

Action Project

Title: **Online Course Evaluation for Quality Assurance**

Category: **Helping Students Learn**

Timeline:

Planned project kickoff date: **June 15, 2011**

Target completion date: **May 31, 2012**

Actual completion date:

1. Describe this Action Project's goal in 100 words or fewer:

The goal of this project is to evaluate the current state of online learning by using established benchmarks to improve the quality and consistency of the online learning experience for WSC students and faculty. WSC will examine and recommend improvements regarding the delivery and support of online courses using an established online self-assessment tool/rubric. A quality assurance process will be developed to address the oversight, review, and evaluation of online courses.

2. Describe briefly your institution's reasons for taking on this Action Project now – why the project and its goals are high among your current priorities:

According to findings of an annual survey published by the Sloan Consortium in January 2010, and reprinted in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, by Marc Parry, on January 26, 2010, colleges saw a 17 percent increase in online enrollment, with more than one if four students taking at least one online course in the fall of 2008. Another key finding of the Sloan Report was "Fewer than one-third of chief academic officers think that their faculty members accept the 'value and legitimacy' of online education, a perception that hasn't changed much in the past six years. (Another survey, released in 2009, also reflected broad faculty suspicion about the quality of online courses.)"

With the increasing popularity and growth on online course at our institution, a need has been determined to improve and assure the quality of the online courses being offered at Wayne State College.

Wayne State College has an online MBA program. The program consists of eight core courses and two electives for a total of 30 credit hours. Each core course is offered each semester. We have tried to assign one core course to qualified faculty. However, we currently have the MBA director teaching two core courses. We are using Sakai as the course management system.

In the past, we have done very little evaluation of our online courses--either from student evaluations or evaluations by an external specialist. During the fall 2010 term, we began using student evaluations for four MBA core courses. However, an institution-wide course evaluation instrument has not been developed and approved. The faculty was informed that an external evaluator would be hired to review the core courses.

We believe that five of our eight core online courses are of very good quality, but that three need considerable improvement. We are hoping by soliciting an external review of the program the review can be used to assist in improving the online courses.

Many of our faculty have never received first-hand instruction on developing online pedagogy. We have a professional staff employee who helps faculty with Sakai software usage, but he is not a pedagogy expert.

In addition to the course review, we would like to have an online pedagogy expert come on campus and provide in-service to all faculty who teach online or hybrid classes.

The Assessment Oversight Committee for the institution approved the recommendation that a review of the MBA business courses be undertaken by an expert with that information shared with other faculty teaching online.

3. List the organizational areas – institutional departments, programs, divisions, or units – most affected by or involved in this Action Project:

Instructional divisions, academic departments, individual faculty, the Assessment Oversight Committee, Dean's Council, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs will be most affected by and involved in this Action Project. All faculty will be invited to attend an in-service presentation on best practices of online education. All online faculty and students will be among those most affected by improvements made in course delivery through this Action Project.

4. Name and describe briefly the key organizational process(es) that you expect this Action Project to change or improve.

The key processes that we expect this Action Project to change or improve would be in the delivery, organization, learning strategies, and assessment used in online instruction. Specifically, staff development, course design, curriculum development, evaluation of instructional delivery, outcomes assessment, and budgeting processes will be changed and improved.

5. Explain the rationale for the length of time planned for this Action Project (from kickoff to target completion):

This Action Project should be able to be completed in one academic year with continued assessment for course improvement to be followed after the initial review and in-service. An online self-assessment tool and its uses, and other meetings detailing the findings of the initial audit review will be used for continued sustainability and continuous improvement of online student learning.

6. Describe how you plan to monitor how successfully your efforts on this Action Project are progressing:

Action Team members, the Assessment Oversight Committee, the Dean's Council, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs will periodically monitor progress on project initiatives. A timeline for each component of the project will be developed and monitored for completion. A quality assurance system for online courses will be used that fully supports continued improvement in online course pedagogy.

7. Describe the overall “outcome” measures or indicators that will tell you whether this Action Project has been a success or failure in achieving its goals:

Develop an oversight process that includes procedures, a standardized system of measuring online course quality, and appropriate instruments of evaluation. This process will seek to achieve the following measurable outcomes.

- 80 percent of the online courses will receive positive evaluation ratings on all evaluation criteria. (Positive evaluation ratings will consist of at least 75% of the evaluators indicating they “agree” or “strongly agree” with the presence of each specific quality instructional characteristic.)
- 80 percent of the online courses will receive an overall OSAT (Online Self Assessment Tool/Rubric) score of 2 or higher on a 4-point scale.