

# Building Excellence: An Iterative Approach to QM Program Certification

**Amy M Grincewicz, PhD**  
**[agrincew@kent.edu](mailto:agrincew@kent.edu)**

Director of Instructional Design  
QM Senior Research Colleague



# Objectives

Active  
Learning



1. Analyze a building block approach to enhancing quality in online degree programs.

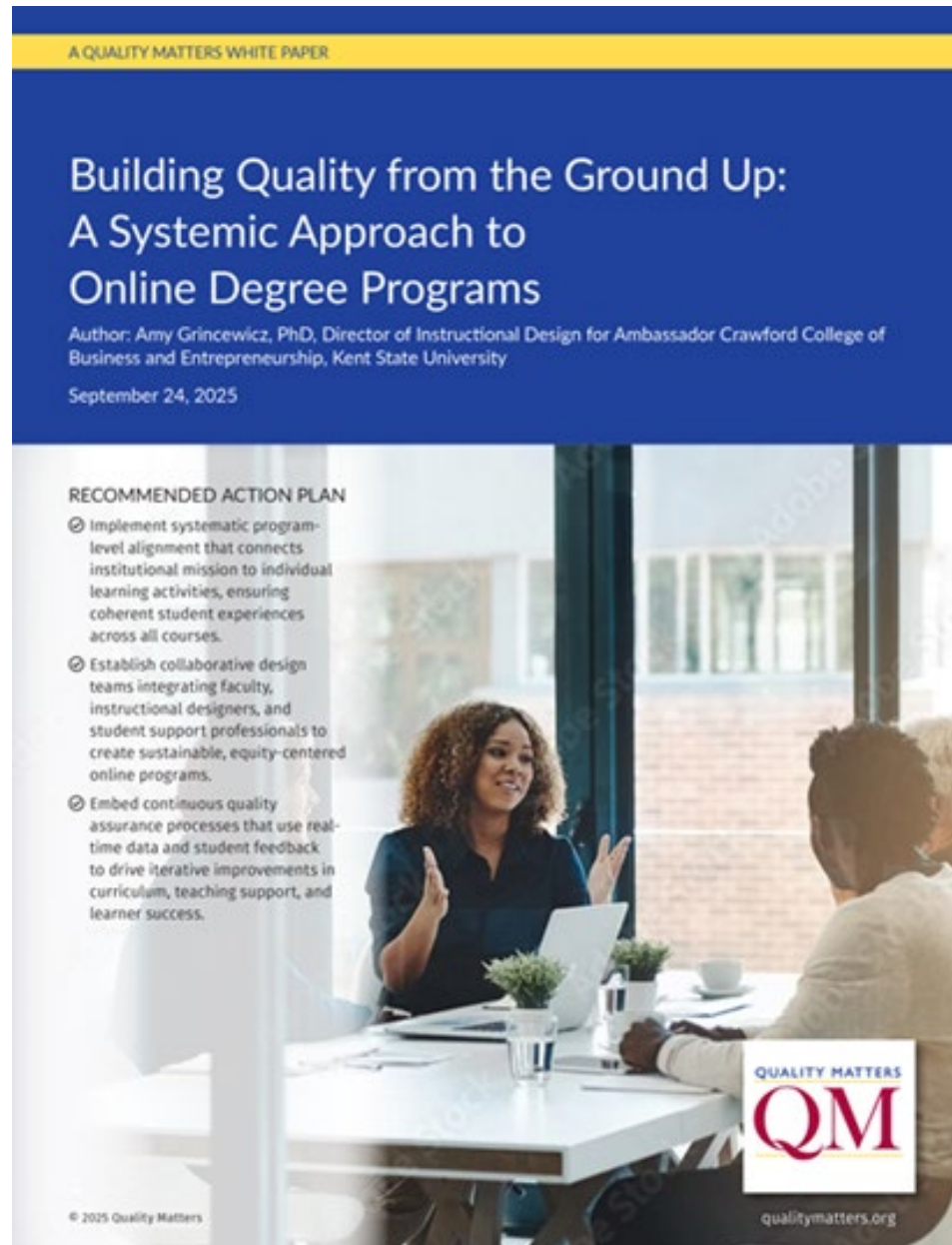


2. Develop an action plan outlining at least one strategy to improve online program quality.



3. Describe how each criterion within the QM Program Certifications can be approached iteratively for continuous improvement.

