National Standards for Quality Online Programs

iNACOL
International Association for K-12 Online Learning

Written by

Liz Pape & Matthew Wicks and the iNACOL Quality
Standards for Online Programs Committee

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iNACOL

International Association for K-12 Online Learning

iNACOL Quality Standards for
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iNACOL would like to thank each member of the iNACOL Quality Standards for Online Programs Committee for their contributions, review, and participation in the development of this document.

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National Standards
for Quality Online Programs

Introduction

The mission of the International Association for K-12 Online Learning, iNACOL, is to ensure all students have access to a world-class education and quality online learning opportunities that prepare them for a lifetime of success.

This document, the International Association for K-12 Online Learning's (iNACOL) *National Standards for Quality Online Programs,* is the third of iNACOL's online education standards, following the *National Standards of Quality for Online Courses* and *National Standards for Quality Online Teaching.* The standards in this document address what is needed for a quality online program, elements of which include quality course design and quality online teaching. However, this set of standards is more than the third of a series – it is intended that these Standards for Quality Online Programs provide the encompassing and over-arching set of standards program leaders need to assure a quality online program.

National Standards for Quality Online Programs is designed to provide states, districts, online programs, and other organizations with a set of quality guidelines for online program leadership, instruction, content, support services, and evaluation. The initiative began with a thorough literature review of existing online program standards, including accreditation standards, a cross-reference of standards, followed by a survey to iNACOL members and experts to ensure the efficacy of the standards adopted.

These guidelines should be implemented and monitored by each district or organization, as they reserve the right to apply the guidelines according to the best interest of the population for which they serve.

These standards start by addressing the foundation of the program: its mission, goals and objectives and its underlying beliefs and philosophy. Leadership is also addressed: the program's governance, the role of the governing body and how the relation between the governing body and organizational/program leadership work together to support the achievement of the mission.

Beyond the foundation of what the program has as its mission, goals and objectives, are the standards that address how the program operates, its teaching and learning standards and support standards. In this document, we have provided an overview of the most critical of the course design and teaching standards. In addition, a program needs to provide the support mechanisms

for student and teacher success in online courses. This document describes the necessary support standards needed for programs designed to supplement schools' course offerings as well as those programs designed for full-time students. For a fuller description of course design and teaching standards, please refer to iNACOL's *National Standards of Quality for Online Courses* and *National Standards for Quality Online Teaching*.

The *National Standards for Quality Online Programs* are identified on the following pages.

Rating Scale

5	Exemplary: a model of best practice as related to this criterion
4	Accomplished: excellent implementation; comparable to other examples
3	Promising: good implementation; however, somewhat lacking in depth or detail
2	Incomplete: partial implementation of this criterion; additional work needed; good start
1	Confusing: not obvious; more work needed; not a good example
N/A	Not Applicable

Institutional Standards

Institutional standards address the organization's vision, mission, philosophy and beliefs. The institutional standards define those elements critical to creating the operational framework of the online program, including the governance, leadership, resources, and organizational commitment to meet the program's vision and mission.

A	Mission statement — A mission statement of a quality online program clearly conveys its purpose and goals. It serves as the basis for the program's day-to-day operations, as well as a guide for its strategic plans for the future. Communication between and buy-in from stakeholders is a critical component of a mission statement.	Rating
✓	States the purpose of the organization. Is clear and concise in articulating who the organization is, what it does and whom it serves.	
✓	Indicates that online learning is the focus of the organization.	
✓	Demonstrates a commitment to measurable quality and accountability.	
✓	Reflects involvement of key stakeholders.	
✓	Is made available to the public.	
✓	Is reviewed periodically by program leadership.	

B	Governance — Governance is typically provided by a Board of Directors, an Advisory Board or a School Board. In a quality online program, governance and leadership work hand-in-hand, developing the operational policies for the program and its leadership and staff.	Rating
✓	Members are knowledgeable about K12 online learning and/or receive appropriate training after joining the governing board.	
✓	Supports the organization by securing necessary resources.	
✓	Fulfills the role defined for it in the by-laws of the institution.	
✓	Collaborates with program leadership to implement policies and procedures that are in compliance with state educational statutes and/or regional accrediting agencies.	
✓	The legal status of the online program is clearly defined with no ambiguities in ownership, control, or responsibility.	

