Online Quality Committee (OQC)

Meeting Notes – 2/7/2020

To begin the meeting, Dr. Aulgur thanked everyone for attending, and noted we would try to keep OQC meetings to one hour. He also stated he was only chairing as a facilitator. We then did round-table, brief introductions. Committee members in attendance are as follows:

Mr. Alex Manly, Office of Information Systems, Ex-Officio

Dr. Sandy Smith, EAM, College of Engineering and Applied Science

Dr. Robin Lasey, Director, Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

Dr. Bill Morelan, Center for Leadership and Learning, representing the Online Learning Advisory Board

Dr. David Smith, Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education

Dr. Jeffrey Aulgur, Interim Dean, College of eTech, Committee Chair

Ms. Jennifer Lackie, Admin. Asst. III and SARA Coordinator, College of eTech

Dr. Lisa Harless, Nursing, College of Natural and Health Science

Dr. David Eshelman, representing Faculty Senate, President (Provisional)

Dr. Aaron McArthur, History and Political Science, representing Graduate Council

Dr. Christine Austin, Director, Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness

Mr. Brent Etzel, Director, Ross Pendergraft Library and Technology Center, Ex-Officio

Ms. Jennifer Saxton, Professional Studies, College of eTech

Dr. Jeffrey Cass, Dean, College of Arts and Humanities, Ex-Officio

Dr. Loretta Cochran, Management & Marketing, College of Business

Mr. Ken Teutsch, Multimedia Coordinator, College of eTech

Dr. Mark Mitchell, Instructional Design Specialist, College of eTech

Mr. Weiwei Ji, Instructional Design Specialist, College of eTech

Unable to attend: Dr. Ernie Enchelmayer, College of Arts and Humanities, English & World Languages

After introductions, Dr. Aulgur briefly touched on all of the charges set forth by Dr. Johnson for this committee, noting that all of these processes need to be faculty driven. We will make recommendations to Faculty Senate and Academic Affairs as a whole unit.

1. Institutional Online Quality process/standard/rubric – This charge is a priority due to the institution’s 20-21 SARA application coming due at the end of the spring semester. We must ensure we are meeting the C-RAC Guidelines set forth by HLC that NC-SARA also follows (assure compliance with the guideline criteria). This is two-fold as meeting the guidelines is a must for HLC as well. We need to prove we have the processes/standard/rubric in place by the beginning of May. The solution does not have to be final. It can be a suggestion of a process we can set in place for the time being, but we have to begin following it.
2. Training protocol for faculty who instruct online (full-time and adjunct) – Completion of this charge will also ensure we are working to meet the C-RAC Guidelines. As it is now, the institution has no defined standard for training of faculty who teach online.
3. Course compliance for ADA and online accessibility – This charge is becoming more of a prevalent issue. We’ll provide education on this piece. Currently, we have recommended Blackboard Ally as a way to meet this standard, but we are unsure if it will make it through the budget approval process. Without Ally, course compliance for ADA and online accessibility will become a manual process. Thomas Pennington is on board with the recommendation of Ally and will be at our next meeting to discuss the ramifications of not having a system in place. There is also an ADA Webinar found on the OQC Website under the Resources section.
4. Ensuring Arkansas Tech University does not deliver “correspondence courses” in the virtual environment – This charge effects ATU’s Title IV Federal Financial Aid funding. If someone from HLC were to ask, “How can you assure us that Tech does not offer any correspondence courses?” we cannot answer that question. Are there courses that are auto-graded with no student-student or student-instructor interaction? This is an example. We need a review and vetting process.
5. Organizational Hierarchy – College of eTech Operations (Non-Academic) – Dr. Johnson asked for recommendations on this piece from the lense of, “What would work best for the institution?”

At this time, Dr. Aulgur asked if there were any questions about the charges set forth.

There were none.

