**Online Committee**

November 3, 2015

Membership open to all online instructors, meetings held virtually

Meeting opened with email to all instructors from Chair Tammy Davis:

*Welcome to the Online Committee. This is our week to meet.  In order for me to document our online meeting, I would you to Reply All with correspondence; then I can easily submit minutes. We only have a few items to address.*

1. *We need to discuss evaluation of our online courses – not our online instructors.  SARA (National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements) has provided guidelines for evaluation of Distance Education Courses.  You can view the document here:* [*http://nc-sara.org/files/docs/C-RAC%20Guidelines.pdf*](http://nc-sara.org/files/docs/C-RAC%20Guidelines.pdf)*.*

*In our September Division Chair meeting, we briefly discussed the use of the Quality Matters Rubric to evaluate the course (again, not the instructor).  Unless changes need to occur, DeLisa will be conducting the majority of the course evaluations, beginning in the Spring.  Instructors have already volunteered for this pilot.*

*I am attaching the rubric and an explanation of QM as an evaluative tool.  I am also copying part of DeLisa’s email regarding this process.*

*“Important Factors to Keep in Mind When It Comes to Quality Matters—*

* *Quality Matters is not meant to be punitive, but to make us better online instructors by offering suggestions for continuous*

*improvement.*

* *It is best to select a mature course that you have taught for at least two years.*
* *There are actually two 85% factors to consider during a QM review:*

1. *A course must earn at least 81 out of 99 points (or about 85%). Each of the 43 specific review standards receives a "yes" or "no" vote, regardless of point value. Partial points are not given using the Quality Matters’ rubric.  For instance, an essential standard is always worth three points. The instructor will receive either 3 points or 0 points, indicating the standard has or has not been met.  Furthermore, the points are added and must be at the 85% or greater percentage (AND meet all 21 essential standards) to be QM compliant.*
2. *When a course review is conducted, a determination will be made to see if the specific standard is met.  The 85% rule is used in making that judgment. The standard does not have to be 100% to be a "yes." The "85% rule" is a guide for a reviewer to gauge whether a "yes" or "no" will be chosen for that particular standard (The Quality Matters’ Rubric, 2015).”*

*I’d like you to take a look at the Rubric and offer thoughts or recommendations.*

1. *The Employee Handbook has seen a few revisions this year.  Please review two portions (myNOC under Employee Information for Online Courses (4.7.13.d) and Instructor Obligations (4.2).  (*[*http://portal.noc.edu/ICS/icsfs/NOC\_Employee\_Handbook\_2015-2016.pdf?target=d982d077-e8b3-41d0-9748-28de450fc2ec*](http://portal.noc.edu/ICS/icsfs/NOC_Employee_Handbook_2015-2016.pdf?target=d982d077-e8b3-41d0-9748-28de450fc2ec)*).  Both sections provide basic requirements of instructors / guarantee to students.  Are there any needed discussion points there?  Should any of these requirements be part of a review process?*

*Please respond to these two items by Tuesday, Nov 10.*

*Take care,*

*Tammy*

Points of conversation – Comments below:

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Discussion in order of receipt:

I have only had experience thus far in becoming certified with QM to teach online. For me, the experience was very helpful and I learned a great deal. {T}his being said I have heard the opposite as well but I would fully recommend using QM as it stands today.

On point two I spent a while today reading it carefully and I have found no points that concern me. This being said, I reserve the right to change my opinion after everyone else gets a chance to review it. Believe it or not I can miss things from time to time lol.

1. In my opinion, the SARA requirements are beneficial to online program planning and development and should be utilized to justify increased attention to the needs of online courses.  I also believe the QM rubric is a great starting point for online course evaluation and it aligns with our faculty training.  Though you mentioned that the rubrics are designed to evaluate the course only, based on accreditation standards and constant concern for both transparency and accountability, I believe we WILL need to evaluate the online courses for instructor effectiveness sooner rather than later.  Baby steps though!  ;)
2. I’m not sure the changes that you’re referring to, but I don’t see anything that gives me cause for particular concern.  Based on the email from Jill Dark on July 16th the only policy change in this section for this year was in 4.2.4 Compensation for Overloads and Special Assignments.  Please advise as to what you’re referring to and I’m happy to give it more scrutiny.

I looked back over the faculty handbook and it was in 2014, rather than 2015, when the communication policy was revised.  The latest version is listed below.  I know that the Online Committee reviewed the language and made the recommendation for the change in 2014 with Paul’s version being approved.

It seems like those two sections in the handbook that you asked us to look at align pretty well with the Rubric.  There were two things saw that caught my eye in the handbook that I didn't think the Rubric addressed as well as it could:

1. From the handbook:  4.2.1.d.3. *Meeting classes for the full duration of the scheduled class period.*

While I know this probably refers to "keeping them in their seats the full number of minutes", I also interpret it as "keeping them engaged in class the full amount of weeks". I didn't see a requirement on the rubric that checked to see if the student is involved with the online classroom for the full sixteen weeks of the semester.  Are there any NOC classes that are purely 'work at your own pace' and the student could conceivably finish in a time frame less than 16 weeks?   If not, I think this might be a good thing to add to the QR rubric in section 5.

1. From the handbook 4.7.13.d  *"In addition, instructors are expected to respond to emails, voicemails, and/or text messages in a timely manner, preferably within 48 hours."* From the Rubric:  5.3 The instructor’s plan for classroom response time and feedback on assignments is clearly stated.

Perhaps we could add on to 5.3 something to the effect that the syllabus states that response time to emails, voicemails, and/or text messages will be within two business days.  The biggest complaint that I hear from students regarding online classes is that they emailed their online instructor and never heard back from them.  Now, I know there's always two sides to the story but I've heard it more than once across the semesters so that's why that part of the handbook caught my eye.

I think it’s a good idea to include in the review an examination of whether work is self-paced or with set deadlines throughout the semester.  By HLC definitions, the self-paced is a correspondence and we’re not approved to offer those.  The discussion board or a similar tool in which a dialogue is created online is another requirement to distinguish it from correspondence.