C	Leadership - The leadership of a quality online program is accountable to the program's governance body, and is responsible for setting and meeting the operational and strategic goals in support of the program's mission and vision statements.	Rating
✓	Is responsible for meeting the organization's annual goals and communicating these goals to its constituents.	
✓	Maintains a disciplined knowledge of its future with projections of income, expense, enrollment, and trends in its educational and business environment.	
✓	Provides a productive collaborative environment for learning and work, and the leadership necessary to plan both day-to-day operations and the long-term future of the online program.	
✓	Verifies that measures are in place to ensure quality, integrity and validity of information.	

D	Planning — A quality online program makes planning, managed by the leadership and staff of the organization a regular part of the program. There are several types of planning activities, including strategic planning, long-range and operational planning, which defines annual goals. Effective planning is not a one-time activity, but instead should provide opportunities for reflection on how to improve the organization's performance.	Rating
Strategic plan		
✓	Is developed that addresses 3-5 years of actions and has been approved by the program's leadership and governance.	
✓	Is updated on a regular basis (at least every 3-5 years) and includes historical data, baseline information, trend data, and projections, allowing data-driven decision-making.	
✓	Addresses the requirements for resources that effectively and efficiently serve their students and faculty, including curriculum, technology, support, professional development, and fiscal viability.	
Organizational goals		
✓	Are aligned with the strategic plan.	
✓	Are updated annually based on past year's accomplishments.	
✓	Are shared and supported throughout the organization.	

E	Organizational Staffing — A quality online program recognizes appropriate levels of staffing are critical to the success of an online program. Staff should be well trained in order to successfully meet their performance goals, and are provided with appropriate levels of support, resources, feedback and management.	Rating
✓	Sufficient professional, administrative and support staff are provided to carry out the mission and annual organizational goals	
✓	Ongoing training and support are provided to the staff to carry out the mission of the program.	
✓	Clearly defined roles and responsibilities are evident to create a collegial team to assure effective delivery of quality education.	
✓	Evaluations of staff and faculty occur on a regularly scheduled basis.	

F	Organizational Commitment — In a quality online program governance, leadership and staff are responsible for creating an organization that demonstrates a commitment to attaining the program's goals and mission statement. Everyone within the organization understands the mission statement and works to achieve it.	Rating
✓	Activities and accomplishments of the organization are aligned to the mission statement.	
✓	Programs that function under the authority of another educational organization have a demonstrated commitment from the parent organization to support the implementation and ongoing operation of this program.	
✓	Sustainability of the program is articulated through strategic and operational planning and implemented through ongoing operations (e.g. commitment to sustainable funding, maintaining quality staff, and compliance with applicable educational statutes).	
✓	Is accredited by a recognized accrediting body.	

G	Financial and Material Resources — A quality online program has adequate financial and material resources to accomplish the mission of the organization. These resources are appropriately planned for and expended using sound business practices.	Rating
✓	Are available to assure a quality educational experience in alignment with the organization's mission statement.	
✓	Are managed in a responsible manner according to prescribed budget and accounting principles.	
✓	Are allocated in support of mission statement that demonstrates sustainability over time.	

H	Equity and Access — A quality online program's policies and practice support students' ability to access the program. Accommodations are available to meet a variety of student needs.	Rating
✓	Policies clearly state eligibility requirements for the program.	
✓	Policies and practices are in place that provide accommodations for students with disabilities.	
✓	Ensures that students have equitable access to the program consistent with its mission and purposes.	

I	Integrity and Accountability — In a quality online program, leadership is transparent in its management of the program, providing regular and timely information on progress towards attainment of goals, alignment with policies and standards, and achievement of student learning outcomes.	Rating
✓	The online program discloses accurate information relating to its mission, accreditation, courses and programs, services, policies, fees, recruitment processes and incentives, and other factors considered important to prospective and current students and stakeholders.	
✓	The program results in learning appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the course, program, or diploma completion requirements.	

Teaching and Learning Standards

Teaching and learning standards focus on how an online program develops or chooses its curricula; how the program's teachers deliver that curriculum to students; and how students' progress in the curriculum is assessed. The *iNACOL National Standards of Quality for Online Courses* focus on issues of curriculum and assessment at the individual course level, while the *iNACOL National Standards for Quality Online Teaching* focus on ensuring individual teacher quality. These standards assume that a quality online program meets those individual course and teacher standards and identifies the most critical aspects of those standards as well as a more comprehensive, "macro-level" set of standards to truly be considered a quality online program.

