Transitioning Graduate Courses From Synchronous to Hybrid While Meeting Quality Matters Standards for Online Education

Laurie A. Theeke
PhD FNP-BC, GCNS-BC
Professor and PhD Program Director

Roger Carpenter
PhD, RN, CNE
Associate Professor

Jennifer Mallow
PhD FNP-BC
Associate Professor
Today’s Purpose

The purpose of this presentation is to describe the process and evaluation outcomes of using the Higher Education Quality Matters (QM) standards for online education to transform three doctoral courses from synchronous (online or face to face) to a hybrid.
Background

• Over 10 years ago, it was reported that the effectiveness and quality of online instruction is what matters most to graduate nursing students.

• More recently it has been reported that hybrid course formats are linked to positive student learning outcomes for clinical graduate students and health professionals.

• These outcomes have included:
  • higher course grades
  • higher favorable course ratings
  • enhanced knowledge for special topics like genetics

• It has been recommended that student learning outcomes can be optimized by:
  • changing methods for content delivery
  • incorporating new online learning activities
  • giving opportunities for frequent student engagement
  • Enhancing effectiveness of evaluating student knowledge.
Rationale for Change

• Enhance student-centeredness in delivery of courses.
• Address concerns from students about long online or in class face to face time.
• Address student suggestions that some content could be asynchronous and therefore, add flexibility for adult learners.
• Increase availability of the course to distance students.
Synchronous versus Hybrid Design

- Synchronous design – simply means that the course is delivered in real time to students – face to face or online.

- Hybrid designs - blend synchronous sessions with asynchronous content to maximize achievement of learning outcomes.

- When seeking evidence about best educational practices for transitioning a course - the gold standard is to adhere to Quality Matters recommendations:
  - Hybrid courses include approximately 25-75% of face to face delivery.
  - Consider varied learning experiences during face to face sessions.
  - Monitor portions of the course being mediated by technology.
  - Consider learner ability to gain an understanding of the overall structure of the course and requirements.
What is Quality Matters?

• A Nationally-Recognized Program with Broad Appeal
• Since FIPSE funding ended in 2006, QM has persisted as a self-sustaining program is used to impact the quality of teaching and learning at a state and national level.
• More than 1300 colleges and universities throughout the world have subscribed to the QM program and used the HE Rubric to improve course design.
Methods for Evaluation Project

• Three course faculty in three courses demonstrated competence in the following 8 Higher Education QM areas:
  • Overall course design
  • Objectives and competencies that are measurable and mapped to weekly content
  • Assessments appropriate to evaluate student progress
  • Activities that facilitate student engagement
  • Technology enabling student success
  • Materials with links to student support services
  • Overall course design reflecting a commitment to accessibility and usability for all learners.
Key changes in a DNP Evidence-Based Practice Research Method Course

- Recorded Asynchronous lectures
- Weekly Synchronous Discussions
- Test Myself Activities Online
- Testing Strategies for Student Centered Learning
Key Changes in a DNP Nursing Informatics

• Volume restricted recorded lectures
• Online learning activities
• Frequency of student engagement
Key Changes in a PhD Quantitative Methods

- Introduced use of asynchronous activities
- Employed technology to deliver course materials
- Complex structure to synchronous discussions
- Additional writing to Evaluate Student Learning
Impact on Student Evaluations of Instruction (SEI)

• In all three courses, SEI demonstrated overall positive changes.
• Overall Course quality had the highest mean SEI scores (> 4.4)
• Higher SEI evaluations on:
  • emphasis on Conceptual Understanding
  • Critical Thinking
  • Fair grading
Outcomes for the Research Methods Course

• Students ranked the short recorded lectures prior to synchronous discussions as key to learning

• Multiple attempts at exams resulted in diminished student stress and more frequent engagement with online materials including recorded lectures
Positive Outcomes in Nursing Informatics

- Students recognized excellence in recorded lectures.
- Students favored the immediacy of feedback.
- Students noted the integration of readings, lectures and discussion.
Outcomes in the Quantitative Methods Course

• Achieved a mean of 5 in all areas on SEI
• Students commented on the frequency and constructive nature of feedback
• Students noted that enhanced flexibility for student time resulted in higher productivity in course assignments
Recommendations

• Consider using the Higher Education Quality Matters standards when transitioning a course from synchronous to hybrid.

• Offering an alternative that includes frequent engagement with faculty may be ideal.

• Taking a student-centered approach can lead to overall improved outcomes for learners and faculty.
Handout of Review Available

See handout for an example of a peer review by a certified Quality Matters Reviewer

Presenter Contact Information
Laurie A. Theeke, PhD, Professor
ltheeke@hsc.wvu.edu
Office Phone: 304-293-1405