



Quality Matters Connect Conference 2017

9th Annual Conference on Quality Assurance in
Online Learning

September 24-27, 2017

Fort Worth, Texas

Quality Matters

- History
 - Group of colleagues in the Maryland Online consortium created a plan to ensure course quality, enabling students to enroll in courses across institutions but have an equivalent experience
 - Consortium members applied for a grant from the U.S. Department of Education to develop a rubric of course design standards and a course peer review process
 - Grant ended in 2006, but QM became self-sustaining, and in 2014, it began operating as a standalone nonprofit organization
- Vision
 - QM is an international organization that is recognized as a leader in quality assurance in online education

Quality Matters

- **Mission**
 - Promote and improve the quality of online education and student learning nationally and internationally through
 - Development of current, research-supported, and practice-based quality standards and appropriate evaluation tools and procedures
 - Recognition of expertise in online education quality assurance and evaluation
 - Fostering a culture of continuous improvement by integrating QM standards and processes into organization plans to improve the quality of online education
 - Providing professional development in the use of rubrics, tools, and practices to improve the quality of online education
 - Peer review and certification of quality in online education

QM Connect Conference 2017

- Conference Tracks
 - Measuring the Impact of Quality
 - Achieving Sustainability
 - The Power of Quality Assurance
 - Leadership Exchange
 - Engagement Strategies
 - Fresh Ideas
 - News You Can Use
- Special Sessions
 - Quality Online Education: What's Rigor Got to Do with It? Part I and II

Quality Online Education

- What's Rigor Got to Do with It? Part I
 - Panel Discussion
 - Definition of academic rigor and its role in education
 - Participants
 - Deb Adair
 - Executive Director, Quality Matters
 - Ashley Hazelwood
 - Student, University of North Texas
 - Paul Gaston
 - Senior Fellow Lumina Foundation, Trustees Professor, Provost's Office, Kent State University
 - Gregory von Lehmen
 - Special Assistant to the President, Cybersecurity, University of Maryland-University College
 - Andria Schwegler
 - Associate Professor, Texas A&M University – Central Texas

Quality Online Education

- What's Rigor Got to Do with It? Part II
 - Panel Discussion
 - Relationship between academic rigor and alternative learning initiatives and open educational resources
 - Participants
 - Deb Adair
 - Executive Director, Quality Matters
 - Lisa Mahoney
 - Director, National College Credit Recommendation Service
 - Leah Matthews
 - Executive Director and CEO, Distance Education Accrediting Commission
 - Kara Gwaltney
 - Director, American Council on Education
 - Mary-Celeste Slusser
 - Director of Academic Assessment, LearningCounts

Quality Online Education

- What's Rigor Got to Do with It? I and II
 - Sessions tie in to the National University Technology Network Colloquium on Alternative Learning in Higher Education
 - Meeting directly followed QM conference
 - Discussed trends in alternative learning, considerations about quality, and how quality is measured
 - Goal was to align form, function, and provider to best serve the learner

What does rigor mean?

- Rigor is...
 - Thorough planning
 - Course Level
 - Program Level
 - Appropriately leveled learning objectives
 - Accountability
 - Teachers
 - Students
 - Active student engagement
 - Connections among information
 - Past & Future
 - Alignment
 - Assessment
 - Art

What does rigor mean?

- Rigor is not...
 - Having lots of assignments
 - Minimized by providing scaffolding to help students meet expectations

What does rigor mean?

- Students' perceptions of rigor
 - Added items to program evaluation survey
 - Indirect measures
 - Rank ordered items
 - Writing assignments (high impact practice)
 - Participation in research (high impact practice)
 - Direct measures
 - Rigor in courses vs. rigor desired
 - Frequency of activities tapping higher level learning outcomes (e.g., analysis, synthesis)
 - Responses provide insight for continuous improvement planning

How is rigor evaluated?

- **Course level**
 - Course activities requiring active student engagement
 - Variety of assignments reflecting multiple aspects of future work
 - Assessment of coursework
 - Rubrics
 - Feedback for improvement
 - Alignment of assessment with objectives
 - Faculty selected content
 - Required assignments and rubrics for program evaluation
- **Responsible personnel**
 - Instructor of record for the course

How is rigor evaluated?

- Program level
 - Syllabi review and alignment with curriculum map
 - Assessment of archived student artifacts
 - Faculty other than instructor of record
 - Program rubrics not course rubrics
 - Students' behavioral demonstration of profession-based activities
 - Clinical experiential coursework evaluations
 - Thesis project evaluations
 - Students' performance on external, standardized tests
 - Licensing exams
- Responsible Personnel
 - Program Faculty, Program Coordinators, Assessment Committees

How is rigor evaluated?

- Curriculum Process for Courses
 - Curriculum review committees
 - Program faculty
 - Department
 - College
 - University Council (Undergraduate / Graduate)
 - University Curriculum Committee
 - Provost
 - Content reviewed
 - Program learning outcomes
 - Course learning outcomes
 - Course content examples (readings, activities, assessments)
 - Change justification / data

How is rigor considered in awarding transfer credit?

- Undergraduate

- Freshman and sophomore level

- Credit only what is evaluated by third parties

- Accredited academic institutions
- American Council of Education
- College Credit for Heroes
- National Association of Credential Evaluation Services

- Junior and senior level

- Program and department faculty review work and third party recommendations

- Working to establish a standard process across programs
- Building database of decisions

How is rigor considered in awarding transfer credit?

- Graduate
 - Limited hours students can transfer
 - Only from accredited academic institutions
 - Awarding credit requires faculty approval
 - Syllabus comparable in content and scope
 - Comparable course description
 - Mastery grades
 - Will not credit
 - Coursework with no formal grades
 - Correspondence courses with no faculty interaction
 - Grades of C or lower
 - Coursework older than 6 years at graduation

What are challenges in evaluating ALEs?

- **Planning**
 - How does ALE relate to overall program?
 - Will learning in a different context transfer to the program/field?
 - Discrete skills vs. integration of content across courses
- **Connections among information**
 - Can students articulate logical relations between ALE and program/field?
- **Appropriately leveled learning objectives**
 - What are the ALE learning objectives?
 - What did students do to demonstrate learning in the ALE?
 - Are the learning activities in the ALE aligned with the learning objectives of the coursework?
- **Assessment**
 - What type of artifacts can students provide to document learning?
 - How were these artifacts evaluated?
 - How should these artifacts be evaluated?
 - Are the artifacts sufficient evidence to substantiate knowledge?
- **Accountability**
 - Is the instructor credentialed to teach the course?

Who is talking about rigor?

- Source of information
 - Majority of responses came from tenured faculty members
 - Why did few tenure track faculty members participate?
- Conversations about rigor invite everyone to the table
 - Send message that all have a voice
 - Develop norms vetted by all