# White Paper



[White Paper | Building Quality from the Ground Up: A Systemic Approach to Online Degree Programs | Quality Matters](#)



# Ice Breaker

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What word best describes quality in your online programs?





# Framing the Challenge: From Margins to Mainstream

4.9M+ learners  
enrolled exclusively  
online (26% of all  
students) (Ortagus et  
al., 2024)

Central question: not  
whether to go online,  
but how to ensure  
quality

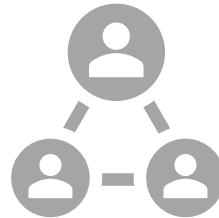
Quality = coherence +  
human support +  
continuous  
improvement.

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# What the Literature Emphasizes



Alignment across program and course outcomes improves coherence and student outcomes.

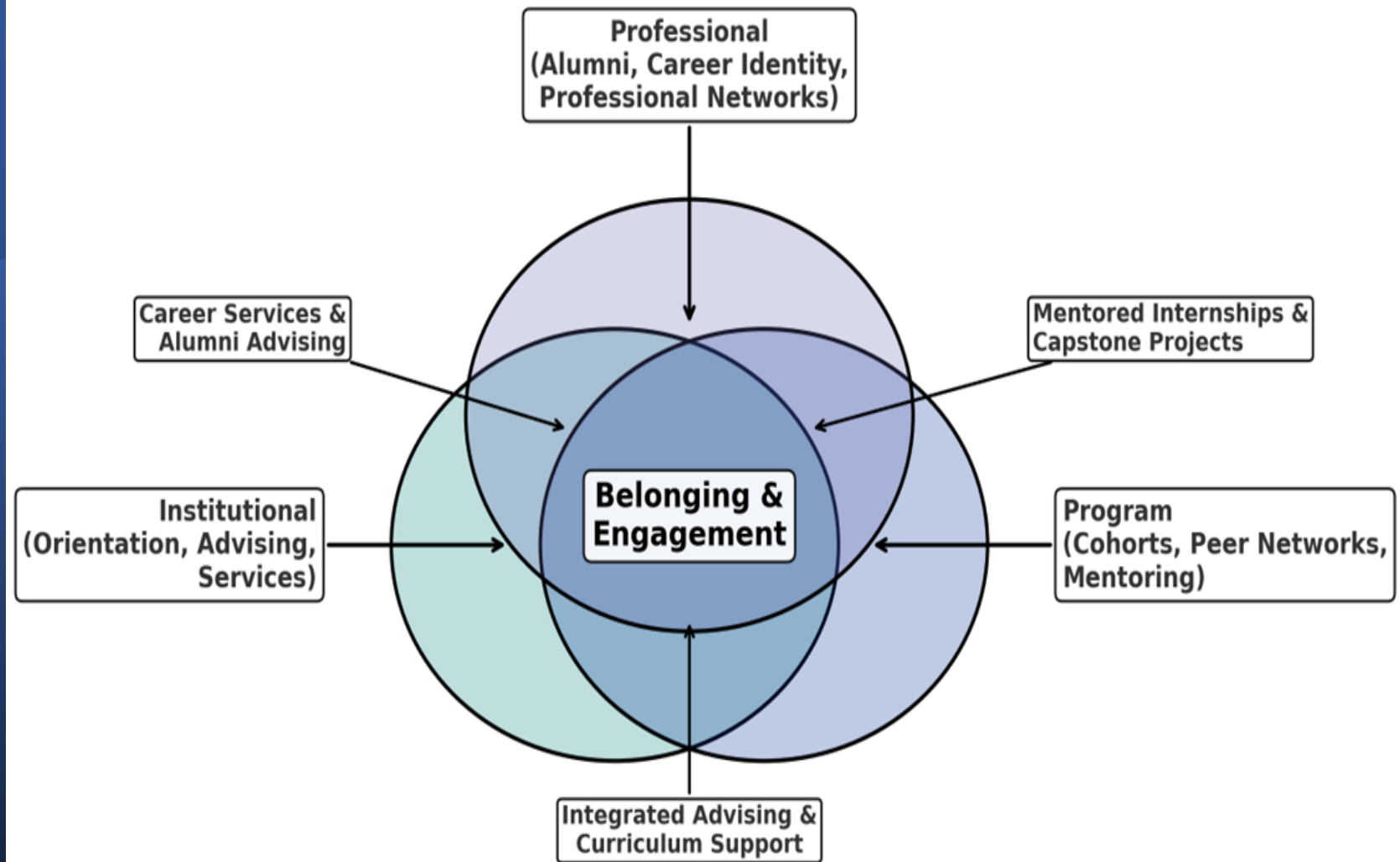


Belonging at institutional, program, and professional levels drives persistence (IPP model) (Shepherd & Bolliger, 2023).



Continuous, data-informed improvement sustains quality.

# Community/IPP Diagram



(Shepherd & Bolliger, 2023)



# Activity: Map your supports

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- Institutional: What centralized services exist?
- Program: What processes or templates ensure consistency?
- Professional: How are you connecting learning to career outcomes?

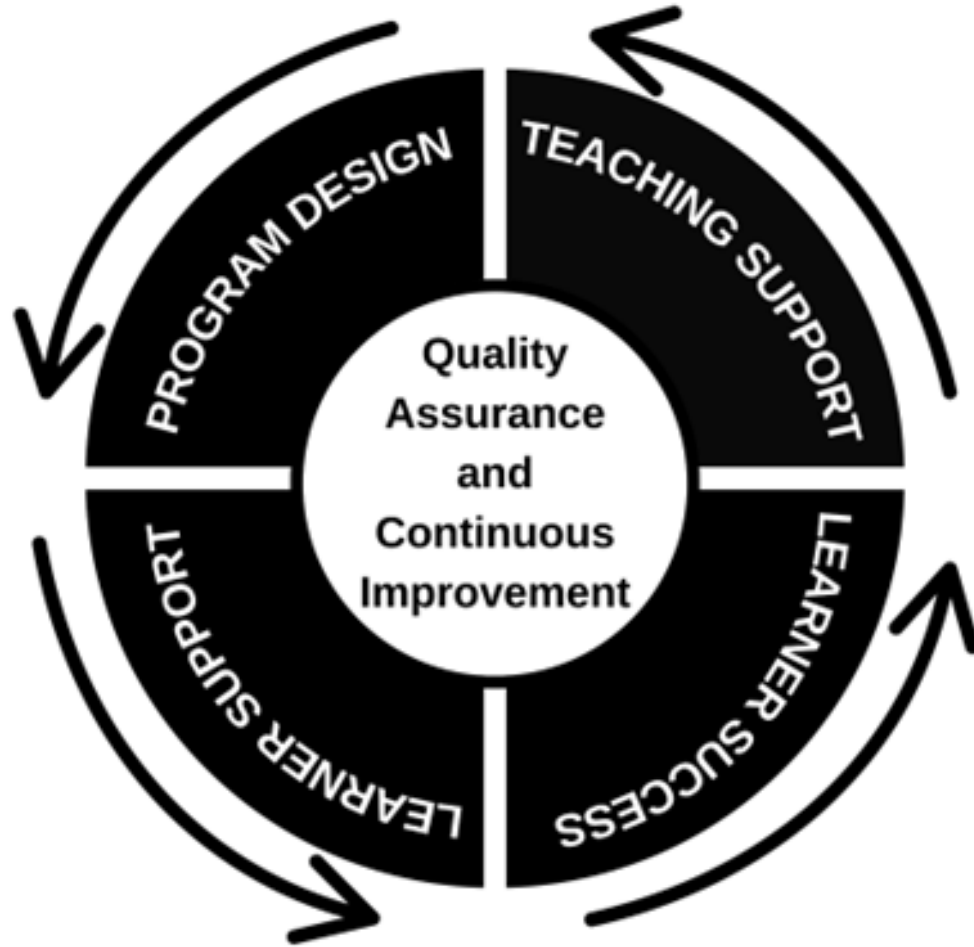




QM Program Certifications as a  
way to formalize and scaffold  
these very connections