Moving forward, how do we accomplish these? Are working groups/sub-groups the answer? The committee can self-select for areas that interest them, and members can serve on more than one sub-group. Also, Dr. Aulgur noted the larger OQC will meet as close to every other Friday as possible, with sub-groups meeting/discussing/coming up with recommendations in the interim.

* Dr. Sandy Smith wondered if the first and fourth charge could go together.
* Alex noted he viewed the first charge as creating the rubric and the fourth charge as ensuring the rubric is followed.
* Dr. Aulgur replied the committee can merge those two charges. Does the training piece stand alone?
* Dr. David Smith replied yes.
* Dr. Morelan noted we may get pushback on the training piece.
* Dr. Aulgur noted that was okay. He asked the committee to, “please go back to your bodies, communicate this committee’s mission. We need support.”
* Dr. McArthur stated this could be explained to colleagues as, “This is not the university needing this oversight. This is an accreditation issue.”
* Dr. Aulgur agreed. He let the group know, for training, Transition to Teaching Online (T2TOL) and the Certification Course are already in place. This does demonstrate a baseline commitment to the second charge, but it is not enforced.
* Dr. McArthur asked if we could require instructors to take the QM rubric training. The cost is less expensive than the incentive currently offered for instructors who complete the Certification Course.
* Dr. Aulgur replied this could be something the sub-group could make a recommendation on, if they wanted to. T2TOL addresses training of the adjunct population. Is T2TOL enough to get us started?
* Dr. Cochran asked the committee not to forget about concurrent.
* Dr. Aulgur also noted that as we figure out how all of the charges relate to the Ozark campus, we will invite an OZ rep to be on the committee as well.

Dr. Aulgur let the committee know that the Online Quality Committee webpage is live, now. It can be found from Tech A-Z. It was built to be a resource and knowledge base. If you have anything you want to add to the page, please let us know. We are also in the process of renewing our Online Learning Consortium membership. This is another example of a source of online assessment. These examples are listed from the Resource section on our webpage, and can aid this committee in determining what our plan/rubric might look like. Ideally, any assessment piece should be driven at the departmental level, then the college level. We needs limits so departments can know their course(s) operate in the right space. We definitely have a lack of protocols.

* Dr. Austin agreed and let the group know this lack of standards is making it hard to write for ATU’s HLC documents. We need these items to show for Criterion 3 and Criterion 4. If we do not come up with something, it will be glaringly obvious to HLC that we cannot prove we operate to a set of standards. It will not be good.
* Dr. Morelan clarified if it was across the board, for both online and face-to-face.
* Dr. Austin replied yes. The university has nothing consistent. No standard of measure.

Dr. Aulgur took this time to mention the committee will also have a Blackboard Organization for small groups to operate in. The webpage gives us a public place for transparency. Are there any concerns with this? Any additions for the webpage?

* Dr. Cochran suggested adding past minutes from the Online Learning Advisory Board (previously the eTech Advisory Committee).
* Dr. Austin agreed and noted, “The more, the better.”
* Dr. Aulgur noted the work we are doing speaks to students, faculty, regulatory compliance, and more.

The next meeting will be two weeks from today (February 21). The commitment will stand at an hour or less. As far as forming sub-groups, Dr. Aulgur will send a simple survey for self-selection. He reiterated again that his role is only as facilitator. He also let the group know that if any of them wanted a copy of the QM Rubric Workbook to let Jennifer Lackie know. She will also get the OLC Scorecard information.

Dr. Cass spoke to the group about how he understands each institution has a push, but ATU needs more standardization. The process is confusing to faculty without any guidelines. Even if we are creating our own courses, based on a rubric and guidelines we all agree with, we must do something with it from here. Faculty need instruction. We can’t, “just dump them into an online environment without instruction.” Tech needs guidelines, and trainings, and faculty need assistance.

