

Mixed-Methods Research Study Proposal:  
Perceptions of Online Course Components  
Linked to High-Quality Online Course Design Standards  
and the Relationship to Student Learning Outcomes

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EDTC809 – Project 3  
Fall 2018

### Brief Description of the Study

As online learning is a growing aspect of higher education in the United States, it is important for institutions understand the implications of high-quality online course design standards. Understanding the perceptions of instructors and students enrolled in online courses on online course design components will provide valuable data on the importance and effectiveness of these standards. This research study will analyze online learners' and instructors' perceptions of high-quality course components including advantages, disadvantages and obstacles related to these standards.

### Participants

Participants of this research study will be comprised of online instructors and students who are enrolled in an online course, during the Fall 2019 semester, at an institution of higher education in the United States. Upon receiving approval from the IRB, the researcher will purposely and randomly select 10 online instructors from the Quality Matter's public database. Quality Matters is a nationally recognized non-profit organization which promotes collaboration, research and a community-based opportunities for online faculty, administrators, instructional designers and other online learning professionals (Quality Matters," 2018). An email be sent to each of the online instructors requesting participation in the study. The 10 online instructors who agreed to participate in the study will be interviewed by the researcher and will disseminate the electronic survey to their students in one of their online courses by way of a URL within their online course environment.

### Research Questions

Research Question:

What are the perceptions regarding high-quality online course design standards?

### Research Sub-Questions:

How do students' perceptions of high-quality online course design standards align with online instructors perceptions?

What are the obstacles of online learning and do the standards address these?

Do nationally recognized online course design standards contribute to student learning outcomes?

### Need of the Study

Although nationally recognized and research-based course design standards are available to institutions and educators of online courses and programs, empirical evidence on students' and instructors' perceptions of the standards is lacking. This research study will analyze the perceptions of online learners and instructors concerning online course design standards, the obstacles related to the standards and if the standards contribute to the effectiveness of online learning experiences.

### Methods

A mixed methods, survey and interview-based, convergent parallel research design will be utilized in this study. This design will allow the researcher to collect data from a large sample of participants. The researcher will purposely and randomly select 10 online instructors from the Quality Matter's public database. Quality Matters is a nationally recognized non-profit organization which promotes collaboration, research and a community-based opportunities for online faculty, administrators, instructional designers and other online learning professionals (Quality Matters," 2018). The 10 online instructors will disseminate the electronic survey to their students by way of a URL within their online course environment. The researcher anticipates an average online course enrollment to have 20 students. This would provide a sample size of 200.

The same 10 online instructors will be interviewed in an effort to align their perceptions of high course quality standards with online students' perceptions.

A similar and highly-cited research study utilized a sample size of 76 survey respondents and utilized a power analysis to determine this number (Bianchi-Laubsch, 2014, p. 72). A sample size of 200 for this study, will address a potential of low-response rates. Additionally, the research will provide a user-friendly electronic survey in order to increase return rates.

### Types of Questions

In an effort to produce a high response rate from participants, a 23-question Likert-scale survey will be created utilizing *Qualtrics* survey software and disseminated electronically by way of URL. The Likert-scale question will consist of 5 levels of agreement or disagreement with the proposed statements. The survey questions will address the various areas of nationally recognized online course quality standards. Quality Matters standards were referenced in order to construct the survey questions ("Quality Matters," 2018). Additionally, the participants will answer a question related to their expected final grade for their online course. The survey will include the following questions:

1) Closest Expected Course Grade: A\_ B\_ C\_ D\_ F\_

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2a) You were introduced to the purpose of the course	1	2	3	4	5
2b)The previous statement/course component had an effect on my final grade	1	2	3	4	5

3a) Instructions were provided to properly get started on your course work and to find course components	1	2	3	4	5
3b) The previous statement/course component had an effect on my final grade	1	2	3	4	5
4a) The course provided learning objectives which were clear and you knew what needed to be done to meet each objective	1	2	3	4	5
4b) The previous statement/course component had an effect on my final grade	1	2	3	4	5

The online instructors in this study have insight on how online course design standards apply to their own online course environments. In order to collect personalized responses to their own course designs, interviews will be conducted and will address their own online course design in their learning environment. The online instructor will include the following types of questions:

How do high-quality online course design standards affect the attitudes of the students enrolled in your courses?

How are student learning outcomes affected by the design standards utilized in your online course?

What obstacles have you encountered in relation to the design of your online course?

What advantages come out of delivering an online course based on high-quality online course design standards?

What disadvantages would exist if your online course was delivered without high-quality online course design standards?

## References

- Bianchi-Laubsch, D. (2014). *An examination of the relationship between online learning course delivery method, sense of community, and learner retention* (Order No. 3618648). Available from ProQuest Central; ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1530298357). Retrieved from <https://draweb.njcu.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1530298357?accountid=12793>
- Quality Matters (2018). Retrieved from: <https://www.qualitymatters.org/sites/default/files/PDFs/StandardsfromtheQMHigherEducationRubric.pdf>