

those modes of delivery falling on the farther end of the spectrum, to those modes of delivery that fall somewhere in the gamut between hybrid and online learning. As the Lebanese HE sector grapples with the challenges posed by digital delivery models in all their complexity, and given the absence of a national qualifications framework to regulate and drive educational reform in this area, there is a clear need to articulate a model of quality assurance that directly addresses this gap. With this rationale in mind, this paper discusses processes of evaluation from design to delivery of online experiences that result, or ought to result, in both learning and institutional/national recognition by way of credit.

B. Elements of a Quality Assurance Model in Online Learning

1. Student Success Rates: Retention versus Dropout rates

There is an inherent difficulty in defining the notion of “quality” in education, yet quality assurance systems can be devised to close the gap between intended learning outcomes and actual student success rates. As such, quality assurance in the field of online learning is best thought of as present from the very start of the design process and continuing through final delivery.

(a) Formulation of key indicators:

- **retention rate** (completion rate versus initial enrollment numbers);
- **dropout rate** (percentage of students who should have completed learning experience but did not)

(b) Establishment of a Quality Assurance Committee. To assess above-listed rates and issue evaluation of success rates.

(c) Publication of annual report on success and dropout rates of online course enrollment. This is carried out by pre-assigned committee dependent on specific university governance structure. Publication is transparent, open, and available to institutional stakeholders and general public.

2. Assessment of Teaching Staff and Quality of Teaching (Student Perspective)

(a) Deployment of student survey of teaching quality (See Appendix A). One main survey dimension is **student satisfaction** on all components of online course. Quality Assurance Committee examines survey results and issues evaluation and makes recommendations for improvement of online experience/teaching.

(b) Quality Assurance committee publishes results of student satisfaction rates along with recommendations for improvement.

3. Evaluation of Online Course (Instructor Perspective)

(a) Deployment of instructor survey of online teaching (See Appendix B). This measures:

- a. Satisfaction level of instructors who have participated in online teaching.
- b. Satisfaction level of technical support staff who have participated in online teaching.
- c. Satisfaction level of all other administrative staff involved in delivery of online experience.

(b) Quality Assurance committee publishes results,

4. Analysis of Data collected. All relevant groups (see point 3 above) are surveyed for satisfaction levels with internal data mining focused on key indicators, namely:

(a) **Demographics.** (Age, gender, specialization, among other key determinants)

(b) Efficacy of guidance systems. This relates to satisfaction levels with level of clarity and comprehensiveness in the successful completion of online experience. Targets students and instructors alike.

(c) Satisfaction with teaching effectiveness. This relates to instructor planning and development of course sequentially, encompassing:

- i. For **synchronous** learning experience, timely availability of course content, modules, requirements, and all other facets of course. For **asynchronous** learning experience, comprehensive availability of entire course content in organized, structured way.
- ii. Accommodation of student schedules through flexibility within the scope or time-frame of learning experience.
- iii. Student satisfaction levels with **teaching methodologies**. This may include lecture viewing, individual work assignments, team-based learning, capstones, among others.
- iv. For **synchronous** learning experience, availability of instructor/technical support staff.
- v. Student satisfaction levels with effectiveness of course portal or platform.
- vi. Student satisfaction levels with course material, learning resources, and all other course infrastructure of direct relevance to course completion (See Appendix C)

(d) Assessment for change. Posterior to Assessment Committee recommendations, evidence of student and instructor satisfaction with:

- i. Modes of assessment

- ii. Attention to suggestions and complaints
- iii. Assessment for change: Instigating change based on survey results.

5. Paying Heed: Listening to Complaints, Suggestions, and Troubleshooting.

A QA system for online learning also prioritizes procedures for receiving and addressing feedback involved in the e-learning experience. The nature of such feedback may be complaints, suggestions, or the reporting of incidents by all stakeholders along the way of learning. Such a flexible system incorporates the following:

- (a) A **data collection system**, through the design of an electronic mailbox for example, found on the course's website or other pertinent publications.
- (b) A system/method for examining and analyzing **suggestions, complaints, and/or incidents** that is transparent, speedy, and efficient. Such a method of response must align with the educational institution's over-all rules and regulations for addressing student complaints.
- (c) Measuring and monitoring over time in a way that tracks the number of **suggestions, complaints and incidents**.
- (d) Identification of the **monitoring unit** in charge of complaints and incidents.

APPENDIX:

SAMPLE INSTRUMENT FOR A QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM IN E-LEARNING

EXHIBIT 1: EVALUATING STUDENT SATISFACTION WITH QUALITY OF TEACHING

In order to determine the level of satisfaction with the course you are currently enrolled in, the Quality Assurance committee responsible for course evaluation is carrying out a student survey. The information you provide is strictly confidential and will remain anonymous. Results of the survey will be published for the sole purpose of quality enhancement and to better understand student attitudes toward the various features of the course.

Age: ____

Gender: M F

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is **strongly disagree** and 5 is **extremely agree**, rate the following. Choose N/A if you have no answer or the question does not apply to your training:

Professor has good knowledge of course content and subject area	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Professor uses the communication tools available on the virtual platform (forum, e-mail, chat, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Course content is clear	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Course content is organized	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Course content is coherent	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
There is a clear methodology to the delivery of the course	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Professor links the theoretical content of course with practical elements (professional exercises, aspects of everyday life, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Course practices, exercises and practical suppositions improve the quality of learning	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Professor motivates and awakens interest in the subject matter	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Professor's answers to students' questions and concerns are quick and Effective	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Evaluation is coherent with content	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Evaluation questions are clearly expressed	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Professor proposes activities to encourage the student engagement	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

SAMPLE INSTRUMENT FOR A QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM IN E-LEARNING

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In order to determine the level of satisfaction with the online course you are currently enrolled in, the Quality Assurance committee responsible for course evaluation is carrying out a student survey. The information you provide is strictly confidential and will remain anonymous. Results of the survey will be published for the sole purpose of quality enhancement and to better understand student attitudes toward the various features of the course.

Age: ____

Gender: M F

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is **extremely poor** and 5 is **extremely good**, rate the following with respect to your e-learning experience. Choose N/A if you have no answer or the question does not apply to your training:

General information, advising, welcome and guidance services facilitating the entry into your online course	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
The information provided regarding availability, accessibility and effectiveness of the course (WEB site of the training course and other media)	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
The availability of instructional and support resources including demos and web links.						
Programming and coordination of modules/units throughout the online course	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Timing of modules and units of the e-course	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Duration course in order to meet targets set	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
The variety and suitability of the training methodology	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
The availability of support learning materials and resources						
Balance between theoretical content of the course and the acquisition of practical skills.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
The variety of activities offered (individual, collective, etc.).						
The variety of communication tools used in the training course (forum, email, chat)						
The usefulness of the communication tools used in the course (forum, email, chat)						

Effectiveness of teaching/learning tools at students' disposal on the platform						
Ease of access to the University virtual platform						
Updating of content	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Usefulness of gained skills and knowledge for over-all program	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Assessment methods of course (adequacy of the criteria, tools, etc.) including delivered learning material and resources	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Overall performance of professor/teaching staff	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Performance of the monitoring tutor of online learning course other than your professor	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Efficiency of teaching staff response to questions and requests						
The classroom/laboratory/facilities equipment and infrastructures available for the training course	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Achievement of objectives and acquisition of competencies at the level of program	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Achievement of objectives and the acquisition of competencies at the course level	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Meeting the expectations of course participants	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
The system available to handle suggestions, complaints, and incidents	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Overall satisfaction with the training course	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

