

Sloan-C View

Perspectives in Quality Online Education

A Publication of the Sloan Consortium

Quality Matters: Inter-Institutional Quality Assurance in Online Learning

Kay Kane, QM Project Coordinator



Quality Matters is a continuous improvement model for assessing and assuring the quality of online courses.

Recognizing quality is much like recognizing art – you know it when you see it, but everybody sees something different. And when it comes to online courses, your students, faculty, administrators, peers, and accrediting bodies may certainly not see what you do. In fact, they might not even know what to look for in assessing quality.

The FIPSE-funded *Quality Matters* (QM) project is creating an inter-institutional continuous improvement model for assuring the quality of online courses. To characterize quality, QM first turned to the research literature and national standards. QM teams identified 40 elements, distributed across eight broad standards, shown to positively impact student learning. These elements were then incorporated into a web-based rubric and weighted from 1 to 3, where 1 is important and 3 is essential.

Annotations and multiple examples from real online courses have been provided for each essential element. Among the national standards included in the QM rubric are those of the Sloan Consortium, one of QM's external partners.

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THE SLOAN CONSORTIUM
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Quality Online Education

forward

... From the Editors

A letter from the editors of the *Sloan-C View*

This issue introduces the Quality Matters initiative, a continuous improvement model for assessing and assuring the quality of online courses.

Quality Matters offers peer reviewers opportunities to assess courses using standards in eight areas: course overview and introduction; learning objectives (competencies); assessment and measurement; learning resources and materials; learner interaction; course technology; learner support and ADA compliance. [Maryland Online](#) (MOL), a statewide partnership, proposes to create a replicable pathway for inter-institutional quality assurance and course improvements in online learning. Look for a Quality Matters Sloan-C workshop to be offered online in Spring 2005.

Quality Matters is an example of the kind of partnership that a **plenary panel** called for at the 10th Sloan-C International Conference on ALN in November. In "ALN Anniversary: Surprises? Promises? Partnerships," panelists look back on a decade of innovations and look forward to continuing rapid change.

Elaine Allen and **Jeff Seaman** give a glimpse of this year's national survey, *Entering the Mainstream: The Quality and Extent of Online Education in the United States, 2003 and 2004*. Download the full report at the Sloan-C [free resources](#) page.

In *Hot Off the Blog*, **Ray Schroeder** of the University of Illinois Springfield reports on hot topics including comparisons, debates and discussions.

Congratulations to the recipients of the 2004 Sloan-C Awards. "The field of online education continues to show vigor and strength. Every year we see advances in the important matters of quality, scale and breadth within this still fledgling community" says **Frank Mayadas**, President of Sloan-C. "The individuals and institutions honored this year are recognized for showing exceptional leadership in advancing online education along these dimensions." For more information about the awards, download the [Sloan Consortium Awards 2004 pdf](#). The recipients will also contribute to a special issue of the Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks in June 2005.

We look forward to seeing you online and hope you will visit Sloan-C soon and often.

... for the Sloan Consortium

Frank Mayadas, John Bourne and Janet Moore

The purpose of the Sloan Consortium (Sloan-C) is to help learning organizations continually improve the quality, scale, and breadth of their online programs according to their own distinctive missions, so that education will become a part of everyday life, accessible and affordable for anyone, anywhere, at any time, in a wide variety of disciplines. You are welcome to join Sloan-C:

<http://www.sloan-c.org>

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Searching for ways to enhance your online offerings?

Try the Sloan-C Vendor Corner:

The Sloan-C Vendor Corner will help you identify your needs, research solutions, and choose which products or services provide those solutions. Along with a list of vendors and their product descriptions, we provide research that will aid you in defining what your needs are and what you should be looking for.

Featured Product:

Silicon Chalk

Find out about Silicon Chalk's innovative new blended learning solutions in the Vendor Corner!

The Vendor Corner will be sponsored by the vendors who are listed in the vendor corner, but the research provided is independent and maintains the Sloan-C effort to be a trusted source of information.

www.sloan-c.org/vcorner

Quality Matters (continued from [cover page](#))

A team of three faculty members is trained to use the rubric to review an online course. The reviewers include one content expert and at least one member from an institution other than the course's home institution. Review team members work both individually and collaboratively, and in communication with the course's faculty member, to provide a compiled report that highlights exceptional elements and provides positive recommendations for improving the course. The QM project then provides instructional design support for implementing the review team's recommendations. At the completion of the review and revision process, a course receives *Quality Matters* Recognition. To receive QM Recognition, a course must demonstrate all 3-point essential review elements and receive a combined total score of 68 out of 80 possible total points.

