Review of Online, Hybrid, and ROCC Courses at Walters State

Approved by Teaching & Learning Technologies Committee on April 1, 2015
Approved by Academic Administrators on April 15, 2015
Approved by Academic Affairs on April 28, 2015

Walters State Community College was one of the early entrants into online education in the state of Tennessee. The present document continues the innovations Walters State faculty members are known for in the use of technology for teaching and learning, including online education.

Background
In the fall of 1998, Andrea Sanders, then of the English department at Walters State, offered the first online course at the institution, English 1010. At that time, because of the newness of this mode of delivery, because there was no learning management system, and because faculty did not feel comfortable without a face-to-face student orientation to the tools being used in this mode of delivery, the first online courses required students to come for a beginning-of-the-course orientation, a middle-of-the-course check-in, and an end-of-course wrap-up. These face-to-face requirements were soon dropped as faculty and students became more comfortable with the technologies and processes of online education. In the early 2000’s TBR created the ROCC program and purchased a learning management system, which Walters State faculty soon adopted for their online courses and for other purposes.

In 2005, Distance Education began a process of reviewing the technical and content aspects of online courses. Based on some early Quality Matters training, faculty developed documents for a technical review (which would be completed by faculty knowledgeable in the learning management system) and for a content review (which would be completed by a faculty member familiar with both online and the discipline/area of the course).

The Niswonger Project (2011-2014) was an i3 grant received by the college to develop online courses in specific disciplines for dual enrollment students. This project delivered 32 courses entirely online with dual enrollment students as the specified target audience. The Niswonger Project allowed the college to further invest in Quality Matters professional development for interested faculty and served as a model process for creating, reviewing, improving and ensuring robust online courses.
Online and Hybrid Courses

Online courses at Walters State are those that require no face-to-face meetings to carry out instruction and are indicated by “WEB” in StarNET; hybrid courses include much instruction online but require one or more face-to-face meetings between faculty and students and are indicated by “HYB” in StarNET.

Online and hybrid courses at WSCC will be reviewed based on the following triggers:

- Every five years in rotation with the division
- When major revisions in curriculum take place, as deemed necessary by deans or department chairs
- When textbooks change (but not necessarily editions of textbooks)
- During pilots for online course changes
- As deemed necessary by academic administrators.

Faculty creating and teaching online and hybrid courses benefit from continued and specialized professional development, including the following Quality Matters courses:

- the faculty member teaches a course developed by another faculty member: “Teaching Online”
- the faculty member is a developer—either lead developer or otherwise—of an online or hybrid course: APPQMR (“Applying the Quality Matters Rubric”) and DYOC (“Developing Your Online Course”)
- the faculty member is a reviewer of an online or hybrid course: APPQMR and PRC (“Peer Review Course”)
- the faculty member may be both a developer and reviewer of an online and/or hybrid course: APPQMR, DYOC, and PRC
- the faculty member is appointed by a dean to review for content only: no QM courses required.

The following rotation recognizes that when divisions focus on online and hybrid courses in their departments and divisions all faculty in that department and/or division focus attention on this particular mode of delivery and any issues that may be unique to online and/or hybrid learning in the discipline. Noting that the next SACSCOC report is due in spring 2017, WSCC divisions will focus on the review of online and hybrid courses in the following rotation:

- Fall 2015/Spring 2016: HP and NSCI
- Fall 2016/Spring 2017: HUMA and MATH
- Fall 2017/Spring 2018: B/SS and PS
- Fall 2018/Spring 2019: Tech Ed
- Fall 2019/Spring 2020: BUSN

At any time, academic deans may request that particular online and hybrid courses in their division undergo review in addition to the above rotation.
Academic Year Rotation
In the fall of the academic year, Distance Education will create a list of online and hybrid courses and faculty teaching those courses (fall and spring) for the indicated divisions. This list will be sent to the dean of the division(s) by August 15.

