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A Guide to Ensure Quality Distance Learning

Academic Technology Center at UWF



11000 University Parkway
Pensacola, FL 32514
<http://uwf.edu/atc>
<http://onlinecampus.uwf.edu>

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Introduction

The Academic Technology Center (ATC) at the University of West Florida (UWF) is committed to offering courses, programs, and certificates using a variety of distance learning strategies to meet the diverse needs of students that we serve. This document is designed to facilitate the design, development, implementation, and ongoing management of quality distance learning at UWF. The document is framed around the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Policy on Distance and Correspondence Education (<http://uwf.edu/sacscoc/>), Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education, the Southern Regional Electronic Board (SREB), the Sloan-C Pillars of Effective Practice for Distance Learning, the Department of Defense Principles of Good Practice, and the MarylandOnline Quality Matters™ process. Each of these documents has a common goal of framing quality systemically and has similar areas of alignment. The concept of continuous quality improvement is also evident in each of the documents, with Sloan-C representing a solid framework of metrics and progress indices. What is evident by viewing distance learning quality as a set of interconnected parts all working together to achieve a common goal is the ability to look not only at the discrete parts but also the interconnectedness of the components. UWF is a member of Sloan-C as well as being a Quality Matters™ institution. Both allow us to utilize the many resources and training opportunities available through membership.

Definitions of Distance Learning Processes at UWF

Distance Learning: “Distance education is a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction (interaction between students and instructors and among students) in a course occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. A distance education course may use the internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing; or video cassettes, DVD’s, and CD-ROMs if used as part of the distance learning course or program”. (SACSCOC 2014)

eLearning: At UWF, eLearning is the term used to describe our Desire2Learn Learning Management System (LMS) that hosts instructional content for fully online and hybrid/blended courses, as well as traditional courses with supplemental information made available online.

eLearning/Online Campus Course: Any eLearning course designated as “Online Campus” is one that is fully online and completely delivered over the web with no in-class requirements. In this model, there is no physical classroom assigned although an instructor may opt for students to meet for a proctored examination or course orientation, taking into account that some students are remote and unable to come to the UWF campus. Accommodations should be made for such students.

Hybrid/Blended Courses: A hybrid/blended course is one in which a combination of strategies is used in a distance environment. A classroom will be assigned for hybrid students, but there will be reduced time spent in the classroom. Components of the course may include asynchronous online delivery, video or web conferencing or some other technological media for out of class time. Students will not only need to be able to get to class for in-class meetings, but also are required to have

access to the Internet for web-based class meetings. This model works especially well if trying to utilize classroom space to the fullest. This is a very convenient approach for storing class materials, emailing students throughout the week between class meetings, storing URLs and other references, and for assigning interactive homework assignments such as participating in an online chat or threaded discussion.

Supplemental Courses: A supplemental course is one that meets face-to-face and uses eLearning to provide class syllabi, course materials, additional out-of-class activities and homework. In this model, there is no impact on time spent in the classroom but the web is used to store substantial course materials. This is a very convenient approach for storing class materials, emailing students throughout the week between class meetings, storing URLs and other references, and for assigning interactive homework assignments such as participating in groups, in an online chat or threaded discussions.

Video/Web conferencing Courses: A videoconferencing course provides delivery through the Videoconferencing classrooms located on the main campus or other UWF instructional sites, and linking through video or web conferencing platforms out to the virtual video classroom for students who access via their computer.

Proctored Exam: A proctored exam is one that is overseen by an individual authorized by an instructor (called a proctor) who monitors or supervises a student while he or she is taking an exam. The proctor ensures the security and integrity of the exam process. A proctored exam may take place in either a face-to-face or virtual online environment.

Faculty: For purposes of training and support of faculty, ATC defines faculty as all personnel who have been assigned to teach an online course and are “instructor of record” of at least one online or

hybrid/blended course. This includes faculty of all rank and status including full-time tenure earning or visiting, part-time or full-time non-tenure earning, and adjuncts.

