Quality Matters Course Preparation

The QM Course Preparation Packet (a shared google drive folder) contains relevant QM resources as outlined below. Beginning on Page 2, the remainder of this document outlines common problems identified in the QM and ADA review process. Supplemental resources are identified on the final page, including information about upcoming trainings with ATC. Making these improvements to your courses now will make for a smoother transition into Canvas.

QM Course Preparation Packet content with descriptions:

- **Accessibility Tips Handout**: Great resource regarding accessibility how to’s including document structuring, formatting, tables, alt text, descriptive links, etc.
- **Accessibility Rubric**: Rubric to be used for evaluating course accessibility
- **Bloom's Taxonomy of Measurable Action Verbs & Matching Assessment Types**: Informative handout packet including tables of measurable action verbs, scaffolding cognitive levels, and associated assessments.
- **Bloom's Taxonomy Teacher Planning Kit**: single page handout of action verbs based on cognitive level thinking skills
- **Goal setting worksheet**: Full QM Rubric worksheet to be used for evaluating your course and identifying areas of improvement with a timeline for resolution
- **QM Fundamental Rubric**: Abridged version of the full QM rubric, addressing most of QM’s essential (3 point) standards. An online course which effectively integrates the ATC course design template and successfully meets the requirements of a QM Fundamentals review could satisfy 75% of the requirements for a full QM course certification.
- **QM Higher Education Rubric with Annotations**: Set of standards used to evaluate the design of online courses. The rubric contains annotations that explain the applications of the standards and the relationship between them. To meet quality expectations, a course must meet all of the Essential Standards (3-point standards) in the QM Rubric AND achieve a score of at least 84 out of 99 possible points.
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Things to Look Out for:

I. Getting Started/Your Course Orientation: Make sure getting started in your course is intuitive. QM evaluates this aspect of a course in General Standard 1. For D2L, the ATC Course Template covers this standard with a Welcome News Item that clearly explains how to get started, directing students to the “Begin Here” page found within the Important Course Information module. Some common problems:

   A. Welcome News Item missing or not customized to the specific class.
   B. Important Course Information/Orientation: try to keep this as streamlined as possible, avoid adding numerous extra pages and modules as this can easily overwhelm a student in that it makes it seem like there is more content than there really is. You can do this by consolidating and grouping similar information in the orientation module pages.

   1. Course Syllabus: A syllabus template with provided headings can be found within the ATC Course Template. Moving into Canvas, University policies will be auto-populated within pages of the Important Course Information. This will include the Course Communication, Minimum Technical Skills, Academic Conduct, Plagiarism Policy, Disability/Accessibility Policies, Military/Veterans, Weather, etc. All this information changes regularly and as such is often out of date in course syllabi. So that will be one less thing you have to worry about! Course Communication information ( contact info, instructor response time, feedback timeline, how you utilize the discussion boards and news items, etc.) can be included in the syllabus and/or there will be a Course Communication page link on the Home page of the course site.
II. Alignment of Learning Outcomes: Wait, don’t go! Alignment is hugely important to your course! If your course is reviewed and misses one alignment Standard, it’s a deal breaker. The course will not pass go without revision. Excerpt from QM Rubric: “The concept of alignment is intended to convey the idea that critical course components work together to ensure that learners achieve desired learning outcomes.” Let’s assume your course is content is completely aligned, meaning when students complete assessments, they achieve the Module Learning Outcomes, which support their achievement of the Course Learning Outcomes- beautiful! But do your actual CLOs and MLOs reflect this? Let’s double check because it’s possible your CLOs and MLOs are selling your course short. Standards 2 and 3 of the QM Rubric cover this topic, but read key points below:

A. What is a Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)? These are the general course Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) listed in your syllabus. They should be measurable, but broader than module outcomes.

If you created your course years ago or inherited the course, or did not have much online course development training when the CLOs were developed, definitely revisit these. It is important that the cognitive level of the learning outcomes should correspond with the level of your course. What does that mean? If the course is a lower level undergraduate course, then the cognitive actions would remain in the low level thinking skills (Knowledge, Comprehension). If the course is 3000 level or beyond, the verbs used in the outcomes should scaffold, reaching higher order thinking involving application, problem solving and analysis.

