10 YEARS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE: ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPERATIVES

Quality Assurance in Online Education –Towards a Culture of Assessment

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ISSUES, ISSUES, ISSUES!

1. Who Is Responsible for: “approving,” “authorizing,” “certifying,” “providing oversight,” “registering or “licensing” non-state sponsored institutions of higher learning in your country?

2. Diploma Mills- Is the victim also to Blame, especially now?

3. John Bear

4. Prior Learning Assessment
The Online Landscape is Shifting

Where Are We Now?

1. 2000 what is online learning?
2. 2005 how do we do it?
3. 2010 how do we expand or escalate?
4. 2013 how do we ensure its quality?
This Workshop

1. Review briefly “the culture of assessment” which slows the quality assurance process
2. Show how adequate quality assurance, in compliance with accrediting agencies’ distance learning policies and practices, can be ensured
3. The case of St. Thomas University’s online programs
Part One: The Quality Assurance Issue in Context

The purpose of every college-related online quality assurance activity:

1. Ensure that the college adheres to program standards, relevant policies, and best practices for teaching online.
2. Show evidence for how they are maintained
Quality Assurance Normally Requires:

1. Conduct Program Reviews
2. Conducting “Self-study” (also known as “compliance certificate, or “quality enhancement plan”)
3. Evidence of sound and varied use of technology
4. Report on self-study, compliance certificate or enhancement plan
5. Subsequent peer review or audit
The quality assurance processes can be:

1. Very involved and comprehensive
2. Intimidating
3. Humbling: highlighting positively in some areas and underlining the areas of concern in others
Is Measured Against 4 Standards

Includes measurements or meeting standards:

1. Fail to meet the minimum standard in an area of assessment,

2. Meet the minimum standard in an area of assessment,

3. Exceed the minimum standard in an area of assessment, or

4. Far exceed the minimum standard in an area of assessment.
Internal vs. External Standards

An internal academic quality assurance process:

1. Solicits the participation of skilled instructors and administrators,
2. Includes a self-regulatory process,
3. Is guided by internal or institutional policies,
4. Usually responds to the institutional mission and core values, and
5. Is mainly voluntary and not policed by governments or external agencies.
Internal vs. External Standards

External academic quality assurance:

1. May not be voluntary and
2. Will be policed by government or external agencies.
Quality Assurance vs. Accreditation

1. Is quality assurance the same as “accreditation”?

2. How many have been through a voluntary and comprehensive quality assurance process in their entire existence.

3. Are the development and strategic plans a substitute for quality assurance?
Common criteria on which a college could be assessed

1. Overall Mission
2. Core standards
3. Pre-established quality standards
4. Involves a self-study (includes Program Reviews)
Common criteria on which a college could be assessed

5. Includes a peer view
6. Use of Technology
7. Funding and financial are realistic and are met
8. Student admissions standards
9. Student support services
10. Quality of educational programs
Common criteria on which a college could be assessed

11. Qualifications and use of Faculty
12. Quality and use of instructional materials
13. Use of Learning Outcomes
14. Who are principally responsible for defining and enforcing the rules and norms assuring the quality of academic programs?
15. Role of government or private, non-profit agency
Role of Program Standards in Quality Assurance

Program standard is defined an established set of criteria or level of quality or achievement for measuring, evaluating and judging success or performance of an activity, process or entity.
Role of Program Standards in Quality Assurance

1. College faculty typically identify, develop, instill, promote, insure and assure program standards related to academic program quality

2. “Standards provide a basis for policies, rules, and procedures that are essential for providing systematic programs and services to any special population
Who else normally formulate standards?

1. Ministries of Government
2. Specific professional associations
3. Agencies
4. Employers and
5. Market forces
What happens once you identify standards?

1. Analyze them
2. Develop scoring rubrics or schedules
3. Reflect on them
4. Review them
5. Use them
Sample #1—Quality Standard—analyzed!

Quality Standard—Instructional Materials

1. The instructional materials contribute to the achievement of stated course learning outcomes
2. The purpose of the materials and how they are to be used are clearly explained
3. All materials used in the course are appropriately cited
4. Instructional materials are current
5. Present a variety of perspectives on course content
6. Distinction between required and optional materials are clearly explained

Source: Butcher & Wilson-Stydom (2013)
Sample #2—Quality Standard—analyzed!