The Quality Framework

The UWF Quality Framework is designed to assist institutions in planning distance education activities and serves as a self-assessment framework for those already involved. Based on the UWF Quality

Framework, policies are framed in each of the following five areas:

1. Institutional Alignment
2. Quality Curriculum
3. Faculty Support
4. Student Support
5. Continuous Improvement



Institutional Alignment: Institutional Commitment

UWF employs procedures to ensure that

1. The student who registers in a distance education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the distance education course or program. Procedures include a secure login and passcode; proctored exams; new or other technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student identification.
2. Protect the privacy of students enrolled in distance and correspondence education courses or programs.
3. Notifies students of any projected additional student charges associated with verification of student identity.
4. UWF Instructional personnel teaching distance education courses must comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), Florida Statute 1006.52, and University Regulation

3.017, as related to the release of student educational records to ensure the privacy of students enrolled in distance education courses. Specific guidance for purposes of compliance can be found in Distance Learning Procedures.

5. The UWF course registration system must advise a student at the time of registration that there may be additional costs associated with distance education courses.

Procedures

The following procedures are in place to support institutional alignment and effectiveness:

1. A new distance learning (DL) student is to be directed to <http://elearninghelp.uwf.edu/> for information regarding UWF online policies and procedures.
2. Access to course materials and live or recorded webcasts is to only be granted to a properly enrolled DL student via a secure password.
3. Registration in a distance learning course shall be made with a UWF ID number and not with a Social Security Number.
4. A DL student who is required to take proctored exams as part of course requirements is to be directed to UWF proctoring procedures for examinations: http://onlinecampus.uwf.edu/class/proc_exams.cfm
5. A DL student shall be directed to UWF's "Computing Resources Usage Agreement" <https://nautical.uwf.edu/people/UsageAgreement.htm> to acknowledge the following:
 - a. Computing users shall take responsibility for all computing resources assigned to them and shall not share access to these resources (such as passwords, Nautilus cards, or printing privileges).
 - b. Computing users shall adhere to established security procedures and shall not access resources to which they are not entitled, including but not limited to, representing themselves as someone else and altering or fabricating of records.
6. Educational records of a DL student shall only be released in accordance with UWF *Regulation 3.017 "Student Educational Records"*.
7. Any request by an outsider for disclosure or verification of the password for a student eLearning account or other account must be reported to UWF's Office of Information Technology (ITS) at (850) 474-2075 or helpdesk@uwf.edu.

8. The UWF Academic Technology Center (ATC) will publish and revise as necessary "A Guide to Ensure Quality Distance Learning"

9. To ensure quality in distance education, The UWF Academic Technology Center (ATC) will conduct for instructional personnel distance education training courses to ensure quality in distance education, which include but are not limited to the following:
 - a. The ATC Quality Course Program
 - b. The ATC Fast-track to a QM Internal Course Review
 - c. The ATC Certified Online Instructor Certificate

10. The Office of the Registrar must ensure that the UWF course registration system includes the following statement:

"Students registering for online or other distance-education formatted sections, courses, or programs may be subject to additional fees associated with confirming student identity. Additionally, online or other distance-education formatted courses may require proctored exams. For details, please check the course syllabus or with the department offering the course."

11. To comply with federal regulations, a representative from the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC) must be added to online courses in the guest instructor role for the sole purpose of assessing the course for accessibility and accommodation of the instructional materials for registered students with special needs. SDRC will promptly notify faculty when a special needs student has registered for their online, blended, or supplemental course using eLearning by email requesting access to the course. If there is no response from the instructor within five (5) days, SDRC will be given guest instructor access to the course by ATC and a notification will be sent to the instructor and the chair of the department. Representatives of SDRC and ATC will then work with the instructor to ensure that the instructional materials are accessible and arrange reasonable accommodation for any instructional materials deemed inaccessible. Students seeking accommodation must register with the SDRC to be eligible. The following statement should be on all syllabi.

"The University of West Florida supports an inclusive learning environment for all students. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that hinder your full participation, such as time-limited exams, inaccessible web content, or the use of non-captioned videos and podcasts, reasonable accommodations can be arranged. Prior to receiving accommodations, you must register with the SDRC by filling out an [Enrollment Application](#). Appropriate academic accommodations will be determined based on the documented needs of the individual. For information regarding the registration process, e-mail sdrc@uwf.edu or call (850) 474-2387."

Commitment to Distance Learning:

Distance learning programs should both support and extend existing roles of educational institutions.