B. Module Learning Outcomes outline what you expect your students to learn each module. MLOs should relate back to the broader CLOs, but should break down the CLO into more specific knowledge, skills, or competencies. As mentioned with the CLOs, the MLOs should also be appropriate for the level of the course. The links included below are excellent resources for reviewing measurable action verbs by cognitive level as well as associated assessment types.

- Bloom’s Taxonomy of Measurable Verbs & Matching Assessment Types
- Bloom’s Taxonomy Teacher Planning Kit
- Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy Resource Page from Iowa State University: Ready to be overwhelmed by action verbs? This is the website for you! This is a link to Iowa State’s compiled resources on action verbs, the page includes information as well as links to other resources on action verbs and associated cognitive processes.
C. Assessments measure the MLOs. Each MLO must be assessed. Here is an example of misalignment between a MLO and an Assessment:

- MLO: Identify key management strategies
- Assessment: Discussion topic: Scenario listed, questions: What management team structure would you choose and why? What model would you associate with your strategy and why?

The problem: The MLO uses a low level action verb “identify”, this term is associated with recalling facts without understanding. Whereas the assessment involves higher level thinking skills associated with the cognitive actions of analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating. In this instance, the lower level MLO does not accurately reflect the level of difficulty of the assessment and is also not appropriate for the level of the course. Great assessment, poor MLO match! This MLO is selling the course short.

Take Home Message: The CLOs and MLOs are equivalent to a blueprint of your course, so make sure they are accurate and appropriate for your class content. The ATC Course Template contains a handy module summary table that shows the alignment of CLOs, MLOs, Instructional Activities, and Assessments. If you don’t already, try to incorporate these tables into your class. The tables are usually housed on the module assignment or summary page.

III. Instructional Materials & Course Activities: The gist of Standard 4 & 5 is that your course content and activities support your learning objectives and promote learner interaction and engagement.

A. Common problem: The content may support the learning objectives, but does not promote interaction or engagement. Why? Too much text. Standard 4.5 looks for the course to present a variety of instructional materials including options for how learners consume content. To promote engagement and interaction, the course should go beyond text to also include video and/or audio content. If you’ve been playing it safe with all textual content for fear of having to caption videos, fear not, I’ll walk you through auto captioning (and correcting!) with YouTube in the Accessibility section below. Also, it’s important to note that the University will be providing captioning assistance within the year.
B. Lack of opportunity to interact is another common problem in online courses and is assessed via Standard 5.2. For example, if most/all assignments are autograded and there are no discussion forums or virtual office hours, the student will have very little opportunity for interaction with the instructor or other students. If student to student interaction is not appropriate or essential for the learning outcomes in your course, then it is not necessary to work in that component. However, all online courses should promote instructor-student, student to instructor interaction. Opportunities for interaction include:

a. Student-Instructor: Assignment submitted for instructor feedback; asynchronous discussion board interaction; FAQ discussion forum moderated by the instructor
b. Student-Student: Group discussions; small group projects; or peer critiques.

IV. Accessibility: Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and QM Standard 8 looks for a course design that is committed to accessibility for all learners. Accessibility standards apply to ALL online content, including supplemental online materials associated with face to face or blended courses. An Accessibility Statement should be included in all course syllabi. In Canvas, this information will be provided in the syllabus template. In the meantime, make sure your syllabus includes an updated Accessibility Statement, ensuring the link is functional and correct and that the phone # and email address is present. The Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC) has recently changed its name to Student Accessibility Resources (SAR). Here is the latest statement to reflect the change:

Assistant for Students with Disabilities: The University of West Florida supports an inclusive learning environment for all students. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that hinder your full participation, such as time-limited exams, inaccessible web content, or the use of non-captioned videos and podcasts, reasonable accommodations can be arranged. Prior to receiving accommodations, you must register with Student Accessibility Resources (Links to an external site.) SAR. Appropriate academic accommodations will be determined based on the documented needs of the individual. For information regarding the registration process, e-mail sdrc@uwf.edu or call 850.474.2387.

