When thinking about choosing a program for reviewing course quality, consider the following factors and how they fit your institutional needs.

**PURPOSE**
What are the driving forces behind an interest in online course quality?

**RESOURCES**
What level of support/resources do you need through the course review process?

**AFFORDABILITY**
Is your institution willing and able to commit funds to this effort?

**USABILITY**
How quickly and easily do you need to deploy this process?

**FLEXIBILITY**
Will you need the ability to adjust standards or alter the review structure?

Inside this packet, you will find easy-to-read overviews of Quality Matters and Open SUNY Course Quality Review and discussion questions to promote internal conversations to help determine the best course quality program review for your institution.
QUALITY MATTERS

Quality Matters (QM) launched in 2003 to create a process for evaluating online course quality. The focus of the program uses trained reviewers to conduct reviews on courses at institutions. Training and adoption can go hand-in-hand, as individuals whose courses go through the QM process may become interested in becoming certified reviewers themselves. QM encourages schools to start adoption with internal training and informal reviews before submitting courses for official review. Courses at or above a certain score on the rubric are ‘certified’ and can use the QM certification in promotion.

The focus of the QM standards is on online course design. Recent updates are subtle but strengthen the standards. There is a lot of emphasis on objective support and alignment, less so on creating student engagement, faculty presence, and providing feedback. QM also pays light attention to course structure and navigation. When going through an update to the rubric, QM develops a Rubric Committee that is composed of community members who are experienced with the Rubric and QM will also survey the QM community about what should be changed, added, or removed.

Recently QM has expanded into Program Reviews that includes program design, teaching support, learner support, and learner success. There are Annotations behind each Specific Review Standard with examples of best practice and application to blended/hybrid courses as well. Both online and blended courses can be reviewed with the QM Rubric. QM also has Rubrics for K-12 and Continuing and Professional Education (non-credit courses).

EASE OF ADOPTION

The formal course reviews are very structured, following a specific process and method of giving feedback. Three external reviewers review the course, come to a decision on scoring, and determine whether the course received certification. Re-submission is allowed throughout the course review process.

QM members have access to a robust set of support resources including annual conferences, workbooks, a research repository, case studies from other schools, and various articles and webinars. QM’s training to be a certified reviewer and participation in reviews can be a valuable professional development tool.

RESOURCES

Access to the full, annotated rubric, training and webinars, and the review process requires membership in QM where costs vary and range from a few thousand dollars to several thousand. Workshops to train faculty and staff in the use of the rubric run $200/member; $300/non-member per registrant.

There are many other training and support options available as well. Course reviews are $1000/course. Because the training and resources are varied and the review process so structured, it is possible to implement QM with a small on-site team. QM Coordinator training is provided with support materials to support adoption efforts. Its longevity, and general acceptance across higher education, make it a valuable external validation of a school’s work. That same structure means that the rubric is fixed and applied the same way to all schools and courses.

As an additional note, there are some resources available to non-QM members, however, there are specific areas restricted to QM members.
The Open SUNY Course Quality Review (OSCQR) rubric is a free and openly-licensed tool developed by Open SUNY based on research in best practices in online learning from the last few decades, including Quality Matters and CSU-Chico’s rubrics. It was first launched in 2014 and has been revised a few times since. They solicit feedback from users for on-going improvement.

OSCQR is focused on reflection and continual improvement, so does not 'score' points, validate courses or programs, or otherwise have a “pass” level. Schools adopting OSCQR would need to define the reviewer role and provide appropriate support/training, which would likely be a key component of an adoption process.

Note: The Online Learning Consortium (OLC) adopted OSCQR (course design) in 2017 as part of its scorecard suite which includes QCTIP (teaching and course design), blended/hybrid courses, student support, program administration, and digital courseware. OLC Institutional members can access an interactive version of all the scorecards and obtain a consulting review of the institution from external reviewers with the potential for an endorsement.

RESOURCES

Like Quality Matters, the OSCQR addresses course design, not teaching practices. The OSCQR has a heavy focus on accessibility and student engagement/contribution and only a single yet strong statement around objectives. Adopters may need a different approach to support that, such as a course development process or outcomes assessment strategy that complements or precedes this.

The OSCQR site includes extensive support for the standards with explanations and examples. The key tool is a Google-based scoring sheet that has tabs for instructional design, peer, and self-review, culminating in an action plan for the course. OSCQR provide a copy of the scoring sheet to institutions to work from and will also provide, on request, a dashboard where institutions can track reviews progress. The rubric can be used as part of a course development process and evaluation after it has been taught a few times.

Within SUNY, there is an established review process that is shared on their site. Institutions will need to determine their own implementation approach. There is no training for reviewers, though there are a few resources and videos on the site to help.

EASE OF ADOPTION

The OSCQR and related resources are freely available. Adoption via OLC may have additional costs for their additional services and products. The flexible nature of the tool and rubric allows for institutions to create unique systems, change or add rubric items, deploy in whole or in part, and determine the process for review, revision, and recognition. This flexibility is powerful and would require broad support and development efforts from the institution. OSCQR adoption would be most successful with strong instructional design guidance and the time and staff required could be more significant.

With the increased exposure of OSCQR through OLC and through recognition by WCET, a growing number of non-SUNY institutions are adopting it and sharing their approach. This may become a vibrant community and source of support in time.
The questions below are intended to help you start a discussion around the needs of your institution.

What are your institutional goals for adopting a set of course quality standards?

*Indicate the priority for the following, add others as you need:*

- Professional development for faculty
- Creating a common language around courses
- Recognizing excellence internally
- Creating accountability, reporting metrics externally
- Accreditation

Who needs to be involved and in what ways?

*For each of the following, determine who needs to be involved and at what level - i.e., kept informed, give approval, involved in discussions:*

- Leading the charge
- Approval
- Provides funding
- Creates and provides infrastructure - i.e., communications, technology
- Buy-in and participation needed
- Maintain and promote usage of program

What resources are needed and are they available?

*What resources (human, time, and money) are available or need to be obtained?*

*Indicate the priority for the following, add others as you need:*

- Flexibility (adapting structure/standards to your needs)
- Usability (easy to deploy, support materials, etc.)
- Reputation (internal, external)