The statements listed below reflect the Academic Technology Center's commitment to distance

learning:

1. The program, course, or certificate being offered is consistent with the institution and college's role and mission.
2. All accreditation requirements for programs that evolve over time from face-to-face to completely distance-delivered will align with appropriate accreditation agencies.
3. Programs will be sustained long enough to meet obligations to students.
4. Technical and physical facilities to support distance programs are provided through UWF's campus infrastructure.
5. ATC is responsible for oversight of the design, development and delivery of targeted online programs.
6. Distance learning courses and programs should have a consistent and coherent technical framework for students and faculty.
7. All UWF distance learning programs will seek to adhere to the legal and regulatory requirements including services for those with disabilities and copyright law.

Measurable and Sustainable Quality Indicators

Goal	Process/Practice	Metric	Process Indices
Investment: Cost effectiveness and institutional commitment	Costs are monitored for DL fees and associated usage in each of the major areas using the fee for enhancing services to students	Annual monitoring of DL fee usage	Monitor annually to ensure that fees are conducive to other institutions in state. Monitor expenditures.
Growth	Monitor growth each semester to better understand our population of learners	Enrollments Gender/Age/Location of students Benchmark against national growth in online learning	Ongoing data collection and analysis, share with deans, chairs and others making decisions about online students.
Partnerships	Continue to seek partnerships that enhance access to education for our students. This practice will also include seeking military student partnerships	Monitor partnerships with institutions, military, industry and others.	Continue to assess partnerships, work with president and others to continue to engage.

Quality Curriculum: Learning Effectiveness

Much of the curriculum and instruction polices would be considered well established essentials of institutional quality found in accrediting body standards. The important issues are curriculum-driven and pedagogical and should be made by qualified professionals that focus on learning outcomes for a diverse population of learners. The statements listed reflect the ATC's commitment to high quality Curriculum and Instruction.

1. Each program or course of study results in learning appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the degree, course, or certificate awarded.
2. Academically qualified persons provide appropriate supervision of the program or course that is offered at a distance including specifically the course presentation, management and assessment.
3. Programs, courses, and certificates offered at a distance provide a coherent degree plan or program of study for students to access all courses necessary to complete a program in a reasonable period of time.
4. Programs, courses, and certificates offered at a distance will have appropriate interaction between instructor and student; student and student; and student and instructional materials.
5. Programs, courses and certificates offered at a distance will ensure comparable student learning outcomes to those offered on campus.
6. The integrity of student work and the credibility of degrees and credits are ensured.

Measurable and Sustainable Quality Indicators

Goal	Process/Practice	Metric	Process Indices
Students receive comparable educational experiences at institutional norm	<p>Learning outcomes are consistent with institutional norm</p> <p>Instructors are trained to design and deliver high quality online courses</p>	<p>Course Analysis of learning outcomes.</p> <p>Faculty training required for both design and implementation of online courses</p> <p>Faculty participate in QM for internal peer reviews</p>	<p>Student learning is comparable in face-to-face and online courses through comparable educational experiences.</p> <p>Course quality is high based upon internal and external peer reviews aligned to QM</p>
Academic integrity is maintained at institutional norm	Academic integrity and control of educational outcomes remains the role of the instructor and offering department	<p>Academic integrity policies are maintained</p> <p>A range of solutions exist for faculty and departmental choice</p>	Reduced incidence of cheating in online courses
Course completion rates are maintained at institutional norm	Data are collected in the same manner as institutional norm for fully online students	Course completion data gathered through institutional research	Program retention rates will continue to improve over time

Faculty Support

Faculty teaching courses at a distance have somewhat different roles than those teaching face-to-face and their instructional responsibilities will broaden to include facilitating online courses and utilizing new technologies. To ensure faculty are given the support and guidance needed for the implementation of high-quality programs, the following policies are in place at ATC:

1. Workload for the design/development of distance courses will be the decision of the College Dean based on the priority need of courses/programs to be delivered at a distance.
2. Compensation for design and development of distance courses will be based on those courses that are part of a degree program or certificate and are a “University Priority”. Programs that fall into “University Priority” status will be determined by the Deans in collaboration with the Associate Provost through the annual strategic planning process. Recommendations are reported to the Provost for implementation of course development.
3. ATC adheres to the Intellectual Property agreements set forth by the UWF for the ownership of course materials. [<http://www.research.uwf.edu/techdev/intellectual-property/default.htm>]
4. The ATC provides extensive faculty development and mentoring for the design, development and implementation of distance programs.
5. The ATC provides ongoing support, mentoring, and consultation with a team of instructional designers who offer one-on-one training, department training and support, workshops, training courses, regular 1-hour “Collaborate at Lunch” series and “Don’t Panic Fridays” walk-in support sessions.

