



Quality Matters Online Assurance Plan

Somerset Community College (SCC) is one of 16 colleges in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS). Opened in 1965 and accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), the goal of Somerset Community College is to prepare students for successful transfer to Kentucky four-year institutions or immediate employment.

The mission of Somerset Community College is to improve the employability and quality of life of area citizens as the primary provider of:

- College and Workforce Readiness
- Transfer Education
- Workforce Education and Training
- Student Support Services

Somerset Community College offers courses and programs through online learning and is dedicated to providing faculty assistance in the design and delivery of online courses through professional development efforts and best practices as outlined in Quality Matters to ensure that student-learning outcomes are met through a systematic, quality-assurance process that provides continuous feedback.

Quality Matters was developed and designed with funding from Funds for Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) grant by MarylandOnline to improve student learning based on national standards of best practices, research findings, and instructional design principles, which promotes four underlying principles:

Continuous

- The Quality Matters process is designed to ensure all reviewed courses will eventually meet expectations.
- The process is integral to a continuous quality improvement process.

Centered

- On research - the development of the rubric is based in national standards of best practice, the research literature, and instructional design principles.
- On student learning - the rubric and process are designed to promote student learning.

- On quality - the review sets a quality goal at the 85% level or better (courses do not have to be perfect but better than good enough).

Collegial

- A Quality Matters review is part of a faculty-driven, peer review process.
- The review process is intended to be diagnostic and collegial, not evaluative and judgmental.

Collaborative

- The review is based on collaboratively identified evidence found in the course rather than the personal preference of an individual reviewer.
- The review is flexible and not prescriptive (many ways to meet each standard).
- The review team consists of experienced online instructors as reviewers in communication with the course developer.

Based on these four underlying principles of Quality Matters, Somerset Community College subscribes to the following goals related to Somerset Community College's online program.

- Improving learner outcomes – persistence, retention
- Creating evidence-based processes for maintaining online learning quality
- Improving and showcasing the quality of online courses
- Aiding the accreditation process
- Consistency in course design (not course content)
- Maximizing organizational resources

Online Program Support Mission

Somerset Community College's Online Learning Program is committed to promote the sound design, development, and delivery of online and hybrid courses to meet the educational needs of our students and faculty. The Online Learning Program advocates providing students a challenging and rewarding educational online experience along with providing faculty professional development resources that allows for continuous improvement of quality courses.

QM Professional Development for Faculty Peer Review Team

Eight individuals have been delegated as members of the Faculty Peer Reviewer Team and have completed training reviewing a course based on the QM Higher Education Rubric Workbook Standards.

Checklist for Online Courses

The QM Coordinator provides all faculty with a copy of the QM Higher Education Standards, in conjunction with the SCC common course Blackboard shell and SCC syllabus template, which aligns with QM Higher Education Standards.

Scheduling of Course Reviews Based on QM Rubric

All new online courses are reviewed by the Faculty Peer Review Team prior to course availability in Blackboard. Faculty who would like their established course(s) reviewed based on

the Quality Matters Higher Education Standards, makes a request through their appropriate Dean or Associate Dean to the QM Coordinator. The faculty course developer is provided a QM Course Review Worksheet to complete prior to the review to provide basic course information, course format, course learning objectives or competencies, assessments, instructional materials, course interaction components, and instructor perspectives. The faculty course developer is involved in pre-review discussion and consulted throughout the review process.

Course Review Process

Quality Matters has eight areas that are comprised of specific standards: course overview and introduction, learning objectives (competencies), assessment and measurement, instructional materials, course activities and learner interaction, course technology, learner support, and accessibility and usability.

Course Reviews are set up in the Course Review Management System by the QM Coordinator. The QM Coordinator will select three individuals from the Faculty Peer Review Team to review the course. One of the three peer reviewers will serve as chair in order to submit the final report.

The Faculty Peer Review Team members make independent decisions on whether a course has “Met” or “Not Met” each specific review standard based on the course meeting 85% for each standard. There are 43 standards assigned with varying points (3, 2 or 1) depending on their relative significance. Of the 43 standards, there are 21 essential standards that must be “Met” to be recognized as a Quality Matters course. To meet QM review expectations: a course must have “Met” all 3-point essential standards **and** receive an overall score of 84 out of 99 points. The Faculty Peer Review Team will complete a final report with all reviewer feedback as well as a final score that reflects the overall QM score of the course.