QM is a complex and challenging project run by MarylandOnline (MOL), a statewide consortium of 14 community colleges and five senior higher education institutions. One of the distinguishing features of QM is the voluntary nature of participation at all levels, from faculty to institutions.

Sloan-C Online Seminar Series: Blended Learning and the Generations

Are you looking for the answer to any of these questions:

- What do we know about blended learning and the differences between the age generations?
- How can we prepare for the next generation learner?
- How can blended learning initiatives be structured to achieve both institutional and student goals?



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Achieving consensus without interfering with the internal practices and policies of each institution is an additional practical consideration. The QM project was initially designed to assure MOL members of the quality of each other's courses and increase participation in resource sharing and articulation. Institutions also can strengthen their institution's accreditation package through the external review of online course quality. Faculty can access instructional design support and participate in professional development activities. Faculty peer reviewers have noted an immediate positive impact on their own online courses resulting from their exposure to the rubric, the opportunity to view other online courses, and collaboration with colleagues.

QM's three year FIPSE grant runs from September 2003 through August 2006. Steps are being taken at every stage to insure that the quality assurance process and tools are replicable, reliable, scalable, and sustainable. QM activities have grown steadily from the review of seven online courses in spring 2004 to the selection of 20 courses for review in spring 2005; QM has trained over 100 faculty to use the rubric. QM also convened a statewide instructional design affinity group which has since become an active and separate organization. Plans for year two include the debut of online rubric training, adaptation to blended and face-to-face courses, and research projects focused on the impact of the QM process on student learning.

For more information about the QM project and to view the rubric, visit <http://www.QualityMatters.org>. To discuss the project or to inquire about participating in it, contact project co-directors Chris Sax (University of Maryland University College, csax@umuc.edu) and Mary Wells (Prince George's Community College, mwells@pgcc.edu).

Welcome to New Programs Listed in the [Sloan-C Catalog](#)

[Teikyo Post University](#)

-[Early Childhood Education](#) (Associate)

[Carnegie Mellon University](#)

-[Master of Science in Information Technology](#)

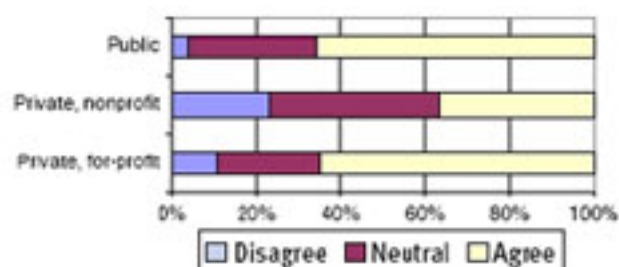
Sloan-C Survey Results

Based on responses from over 1,100 colleges and universities, [Entering the Mainstream: The Quality and Extent of Online Education in the United States, 2003 and 2004](#) shows online enrollments continue to grow and institutes of higher education expect the rate of growth to continue increasing.

See the report overview and download the report by clicking on the link above for answers and evidence on questions like these:

- Will online enrollments continue their rapid growth?
- Are students as satisfied with online courses as they are with face-to-face instruction?
- What role do schools see online learning playing in their long term strategy?
- Do schools continue to believe that quality measures up?

ONLINE EDUCATION IS CRITICAL TO LONG-TERM STRATEGY



2004 Sloan-C Awards Recipients

Presented at the [10th Sloan-C Annual International Conference on Asynchronous Learning Networks: The Power of Innovation from Innovation to the Mainstream](#), Friday, Nov 12th, the Sloan Consortium annual awards recognize excellence and effectiveness. Congratulations to these recipients of the 2004 Sloan-C awards for significant contributions to knowledge about asynchronous learning networks:

University of Wisconsin Master of Engineering in Professional Practice:

Most Outstanding Online Teaching & Learning Program

eArmyU: Award for Excellence in Institution-Wide Online Teaching & Learning Programming

University of Nebraska Summer Institute for Online Teaching: Excellence in Online Teaching & Learning Faculty Development

Jason Scorza, Fairleigh Dickinson University: Excellence in Online Teaching

Starr Roxanne Hiltz, New Jersey Institute of Technology: Most Outstanding Achievement in Online Learning by an Individual

Rogue Community College: *Effective Practice Award* for Discipline-Specific Online Writing Lab with 24/7 Access and Asynchronous Peer Tutoring

Western Washington University: *Effective Practice Award* for Integrated Laboratory Network: Better Access to Scientific Instrumentation

Michigan State University: *Effective Practice Award* for Effective Feedback to the Instructor from Online Homework

eArmyU: *Effective Practice Award* for Providing anytime, anywhere online access to higher education for a highly mobile learner population

Florida Community College at Jacksonville: *Effective Practice Award* for Supporting Online Adjunct Faculty: A Virtual Mentoring Program

For individual descriptions, download the [Sloan Consortium Awards 2004 pdf](#).