Measurable and Sustainable Quality Indicators

Goal	Process/Practice	Metric	Process Indices
Faculty have a high quality, consistent methodology for training on the design and development of online courses	<p>Faculty participate in the Quality Online Course Program prior to teaching online.</p> <p>Faculty participate in ongoing professional development new versions of software, LMS tools, strategies, etc.</p>	<p>Design to standard, reviewed and approved by ATC for faculty extra state compensation.</p> <p>Number and percentage of faculty trained on process</p> <p>Number of online courses developed</p>	Track progress during implementation to make mid-course corrections.
Faculty have a high quality, consistent methodology for faculty support during the implementation of online courses.	Faculty participate in Quality Online Course Program	<p>Mid-course evaluation instrument</p> <p>End of each course evaluation instrument</p>	Conduct formative evaluation throughout the first implementation of the courses, make corrections as needed.
For course maintenance, faculty participate in ongoing training (Collaborate at Lunch and workshops as well as one-on-one sessions with an instructional designer) to make course	<p>UWF participates in QM, which is used as the benchmark of course quality, using the peer review process.</p> <p>ATC provides training by standard to promote new ideas</p>	Peer review documentation	Continued emphasis on the instrument and continuous improvement of courses.

Faculty are provided with opportunities to get course development, revision and implementation assistance on a routine basis.	ATC provides email, phone, videoconference and walk-in service for faculty. ATC provides "Ask ATC" an online CRM-based knowledge base.	Services are used by faculty	Ongoing analysis of services offered for continuous improvement
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Student Support

Supporting students is a hallmark of UWF. Distance learning programs, courses, and certificates should reflect this same vision of individual student attention and guidance based on the needs of the student. To offer student support services for distance programs, courses and certificates require a process to market to new audiences, register students for courses, support library services, bookstore services, financial aid and more. The policies listed below reflect the ATC and UWF's Online Campus commitment to student support services:

1. A commitment to continuation of a program or certificate for its publicized timeframe to enable all admitted students to complete.
2. UWF's Online Campus informs prospective students on issues of admissions, technical requirements, instructional requirements and expectations, library resources, other student support services, program costs, expectations of learning online, and overall time for completion.
3. The UWF Online Campus provides students with adequate access to the array of student support services available as a distance student that may never visit the UWF campus.
4. Through the UWF Online Campus and MyUWF Portal, distance students will be involved as part of the academic community.
5. In addition to the course instructor, the UWF help desk, eLearning Help, and resources on UWF's Online Campus, advisors will be available to support the online learning community.

6. Web-based resources will be in place to provide tutorial guidance to distance students to the technical and time-management skills required to be online learners.

Measurable and Sustainable Quality Indicators

Goal	Process/Practice	Metric	Process Indices
Students express satisfaction with their experience in online courses in terms of student engagement and interaction.	Faculty/student interaction; student/student interaction and student/content interaction are evident	Mid-course and end-of-course formative evaluations SAI evaluations Annual survey	Student satisfaction with levels of engagement and interaction are sufficient
Students express satisfaction with student support services received as online students	Remote students are able to receive the same level of student services as face to face students	Online Learning Student Support Services Survey	Students are able to <u>access</u> services in a timely manner to be able to continue their education
Students express satisfaction with tutorials and guidance provided for new online learners	Guidance includes: time management strategies, testing, how to use LMS tools, how to interact with the instructor and with other students, and how to be a self-directed learner		Students are achieving success in online courses

Continuous Improvement

Assessing student achievement along with evaluating the quality of courses and programs is critical in determining if distance learning programs are meeting the target learning outcomes. Also important is overall student satisfaction with courses and continuing motivation to take additional courses at a distance. The results of these findings can shape the design of new distance programs and can facilitate a better understanding of the online educational process. The following policies outline the commitment of the UWF with regard to evaluation and assessment of online learning:

1. ATC works with faculty to evaluate program and course effectiveness, including student learning outcomes compared to student achievement, and student and faculty satisfaction during the semester of formative evaluation (first implementation of a fully online course developed in collaboration with ATC).
2. ATC works with colleges and departments to evaluate student retention and documentation of students not previously served.
3. ATC works with colleges and departments to conduct ongoing self-evaluation of programs and certificates for program improvement.