Educate yourself in how to create accessible content, so it becomes part of your workflow rather than something to take care of later. Review the Web Accessibility Handbook created by ATC for a thorough breakdown of accessibility methods. I touch on some of the core methods to incorporate into your workflow below:
A. Course Navigation & Design: I discuss this in the Getting Started section above in regard to course orientation. As students move forward in your course the navigation should remain intuitive and consistent, facilitating ease of use. This can be taken care of by using the ATC course template or by organizing your course similar to the template, but customized to better suit your course content.

The basic concept is to utilize a consistent module outline such as depicted in the image to the right. Each module would use the same framework of (or a version of) an Intro, Lesson Topic, and Assignment HTML page throughout the course. Most courses I’ve reviewed do follow this outline, however, common issues include trying to slip resources into the module, but outside of the html pages. In the example depicted below (left), lecture content is being housed outside of the content page. Problem? The content is just floating there with cryptic file names and no instructions. To resolve the issue, the lecture video and transcript would simply be moved within the Content page. Links using informative text are included in the page instructions to link users to the content. This slight revision makes for an intuitive and consistent module delivery throughout the class.

Figure 1: Poor incorporation of lecture content (left); Revised incorporation of lecture materials (right).

B. Accessibility Features:

1. Headings: Use true headings (not text formatting) within documents and HTML pages within elearning to enable users with assistive technology to navigate through the content by heading structure. For more information on use of headings please see WebAIM’s Semantic Structure. Other resources include:

   - Microsoft Word: Creating Accessible Documents
2. Alt Text for Imagery provides a textual alternative to non-text content. Do not include the words “image of”; do include succinct description of the image. For more information, access WebAIM’s Alternative Text Basics. Alt text in d2l html pages will transfer to Canvas.

![Image example: Alt text example- good and bad from University of Leicester](image_url)

Figure 2: **ALT text example- good and bad from University of Leicester**

a. Alt Text for complex STEM Images: In some cases the text publisher may provide long descriptions for figures. If not, this is a great resource for Effective Practices for Description of Science Content.

3. Informative link text: screen readers can scan for links so it is best to use the title of the link as the link text. Avoid link text such as Click Here. For more information, access WebAIM’s information on Links and Hypertext.

4. Tables: Do use a build table feature to construct the table, do use headers, do create a caption. Don’t use tables to create a document layout. Don’t leave off the header row. For detailed information including a video tutorial see: Universal Design Creating Accessible Tables in Microsoft Word. Other resources include:

   - [Web Accessibility Tutorials: Tables Concepts](web_url)
   - [WebAIM: Creating Accessible Tables](web_url)

5. Use of Color: Variety of color can enhance comprehension, but do not rely on color alone to convey information. In the United States, about 7 percent of the male population—or about 10.5 million men—and 0.4 percent of the female population either cannot distinguish red from green, or see red and green differently from how others do. That said, avoid true
red/green color combinations. Also make sure color contrast between
text and background is strong, the preferred color ratio is 4:5:1. Below
are some resources to help you select color for your content.

- **WebAIM Color Contrast Checker**: Enter your colors to generate
  the ratio
- **Color Safe**: Excellent web app that allows you to view and select
  color combinations that will meet guidelines for various visual
  capabilities.

6. Avoid Floating Objects: Screen readers cannot access text boxes, so
these should be completely avoided. Images, data tables, charts and
other objects should be placed inline with document content. This means
wrapping text should be avoided if possible. However, if floating objects
are unavoidable, do not distribute the document as a Word doc, instead
convert the file to an accessible format such as pdf or gdoc.

7. Creating More Accessible Documents & Presentations: Incorporating the
accessibility components listed above will get you well on your way to
meeting Standards, but for a more encompassing overview of methods in
Microsoft Word and Powerpoint, check out these brief yet very informative
accessibility training videos.