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# HOLISTIC ONLINE DEGREE PROGRAM QUALITY FRAMEWORK



# Building Blocks

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# Iterative, Scaffolded Progress

## Basic

- Programs list objectives

## Intermediate

- Alignment maps created

## Advanced

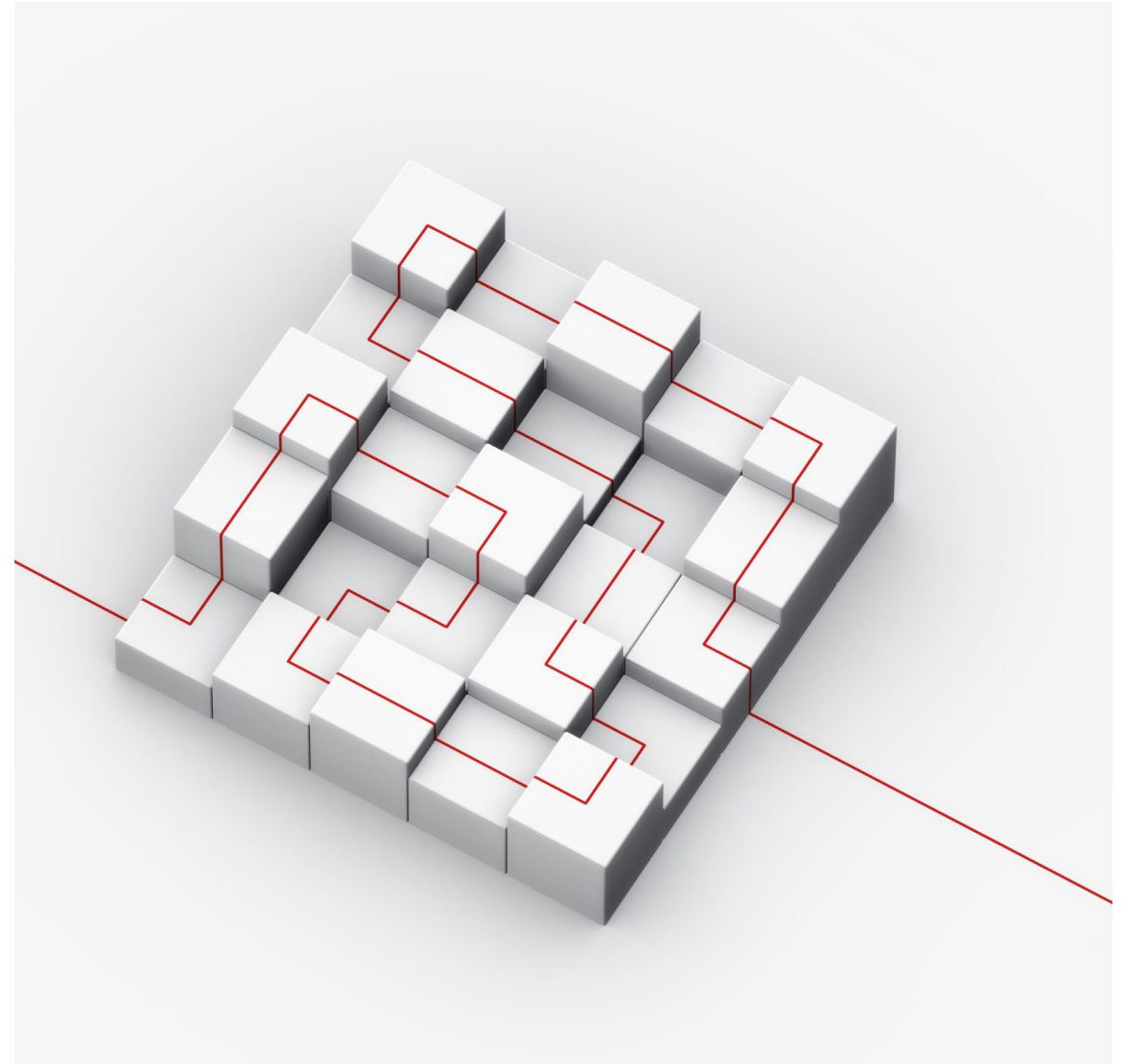
- Alignment maps verified with data and updated