Measurable and Sustainable Quality Indicators

Goal	Process/Practice	Metric	Process Indices
Online learning will provide needed access to education for students.	Monitor strategies for student access to education including military students, non-traditional students and traditional students,	Metrics on: -gender/age -location from campus -reason for taking online courses -number of students that are truly online-only students,	Access to education will be provided with a clear understanding of who our students are.
Online learning will grow at a rate similar to the national average.	Monitor national data such as the Sloan reports on DL growth	Trend analysis of student enrollments. Trend analysis of out-of-state students and fee waivers received.	Continue monitoring where students are coming from and how UWF's enrollments compare nationally.

Procedures for Distance Delivery Technologies

Faculty engaged in the development and delivery of fully online and blended courses are encouraged to enroll in the ATC Quality Course Program and follow the processes established to ensure quality online learning. Further, faculty engaged in the development and delivery of fully online and blended courses are encouraged to submit their courses for Quality Matters™ internal and external reviews. This recommended protocol for faculty development and delivery exists for faculty assigned to teach a fully online or blended course (defined as all faculty, which includes full-time tenure earning or visiting, part-time or full-time non-tenure earning, and adjuncts).

Academic Departments

Establish a quality implementation planning process for online learning

- Needs assessment of faculty within academic department on their levels of technological competence, their depth of understanding of pedagogical foundations of distance learning, the ability to create and sustain engaging courses, and the ability to create and sustain high quality assessments.
- Plan for needs of academic department each year in the Annual Report and Strategic Plan in terms of faculty professional development and support needs as well as alignment of programs and courses to departmental, college, and university priorities.
- Track annually a series of variables including course enrollments, completions, faculty development completions, and others deemed necessary.

Faculty Development Process

The Quality Online Instructor Certificate Program at ATC is a faculty Development process that prepares faculty to effectively design and teach online courses. Online faculty are encouraged by their deans, department chairs, and the Academic Technology Center to enroll in these training courses. The following are recommendations for online faculty.

- Recommend that all faculty assigned to teach online courses participate in *The ATC Quality Online Instructor Certificate* program prior to teaching their first online course. *The ATC Quality Online Instructor Certificate* is awarded at the successful completion of (1) *Designing a Quality Online/Blended Course* (6-week fully online course and (2) *Teaching a Quality Online/Blended Course* (6-week fully online course).
- Encourage all online faculty to participate in The Quality Matters™ Course Review Process. Courses are submitted for internal review, and then the course may be submitted for external review.
- Recommend that faculty develop their course to at least the minimum guidelines developed by ATC.
- Require that all faculty develop their course(s) to at least the minimum guidelines set forth by the Student Disability Resource Center.
- Recommend that chairs and deans actively participate in online learning programs and courses as well as engage in ongoing collaboration with other chairs and ATC for problem solving, support, and for implementation of their plans.

Training	Faculty Developers	Faculty Delivering Online Courses	Chairs, Assessment Liaisons
Quality Online Instructor Certificate	X	X	X
ATC Quality Course Program	X	X	
Applying the QM Rubric/Peer Review Course	X	X	X
QM Review Process	X	X	
Evaluation of Online Learning	X	X	X

ATC Quality Course Program

ATC recognizes the time and effort faculty must commit to designing and teaching quality online/blended courses. This development effort is further increased if the course is expected to meet expectations for a Quality Matters (QM) internal or external review. To compensate faculty for their time and effort, faculty (full-time faculty and adjuncts) will receive \$2000 for the successful completion of all of the following in order:

1. Designing a Quality Online/Blended Course (6-week fully online course)*
2. Teaching a Quality Online/Blended Course (6-week fully online course)*
3. Academic department chair approval of course instructor selected for QM review
4. New or revised online or blended course that successfully meets expectations of a QM internal review.