J	Curriculum and Course Design — A quality online program will have a well thought-out approach to its curriculum and course design whether it develops its own courses and/or licenses curriculum from other educational providers.	Rating
✓	Has clearly stated and attainable educational goals	
✓	Is clear and coherent in its organization	
✓	Utilizes quality instructional materials and appropriate technology that enable and enrich student learning	
✓	Demonstrates rigorous course content	
✓	Provides for high-degree of interaction between teacher, learners, parents, and among learners themselves	
✓	Embeds critical thinking, problem solving, analysis, integration, and synthesis abilities in learning activities	
✓	Meets requirements of appropriate state or national standards, including applicable end of course assessments	
✓	Meets requirements of accessibility for individuals with disabilities	
✓	Meets requirements of copyright and fair use	
✓	Is designed to accommodate different learning styles	
✓	Is designed with consideration for time and place limitations of students	

K	Instruction — A quality online program takes a comprehensive and integrated approach to ensuring excellent online teaching for its students. This process begins with promising practices but is equally committed to continuous improvement and adaptation to student learning needs through professional development.	Rating
✓	Is grounded in the program's mission, beliefs, and expectations for student learning	
✓	Is supported by research and best practice	
✓	Is continually refined based on assessment of stakeholders' needs	
✓	Is adaptable to best serve different student learning styles	
✓	Is sensitive to the cultural differences of students	
✓	Includes frequent teacher to student interaction, teacher to parent interaction, and fosters frequent student-to-student interaction	
✓	Is sensitive to time and place limitations of students	
✓	Faculty hold the required state certifications	
✓	Faculty are trained in and demonstrate competency in online instructional methodologies and learning technologies	
✓	Includes a process to monitor that the work and assessments are completed by the students registered for the course	

L	Assessment of Student Performance — A quality online learning program values student academic performance and takes a comprehensive, integrated approach to measuring student achievement. This includes use of multiple assessment measures and strategies that align closely to both program and learner objectives, with timely, relevant feedback to all stakeholders.	Rating
✓	Enables students to monitor their own learning progress.	
✓	Enables teachers to adapt their instruction to meet learner needs.	
✓	Uses multiple methods to assess student performance.	
✓	Assesses a variety of types of student performance.	
✓	Uses formative assessments to inform instructional practice.	
✓	Informs ongoing course design and revisions.	
✓	Measures student attainment of the course's educational goals.	
✓	Provides for timely and frequent feedback about student progress.	

Support Standards

Support standards address the organization's academic, administrative, guidance and technical services that are critical to meeting the needs of all participants in the online program.

M	Faculty — A quality online program supports the faculty by providing opportunities for them to develop their professional skills through mentoring, professional development, and technical assistance.	Rating
✓	Provides and encourages participation in induction and mentoring programs.	
✓	Provides regular feedback regarding teacher performance.	
✓	Provides a wide variety of professional development opportunities.	
✓	Provides timely, effective technical support.	

N	Students — A quality online program has student support services to address the various needs of students at different levels within the organization. The levels of support are appropriate and adequate for a student's success.	Rating
✓	Provides an orientation to online learning technologies and successful online student practices.	
✓	Provides academic and administrative services to address their academic and developmental needs.	
✓	Provides support services for individual needs.	
✓	Provides access to learning and assessment content, instruction, technologies and resources.	
✓	Establishes standards for teacher to student communication.	
✓	Provides timely and meaningful assessment feedback.	
✓	Provides timely, effective technical support.	

O	**Guidance Services: A quality online program has guidance services to support students and parents to ensure success of the online program. Depending on the program, these services are either directly provided by the program or a service provider, or in the case of supplemental programs, these services may be provided by the local school.**	Rating
✓	Ensures academic advising is provided for students to meet requirements of the program and/or school.	
✓	Provides staff training in the unique student needs of online learning.	
✓	Provides tools and/or information to assist students in determining the appropriateness of specific courses for their academic needs.	
✓	Understands the network of services available to support online learning.	

P	**Organizational Support — A quality online program has organizational support to oversee the instructional learning environment as it is conveyed through technology. Some organizational support services may be distributed between the program and other entities, depending on the physical location where the students are taking their online courses.**	Rating
✓	Provides an online learning environment that is appropriately maintained, secure and is a productive and safe work environment for students and staff	
✓	Provides a work environment consisting of the resources, tools, and organizational policies that enables staff to implement the program's mission, beliefs and objectives.	

Q	Parents/Guardians — In a quality online program, parents and guardians play an integral part in their students' educational life. They work as a team with faculty, administrators, guidance services, and organizational support to ensure a quality educational experience for their students.	Rating
✓	Are provided information about the program, successful online student practices and supportive learning environments.	
✓	Receive timely responses from faculty and staff.	
✓	Receive critical information about student progress and are encouraged to communicate with faculty and administrators to best support the online learning student.	

