

Design and Build with Quality

Quality in this instance is associated with content, the materials essentials for the learning experience. Under this umbrella term, we find accuracy, integrity, editing, instructional method and interface with the rest of the course. Most online instructors would agree quality is critical in ensuring their course does not provide students a poor educational experience. The consequences should be obvious. A poor designed or managed course easily translates to a less than desirable degree program and the need to move on.

Quality must also be found at the support level, admissions level, and information level. It is a team effort that eventually culminates in the course and with the instructor that owns and teaches the course.

Recent innovations of on-the-fly media and the myriad of online publication methods, makes quality (integrity and andragogical concerns) a constant watch word for the instructor. The rule here is simple. If you are not the subject matter expert when considering the use of specific topic media, consult them first, or make them part of the course review process. Despite our best efforts, technology, advancements in our field, and media development can easily outpace the course design process.

Content accuracy and relevance are also critical. Regardless of the type of content, (text, audio presentations, video, and slide presentations with voiceover) make sure it is andragogically effective for the audience. Be certain it ties together learning objectives and the assessments.

Students also tie appearance and use of multimedia to quality. The course should be free of typing and graphic design errors. Students can be encouraged to report errors and your prompt response to change them, will be to your benefit. Some instructors balk at using multimedia. However, multimedia (audio, video, interactive content) is a learning preference supported by research. And evidence of its use should be found across the course design.

Make sure links (embedded in text or standalone) work appropriately and the sites you select are quality and offer some type of American Disability Act compliance (transcript or academic quality closed captions).

Is the course designed with consistency and easy to navigate? We will talk more about this in modular design, but course materials and assessments should be easy to find. Resources and instructions should be clear and in the right location.

Quality increases student satisfaction, attention to the learning process, retention and success. It also dramatically decreases time spent on fixing failures, adding content, and responding to student tech issues. Lastly, it provides a more robust, engaging and interactive learning and teaching experience. Putting the work up front, decreases the repair work through the semester.

The path to a quality course also involves the development of relationships with your colleagues, subject matter experts, learning management system, instructional designers, and your students. Ultimately, course quality can be gauged by how successfully your students master their learning outcomes and objectives.