Recommendations and Assistance in Implementing Course Improvements

The Faculty Peer Review Team members will make individual recommendations on each standard area through the Course Review Management System. A post-review call will be conducted by the Faculty Peer Review Team to ensure that the final report is complete. The QM Coordinator will review recommendations from the final report with the course faculty developer and assist in implementing improvements. Courses having “Met” QM standards are documented for quality assurance for accrediting agencies as well as institutional recognition of the course having met quality design standards as indicated by the QM image displayed in the course shell.

Standards	Points
Course Overview Introduction	1.1 Instructions make clear how to get started and where to find various course components. 3
	1.2 Learners are introduced to the purpose and structure of the course. 3
	1.3 Etiquette expectations (sometimes called "netiquette") for online discussions, email, and other forms of communication are clearly stated. 2
	1.4 Course and/or institutional policies with which the learner is expected to comply are clearly stated, or a link to current policies is provided. 2
	1.5 Minimum technology requirements are clearly stated and instructions for use provided. 2
	1.6 Prerequisite knowledge in the discipline and/or any required competencies are clearly stated. 1
	1.7 Minimum technical skills expected of the learner are clearly stated. 1
	1.8 The self-introduction by the instructor is appropriate and is available online. 1
	1.9 Learners are asked to introduce themselves to the class. 1
Learning Objectives (Competencies)	2.1 The course learning objectives, or course/program competencies, describe outcomes that are measurable. 3
	2.2 The module/unit learning objectives or competencies describe outcomes that are measurable and consistent with the course-level objectives or competencies. 3
	2.3 All learning objectives or competencies are stated clearly and written from the learner's perspective. 3
	2.4 The relationship between learning objectives or competencies and course activities is clearly stated. 3
	2.5 The learning objectives or competencies are suited to the level of the course. 3
Assessment and Measurement	3.1 The assessments measure the stated learning objectives or competencies. 3
	3.2 The course grading policy is stated clearly. 3
	3.3 Specific and descriptive criteria are provided for the evaluation of learners' work and are tied to the course grading policy. 3
	3.4 The assessment instruments selected are sequenced, varied, and suited to the learner work being assessed. 2
	3.5 The course provides learners with multiple opportunities to track their learning progress. 2
Instructional Materials	4.1 The instructional materials contribute to the achievement of the stated course and module/unit learning objectives or competencies. 3
	4.2 Both the purpose of instructional materials and how the materials are to be used for learning activities are clearly explained. 3
	4.3 All instructional materials used in the course are appropriately cited. 2
	4.4 The instructional materials are current. 2
	4.5 A variety of instructional materials is used in the course. 2
	4.6 The distinction between required and optional materials is clearly explained. 1
Course Activities and Learner Interaction	5.1 The learning activities promote the achievement of the stated learning objectives or competencies. 3
	5.2 Learning activities provide opportunities for interaction that support active learning. 3
	5.3 The instructor's plan for classroom response time and feedback on assignments is clearly stated. 3
	5.4 The requirements for learner interaction are clearly stated. 2
Course Technology	6.1 The tools used in the course support the learning objectives and competencies. 3
	6.2 Course tools promote learner engagement and active learning. 3
	6.3 Technologies required in the course are readily obtainable. 2
	6.4 The course technologies are current. 1
	6.5 Links are provided to privacy policies for all external tools required in the course. 1
Learner Support	7.1 The course instructions articulate or link to a clear description of the technical support offered and how to obtain it. 3
	7.2 Course instructions articulate or link to the institution's accessibility policies and services. 3
	7.3 Course instructions articulate or link to an explanation of how the institution's academic support services and resources can help learners succeed in the course and how learners can obtain them. 2
	7.4 Course instructions articulate or link to an explanation of how the institution's student services and resources can help learners succeed and how learners can obtain them. 1
Accessibility and Usability*	8.1 Course navigation facilitates ease of use. 3
	8.2 Information is provided about the accessibility of all technologies required in the course. 3
	8.3 The course provides alternative means of access to course materials in formats that meet the needs of diverse learners. 2
	8.4 The course design facilitates readability. 2
	8.5 Course multimedia facilitate ease of use. 2

* Meeting QM's accessibility Standards does not guarantee or imply that specific country/federal/state/local accessibility regulations are met. Consult with an accessibility specialist to ensure that accessibility regulations are met.