Online Quality Committee (OQC)

Meeting Notes – 2/21/2020

To begin the meeting, Dr. Aulgur thanked everyone for attending. Our goal is to keep today’s meeting to 45 minutes in length. He also thanked everyone for volunteering to serve on the sub-groups. The working list has been posted to the OQC website.

Dr. Aulgur asked the groups, as they find resources they believe are beneficial to the OQC, please send them to Jennifer or Ken and they will get added to the webpage. Also, please let your colleagues know of the work we are doing. We strive for openness and transparency, no matter the recommendations that come along.

Moving forward, are there any sub-group updates?

* Dr. Cass let us know the Online Processes and Standards group has a meeting scheduled for Friday, February 28. He did send a few examples out to everyone that were adopted by his past institution (“QMish Standards). These, as well as the other examples, are good points of discussion to aid us in our reaccreditation. His group is hopeful they will have recommendations for the OQC “within a month or so,” with a hopeful institution adoption (based on the recommendations) by the beginning of May. He will email the example documents so they can be added to our page.
* Dr. Aulgur thanked him and reiterated the repercussions of not having these recommendations/processes in place. One, it hurts our reaccreditation. We do not meet HLC requirements as everything now stands. Also, without the processes, we will not be able to renew our SARA application. If that happens, the only way ATU can accept out-of-state distance education students is to pay all individual state authorization fees. He asked the sub-group to please remember that their recommendations can be for a “pilot.”
* Dr. Austin apologized for being unable to volunteer to a sub-group. She asked that if she can be a resource to anyone/any group, please let her know.
* Dr. Aulgur reiterated this. He stated, “If Dr. Austin can be of support, ask.”

The Faculty Training group is being led by Dr. Lasey. She let us know a Doodle poll went out and it seems their first meeting will be Friday, February 28, as well (based on when the most could attend). Dr. Lasey apologized because she has been busy with Arkansas Governors School student selection.

* Dr. Aulgur let her know it was okay. Because her sub-group is meeting before our next larger meeting (March 13), it works out.

Dr. Smith is the volunteer lead of the Organizational Hierarchy sub-group. Their first meeting has not been scheduled but she will send a Doodle to take care of this piece.

* Dr. Aulgur let the OQC know the Blackboard Organization is available as well, if needed. Please let us know if your sub-group(s) need to utilize the discussion board area, post anything, etc. It essentially operated like the web-page, but sub-groups can list all their items, minutes (if any), and more from the Organization.

There is not a lead for the ADA Accessibility and Compliance sub-group. But, a representative from Disability Services has been asked to attend those meetings as well.

Thomas Pennington was hopeful he could attend today’s meeting to visit with us about liability and exposure risks (as far as not complying with ADA/Section 508) but he had a meeting come up with Dr. Bowen. Due to this, we began a short overview of the ADA Webinar slides (found from the Resources area on the OQC webpage).

* Dr. Morelan wondered if there was an update on Ally?
* Dr. Aulgur replied there is not. We were hopeful we would have the approval to prorate the service this semester, with funding approved for the future. The challenge has been getting a long-term commitment of cost. We will not know if Ally has been approved until the budget is established. If it is not approved, we will need to find another way to meet the accessibility standards. The sub-group will either need to stand by Ally, knowing that it gives clear legal protection, or acknowledge the liabilities of not having any accessibility standards (ways to measure and fix). After that, it is in Administration’s hands.
* Dr. Cass noted the cost of Ally is cheaper than our institution being sued.
* Dr. Harless asked if there were other products, like Ally, that we could use?
* Alex replied, “no.” Not that are Blackboard compatible, anyways.
* Dr. Aulgur replied he was unaware, but that was something we could investigate, if the committee wanted to go that route.
* Dr. Morelan stated it is worth noting the amount of man hours for another product other than Ally would not be a good choice. It comes down to cost vs. time.
* Dr. Aulgur agreed. Ally alleviates the need for faculty to be an accessibility subject matter expert.
* Dr. Smith asked, “What do you need from us?”
* Dr. Aulgur reiterated that either we clearly state known liabilities of not having this protection, or we recommend that ATU adopt Ally (or a product like Ally). The Deans made Ally a top priority in the funding model for next AY, but we still have not received a budget answer.

