

## **PNC Distance Learning and Teaching Mentorship Program: An Overview**

This program is based on the Quality Matters evaluation system, a research-based rubric and assessment process adopted by many schools nationwide. The intention is to help faculty not only learn how to use the tools available to them to create high-quality online learning experiences, but also to provide them with guidance on course design and pedagogy in the online classroom. For added value, this program also connects faculty with others, creating meaningful partnerships and professional learning communities to provide all faculty with greater levels of support, both within their departments and beyond them.

Like the DOC Grant program, faculty Course Developers are guided through the process of designing and delivering new online courses. However, in addition, faculty guides working with each participant support them through this process, and evaluate their online courses both before they have been delivered, and after they have been taught one time.

### **The Quality Matters Process**

The essential element of the QM process is the extensive QM Rubric, an 80-point assessment with seven core standards and a number of essential indicators within each standard. See the Appendix for the public domain Quality Matters rubric from 2005, which is not the latest version of the rubric, but retains all of the core principles of the current rubric versions. When taken as a whole, the Quality Matters rubric is a holistic assessment of course quality and delivery, including:

- Course overview and introduction
- Learning objectives or competencies
- Assessment and measurement
- Instructional materials
- Learner interaction and engagement
- Course technology
- Learner support
- Accessibility

It is important to note that that QM Rubric is designed to measure primarily course construction in any discipline, but is not intended as a punitive measure or to further only one type of course delivery method. Instead, the QM Rubric is designed to help faculty employ best practices, based on the extensive research in the distance education field that is now available, in any content area. The standards speak to certain fundamentals that should be present in any course in order to ensure that students understand clearly what is expected of them and how they can achieve the desired course objectives.

The evaluation process for a course using the QM Rubric typically involves at least three evaluators who have been trained to use the Rubric. Each evaluator scores the course on his/her own and provides comments and annotations where needed. Then, the reviews are compared and discrepancies and disagreements are noted and discussed, one at a time, until a decision about the attainment of each standard is made. Once there is consensus, the points are totaled, and if the

course receives at least 68 out of 80 possible points, and is deemed to pass every 3-point “essential” standard, then it has passed as a quality course. If the course has not passed, detailed annotations are provided to the course creator with suggestions on how to address each failing standard, so that the course can be improved and re-evaluated at a later date.

### **Faculty Supporting One Another**

As noted by Barczyk, Buckenmeyer, Feldman, and Hixon (2011), faculty often respond well to feedback and support provided by their peers. Mentoring and other forms of peer support programs often help faculty develop as scholars and members of the academic community, and can assist in increasing retention and promotion of junior faculty. In addition, senior faculty often benefit from mentorship programs as well, as sharing new ideas with peers can invigorate their practice, as well as promote critical self-reflection regarding their own teaching and scholarship (Huston & Weaver, 2008).

The PNC Distance Learning and Teaching Mentorship Program would engage those faculty with more extensive online teaching experience with those who wish to learn more. With support from the Office of Learning Technology, “tech-experienced” guides and faculty Course Developers would work together to develop online courses, and mentors would review courses on a regular basis to ensure that courses are meeting Quality Matters standards at all times. Given the relatively small and friendly nature of the PNC faculty corps, it is likely that both Guides and Course Developers will benefit professionally from this working relationship, and the program is likely to further build community across campus.

### **Responsibilities of Mentor Guides**

Each Guide must agree to the following in order to maintain their status in the program:

- Recruit and work with at least two, and up to three, faculty Course Developers on a regular basis throughout the first and second semester, including monitoring an Online Academy course in BlackBoard. Those potential Guides who do not secure at least two Course Developers within the first two weeks of the semester will not be able to participate in the program during that academic year. Department heads, deans, and the Office of Learning Technology will assist in matching up Guides and Course Developers if needed.
- Complete a one-day Quality Matters training through the Office of Instructional Technology
- Attend regular meetings with Course Developers and with the Office of Learning Technology Director
- Informally review courses with Course Developers at the end of the first semester
- Review courses with the other Guides at the end of the second semester and certify faculty as passing or non-passing

Mentor Guides will be approved by their department chairs, and their participation in the program will be monitored through monthly meetings with the Director of the Office of Learning

Technology. These meetings will help Guides gain additional knowledge that they may need, as well as allow them a chance work through challenges that may arise during the mentoring process.

### **Responsibilities of Course Developers**

While Guides must recruit Course Developers that they will be working with, each Course Developer will also be noted and approved by their department chairs. Course Developers do not have to come from the same department as their Guide, and in fact, it is advised that they work with Guides from different disciplines as much as possible. In this way, not only do faculty who may otherwise not have a chance to get to know one another get to interact, but it also allows for a fresh, unbiased look at the courses faculty create.