Template Online Courses and Template Hybrid Courses
The review of online and hybrid courses will not review current active teaching sections of courses; instead, the reviews will examine template courses. Template courses are designated by deans and/or department heads. For example, a dean or department head may designate a Template Online PSYC 1030 course and a Template Hybrid PSYC 1030 course. The dean and/or department head will also designate a lead developer for the template courses. In concert with the department head and/or dean, the lead developer will reach out to other members of the department and/or division to assist in developing the template course. The lead developer may copy portions from a current teaching course—either his/hers or another faculty member’s—into the template course to begin development.

After template courses are developed, reviewed, and improved for online and hybrid courses, it is expected that faculty will copy from the template course into current active teaching courses, will make changes on the template course to conform to their own teaching style in consultation with department heads and/or deans, and will personalize the course so that the online or hybrid teaching course reflects the teaching style and preferences of the faculty member.

In this way, template online and hybrid courses are planned, created, developed, and then reviewed to reflect an ideal version of an online or hybrid course that meets WSCC quality assurance standards and conforms to WSCC, division, and department policies, standards and guidelines. In consultation with deans and department chairs, faculty members then modify their teaching sections of online and hybrid courses to reflect their own teaching styles and preferences.

ROCC Courses
Courses in ROCC “belong” to the campuses that developed the courses. Because these courses reside in Walters State departments and divisions, because the ROCC courses were developed by faculty from the department and/or division, because the ROCC course uses the same (or similar) syllabi to the course on campus, and because the dean and department chair have oversight of the course, ROCC courses will be reviewed in the same rotation as the courses in the department/division.

The ROCC “Master Course” will be deemed the template course for purposes of the Review of Online, Hybrid, and ROCC courses. The Assistant Dean of Online Instruction will work with ROCC staff to obtain access to the Master Course for appropriate reviewers.
Template Course Meeting

Distance Education personnel will meet with each Dean to identify the courses in the divisions and departments that are taught in online and/or hybrid mode of delivery. Department chairs and/or deans will designate lead developers for each course taught in online and/or hybrid modes of delivery, and a template online and/or template hybrid course will be created by the Coordinator of Academic Technology and all lead developers and collaborating faculty as well as division deans and department chairs will be given access to the appropriate template courses. Deans will also identify other members of the department and/or division to collaborate with the lead developer on course development; such faculty will also be given access to the template course. At this time, should they choose to do so, deans may also identify a content-only reviewer for each of the courses in his/her division to be reviewed; any such faculty will also be given access to the template course by the Coordinator of Academic Technology.

After deans and department chairs have identified the template course and it has been created, deans will identify a lead developer for each template course. Names of lead developers and courses will be compiled; each lead developer will be given the “Course Information Form” to complete and return to Distance Education in order to signal to Distance Education when the template course is ready for review.

Lead Developers

Lead Developers will be assigned by deans to template courses. Each lead developer will be responsible for taking the appropriate QM courses and creating a template course that meets QM design standards and will work with other faculty in the department and division as selected by deans. Lead developers will signal their course is ready for review by submitting the “Course Information Form,” will meet with the Instructional Design team in the “Course Developer Meeting” to receive the results of the course reviews, will complete and submit the “Course Improvement Action Plan” based on feedback and results of the “Course Developer Meeting,” and will carry out changes and improvements to the course based on the results of the review process. Lead developers will be expected to maintain, update, and improve the designated template course through the five-year time period of the academic year rotation, mentioned above; deans may elect to change lead developers for template courses as they deem appropriate.

Reviewers

Three reviewers will be selected to review each template course in rotation. Reviewers are those faculty members who have completed both the APPQMR and PRC courses. An “all call” to reviewers will be given from Instructional Design and the QM Institutional Reviewer in order to identify reviewers who are willing to review course templates each semester, and reviewers will be assigned to review particular template courses.
Review and Improvement Process