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www.sloan-c.org/info/resources

Sloan-C would like to like to thank the newest Premium Members for their continued support:

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University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Fairleigh Dickenson University

University of New Brunswick

SUNY Learning Networks

National University

Saint Joseph's College of Maine

Buena Vista University

Hampton University

Tennessee Technological University

Metropolitant State College of Denver

Erie Community College

West Virginia University

University of Wisconsin-Extension

Fairfield University

The University of Toledo

Kent State University

www.sloan-c.org/info/decrem
for more info on Premium Membership

ALN Anniversary: Surprises? Promises? Partnerships

A plenary panel at the 10th Sloan-C Annual International Conference on Asynchronous Learning Networks looked back on years of innovation and forward to radical changes.

Frank Mayadas said that Sloan's earliest working assumption was to enable anyone the opportunity to learn anything online at any time affordably, and the best way the Sloan Foundation could foster innovation would be with incentives to institutions that would align with their own best purposes and interests. For the panel, greatest surprise is how well the idea works and how rapidly ALN is growing. **Burks Oakley** remarked that 11 years ago there was no internet and no graphical web browser, and zero percent of institutions of higher education had fully online courses; today, 80% of schools have online or blended courses. This is a record rate of change for higher education, said Oakley, and it is manifested in innovative sharing among faculty, constructivist pedagogy, and growing recognition of good practice. Despite uneven access to technology from home among students in the U.S., and great disparity of access in many nations, Tony Picciano applauds the fact that faculty, not just administrators, are taking leadership roles especially in the development of blended courses. Pointing out that groups vary widely in access to technology, it has been surprising, said **Janet Poley**, how rapidly people have gravitated from other

technologies to learning via the internet; one effect of growth is that the lines between research and education are being blurred as we learn more about how we learn. **Carol Scarafiotti** concurred that ALN is opening doors like never before, empowering critical audiences of learners and teachers to understand pedagogy, faculty role change, instructional design, 'consumers' who expect immediate feedback, emerging new services and organizations, and control shifting from faculty to students in cooperative ways. **Joel Hartman** said that fast-paced diffusion of innovation spurs random progress, yet internal and external forces and energies at work in the environment call for a new agenda: "It's not so much the goals that will change, but our awareness of new ways to meet the goals." As we examine the social mission of ALN and what it means to society, the agenda will mean not just access to technology but using it meaningfully. Citing William Berquist's *The Four Cultures of the Academy: Insights and Strategies for Improving Leadership in Collegiate Organizations*, Hartman said that internal and external partnerships are motivated first by mutual interests, then move to identifying needs, and finally to realizing and implementing benefits. What's possible isn't always doable unless partners identify self-interest, noted Mayadas, and the question is "What is the glue that holds interests together?" **John Bourne** responded that as the mainstream changes over the next five years, ALN's positive spillover effects on higher education and the *people* part of networking mean finding overlapping interests and consolidating networks through channels such as Sloan-C's special interest groups and publications.

Chaired by **Gary Miller**, Associate Vice President for Distance Education and Executive Director of the World Campus at The Pennsylvania State University and by **Jacqueline Moloney**, Dean of the Division of Continuing Studies, Corporate and Distance Education at UMass Lowell, the panel included **Carol Scarafiotti**, Executive Consultant for Online Learning at Rio Salado College and Dean, Emerita; **Tony Picciano**, Professor of Education and Leadership at Hunter College; **Janet Poley**, President and CEO of the American Distance Education Consortium; **Burks Oakley**, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs for the University of Illinois and Director of University of Illinois Online; **Joel Hartman**, Vice Provost for Information Technologies and Resources and Chief Information Officer at the University of Central Florida; **John Bourne**, Executive Director of the Sloan Consortium and professor at Olin and Babson Colleges; and **Frank Mayadas**, program officer for the Sloan Foundation and President of the Sloan Consortium.

Sloan-C would like to announce its newest publication!



