Design to Align

Directions: Instructional design is an evolving and revolving process. As instructors, there are always things to adjust and refine. As a take away for this session, here are some things to continue to think about.

- Once you get your course aligned, remember to write notes alongside the detailed student schedule to recall what worked and what did not work. Make slight adjustments as students use the course and you find issues that need clarification. It takes 2-3 actual uses to get the "bugs" worked out and feel like you have a solid course. Remember sections and semesters can vary based on the students taking the course. Don't react and "throw it out" because it didn't work once. Give yourself and the students time to acclimate to the online/hybrid experience.

- Courses designed as a stand-alone take on a different perspective than those that are part of a program sequence. For sequenced/pre-request courses, please be sure you consult with your fellow faculty so that key learning is taking place to prepare the students for their course. If program outcomes or external/industry standards must be met within the course, please be sure you look at those requirements to be sure they are robustly addressed in your course.

- Does your program require students to complete a tutorial of Learning Management System (LMS) prior to starting? Is it part of the college orientation process? Do you know what topics/online navigation pieces are covered? If not, don't assume students are technology savvy. Do your fellow faculty (within the program) layout or use features of the LMS similarly. It's helpful if a student doesn't have to focus on the technology AND learn the content of your course and the many other courses s/he is taking. Not all students are full-time students. Not all students enroll and stay enrolled. Students today switch colleges and start and stop out in their academic careers. This starting and stopping affects their ability to perform and be successful learners.

- How can students track their learning progress within the LMS? Do they know how to do this? Do you assume they know? Do you remind them about this feature even after the first week of introductions to the course?

- Do you offer students a variety of materials/methods for learning the content? Having choices gives the students a sense of empowerment and a sense of responsibility for their learning. Are course materials current, offer multiple perspectives, and add variety to the learning environment? Textbook costs are high. Consider open sources. Remember, if you use 3rd party resources within your course, please help students by showing them/telling them where they can go to learn more about protecting their privacy. Privacy isn't something the average student thinks about; and once aware they understand how this may/may not affect their future employment opportunities. Everyone is searchable online.

- How do you offer instructor-student interactions? Office hours, chats, videoconferencing? Are such things required? Be sure to explain and be upfront on how to use these things. Online tutorials, in class demonstration/trying it out to prepare for online portion, are helpful.

Here are some specific points to ponder regarding alignment and the General Standards found in the Quality Matters (QM) Rubric.

General Standard 2 – Competencies & Objectives

Creation/Development:

- Write 3-5 competencies (course goals) per credit.
- Competencies should be at the Application level or higher (i.e.: Bloom's taxonomy).
- Competencies should meet advisory committee/industry standards.
- Competencies for the course tie back to the program outcomes mapped/identified for the course.
- Competencies for the course tie back to the core abilities mapped/identified for the course.
- Competencies for the course tie back to the external/industry standards mapped/identified for the course.
- If the competencies are state mandated, the instructor may ADD to, but NEVER take away from the given script. All of the competencies must be taught in your course to ensure your students have the knowledge and skills needed for his/her next sequenced course. (Can't teach just the topics you like.) This also ensures that the students taking your course (no matter the section or campus) have the necessary skills to be successful, as well.
- Competences should "fit" and "be appropriate" for the semester level. For example, a 1st semester course would have lower or introductory level competencies (Explore, Demonstrate, Determine), whereas, a 4th semester would have advanced skills (Analyze, Evaluate, Create).
- Learning objectives are the "stepping stones" underneath each competency. For students to successfully meet your competency, the learning objectives "teach" the content in bite-sized pieces. Industry faculty often think of it in terms of their "process".
- Learning objectives must be under the "competency roof line" or at the same taxonomy level. Objectives should not "punch a hole" or be at a higher level than your competency.

In E360/Learning Management System:

- Competencies and learning objectives must be copied into the online/hybrid course. It helps fellow faculty/dean/college professional developers/students know the focus of the lesson.
- All course competencies and objectives must be accounted for in the lessons.

General Standard 3 – Assessment & Measurement

- Summative assessments need to match the assessment tool identified in WIDS.
- Assessment choices fit the competency word (taxonomy level). For example, a student wouldn't show you Demonstrate or Write, by completing a multiple choice test.
- Assessment meets the performance criteria identified (more can be added – but basics are accounted for).
- If students learned the material covered in the learning objectives, the student should be able to successfully complete any formative or summative assessment. In other words, we can't "test" what we don't teach.