Evaluation Standards

A culture of continual program improvement is critical in becoming a quality online program and maintaining that status. Evaluation efforts are utilized to both verify the program is meeting its intended purposes and identify where improvements can be made. The cycle is completed by taking this information and developing concrete plans for program improvement.

R	Program Evaluation — A quality online program recognizes the value of program evaluation. Program evaluation is both internal and external and informs all processes that effect teaching and learning. Internal evaluations often are more informal in nature and may provide immediate feedback on a targeted area of inquiry. External program evaluations typically look at the entire program from an objective perspective that will bring additional credibility to the results.	Rating
✓	Conducts ongoing internal evaluations that include regularly collecting and analyzing data based on national, state, and/or program metrics.	
✓	Conducts ongoing internal evaluations that include using clearly articulated measures to evaluate its learners.	
✓	Conducts ongoing internal evaluations that include determining program success by measuring student achievement and satisfaction based on valid and reliable assessment techniques.	
✓	Conducts ongoing internal evaluations that include ensuring students participate in state or national standardized testing, as appropriate and evaluating results against state or national data.	
✓	Conducts ongoing internal evaluations that include consistently evaluating faculty to assure instructional quality, using clear, consistent policies, measures and procedures.	
✓	Conducts ongoing internal evaluations that include reviewing and evaluating courses to ensure quality, consistency with the curriculum, currency, and advancement of the student learning outcomes.	
✓	Conducts periodic external evaluations that include validating internal evaluation process and results.	
✓	Conducts periodic external evaluations that include independently assessing progress towards goals, mission and strategic plan of program.	
✓	Conducts periodic external evaluations that include informing an improvement plan for the online program.	
✓	Communicates evaluation results to program stakeholders.	

S	Program Improvement — A quality online program establishes a culture of continual program improvement. Improvement planning focuses on using program evaluations, research, and promising practices to improve student performance and organizational effectiveness. It fosters continuous improvement across all aspects of the organization and ensures the program is focused on accomplishing its mission and vision.	Rating
✓	Uses strategic, long-range and operational planning and evaluation to continuously improve its educational programs and services.	
✓	Uses data effectively to drive instructional and management decision-making.	
Is based on:		
✓	Advancement of the program's vision and mission.	
✓	Student achievement.	
✓	Internal and external evaluation.	
✓	Current research in the relevant areas.	
✓	Promising practices.	
Includes provisions for:		
✓	Beta testing and peer review.	
✓	Satisfaction surveys by students, parents, teachers and schools as appropriate.	
✓	Evaluation of curriculum and instruction as it relates to student achievement.	
✓	Regular online teacher performance evaluations.	
✓	Reviewing and updating policies and procedures.	
✓	Reviewing appropriateness, effectiveness and quality of teaching and learning technologies.	
✓	Regular online course reviews.	

References

Accrediting Commission of the Distance Education and Training Council. (2008). *DETC Accreditation Handbook – 2008*.

American Distance Education Consortium. (2002). *ADEC IDEAL IRIC-D Committee Checklist*.

American Federation of Teachers AFL-CIO. (2000). *Distance Education Guidelines for Good Practice*.

Contains a list of standards of good practice, some related to program operations/policy, some related to course design, some related to instructional practice. These standards could be considered for inclusion as characteristics of quality online programs. However, some statements appear to have a strong higher education focus (statements about undergrad programs, statements about faculty control).

Council for Higher Education Accreditation. (2002). *Accreditation and Assuring Quality in Distance Learning*.

This document focuses on the challenges online learning poses for higher education accrediting organizations. It outlines 7 "planks" of the "platform" that are routinely reviewed when reviewing programs for quality, which could be considered as an organizer for our standards.

Graf, David & Caines, Maisie. (2000). *WebCT Exemplary Course Project Scoring Rubric*. Retrieved June 23, 2009 from: http://www.webct.com/Communities/library/iteminformation?source=brow se&objectID=4367802

Hassel, Bryan C., and Terrell Michelle Godard. (2004). *How Can Virtual Schools Be a Vibrant Part of Meeting the Choice Provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act?*

This document was prepared for the July, 2004 NCLB Summit. It has a few areas related to establishing a virtual school that could be applicable to a discussion of quality program standards. The definition of highly qualified teacher could also be applicable as well as the area discussing accountability.

Legon, Ronald. (2006). *Comparison of the Quality Matters Rubric to Accreditation Standards for Distance Learning*.

