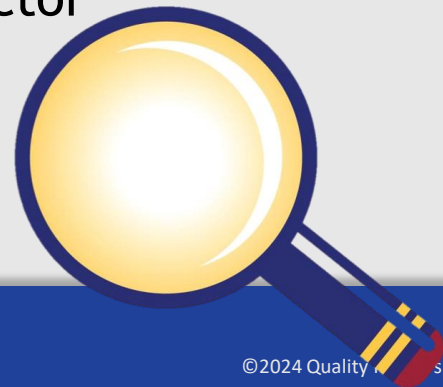
Continuum of Excellence for QA (CEQA)

AD-HOC
Identification, dissemination, episodic/variable use of standards

Introduce

Standards & Training

QUALITY EVALUATION
System in place to review against standards

Assure

Review policies and protocols

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT
Going beyond quality thresholds to change practice

Improve

Data for quality improvement

BENCHMARK
Demonstrating ROI: Meeting internal goals and external expectations

Accountability

Evidence quality to stakeholders

INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE
Sustaining Quality Culture

Transformation

Change Mgmt: resources, incentives, structure

Adair, D., & Shattuck, K. (2019). Ensuring quality while creating and innovating. In K. E. Linder (Ed.), *The business of innovating online: Practical tips and advice from industry leaders* (pp. 97-112). Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Because You Can't Do It Alone...
QA is an Institutional Lift

Successful QA implementation requires various KSAs, as well as shared goals, collegiality, and collaboration.

- "Big Why": Quality matters to online learners... both current and future.
- Implementation requires a broad skill set... campus offices, individuals, and groups need to work together.

The Importance of Building Buy-in for Online Learner Success

- Developing and implementing quality online learning often requires substantial organizational change

- Begin with communication, collegiality, and collaboration: implementing QA well requires buy-in

- Successful online programs have different design, support, technology and other needs than on-ground programs. Quality is a differentiating factor.

- Approaches championing collaborative, open-communication set the stage for creating a culture of quality, focused on continuous improvement and student success

The Who and The What:
Communicating QA to Campus Partners

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Identify Your Institutional Partners

Engage Faculty in the Process
Seek faculty input & leadership throughout implementation: conducting needs assessments, coordinating w/administration, updating training & design.

Coordinate Efforts with eLearning Staff
Collaborate with institutional online learning support units for professional development, course design guidance, and resources to support goal achievement.

Build Buy-in Among Senior Administration
Connect with institutional and academic leaders to clarify strategic priorities and pinpoint opportunities for enhancing online learning operations.

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Engage Faculty in the Process

- Faculty buy-in is vital... engage and include faculty at every stage.

- Faculty should have input on QA goals and be supported in meeting them.

- Faculty new to online often encounter 'online knowledge gap':

  • Underestimate time/effort req'd for online course design

  • Limited tech skills for online course development & instruction

  • Unfamiliarity with online learning design frameworks and best practices for online instruction

Faculty Leaders as Collaborators in Quality Online Learning

- **Communication:**
  Understanding faculty confusion, objections, & constraints is crucial for building buy-in & creating a good relationship with ID teams.

- **Collaboration:**
  Faculty should be co-collaborators in designing & revising online courses to meet quality standards

- **Collegiality:**
 Don't "impose" QA... demonstrate how research-supported standards can support both online learners *and* faculty

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Coordinate Efforts with eLearning Staff

- Online learning staff often do the "heavy lifting" of online QA

- Instructional designers, educational technologists, directors of online learning, chief online learning officers...
  - Are most knowledgeable about digital learning
  - Are often responsible for creating processes for online QA
  - Implement institutional strategy for online QA
  - Help to provide leadership for online quality initiatives and goals

Leaning on the Expertise of your Online Learning Professionals

- Instructional designers and educational technologists provide support and suggestions to faculty members, who serve in the dual role of instructional designer client and subject-matter expert within the design process (Kumar & Ritzhaupt, 2017)

- Collaborating with instructional designers, who are experienced in designing learning materials that are suitable for online environments, can both reduce faculty workload and create higher-quality online courses (Cox & Osguthorpe, 2003; Kenny, Zhang, Schwier, & Campbell,2005)
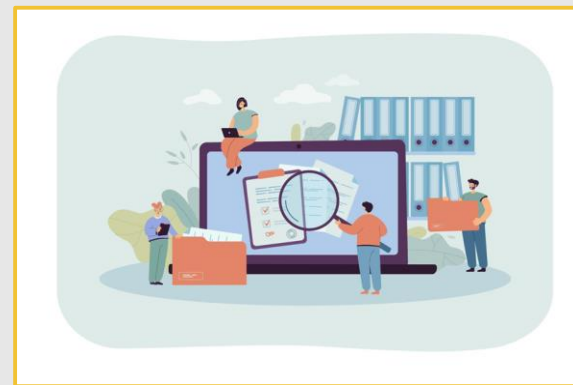
Build Buy-In Among Senior Administration

- Implementing online QA and overcoming organizational obstacles requires the support of senior administration

- Holding crucial, foundational discussions about online learning prevents "top-down" approach

- Allows administrators to identify and address faculty misconceptions and concerns early

- Engage with institutional strategic goals; communicate how quality online learning fits in

The How:

Strategies to Support QA Implementation

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Strategies to Engage & Support Online Faculty

- **Provide faculty support** via centralized services, faculty development workshops, resources, and tools for the development, delivery, and assessment of online courses.