Description of Training Courses

Designing a Quality Online/Blended Course (also known as “The Designing Course”)

Teaching a Quality Online/Blended Course (also known as “The Teaching Course”)

Applying the QM Rubric

Peer Reviewer Course

Designing a Quality Online/Blended Course: This course requires roughly 2-3 hours per week to complete. Designing a Quality Online/Blended Course is for all faculty or instructors who plan to develop an online or blended course. Faculty members who complete this course are able to demonstrate the principles of quality design and development. The ATC course facilitator(s) work collaboratively with faculty to help translate what normally occurs in a traditional face-to-face classroom to an appropriate online/blended mode or perhaps a new approach to accomplish the same instructional goals and objectives. This course is offered free of charge to any UWF faculty member.

This course focuses on:

- Understanding the QM rubric
- Understanding Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
- Planning your online/blended course
- Designing your course in eLearning
- Online assessments
- Student engagement strategies

Prerequisite: None

Teaching a Quality Online/Blended Course (6-week, fully online course): This course requires about 3-5 hours per week to complete. The purpose of this six-week online course is to facilitate the implementation of instructional strategies that have been proven through the research to be essential to successful online/blended teaching and is facilitated by a QM Faculty Scholar. This course is offered free of charge to any UWF faculty member.

This course focuses on:

- Facts and fallacies of online/blended education
- Instructor roles and responsibilities in the online/blended classroom
- Instructor communication/feedback
- Facilitating interaction/instructor presence
- Online learning communities
- Effective time management
- Bells and whistles/course technology

Prerequisite: Designing a Quality Online/Blended Course

Applying the QM Rubric: The Applying the QM Rubric (APPQMR) workshop is QM's flagship workshop on the QM Rubric and the process of using the QM Rubric to review online courses. It is intended for a broad audience, including but not limited to faculty, instructional designers, administrators, and adjunct instructors who wish to understand more about the QM Rubric and process of course review.

The APPQMR is the prerequisite for the Peer Reviewer Course, which is the required course to become a QM Peer Reviewer.

Specific Workshop Information:

Option A: Face-to-face, 6 hours, up to 25 participants, facilitated by a QM-trained instructor, no prerequisite requirements.

Option B: Online, two weeks, facilitated, no prerequisite requirements. Participants can expect to spend about 8 -10 hours per week in this workshop to successfully complete it.

With both of these options, ATC will pay the registration fee for any UWF faculty member for the first attempt. If for any reason the registered faculty person cannot complete the workshop, any additional attempts would be at the faculty member's expense.

Peer Reviewer Course: The Peer Reviewer Course is designed to prepare experienced online faculty to become Quality Matters Certified Peer Reviewers. The Peer Reviewer Course includes a review of Quality Matters, practice critiquing and writing helpful recommendations, and a Practice Review in which the participants are asked to review specific standards in an online course using a simulated online rubric tool.

QM expects all Peer Reviewers to give significant attention to their reviews, so the Peer Reviewer Course (PRC) is modeled after those expectations. Since the PRC leads to certification as a peer reviewer, it is a rigorous course and demands significant time and attention. Participants can expect to spend 8-10 hours per week to complete this course.

Upon successful completion of this course, eligible participants must complete and submit an Application as well as a Memo of Understanding in order to become a QM Certified Peer Reviewer. QM Certified Peer Reviewers are eligible to serve on both QM-managed and Subscriber-managed course reviews.

Eligibility requirements to become a QM Certified Peer Reviewer:

1. Successful completion of the Applying the QM Rubric Workshop and the Peer Reviewer Course.
2. Current for-credit online teaching experience (within the last 18 months).
3. Complete an Application and a Memo of Understanding. Submit to QM.

Specific Course Information

The PRC is only available online. It is a two week course and is facilitated. \$200 per person for subscribers. ATC will pay the registration fee for any UWF faculty member for the first attempt. If for any reason the registered faculty person cannot complete the workshop, any additional attempts would be at the faculty member's expense.

Prerequisite: Successful completion of the Applying the QM Rubric (APPQMR) workshop (either online or face to face)