This document compares a rubric that is designed for evaluating online courses to accreditation standards designed to evaluate online programs and shows how they align to the CHEA standards. This document doesn't provide additional standards beyond the CHEA standards that are contained in other documents reviewed. The Quality Matters metric could be adapted for course development standards and used in some areas of course delivery standards.

Lucent Technologies. (1999.) *Critical Success Factors for On-line Learning*.

Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Secondary Schools. (2007). *Supplementary Issues for Distance Education Institutions*.

Document has a focus on career and technical institutions, so some parts of document may not be applicable. The portion on hands-on learning (including laboratories), multiple modes of assessment, and student services are worth considering.

Middle States Association Commission on Secondary Schools. Standards for Accreditation with *Indicators for Supplementary Education Organizations*.

This document focuses on supplemental programs. Document contains 7 areas of standards, which could be considered as "buckets" for quality program standards. The standards related to Governance, Leadership, and Planning and Assessment of Student Learning and Organizational Performance are of particular relevance.

Moore, Janet C. (2005). *The Sloan Consortium Quality Framework and the Five Pillars.*

The Sloan Consortium is a higher education organization that has identified 5 over-arching areas (pillars) required for a quality online program along with statements about each pillar that are ways to demonstrate the specific pillar is met. Because of its higher education focus, not all of the individual statements would be relevant to this work, but there are quite a few that still are relevant.

Northwest Association of Accredited Schools. (2008). *Distance Education Annual Report, 2007-2008.*

This document outlines 3 broad areas of standards (or when counting the various sub-areas, it could be viewed as 8 areas) that could be used as organizers for quality program standards. The area on school improvement was cited as being especially helpful.

Sichenze, Celeste M. and Robinson, Jo Ann. (2005). *How the American Council on Education Seeks Quality in DE.*

This is from a 2005 conference and describes how an organization reviews distance education courses and recommends the appropriate amount of college credit. This organization in general reviews non-traditional classroom experiences (e.g. military service, courses offered by business, trade organizations, etc.) Of relevance are the 5 guiding principles for distance education that could potentially be used as organizers for quality program standards.

Southern Regional Education Board. (2004). *Principles of Good Practice: The Foundation for Quality of Southern Regional Education Board's Electronic Campus.*

SREB has identified various principles, which it has used to evaluate college distance education courses that are listed on its Electronic Campus. This is another document that contributes organizers for quality program standards.

The Institute for Higher Education Policy. (2000). *Quality of the Line: Benchmarks for Success in Internet-Based Distance Education.*

Document provides standards for internet-based distance education based on 2000 literature review and consensus of many online providers. Many standards are related to course design and teaching which are addressed in other NACOL standards, including the areas of Course Development, Teaching/Learning, and Course Structure. Relevant standard areas that are more programs focused include Institutional Support, Student Support, Faculty Support, and Evaluation and Assessment.

The North American Council for Online Learning and the Partnership for 21st Century Skills. (2006). *Virtual Schools and 21st Century Skills.*

Document talks about the importance of incorporating 21st Century Skills (as defined by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills) into online courses. Document doesn't provide standards, but provides a different approach to identifying areas that quality program standards should cover.

Transparency by Design: Principles of Good Practice for Higher Education Institutions Serving Adults at a Distance.

15 principles identified for serving adults at a distance in higher education. All of these principles could be considered for inclusion in quality program standards.

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education. (2006). *Evidence of Quality in Distance Education Programs Drawn from Interviews with the Accreditation Community.*

The Office of Postsecondary Education through discussions with 7 regional accreditation agencies and five national accrediting agencies to create guidelines leading to a more consistent and thorough evaluation of distance learning programs created this document. The document contains a number of statements that indicate areas that should be included in the standards as opposed to actual standards.

Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications. (1999). *Principles of Good Practice for Electronically Offered Academic Degree and Certificate Programs*.

Principles come from 1995 work, with an emphasis on higher education programs that result in student receiving some sort of credential. Both age and specific area of focus may limit applicability of document. Principles include: curriculum and instruction, institutional context and commitment, faculty supports, resources for learning, student services, commitment to support, and evaluation and assessment.

Working Group of the Indiana Partnership for Statewide Education (IPSE). (2006). *Guiding Principles for Faculty in Distance Education*.