Faculty participating in the program as Course Developers:

- Agree to complete development of a course that will be delivered the following semester
- Work together with Guides through an Online Academy course in BlackBoard during the first semester
- Stay in communication with their Guides on a regular basis
- Teach the developed course in the second semester
- Agree to make any necessary changes to course construction or delivery after review

### **Timeline**

The program spans two semesters, typically fall and spring. In the first semester, Guides and Course Developers attend roundtable luncheons and training sessions periodically while also working together to help the Course Developer create a new online course. Guides and Course Developers will receive training both on technical competencies as well as pedagogical competencies necessary for online teaching and learning success. The course that Course Developers develop in the first semester is to be taught in the following semester, and Guides will informally review the course before the end of the first semester to ensure that it is complete and of quality before it is delivered.

During the second semester, Guides will meet regularly with Course Developers to find out how the course is going as it is being taught. Together, they will work through questions or problems that may develop during the semester, along with support from the Office of Learning Technology.

Near the end of the second semester, the Guides will get together to review all courses as a group, using the full Quality Matters rubric, to determine whether courses developed by Course Developers officially “pass,” or whether additional work is warranted in order to ensure that the course has met a high standard of quality. The Director of Learning Technology will guide this process, and all feedback will be thoughtfully collected and provided individually to each Course Developer.

Once a Course Developer has developed a “passing” course and has gone through the entire program, he or she is eligible to become a Guide the following academic year, if approved by his or her department chair.

### **Compensation and Selection Process**

Potential Guides will be identified from each of four Colleges, with up to six Guides starting in the Fall 2014 semester, and new Guides selected each Fall. Guides will be trained in using the Quality Matters rubric in evaluating online and hybrid courses. All Guides and Course Developers must receive department head approval before joining the program.

Guides will receive \$500 per semester (\$1000 for the academic year) for their active participation in mentoring at least *two* faculty Course Developers. Other benefits for both Guides and Course Developers, such as access to new technology tools, may be made available as appropriate and as funds become available.

Guides must find at least two and no more than three faculty Course Developers to work with before the start of the Fall 2014 semester. These faculty may come from within the Guide’s department, but we encourage Guides to work with others outside of their departments and colleges as much as possible. The free exchange of ideas across disciplines can lead to very engaging and rewarding collegial partnerships. The Office of Learning Technology will assist Guides in identifying potential Course Developers.

The following list of potential Guides has been built based on previous experience in the Online Academy for Effective Instruction and DOC Grant program.

- Sarah White (ENGL)
- Heather Fielding (ENGL)
- Dave Pratt (EDUC)
- Debra Pratt (EDUC)
- Jeff Shires (COM)
- Carrie Higgins (COM)
- Carla Pfeffer (SOC)
- Christabel Rogalin (SOC)
- Carin Chuang (CNIT)
- Anne Christo-Baker (BUS)
- Jaclyn Barnhill (BUS)
- Wei He (BUS)
- Harshini Fernando (MATH)
- Annette Tomory (CHM)
- Annette Coates (NUR)
- Karen Klosinski (NUR)



**PEER COURSE REVIEW  
RUBRIC  
(FY 05/06)**

**I. COURSE OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION**

**General Review Standard:** The overall design of the course, navigational information, as well as course, instructor and student information are made transparent to the student at the beginning of the course.

<b>Specific Review Standards:</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Notes</b>
I.1 Navigational instructions make the organization of the course easy to understand.	3			
I.2 A statement introduces the student to the course and to the structure of the student learning.	3			
I.3 Netiquette expectations with regard to discussions and email communication are clearly stated.	2			
I.4 The self-introduction by the instructor is appropriate.	1			
I.5 Students are requested to introduce themselves to the class.	1			
I.6 Minimum technology requirements, minimum student skills, and, if applicable, prerequisite knowledge in the discipline, are clearly stated.	1			

**Comments and Recommendations:** The following comments and recommendations by the review team are designed to assist in advancing implementation of the General Standard to the next level or in refining accomplishments

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**II. LEARNING OBJECTIVES (COMPETENCIES)**

**General Review Standard:** Learning objectives are clearly defined and explained. They assist the student to focus learning activities.

<b>Specific Review Standards:</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Notes</b>
II.1 The learning objectives of the course describe outcomes that are measurable.	3			
II.2 The learning objectives address content mastery, critical thinking skills, and core learning skills.	3			
II.3 The learning objectives of the course are clearly stated and understandable to the student.	2			
II.4 Instructions to students on how to meet the learning objectives are adequate and easy to understand.	2			
II.5 The learning objectives of the course are articulated and specified on the module/unit level.	2			

<b>Comments and Recommendations:</b> The following comments and recommendations by the review team are designed to assist in advancing implementation of the General Standard to the next level or in refining accomplishments

### III. ASSESSMENT AND MEASUREMENT

**General Review Standard:** Assessment strategies use established ways to measure effective learning, assess student progress by reference to stated learning objectives, and are designed as essential to the learning process.

