**Florida Online Course Quality**

**Background:**

The [Florida Board of Governors 2025 SUS Strategic Plan for Online Education](http://www.flbog.edu/board/office/online/strategic_planning_online_ed.php) outlines goals and strategies designed to result in improved instruction and increased educational opportunities for Florida Citizens. Goal 1 of the plan is that the State University System will create a culture of quality for online education. Tactics in support of this goal include a process to ensure implementation of quality standards for course design and the creation of a coding system in the Florida Virtual Campus course catalog that allows the identification of Quality and High Quality online courses.

At the outset of planning, the State University System (SUS) recognized that implementation of potential processes and policies may impact the Florida College System (FCS). Thus, a statewide Quality Workgroup was developed to include distance learning leaders from both systems. This group has been meeting regularly since 2016 to develop a process for course reviews and these designations. Results and progress reports have been provided to the SUS Board of Governors, reporting to the 2025 Strategic Plan for Online Education [Steering Committee](https://www.flbog.edu/board/office/online/_doc/online/2018%20Implementation_Steering%20Comm.pdf) for guidance and approval.

**Process:**

Florida online course quality designations are based on the Quality Matters (QM) Higher Ed. rubric standards, but the review process is unique to Florida. The Florida online course review processes were developed by the Quality Workgroup members to be flexible enough to work across all our institutions and to accommodate institutional differences while increasing overall online course quality.

The Quality (Q) designation results from a course being reviewed by two trained reviewers, one of whom can be the faculty developer, meeting all of the Quality Matters (QM) Higher Ed. Course Design Rubric essential standards, and meeting QM Accessibility Standard 8.3.  
  
The High Quality (HQ) designation results from a course being reviewed by three trained reviewers, one of whom is a Subject Matter Expert (SME), scoring at least 84 on the Quality Matters (QM) Higher Ed. Course Design Rubric, meeting all QM essential standards, and meeting QM Accessibility Standard 8.3.

For institutions that are not QM subscribers, a formal process by which an institution may provide evidence that their quality review practices are substantially equivalent to the Florida Quality Course Review and the Florida High Quality Course Review was developed. Equivalency is based upon a documentable set of standards and adherence to a review process of comparable rigor.

Adoption of this process is mandatory for all SUS institutions and is currently opt-in for FCS institutions.

**Designations:**

All Florida institutions are statutorily required to upload online course offerings to the [Florida Shines Online Course Catalog](https://courses.flvc.org/Courses), Online course quality designations will publicly display in the catalog for the Fall 2019 semester. An institution will designate Q or HQ dependent on the review completed. In addition to the quality designators there will be a Not Reviewed (NR) and In Progress (IP) indicator thus all courses will carry some indication of quality status. The catalog will also provide user-facing iconic representation and text label for each designation as well as a more substantive “drill down” explanatory statement.

A subset of institutions will begin piloting the upload of those designations (without public display) for the Spring 2019 semester. The BOG has set a benchmark of 90% of courses uploaded carry a HQ designator at the time of public display. Given the ability for FCS institutions to opt-in no benchmarks have been set.

**Frequently Asked Questions:**

*Who are the members of the Online Education Quality Workgroup?*

Michelle Franz, Co-Chair, Seminole State College

Michael Nathanson, Co-Chair, Lake Sumter State College

Deb Miller, Co-Chair, University of North FL

Kelvin Thompson, Co-Chair, University of Central FL

Kevin Celebi, New College of FL

Vance Burgess, University of West FL

David Jaeger, Florida Gulf Coast University

Brian Marchman, University of FL

Arifa Garman, Gulf Coast State College

Brenda Vose, University of North FL

Joe Clark, Florida State University

Dennis Walpole, University of South FL

Sid Beitler, Palm Beach State College

*What are the Florida Online Course Quality designations?*

Florida Online Course Quality reviews can result in a Quality(Q), or High Quality (HQ) designation.

*What is the difference between Q & HQ designation in the Florida Online Course Design Quality process?*

The Q designation results from a course being reviewed by two trained reviewers, one of whom can be the faculty developer, meeting all the Quality Matters (QM) Higher Ed. Course Design Rubric essential standards, and meeting QM Accessibility Standard 8.3.

The HQ designation results from a course being reviewed by three trained reviewers, one of whom is a Subject Matter Expert (SME), scoring at least 84 on the Quality Matters (QM) Higher Ed. Course Design Rubric, meeting all QM essential standards, and meeting QM Accessibility Standard 8.3. The course faculty developer may serve as the SME.

*What is the difference between a Quality Matters (QM) review and a Florida Online Course Quality review?*

Florida Online Course Quality reviews rely on the QM Higher Ed. Course Design Rubric standards, but the review process and the training for reviewers differ. The Florida Online Course Quality review processes were developed by the Florida BOG Quality Workgroup members to be flexible enough to work across all our institutions and to accommodate institutional differences while increasing overall online Course Design Quality.

*What training is required for course reviewers?*

Faculty course developers who serve as the SME for their course review must complete training in the QM standards and rubrics. This requirement may be met by completion of QM’s Applying the QM Rubric (APPQMR) or through other institutional faculty training in which the APPQMR principles are embedded.Other course reviewers must complete training in the QM standards and in conducting course reviews. This requirement may be met by completion of QM’s APPQMR and Peer Reviewer Course (PRC) courses or through other institutional faculty training in which the APPQMR & PRC principles are embedded

*What if my institution does QM internal or QM Official reviews?*Institutions who continue QM internal and QM Official reviews can label courses that complete those reviews as Q and HQ respectively.

*When does a Florida Online Course Design Quality review designation expire?*

Florida Online Course Design Quality designations expire after five years.

*What about online courses that have not been reviewed?*

These courses will receive a not reviewed (NR) designation in the FLVC course schedule.

*What if we reviewed our courses before this process rolled out and the designations were available?*

Courses reviewed prior to roll out may still receive Florida Online Course Quality designations, which will expire five years after time of review.

*How does a Florida Online Course Design Quality designation get into the FLVC Online Course Catalog?*

FLVC will update their platform to add a field for Florida Online Course Quality Review designations. This is expected to be available for a small pilot in late fall 2018 for spring uploads. The designations uploaded during the pilot will not be publicly available in the catalog.

*Can a course display a Florida Online Course Design Quality designation if it is not taught by the faculty developer?*Yes, if a course receives the Q or HQ designation and is used as a master course, any section that uses the master course can be labeled with the Q or HQ designation.

*Which version of the Quality Matters rubric is being used?*

This plan was developed with the 5th edition of the QM Higher Ed rubric 5. Now that the 6th edition has been released, we’ll need to review that to be sure the number of standards and required standards still make sense. Assuming they do, the review process will use QM HE rubric 5th edition *or higher.* We anticipate this will stay in place until a 7th edition is released, at which point this would likely be revised to QM HE rubric 6th edition *or higher.*

*What about institutions that do not subscribe to QM or who have developed their own standards?*A formal process by which an institution may provide evidence that their standards and course review practices are equivalent to the Florida Online Quality Course review process is being developed. Equivalency will be based upon a documentable set of standards that can be mapped to the QM standards and adherence to a review process of comparable rigor.

*How can we know that other institutions are following the course review processes?*The Florida Online Course Design Quality review process is based on the honor system, but an auditing process will be developed in the future, so institutions should maintain records of their course reviews.

*What about the Faculty Awards- President, Florida, and Chancellor?*Stay tuned- we’ll tackle that next. Instructors who receive those awards will be identified in the FLVC online course schedule as such.