In getting back to the ADA slides, as a public entity, we are required to meet the individual needs of students with disabilities.

* Dr. Cass wondered if students make the request to the institution?
* Dr. Aulgur replied the request should be made through Disability Services. In an online space, solutions for student access need to be made to the instructor as well. The only thing a student must do to initiate an OCR lawsuit is to simply call the OCR. We want to make sure this does not happen.
* Dr. Cass noted it was not unlike an OEO.
* Dr. Aulgur stated it is logical, that as online grows, so will the complaints. If HLC asks ATU how we vet online courses, what would you say?
* Dr. Cass replied, “No idea.”
* Dr. Aulgur, “Exactly.”
* Dr. Morelan asked if the Student Resource Module (SRM) was in all online courses.
* Alex replied that it is. As soon as a shell is created, the SRM populates.
* Dr. Harless let the group know that if faculty go through the Certification Course, you are trained to correct your course (or ID’s can help you look for errors). How many faculty have been through the process?
* Dr. Aulgur stated that 133 faculty have been through the Certification Course. Also, for next AY, we are going to work on General Education redevelopment of all online courses. This is starting with the naming convention. All distance courses are “Web” courses. There will still be a process to pull in eTech developed content, but this will fall on the Department (with assistance from Jennifer and Tim Land). The responsibility is on the department and their faculty to update their content. We will hold a training in March for scheduling options. The idea is a department driven endeavor, with eTech becoming a support entity.
* From the “Biggest Offender” ADA slide, Dr. Aulgur asked that departments be vigilant of third-party software they use.
* Dr. Cass asked if CIS has these issues?
* Weiwei replied there is language that can interpret screen reader information. But, it is not native to HTML features.
* Ken noted that website accessibility is separate from course accessibility.
* Dr. Harless wondered if there were complaints of any VR courses. What would we do then?
* Dr. Aulgur stated that as we move forward (as an institution with distance courses), there will be items that are inherently problematic that we will need to develop answers for.
* Ken replied it would also be helpful for faculty to know and understand what tools are available for them to use (like Kaltura) that can assist with some of these issues.
* Dr. Lasey agreed and stated the key is getting faculty to understand from the beginning, that as they develop, accessibility should be on their mind. Accessibility is for everyone. It is not based solely on disabilities.
* Dr. Aulgur suggested the ADA sub-group review the institutional policies (or lack thereof). Also, they should ask if the policies are renewed annually.
* Dr. Cass asked the ADA sub-group to make the resources they find known to the OQC as a whole.
* Ken replied that we try to do this now.
* Dr. Aulgur replied that we cannot mandate these policies right now (which is why the sub-group has been formed…to make recommendations), but we can put items in place for training and support.
* Dr. Morelan told the group that there should also be a recommendation for faculty to complete the trainings.
* Dr. Aulgur agreed and noted the “baseline” for training could be the Transitioning to Teaching Online Course (T2TOL). It is available to all faculty in their Blackboard Course List.
* Dr. Morelan noted it would be difficult to ask trainings of Adjunct faculty. We only pay them $2100, but we need them to participate as well.
* Dr. Aulgur replied that he has done well posting in Higher Ed for Adjunct faculty. All are credentialed and have been willing to develop, train, and more. He encouraged the OQC that as their departments need Adjuncts, post the open position with Higher Ed. It is free to post.
* Alex and Jennifer pulled up a list of third-party providers and software that ATU uses from the eTech webpage. This is a good tool for faculty. The list is not currently in the SRM, but we will get it added.

To end the meeting, Dr. Aulgur asked if there were any announcement for the good of the group.

* Dr. Austin let everyone know that we are beginning to prep for the HLC visit. This includes Open Forums. She would be appreciative if the OQC could attend on ~~March 6~~ *(corrected after the meeting to March 13)* as 3.A.3 deals with program quality and online courses. Look over Criterion 3 (“HLC 2020” can be reached from the Faculty and Staff tab, then A-Z, and then HLC 2020), and please come to that Open Forum. We are getting everyone’s feedback and helping the institution get used to the idea of the visit (with “mock reviews”).

Dr. Aulgur thanked everyone for attending and hopes everyone has a good weekend.