This document provides useful standards related to faculty. Some of these standards may already be addressed in NACOL Teaching and Course standards

National Standards of Quality for Online Programs[1]
Online Program Self-Evaluation Form

		5 - Exemplary	4 - Accomplished	3 - Promising	2 - Incomplete	1 - Confusing	N/A	
	5 Exemplary: a model of best practice as related to this criterion **4 Accomplished:** excellent implementation; comparable to other examples **3 Promising:** good implementation; however, somewhat lacking in depth or detail **2 Incomplete:** partial implementation of this criterion; additional work needed; good start **1 Confusing:** not obvious; more work needed; not a good example **N/A Not Applicable:** Some standards may not apply to all types of programs							
A	Mission statement — A mission statement of a quality online program clearly conveys its purpose and goals. It serves as the basis for the program's day-to-day operations, as well as a guide for its strategic plans for the future. Communication between and buy-in from stakeholders is a critical component of a mission statement.							INSTITUTIONAL
✓	States the purpose of the organization. Is clear and concise in articulating who the organization is, what it does and whom it serves.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
✓	Indicates that online learning is the focus of the organization.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
✓	Demonstrates a commitment to measurable quality and accountability.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
✓	Reflects involvement of key stakeholders.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
✓	Is made available to the public.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
✓	Is reviewed periodically by program leadership.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
	Comments/Evidence:							

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1   Graf, David & Caines, Maisie. (2000). WebCT Exemplary Course Project Scoring Rubric. Retrieved June 23, 2009 from: http://www.webct.com/Communities/library/iteminformation?source=browse&objectID=4367802

B	Governance — Governance is typically provided by a Board of Directors, an Advisory Board or a School Board. In a quality online program, governance and leadership work hand-in-hand, developing the operational policies for the program and its leadership and staff.						
✓	Members are knowledgeable about K12 online learning and/or receive appropriate training after joining the governing board.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Supports the organization by securing necessary resources.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Fulfills the role defined for it in the by-laws of the institution.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Collaborates with program leadership to implement policies and procedures that are in compliance with state educational statutes and/or regional accrediting agencies.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	The legal status of the online program is clearly defined with no ambiguities in ownership, control, or responsibility.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	Comments/Evidence:						

INSTITUTIONAL

C	Leadership — The leadership of a quality online program is accountable to the program's governance body, and is responsible for setting and meeting the operational and strategic goals in support of the program's mission and vision statements.						
✓	Is responsible for meeting the organization's annual goals and communicating these goals to its constituents.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Maintains a disciplined knowledge of its future with projections of income, expense, enrollment, and trends in its educational and business environment.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Provides a productive collaborative environment for learning and work, and the leadership necessary to plan both day-to-day operations and the long-term future of the online program.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Verifies that measures are in place to ensure quality, integrity and validity of information.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	Comments/Evidence:						

INSTITUTIONAL

D	Planning — A quality online program makes planning, managed by the leadership and staff of the organization a regular part of the program. There are several types of planning activities, including strategic planning, long-range and operational planning, which defines annual goals. Effective planning is not a one-time activity, but instead should provide opportunities for reflection on how to improve the organization's performance.							
	Strategic Plan							
✓	Is developed that addresses 3-5 years of actions and has been approved by the program's leadership and governance.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
✓	Is updated on a regular basis (at least every 3-5 years) and includes historical data, baseline information, trend data, and projections, allowing data-driven decision-making.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
✓	Addresses the requirements for resources that effectively and efficiently serve their students and faculty, including curriculum, technology, support, professional development, and fiscal viability.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
	Organizational Goals							
✓	Are aligned with the strategic plan.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
✓	Are updated annually based on past year's accomplishments.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
✓	Are shared and supported throughout the organization.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
	Comments/Evidence:							

INSTITUTIONAL

E	Organizational Staffing — A quality online program recognizes appropriate levels of staffing are critical to the success of an online program. Staff should be well-trained in order to successfully meet their performance goals, and are provided with appropriate levels of support, resources, feedback and management.							
✓	Sufficient professional, administrative and support staff are provided to carry out the mission and annual organizational goals.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
✓	Ongoing training and support are provided to the staff to carry out the mission of the program.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
✓	Clearly defined roles and responsibilities are evident to create a collegial team to assure effective delivery of quality education.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	

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✓	Evaluations of staff and faculty occur on a regularly scheduled basis.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
	Comments/Evidence:							

F	Organizational Commitment — In a quality online program governance, leadership and staff are responsible for creating an organization that demonstrates a commitment to attaining the program's goals and mission statement. Everyone within the organization understands the mission statement and works to achieve it.							
✓	Activities and accomplishments of the organization are aligned to the mission statement.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
✓	Programs that function under the authority of another educational organization have a demonstrated commitment from the parent organization to support the implementation and ongoing operation of this program.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	INSTITUTIONAL
✓	Sustainability of the program is articulated through strategic and operational planning and implemented through ongoing operations (e.g. commitment to sustainable funding, maintaining quality staff, and compliance with applicable educational statutes).	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
✓	Is accredited by a recognized accrediting body.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
	Comments/Evidence:							