Three reviewers are independently assigned to review each course such that

- Distance Education will contact each reviewer separately so that reviewers are working on reviews of the template course independently.
- Distance Education will send a blank document with the Quality Matters Standards so that reviewers can input comments for each of the QM standards. A copy of the Quality Matters Rubric will also be sent as will a completed “Course Information Form.”
- Reviewers will provide comments, explanation, and discussion points for any “not met” standard. For all essential standards, reviewers will provide comments.
- Reviewers will have 3 – 4 weeks to complete each review during fall and spring semester.
- Reviewers will not be asked to review more than one course at a time.
- Reviewers will send completed course review documents to Distance Education. Distance Education will compile and edit the reviews for each course.
- When the edited review results are compiled, a meeting of reviewers (“Course Review Meeting”) will be scheduled, led by the Institutional Representative with assistance from the Assistant Dean of Online Instruction.
- At the time the Course Review Meeting schedule is finalized, the Institutional Representative will send to each reviewer a list of the standards to be discussed in the Course Review Meeting.
- In the Course Reviewer Meeting, all “not met” standards will be discussed. Reviewers will also have an opportunity to add additional information that might be helpful to make the template course a better course.
- The review results of the Course Review Meeting will again be edited and a date established to return the review results to the developer.

Reviewer Meeting

Before convening a meeting with reviewers, Instructional Design will compile the three separate reviews into one document, make editing changes as needed, and prepare a review results document for a meeting with the course reviewers. In that meeting, the following points will be addressed:

- Discuss confidentiality of the review and professionalism needed in the review process.
- Thank the reviewers for their prior work.
- Discuss all not met QM standards.
- Discuss any other standards, as needed.
- Discuss any other concerns the reviewers would like to discuss.

From the Course Review Meeting and oral input from the reviewers in the meeting, Instructional Design will prepare a written document of the combined review results of the reviews and the meeting.

Distance Education retains copies of the completed review documents. Reviewers will be compensated after the Course Reviewer Meeting.
Developer Meeting

When the review results document has been prepared and is ready to be delivered to the course developer, Distance Education will schedule a meeting with the developer (“Developer Meeting”) to deliver and discuss the review documents. In that meeting, the following points will be addressed:

- Discuss confidentiality of the review and professionalism in the review process.
- Discuss the process to this point, especially each reviewer working independently.
- Return review results document to developer.
- Discuss all not met QM standards.
- Discuss any other standards, as desired by the developers.
- Discuss any other concerns the developer would like to discuss.
- Distribute the Course Improvement Action plan to the developer.
- Discuss any assistance in making changes to the Master Course that the developer feels he/she needs.

The developer and Instructional Design personnel will discuss the Course Improvement Plan and how it is to be completed and returned within three weeks of the meeting date to Distance Education. Developers

Course Improvement Action Plan

At the end of the Course Developer Meeting, the Course Improvement Action Plan is discussed with the developer and possible improvement actions may be discussed. Within three weeks of the meeting, the form is due to Distance Education and to the dean of the appropriate division. At the trigger date (the last date for completion of the action items as indicated by the developer on the completed form), Distance Education sends the form back to the developer who then indicates that the improvement actions have been completed and returns the form to Distance Education.

Distance Education retains copies of the completed Course Improvement Action Plans. Developers will be compensated after the receipt of the Course Improvement Action Plan.
Please identify a date when your template course will be ready for review.

Have you taught this course online in the past? When? Have you made changes over the past three years and why?

Does the course use a companion website such as Pearson, Cengage, etc.? If yes, please provide specific information for logging in and accessing materials so reviewers may enter that companion website.

Are the course level SLO’s departmentally mandated? Have they been changed over the past three years and why? Do you have data comparing student outcomes with changed SLO’s?

Are there any division/department wide policies carried out in this course that the reviewers should be aware of (Service Learning requirements, etc.)?

Are there any QM standards that reviews may not readily fine in the course? Please refer to the QM rubric. Identify any standards where materials meeting that standard may not be readily identified by reviewers and where the material meeting that standard might be found, if you think needed.

Please provide any additional information you feel would be helpful during the review process.
Instructional Design has supplied to me the results of the QM Review of Courses as applies to my course, named above. I have read those results, understand them, and have discussed them with persons from Instructional Design. The following is an action plan in response to those results. I will first work on the essential not met standards. In addition, I plan to make improvements in the course that grow out of my own sense of the needs of students in terms of student engagement with content, the instructor, and with other students and that grow out of my own sense of the needs of students in terms of course learning outcomes (SLOs). This plan should be submitted no later than two weeks after the Developer Meeting to Vickie Mills (Vickie.mills@ws.edu; extension 6996).

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