Elements of Quality Online Education: Into the Mainstream: Wisdom from the Sloan Consortium

Of value to practitioners in the full range of educational contexts, the sixteen wisdom papers in this collection include perspectives ranging from programs and institutions to effective practices to insights about the future of higher education as new models emerge that will improve learning effectiveness, cost effectiveness, access, faculty satisfaction and student satisfaction.

For more information or to order the book online, please visit:
www.sloan-c.org/info/decwisdom.asp



by Ray Schroeder

This month we are looking at a wide range of topics on online learning from primordial comparisons to mounting formal debates in an online format, to online as preferred medium for academic discussions of socially-charged topics.

[Online Debate: A Case Study Combining Traditional Strategy and Online Technology - Shawn M. Love, Instructional Technology and Distance Learning](#) — Merging a traditional debate format in synchronous and asynchronous online environments demonstrates the challenges of merging the traditional with the non-traditional. In this article, an online debate is examined in terms of limited communication methods and suggestions are provided for designing an online debate.

Elements of Quality Online Education Into the Mainstream

Edited by *John Bourne and Janet C. Moore*

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Free PDF Condensed version is also available for download at www.sloan-c.org/info/vol5

Volume 5 in the Sloan-C Series

 **The Sloan Consortium**
A Consortium of Institutions and Organizations
Committed to Quality Online Education

[Learning Objects: A Practical Definition - Rory McGreal, Instructional Technology and Distance Learning](#) — In this article, we find it is worthwhile to re-visit the operating definitions and uses of one of our key online tools. Learning objects (LOs) enable and facilitate the use of educational content online. Internationally accepted specifications and standards make them interoperable and reusable by different applications and in diverse learning environments. The metadata that describes them facilitates searching and renders them accessible.

[Campfires in Cyberspace: Primordial Metaphors for Learning in the 21st Century - David D. Thornburg, Instructional Technology and Distance Learning](#) — As we use more and more electronic media in education, it is essential that we understand the unique nature of each expressive medium we encounter. This article suggests that learning takes place in four spaces, only a few of which are honored in most schools. These spaces can be compared to primordial life. The article offers new theory for educational systems based on four primordial learning spaces: campfires (information), watering holes (conversation), caves (concept), and life (context).

[Commentary: Online Learning Encourages Openness - Kevin Simmonds, University of South Carolina Gamecock](#) — This commentary, by an articulate University of South Carolina student, reflects on an online class on Diversity in the Curriculum. He calls it “one of the most exhilarating classes I’ve taken at USC. The only drawback — all this takes place online. I won’t get to see any of these interesting folks in person until after we’ve finished working together. That’s really sad. But is it? I’ve been wondering whether the online environment is a more fertile place to deal with such issues.”

[Ball State Study Finds Socialization is Key to Online Learning - Muncie Star Press](#) — Since online learners may feel isolated by distance, increased personal interaction with their classmates and instructors is important for the education to succeed, according to a Ball State University study. Nursing faculty members Nagia Ali, Kay Hodson-Carlton and Marilyn Ryan interviewed nursing graduate students confidentially to understand their experiences with online learning.

Each month, we will share selected items that have recently been posted at the Online Learning Update blog, which provides daily summaries of news and journal articles in the field with links to the complete articles. You can always see the latest items, and find many more articles posted seven days a week at the **[Online Learning Update blog](#)**. Until next time, I’ll see you online!

~ray



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The Sloan-C View is published by Sloan-C™ and is supported by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation.

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ISSN 1541-2806

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If you know of, or are hosting, an event that should be listed on the Sloan-C View Calendar, please send the details of the event and url to publisher@sloan-c.org.

CALENDAR

Sloan-C: Blended Learning and the Generations

Date: Starts December 3, register until Dec 7
Location: Online

URL: <http://www.sloan-c.org/info/decblendedsem.asp>

This online workshop from the Sloan Consortium will help answer important blended learning questions. Please see our ad on [page 3](#).

Beyond the Comfort Zone: Ascilite 21st Annual Conference

Date: December 5-8, 2004
Location: Perth, Western Australia
URL: <http://www.ascilite.org.au/conferences/perth04/>

For more information, contact [Rob Phillips \(conference convenor\)](#)

The 2004 Conference will be the Australasian region's premier event for lecturers, trainers and researchers concerned with all aspects of educational technology and computer mediated learning in tertiary and post school education and training. Call for presentations.

CADE-ACED: 2005 International Conference

Date: May 7-11, 2005
Location: Vancouver, Canada
URL: <http://www.cade-aced.ca>

The Canadian Association for Distance Education (CADE-ACED) & Simon Fraser University are proud to announce the 2005 International Conference.