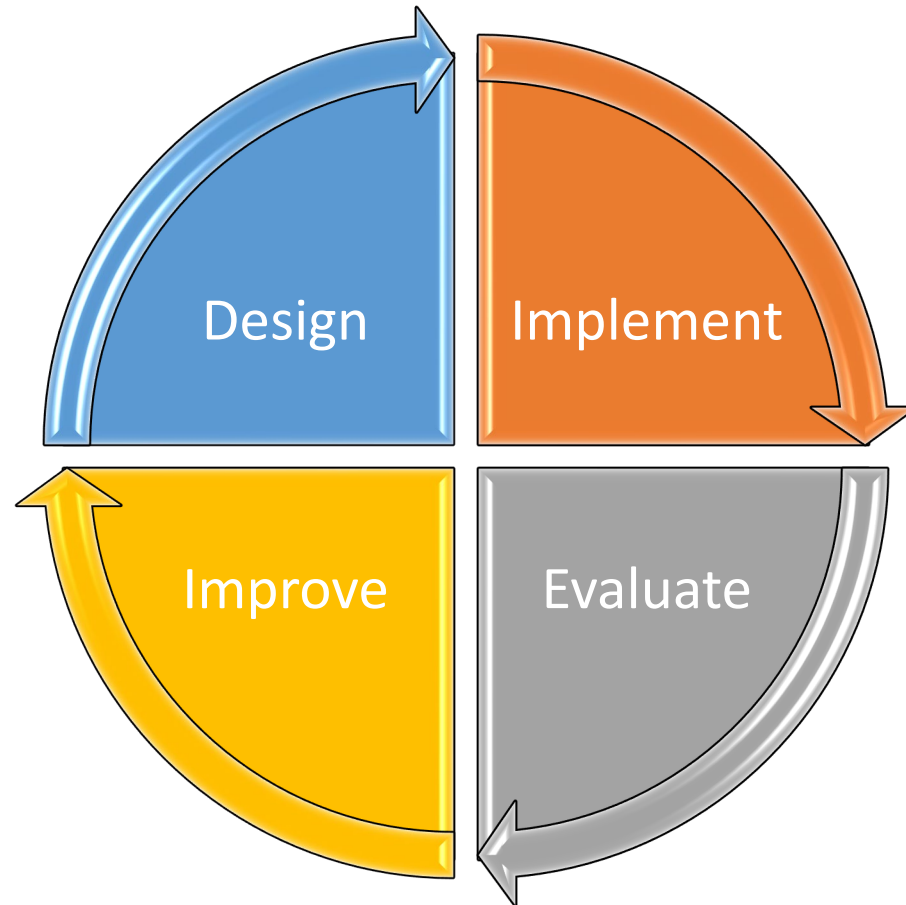
## Activity: Building Block Progression Checklist by Criterion

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- Visualize Growth: Explore how online program quality evolves from foundational to advanced practice.
- Self-Assess: Identify where your program currently stands across design, teaching, support, and success.
- Plan Next Steps: Pinpoint one realistic action to move forward on your quality journey.