* Dr. McArthur agreed, but “with flexibility.” We need to make sure Adjunct are trained as well. And, the Certification Course needs to be asynchronous.
* Jennifer Lackie explained the Certification Course is now a 6-week hybrid model. However, each session is recorded using Blackboard Collaborate, so any faculty who participate but cannot attend in person, can watch the recordings and complete the course.
* Dr. Austin noted that training is one piece. The second piece is making sure courses are developed properly. QM facilitates this through their peer reviewer roles. Colleagues can review courses, making it truly peer driven.
* Dr. Cass asked what CETL was.
* Dr. Lasey explained the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning.
* Dr. Cochran stated the College of Business used QM to assist them in meeting their last reaccreditation. We need to continue to develop faculty developed courses that adjuncts can teach, if needed. The courses are high quality, and consistent. Adjuncts can then focus on teaching. The reason QM is so important is that it is supported by HLC.
* Dr. Austin agreed. When HLC sees an institution utilizes QM, they are “pretty much good.”
* Dr. Aulgur let the committee know we will send a list of all ATU faculty and staff that have participated in QM training(s).
* Dr. Austin noted that QM is a resource for everyone. We can begin vetting according to the QM process, if we choose that route.
* Dr. Aulgur asked if we should consider ensuring Department Heads have been trained in online pedagogy for their faculty who teach online. They could be asked to go through the QM rubric training. This would give some faculty that teach online comfort when it comes time for yearly review and portfolios.
* Dr. Sandy Smith asked we include Deans in this recommendation as well.
* Dr. McArthur has completed the Peer Reviewer Course through QM and can now peer review courses for faculty across the country. A small stipend is included, but it also helps build a faculty member’s portfolio.
* Dr. Cochran replied after peer review, you are encouraged to complete the Master Reviewer Course, if only for the experience, alone. Weiwei is also certified as a rubric trainer, so we can have one-day rubric trainings on-site, versus two-week online trainings.

Dr. Lasey asked what the pushback was, before, from Faculty Senate pertaining to having a process/standards in place.

* Dr. Eshelman replied Faculty Senate felt outside standards were being pushed upon them. They were also viewed as onerous.
* Dr. Aulgur noted that instructors need to decide what is correct for their domain. But, we need the quality control. How do we find the balance between not being overbearing and still meeting assurance?
* Dr. Austin stated she did not believe the process to be onerous. “The rubric course made me a better instructor.” It is not content based, and the course is very helpful.
* Dr. McArthur replied that if you are going to teach online, QM makes you aware of the issues you should know about, and be able to fix. It makes you more marketable.
* Dr. Austin agreed and stated the benefits are there for faculty and students.
* Dr. McArthur agree in return, and added, “There are concrete benefits.”
* Dr. Harless wondered why trainings/standards have not been required.
* Dr. Aulgur let the committee know that due to constant turnover in Academic Affairs for the last six years, this has fallen by the wayside.

Dr. David Smith took the time to explain there are a lot of available resources he was unaware of. He is also on the Adjunct Committee where training has been brought up. Communication needs to be key.

* Dr. McArthur wondered when new instructors are hired, and they attend the week long New Faculty Academy, can eTech speak to them about all of these things.
* Dr. Lasey agreed, and let him know that with all of the turnover previously spoken about, CETL suffered as well. They are already passing on a lot of information to these instructors in a short amount of time.
* Dr. McArthur asked if resources available, from all entities, could be put into Blackboard.
* Dr. Lasey let the committee know that she is working on building out CETL’s webpage and Blackboard course to be this type of resource. It can include QM trainings, PD opportunities, internal trainings, and more. She understands that what instructors learn benefit both face-to-face and online education.
* Dr. Cochran replied the OQC members can also be added to the QM Users Working Group in Blackboard for their resources, rubric, assessments, etc.
* Dr. David Smith suggested CETL as a “clearing-house.”
* Dr. Lasey agreed and stated there should be one place to house all of the information. CETL makes sense as the central place. However, she will need help in building this out.
* Dr. Aulgur noted he/we would send her items, and we would continue to support each other.

To close, Dr. Aulgur stated he would send a survey for self-placement in sub-groups later today. Anything else in the short-term?

There were no replies. Meeting adjourned.