    - Do assessments allow for students to practice content more than once? Are they varied and/or sequenced over the span of the semester? Student performance may vary based on the type of tool selected. For example, some students may perform better in a project setting over taking a test.
        - Think beyond the test – interview, journals, portfolios, observations, reports, demonstrations, exhibits.
        - Build upon previously learned material in the course. Example: small papers/projects to final research paper/project. Breaking down the big project into smaller assessed chunks allows for feedback and an improved final product. It also allows the instructor the ability to check if the student is actually doing the work (way to check for cheating).
        - Allow adequate time to take assessment. Add time for slower readers/nervous students.
    - Do you offer an assessment choice for the student? For example, the competency might be met with a multimedia presentation, a paper, or a service learning project.
        - Think beyond you being the only assessor – peer reviewers, self-checks, games, simulations, answer keys for self-assessment.
        - Think beyond one scheduled time. Example: Student sign up for day/time within the week to demonstrate skills.
- If the course is identified in the state TSA (Technical Skills Attainment), the TSA rubric and/or program outcome criteria should be integrated into the course activities and assignments. Assessment data for program directors should be made available, so they are able to document data for graduates.
- Formative Assessments – check for general understanding of a concept or industry vocabulary throughout the course. They can be informal or formally created. Examples: thumbs up/thumbs down, nod of head, I Clickers, quiz, discussion, or apply knowledge to a case study/scenario.
- Summative Assessments – check for student knowledge and skills attained by student during or at the end of the course. They are formally created and show a student can analyze, evaluate, and use course content and resources in a new way (create). Summative assessments might take the form of a test, skills check-off, project rubric, etc. Examples: video tape a speech, final paper, class project build over the semester, or create a solution for a case study/scenario.
- Assessment is clearly explained. It provides details on points allocated for the various sections and how it will be scored. Instructors may include an attached rubric, describe how the assessment will be weighed, how feedback will be given, time frames for grading and posting results. Be sure to clarify late policies and decreases in point values if assessments are late.

General Standard 4 – Instructional Materials

- Learning/instructional materials used support learning objectives and competency "content".
- Instructor explains how materials used will help student achieve competence. Examples: self-check – games, enhance skills – lab practice sessions.
- Set professional example to students – cite sources, be sure spelling is accurate within course lesson, resources are current to industry/relevant/up-to-date, quality of videos (clear visual/audio).
- Use variety in instructional materials. Its' not just one author – allows for different perspectives/learning preferences.
    - Offer instructional choice. Can student read, watch video, listen to a podcast, etc. to get the same information?
    - Clearly label resources/activities as Required or Optional. Put notation in the activity's title, use colored font, picture icon, etc. Optional activities/tutorials might be held in a clearly marked – separate location – to not add scrolling length to a lesson.

General Standard 5 – Course Activities & Learner Interaction

- Activities are active learning experiences and not just "sit and get" lecture style learning activities.
    - Does the course "do" or "apply" content rather than just give it?
    - Does the course challenge students to research or bring content to the class as a member of a learning community?
- Interactions online should be visible and fit the purpose of the course/meet competency.
    - Where is there instructor to student interactions?
    - Where is there student to instructor interactions?
    - Where is there student to student interactions? If this one is difficult based on the context of your course, perhaps a "water cooler/study buddy/café – general discussion area" would allow for this.
- Does the course foster strong instructor directed interactions at first to end the semester where students can do things without the strong guidance of the instructor?
- Does the course allow practice time with appropriate feedback, so students can improve based on input? Is the feedback timely, clearly explained?
- Do discussion posts clearly explain expectations and contain a discussion post grading rubric?
    - Get beyond frequency, length or "reply to 2 students".
    - Try grading discussions for the week with a weekly grading rubric rather than grade each discussion separately.
    - Try a scenario/case study or real world issue to discuss rather than comment on reading/text/etc.
    - Try a course character/avatar who has issues/problems within the context of the course content. Let students be the experts to Dear John/Abby.
    - Try giving students a choice in what discussion question they'd like to respond to for the week (post 2 or 3 options).

General Standard 6 - Course Technology

- Tools selected are functional and easy to use.
    - There is nothing more frustrating for a student than an inoperable device/tool when the "crunch" is on.
    - The student shouldn't have to learn the technology on top of learning the course content. It should be intuitive and fairly easy to pick up. Remember what's easy for you may not necessarily be easy for the student.
    - Use tools found within the learning management system (E360). It's one stop and doesn't cost the student anymore to use. Assessable to everyone.
- Don't use technology just to use it. It should provide meaning and support the competency.
    - Technology is more than a "passive" experience.
    - It should help explain the content better.
    - It makes reviewing concepts fun/easy, but not "busy work or childish".
- Give specific directions on how to use, where to go on the website, etc., so it's not confusing.
- If using social media/3rd party, show/tell student where to go to protect their privacy. Just attaching the privacy link isn't enough, especially if they have to create an account. Walk them through the steps. Practice it yourself! This is something new on the QM Rubric. Provide students with information on how to safeguard their accounts and reputations.
- Technology needed for the course is explained via tutorial/shown in class. Be sure students know how to access the technology.
- Instructors do not have to master all technology types/devices. Let students choose technology devices they know how to use to show you their competence in the course content.

If you Design to Align, your ability to successfully Meet the Standards of the QM Rubric will significantly increase!