- **Create More Accessible Word Docs**: Topics: Check document
  accessibility, Improve accessibility with alt text, Improve header
  accessibility, Create accessible links, Create accessible file
  names, Create accessible tables, Creating accessible documents.
- **Create More Accessible Slides**: Topics: Create more accessible
  slides, improve image accessibility in PowerPoint, Use more
  accessible colors and styles in slides, Design slides for people
  with dyslexia, Save a presentation in a different format.

8. Scanned Images or Documents should be searchable--for instance if you
scan in a journal article or chapter text or even a poster, ocular character
recognition (OCR) must be performed so the text is searchable and
recognized by screen readers. This can be done with Adobe Acrobat Pro
software. Campus availability of the software is as follows:

- Multimedia PCs in UWF Library Skylab
- Michael Pace with the Library can help to make a PDF accessible
  (it just takes some time for them to get it through their system so
  faculty needs to plan ahead).
○ ATC also has a computer with Adobe Acrobat Pro installed on it for faculty to use. Faculty can schedule time in the lab (Building 77) by completing this form, or just give ATC a call: 850-473-7239.
○ Anyone who feels like they should have the software can submit an ITS request through JIRA to have Adobe Acrobat Pro 11 installed. It has to be justified and approved before they will do it.

9. Accessibility Checklists & Checkers:
○ Section 508 Checklist: WebAIM’s excerpt from Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act
○ UWF ATC Accessibility Checklist
○ Online Course Accessibility Checklist (University of Washington)
○ Rules for Microsoft Accessibility Checker
○ How to use Microsoft Accessibility Checker
○ Grackle Accessibility Checker for Google Suite: download this extension to run accessibility checks in G Docs or G Sheets.
○ Accessibility Checker in Canvas is found within the HTML editor: tool highlighted in yellow below identifies issues and allows one to resolve within the AC Window.

○ Accessibility Checker in D2L is also found within the HTML editor, but in the tool ribbon at the bottom of the window.
10. Captions and/or Transcripts for Videos: To meet QM and ADA standards, all videos or animations should be captioned.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>508 STANDARD</th>
<th>PASS</th>
<th>FAIL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(b) Equivalent alternatives for any multimedia presentation shall be synchronized with the presentation.</td>
<td>Video files and live audio broadcasts have <strong>synchronized captions</strong>.</td>
<td>Video files or live audio broadcasts do not have captions or captions are not synchronized.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Content presented through video, but not through audio is provided in an audio description track.</td>
<td>Audio descriptions are not provided for visual-only content in multimedia.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Recorded lectures are an excellent way to promote instructor to student engagement (assessed in QM Standards 5 & 6), and provide variety in the way students consume content (assessed in Standard 4.5). An easy solution for captions is to use YouTube’s auto-captioning feature. Doing so meets accessibility standards (assessed in Standard 8), while housing your videos in youtube reduces your course size which will make for an easier transition to Canvas, that’s a win-win! However, if your lectures are delivered via interactive slides such as through adobe presenter or articulate, the captioning must be done in that interface.

- Watch this [YouTube How To](#) Video to learn: How to upload videos to youtube and set privacy settings, generate auto captions, edit auto captions, organize videos in youtube, and link or embed videos in D2L and Canvas.

The University will be providing captioning services within the year, so if you need assistance in this department, help will be available in the near future!

Supplemental Resources:

- Watch [Preparing for your QM Review](#) (40 minutes). In this video UWF’s Dr. Anita Solarski discusses general QM Prep and commonly seen issues that impede QM certification. Dr. Solarski is a QM Scholar and Master Reviewer. Excellent resource.

- [ATC’s Accessibility Resources](#): Wealth of resources on accessibility, including a webinar series covering the how to’s of accessibility.

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● You may complete a full QM Self Review of your Course using the Self Review feature on the QM Website. Watch the video: Self Review 2015 to learn how to access the Self Review feature within the QM website.

● ATC Training Calendar: A self paced QM/ADA training course will be available all the time in the Canvas Sandbox--coming soon!