- **Conduct information sessions** on the online course development process, institutional standards, timeline for completion, faculty and departmental requirements, and training and resources available.

- **Check in with adjuncts and clinical faculty** members frequently to receive and provide feedback on resources they may need to improve course design and delivery.

- **Gather data and feedback from faculty** on satisfaction, whether they feel supported and recognized, etc., and act on it.

Strategies to Engage & Support Online Faculty

- **Provide flexible offerings of QM workshops** to support busy faculty in building their online skills (consider training a Facilitator to maximize your budget).

- **Encourage faculty to complete Self-Reviews** in the CRMS (or take the IYOC); communicate the benefits of continuous improvement and provide support.

- **Develop cohorts of "Faculty Fellows"** to recognize exemplar contributions, showcase best practices, and serve as online learning liaisons to their respective academic units.

- **Tie QA efforts to tenure and promotion** – particularly in areas associated with teaching and service.

Strategies to Engage & Support OL Staff

- **Collaborate on online-related policies**… e.g, the creation (or improvement) of the design, development, and evaluation of online course and program review processes.

- **Engage OL staff in data collection** for online learning… what data do you need to show efficacy to stakeholders? (student achievement & satisfaction, etc.)

- **Strategize how online QA aligns with and supports** institutional mission and goals. Engage OL staff in strategic planning.

- **Consult with OL staff on online technology** for the institution, and help to coordinate conversations with appropriate staff from IT (LMS administrators, etc.)

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Strategies to Engage & Support OL Staff

- **Collaborate with institutional support teams** to promote inclusive, accessible, and representative online environments for all learners.

- **Gather insights on faculty support needs** for specific aspects of course design, using institutional technologies, online teaching, etc.

- **Facilitate successful ID/Faculty collaborations**... communicate the expertise and value of OL staff to faculty, & foster mutual respect.

- **Ensure OL staff are aware of OL policies** (including federal, state, & institutional policies), and how to meet their requirements.

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Promote Compliance via Collaboration

Collaborate with OL professionals to ensure your implementation plan provides feedback & data reflecting compliance with specific federal agencies/policies, accrediting bodies, disciplinary organizations, and other accountability partners.

Review applicable expectations

Identify opportunities for improvement

Seek inspiration from peer institutions

Lean into your networks of support

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Strategies to Engage Administrators

Strategize ways of ensuring e-learning initiatives are in compliance with federal regulations and regional accrediting standards

Develop a crosswalk of institutional targets, academic strategic goals, and available services

Collaborate with online learning professionals to identify current gaps and opportunities for growth in more efficiently achieving institutional goals

Recognize that developing a quality online program may necessitate a new way of working for faculty, administrators, and staff

Assess the efficacy of institutional online learning initiatives and educational resources by continuously examining and evaluating the effectiveness of online courses and programs

Engage in benchmarking activities with peer institutions and identify existing approaches for meeting accrediting expectations in target areas

Summary and Action Steps

The Why:

- QA is vital to online learner & institutional success
- QA implementation is complex and requires collaboration and strategic, inclusive communication.

The Who:

- Faculty, OL staff, and senior administration are your main collaborators in implementing online QA. (*there are more!*)

The What:

- Emphasize collaboration, support, and shared goals in order to engender buy-in with QA initiatives. Avoid top-down.

The How:

- Focus on strategies that engage collaborators and support them in meeting shared goals.

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Implementation Buy-in for Your Institution

- **Coordinate and collaborate with all units** and individuals that are part of quality online learning: librarians, student advising, student success, accessibility, IT, institutional research, et al.

- **Create/verify a process for approving online course development** that respects institutional processes & reporting.

- **Develop a communication plan** to notify your campus community of quality assurance goals, milestones, resources, achievements, etc.

Implementation Buy-in for Your Institution

- **Engage early adopters in piloting** initial implementation stages and new initiatives. Publicize efforts and outcomes.

- **Incorporate ongoing formative & summative evaluation** of the implementation plan at strategic benchmarks.

- **Showcase and recognize faculty work**, e.g. implementation of best practices in online course design and delivery, QM certification, etc.

- **Clearly tie engagement/efforts to tenure & promotion** – particularly in areas associated with teaching and service.

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Invest in an Institutional Culture of Quality

Invest in Online Learning Initiatives

Celebrate Faculty & Staff Contributions

Set Attainable Development Goals

Provide Support for Faculty & Staff

As you craft your implementation plan, clarify identifiable and attainable targets to sustain faculty and online learning staff motivation and investment.

Online learning implementation requires strategic investment in and use of human, digital, and financial resources. Build a business case to support buy-in.

Consider the needs of all faculty and staff engaging in the online learning enterprise. Plan to meet their needs regarding experience, capacity, and accessibility.

Our faculty members and eLearning professionals are critical to the success of our work. Celebrate their efforts in ways that are meaningful to them.

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Don't go it alone

QM Can Help: Here's How

- **Complete the QMCT**, and stick around when you're done! We're continuing to add new resources to aid implementation.
- **Explore member resources** for introducing QM to your campus, publicizing QA efforts & accomplishments, and more (come to QMC meetings!).
- **Use existing QA resources** like the QM Bridge to Quality Design Guide, and the CRMS for self, internal, and QM certified reviews… as well as custom!
- **Attend free member webinars** on successful strategies for implementation.

- *Need targeted help that's specific to your institutional context and needs?* QM Consulting can help with strategy, buy-in, and more.