G	Financial and Material Resources — A quality online program has adequate financial and material resources to accomplish the mission of the organization. These resources are appropriately planned for and expended using sound business practices.							
✓	Are available to assure a quality educational experience in alignment with the organization's mission statement.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
✓	Are managed in a responsible manner according to prescribed budget and accounting principles.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	INSTITUTIONAL
✓	Are allocated in support of mission statement that demonstrates sustainability over time.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
	Comments/Evidence:							

H	Equity and Access — A quality online program's policies and practice support students' ability to access the program. Accommodations are available to meet a variety of student needs.							INSTITUTIONAL
✓	Policies clearly state eligibility requirements for the program.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
✓	Policies and practices are in place that provide accommodations for students with disabilities.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
✓	Ensures that students have equitable access to the program consistent with its mission and purposes.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
	Comments/Evidence:							

I	Integrity and Accountability — In a quality online program, leadership is transparent in its management of the program, providing regular and timely information on progress towards attainment of goals, alignment with policies and standards, and achievement of student learning outcomes.							INSTITUTIONAL
✓	The online program discloses accurate information relating to its mission, accreditation, courses and programs, services, policies, fees, recruitment processes and incentives, and other factors considered important to prospective and current students and stakeholders.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
✓	The program results in learning appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the course, program, or diploma completion requirements.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
	Comments/Evidence:							

J	Curriculum and Course Design — A quality online program will have a well thought-out approach to its curriculum and course design whether it develops its own courses and/or licenses curriculum from other educational providers.							TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARDS
✓	Has clearly stated and attainable educational goals.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
✓	Is clear and coherent in its organization.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
✓	Utilizes quality instructional materials and appropriate technology that enable and enrich student learning.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
✓	Demonstrates rigorous course content.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
✓	Provides for high-degree of interaction between teacher, learners, parents, and among learners themselves.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
✓	Embeds critical thinking, problem solving, analysis, integration, and synthesis abilities in learning activities.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	

✓	Meets requirements of appropriate state or national standards, including applicable end of course assessments.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Meets requirements of accessibility for individuals with disabilities.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Meets requirements of copyright and fair use.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Is designed to accommodate different learning styles.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Is designed with consideration for time and place limitations of students.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	Comments/Evidence:						

K	Instruction — A quality online program takes a comprehensive and integrated approach to ensuring excellent online teaching for its students. This process begins with promising practices but is equally committed to continuous improvement and adaptation to student learning needs through professional development.						
✓	Is grounded in the program's mission, beliefs, and expectations for student learning.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Is supported by research and best practice.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Is continually refined based on assessment of stakeholders' needs.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Is adaptable to best serve different student learning styles.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Is sensitive to the cultural differences of students.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Includes frequent teacher to student interaction, teacher to parent interaction, and fosters frequent student-to-student interaction.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Is sensitive to time and place limitations of students.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Faculty hold the required state certifications.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Faculty are trained in and demonstrate competency in online instructional methodologies and learning technologies.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Includes a process to monitor that the work and assessments are completed by the students registered for the course.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	Comments/Evidence:						

TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARDS

L	Assessment of Student Performance — A quality online learning program values student academic performance and takes a comprehensive, integrated approach to measuring student achievement. This includes use of multiple assessment measures and strategies that align closely to both program and learner objectives, with timely, relevant feedback to all stakeholders.						
✓	Enables students to monitor their own learning progress.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Enables teachers to adapt their instruction to meet learner needs.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Uses multiple methods to assess student performance.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Assesses a variety of types of student performance.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Uses formative assessments to inform instructional practice.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Informs ongoing course design and revisions.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Measures student attainment of the course's educational goals.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Provides for timely and frequent feedback about student progress.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	Comments/Evidence:						

TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARDS

M	Faculty — A quality online program supports the faculty by providing opportunities for them to develop their professional skills through mentoring, professional development, and technical assistance.						
✓	Provides and encourages participation in induction and mentoring programs.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Provides regular feedback regarding teacher performance.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Provides a wide variety of professional development opportunities.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Provides timely, effective technical support.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	Comments/Evidence:						