<b>Specific Review Standards:</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Notes</b>
III.1 The types of assessments selected measure the stated learning objectives and are consistent with course activities and resources.	3			
III.2 The grading policy is transparent and easy to understand.	3			
III.3 Assessment and measurement strategies provide feedback to the	3			

student.				
III.4 The types of assessments selected and the methods used for submitting assessments are appropriate for the distance learning environment.	2			
III.5 “Self-check” or practice types of assignments are provided for quick student feedback.	1			

**Comments and Recommendations:** The following comments and recommendations by the review team are designed to assist in advancing implementation of the General Standard to the next level or in refining accomplishments

#### IV. RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

**General Review Standard:** Instructional materials are sufficiently comprehensive to achieve announced objectives and learning outcomes and are prepared by qualified persons competent in their fields. (Materials, other than standard textbooks produced by recognized publishers, are prepared by the instructor or distance educators skilled in preparing materials for distance learning.)

Specific Review Standards:	Points	Yes	No	Notes
IV.1 The instructional materials support the stated learning objectives and have sufficient breadth and depth for the student to learn the subject.	3			
IV.2 Instructional materials are presented in a format appropriate to the online environment, and are easily accessible to and usable by the student.	3			
IV.3 The purpose of the course elements (content, instructional methods, technologies, and course materials) is evident.	2			
IV.4 The instructional materials, including supporting materials - such as manuals, videos, CD ROMs, and computer software – are consistent in organization.	1			
IV.5 All resources and materials	1			

used in the online course are appropriately cited.				
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<b>Comments and Recommendations:</b> The following comments and recommendations by the review team are designed to assist in advancing implementation of the General Standard to the next level or in refining accomplishments

## V. LEARNER INTERACTION

**General Review Standard:** The effective design of instructor-student interaction, meaningful student cooperation, and student-content interaction is essential to student motivation, intellectual commitment and personal development.

<b>Specific Review Standards:</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Notes</b>
V.1 The learning activities promote the achievement of stated objectives and learning outcomes.	3			
V.2 Learning activities foster instructor-student, content-student, and if appropriate to this course, student-student interaction.	3			
V.3 Clear standards are set for instructor response and availability (turn-around time for email, grade posting, etc.)	3			
V.4 The requirements for course interaction are clearly articulated.	2			
V.5 The course design prompts the instructor to be present, active, and engaged with the students.	2			

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## VI. COURSE TECHNOLOGY

**General Review Standard:** To enhance student learning, course technology enriches instruction and fosters student interactivity.



<b>Specific Review Standards:</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Notes</b>
VI.1 The tools and media support the learning objectives of the course and are integrated with texts and lesson assignments.	3			
VI.2 The tools and media enhance student interactivity and guide the student to become a more active learner.	2			
VI.3 Technologies required for this course are either provided or easily downloadable.	2			
VI.4 The tools and media are compatible with existing standards of delivery modes.	1			
VI.5 Instructions on how to access resources at a distance are sufficient and easy to understand.	1			
VI.6 Course technologies take advantage of existing economies and efficiencies of delivery.	1			

**Comments and Recommendations:** The following comments and recommendations by the review team are designed to assist in advancing implementation of the General Standard to the next level or in refining accomplishments

## VII. LEARNER SUPPORT

**General Review Standard:** Courses are effectively supported for students through fully accessible modes of delivery, resources, and student support.

<b>Specific Review Standards:</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Notes</b>
VII.1 The course instructions articulate or link to a clear description of the technical support offered.	2			
VII.2 Course instructions articulate or link to an explanation of how the institution's academic support system can assist the student in effectively using the resources provided.	2			

VII.3 Course instructions articulate or link to an explanation of how the institution's student support services can assist the student in effectively using the resources provided.	1			
VII.4 Course instructions articulate or link to tutorials and resources that answer basic questions related to research, writing, technology etc.	1			

**Comments and Recommendations:** The following comments and recommendations by the review team are designed to assist in advancing implementation of the General Standard to the next level or in refining accomplishments

### VIII. ADA COMPLIANCE

**General Review Standard:** The course is accessible to all students.

Specific Review Standards:	Points	Yes	No	Notes
VIII.1 The course acknowledges the importance of ADA requirements.	3			
VIII.2 Web pages provide equivalent alternatives to auditory and visual content.	1			
VIII.3 Web pages have links that are self-describing and meaningful.	1			
VIII.4 The course demonstrates sensitivity to readability issues.	1			

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**Final Comments:** Now that you've looked at the entire course, please share your reflections on the degree of coherence of the course as a whole and its potential to promote student learning.

<b>TOTAL POINTS (out of 80 possible):</b>	
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**Meets Expectations if:**

Answered 'Yes' to all 3-point Essential Standards: I.1, I.2, II.1, II.2, III.1, III.2, III.3, IV.1, IV.2, V.1, V.2, V.3, VI.1, VIII.1

***AND***

68 points or more