Quality Standard—Course Technology

1. The tools and media support the course learning outcomes
2. Course tools and media support student engagement and guide the student to become an active learner
3. Navigation throughout the online course components is logical, consistent and efficient
4. Students can readily access the technologies required in the course
5. Course technologies are current

Source: Butcher & Wilson-Stydom (2013)
Questions to guide an institution in defining its program standards

1. Is quality assurance mainly for compliance/accountability or for academic enhancement/innovations?

2. Do quality assurance mechanisms or “program standards” exist and are identifiable in your college?

3. Who is responsible for QA at your college or university?

4. To what extent do they exist?

5. Adequacy of both the traditional internal and external practices (and those institutional policies) for assuring acceptable academic standards?
Questions to guide an institution in defining its program standards

6. Is program relevance to graduates and the economy an important factor in establishing program standards?

7. Should the institution safeguard the public interest in the assurance of academic standards?

8. Is voluntary institutional and program accreditation an adequate mechanism for assuring the quality of student learning?

9. When were your first and last institutional self-study, external peer review, and a public report of findings?

10. Where should the balance exist between external (national/agency) control and institutional responsibility for improvement?
Questions to guide an institution in defining its program standards

11. Who has the majority authority to set and measure standards: institutions themselves, external forces, including governments, students, and their parents?

12. Extent to which innovation in academic programs is encouraged while maintaining and improving academic standards and institutional policies?

13. What is the evidence of growing or declining academic standards in educational achievement?

14. Is achieving a better linkage of higher education with the labor market as important as the educational attainment?
Questions to guide an institution in defining its program standards

15. Does exclusively focusing on the subject level assessments provide limited incentives for the overall institution to develop an effective internal quality assurance process?

16. What is the role of informed student choice as an influential means of external quality assurance?

17. Role of outcome measures such as graduate placement and salaries as informative and generally valid quality information for potential students and their value as general indicators of effectiveness for academic programs?

18. Do the same standards also apply to online programs.
Are You Ready for Quality Assurance for Your Online Programs

1. Determining how instructors and their institutions ensure the quality of online courses and programs under their jurisdiction, even when the parent institution does not perform systemic program quality assurance.

2. Assessing the quality of your online program is tantamount to maintaining higher education standards.

3. Does your institution have a functional and well designed institution-wide quality assurance system, to design, review and establish program standards and best practices specifically for online programs and courses?

4. If not, what can we do?

5. Is there a “Culture of Assessment”?
Why Do It? Do What?

1. All colleges that teach courses online, including those in the Caribbean, must have a plan to assure quality programming.

2. WHY?
WHY?

1. **College:** To protect and enhance the reputation of the college in attracting quality students and instructors while ensuring that business and industry can trust the quality of graduates they employ.

2. **Student:** To give students the confidence that their credentials have value and relevance in today’s workplace, and will be recognized and accepted by prospective employers and other reputable accredited institutions, regionally and overseas.
3. Faculty: To provide training, resources, and technical support for the development of online courses, the maintenance (including teaching) of on-going online courses and assessing the learning outcomes of those programs or courses.

4. There are other interests, of course: accrediting agencies, legislators, tax payers, private sector and other employers and other institutions of higher learning.
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PART TWO

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Standard # 1:
Definition of Distance Education
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Standard # 2—Student Privacy and Authenticity:

The institution must demonstrate that the student who registers in a distance or correspondence education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the credit — verification and identity.
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Standard #3 — **Enrolment Report:** An institution that offers distance or correspondence education must ensure that it reports accurate headcount enrollment on its annual Institutional Profile submitted to the Commission.
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Standard #4—Compliance:
Institutions must ensure that their distance and correspondence education courses and programs comply with the *Principles of Accreditation*. This applies to all educational programs and services, wherever located or however delivered.
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Standard #5—Mission: Curriculum and Instruction
If an institution offers significant distance and correspondence education, it should be reflected in the institution’s mission.
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Standard #6— Curriculum and Instruction, Faculty’s Role:

The faculty assumes primary responsibility for and exercises oversight of distance and correspondence education, ensuring both the rigor of programs and the quality of instruction.
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Standard #7— Curriculum and Instruction, Technology:

The technology used is appropriate to the nature and objectives of the programs and courses and expectations concerning the use of such technology are clearly communicated to students.
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Standard #8—Curriculum and Instruction, Copyright:

Distance and correspondence education policies are clear concerning ownership of materials, faculty compensation, copyright issues, and the use of revenue derived from the creation and production of software, tele-courses, or other media products.
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Standard #9— Curriculum and Instruction, Academic Support:

Academic support services are appropriate and specifically related to distance and correspondence education.
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Standard #10—Curriculum and Instruction, Program Length:
Program length is appropriate for each of the institution’s educational programs, including those offered through distance education and correspondence education.
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Standard #11—Curriculum and Instruction: Coherence

For all degree programs offered through distance or correspondence education, the programs embody a coherent course of study that is compatible with the institution’s mission and is based upon fields of study appropriate to higher education.
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Standard #12—Curriculum and Instruction, Credit Level:
For all courses offered through distance or correspondence education, the institution employs sound and acceptable practices for determining the amount and level of credit awarded and justifies the use of a unit other than semester credit hours by explaining its equivalency.
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Standard #12—Curriculum and Instruction, **Contractual Arrangements:**

An institution entering into consortial arrangements or contractual agreements for the delivery of courses/programs or services offered by distance or correspondence education is an active participant in ensuring the effectiveness and quality of the courses/programs offered by all of the participants.
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Standard #13—Faculty, Adequacy:
An institution offering distance or correspondence learning courses/programs ensures that there is a sufficient number of faculty qualified to develop, design, and teach the courses/programs.
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Standard #14—Faculty, Evaluation:

The institution has clear criteria for the evaluation of faculty teaching distance education courses and programs.
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Standard #15—Faculty, Training

Faculty who teach in distance and correspondence education programs and courses receive appropriate training.
Standard #16—Institutional Effectiveness:
Comparability of distance and correspondence education programs to campus-based programs and courses is ensured by the evaluation of educational effectiveness, including assessments of student learning outcomes, student retention, and student satisfaction. The institution regularly assesses the effectiveness of its provision of library/learning resources and student support services for distance or correspondence education students. USE ASSESSMENT RUBRICS or other measures
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Standard #17— Library and Learning Resources:
Students have access to and can effectively use appropriate library resources. Access is provided to laboratories, facilities, and equipment appropriate to the courses or programs.
Standard #18— **Student Services, Access:**

Students have adequate access to the range of services appropriate to support the programs offered through distance and correspondence education.
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Standard #19— Student Services, Appeal:

Students in distance or correspondence programs have an adequate procedure for resolving their complaints, and the institution follows its policies and procedures.
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Standard #20— Student Services, Truth in Advertising:

Advertising, recruiting, and admissions information adequately and accurately represent the programs, requirements, and services available to students.
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Standard #21—Student Services, Security in Assessment:

Documented procedures assure that security of personal information is protected in the conduct of assessments and evaluations and in the dissemination of results.
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Standard #22—Student Services: Use of Technology

Students enrolled in distance education courses are able to use the technology employed, have the equipment necessary to succeed, and are provided assistance in using the technology employed.
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Standard #23— Facilities and Finances:
Appropriate equipment and technical expertise required for distance and correspondence education are available. The institution, in making distance and correspondence education courses/programs a part of its mission, provides adequate funding for faculty, staff, services, and technological infrastructure to support the methodology.
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Standard #24—

Distance Education Policy Review Procedures
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Standard #25—Course Work for the Degree:

The institution provides instruction for all course work required for at least one degree program at each level which it awards degrees. If the Institution does not provide instruction for all course work and (1) makes arrangements for some instruction to be provided by other accredited institutions or entities through contracts or consortia or (2) uses some other alternative approach to meeting this requirement, the alternative approach must be approved by the Commission on Colleges. In both cases the institution demonstrates that it controls all aspects of its educational program.
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1. Please read this document for more details
2. Read all Conference Papers
3. Where you have already started, continue to lead and HELP others to realize the CANQUATE “Imperative”!
4. For “non-starters” start something, somewhere, and start leading the QA imperative!
5. Take the risks, seek help, we will all help you to succeed.

Thank You!