# Continuous Improvement Loops



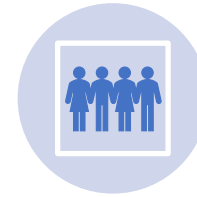
# Synthesizing Insights - Toward Best Practices in Online Degree Programs



Clear Institutional  
Mission and Strategy



Program Design  
Focused on  
Engagement and  
Flexibility



Community-Building  
and Instructor  
Presence



High-Quality Digital  
Infrastructure and  
Support



Data-Driven  
Continuous  
Improvement



Faculty Training and  
Support for Online  
Teaching

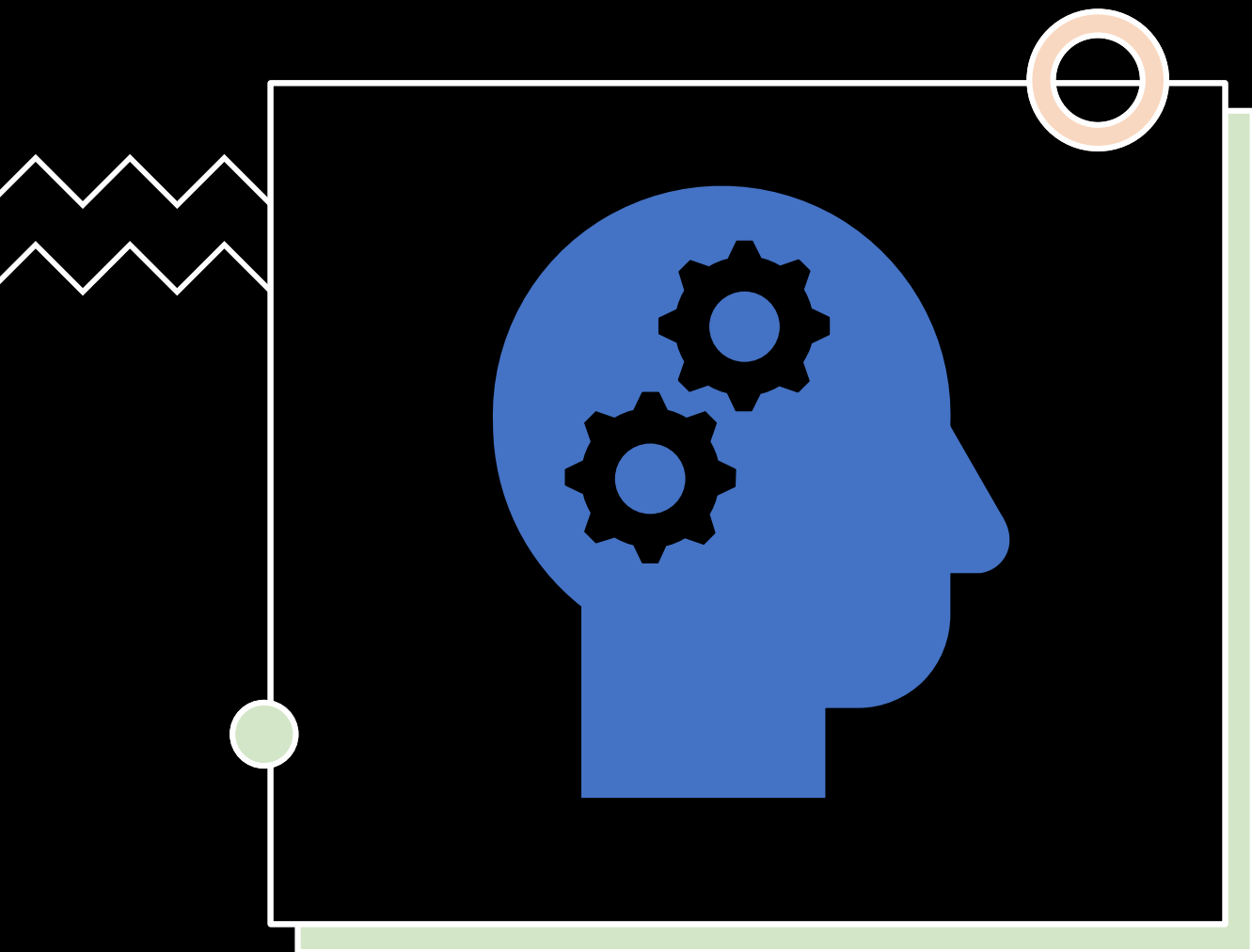


Clear  
Communication of  
Expectations and  
Course Consistency

Quality isn't a checklist—  
it's a culture of iteration,  
collaboration, and impact.

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# Reflection and Wrap- Up



# References

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