SUPPORT STANDARDS

N	Students — A quality online program has student support services to address the various needs of students at different levels within the organization. The levels of support are appropriate and adequate for a student's success.							
✓	Provides an orientation to online learning technologies and successful online student practices.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
✓	Provides academic and administrative services to address their academic and developmental needs.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
✓	Provides support services for individual needs.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
✓	Provides access to learning and assessment content, instruction, technologies and resources.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
✓	Establishes standards for teacher to student communication.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
✓	Provides timely and meaningful assessment feedback.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
✓	Provides timely, effective technical support.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
	Comments/Evidence:							

SUPPORT STANDARDS

O	Guidance Services — A quality online program has guidance services to support students and parents to ensure success of the online program. Depending on the program, these services are either directly provided by the program or a service provider, or in the case of supplemental programs, these services may be provided by the local school.							
✓	Ensures academic advising is provided for students to meet requirements of the program and/or school.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
✓	Provides staff training in the unique student needs of online learning.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
✓	Provides tools and/or information to assist students in determining the appropriateness of specific courses for their academic needs.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
✓	Understands the network of services available to support online learning.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	
	Comments/Evidence:							

SUPPORT STANDARDS

P	Organizational Support — A quality online program has organizational support to oversee the instructional learning environment as it is conveyed through technology. Some organizational support services may be distributed between the program and other entities, depending on the physical location where the students are taking their online courses.						
✓	Provides an online learning environment that is appropriately maintained, secure and is a productive and safe work environment for students and staff.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Provides a work environment consisting of the resources, tools, and organizational policies that enables staff to implement the program's mission, beliefs and objectives.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	Comments/Evidence:						

Q	Parents/Guardians — In a quality online program, parents and guardians play an integral part in their students' educational life. They work as a team with faculty, administrators, guidance services, and organizational support to ensure a quality educational experience for their students.						
✓	Are provided information about the program, successful online student practices and supportive learning environments.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Receive timely responses from faculty and staff.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Receive critical information about student progress and are encouraged to communicate with faculty and administrators to best support the online learning student.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	Comments/Evidence:						

R	Program Evaluation — A quality online program recognizes the value of program evaluation. Program evaluation is both internal and external and informs all processes that effect teaching and learning. Internal evaluations often are more informal in nature and may provide immediate feedback on a targeted area of inquiry. External program evaluations typically look at the entire program from an objective perspective that will bring additional credibility to the results.						
✓	Conducts ongoing internal evaluations that include regularly collecting and analyzing data based on national, state, and/or program metrics .	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Conducts ongoing internal evaluations that include using clearly articulated measures to evaluate its learners.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Conducts ongoing internal evaluations that include determining program success by measuring student achievement and satisfaction based on valid and reliable assessment techniques.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A

SUPPORT STANDARDS

SUPPORT STANDARDS

EVALUATION STANDARDS

✓	Conducts ongoing internal evaluations that include ensuring students participate in state or national standardized testing, as appropriate and evaluating results against state or national data.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Conducts ongoing internal evaluations that include consistently evaluating faculty to assure instructional quality, using clear, consistent policies, measures and procedures.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Conducts ongoing internal evaluations that include reviewing and evaluating courses to ensure quality, consistency with the curriculum, currency, and advancement of the student learning outcomes.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Conducts periodic external evaluations that include validating internal evaluation process and results.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Conducts periodic external evaluations that include independently assessing progress towards goals, mission and strategic plan of program.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Conducts periodic external evaluations that include informing an improvement plan for the online program.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Program Evaluation communicates evaluation results to program stakeholders.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	Comments/Evidence:						

EVALUATION STANDARDS

S	Program Improvement: A quality online program establishes a culture of continual program improvement. Improvement planning focuses on using program evaluations, research, and promising practices to improve student performance and organizational effectiveness. It fosters continuous improvement across all aspects of the organization and ensures the program is focused on accomplishing its mission and vision.						
✓	Uses strategic, long-range and operational planning and evaluation to continuously improve its educational programs and services.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Uses data effectively to drive instructional and management decision-making.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	Is based on:						
✓	Advancement of the program's vision and mission.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Student achievement.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Internal and external evaluation.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Current research in the relevant areas.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Promising practices.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A

EVALUATION STANDARDS

	Includes provisions for:						
✓	Beta testing and peer review.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Satisfaction surveys by students, parents, teachers and schools as appropriate.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Evaluation of curriculum and instruction as it relates to student achievement.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Regular online teacher performance evaluations.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Reviewing and updating policies and procedures.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Reviewing appropriateness, effectiveness and quality of teaching and learning technologies.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
✓	Regular online course reviews.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	Comments/Evidence:						

EVALUATION STANDARDS