

Exploring an Evaluation Mechanism for Online Teaching: An Experience from Nursing Program at Al Maarefa University, Review Article

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Abstract: As a result of the mandatory to follow the regulations of the Ministry of Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia regarding online teaching responding to Pandemic situation, and to maintain the quality of the teaching process, it was necessary to develop clear, direct, and relevant guidelines for evaluating online teaching to keep teaching at a level in which it promotes the best practices and maintains educational quality. **Objectives:** Developing an evaluation system for online education and increasing the orientation of the faculty members regarding the global standards in online education, and aligning them with the key performance indicators of the Ministry of Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the purpose of monitoring and improving the teaching skills on the Internet for each faculty member to further improve the educational process. **Methods:** The search strategy began with electronic databases (such as CINAHL and Medline). These searches provided us evaluation tools for review and analysis as blackboard's exemplary course program rubric (2020), California Community Colleges' Online Education Initiative (OEI) Course Design Rubric (2018), The Open SUNY Course Quality Review Rubric (OSCQR) (2016), Quality Matters (QM) Higher Education Rubric (2018), California State University Quality Online Learning and Teaching (QOLT) (2015b), Park University Online Instructor Evaluation System (OIES) (2005), and A Peer Review Guide for Online Courses at Penn State (2017). **Results and conclusion:** As there is no generic model that may match each institution's online course assessment and evaluation needs, the nursing program specifically tailored the Park University Online Instructor Evaluation System to our online courses, faculty, students, culture, and resources at our institution. Further modification was carried to the tool to be completely compatible with the university's education and learning policies, taking the key performance indicators of our University Learning Management System (LMS) into consideration.

Keywords: Quality assurance of online teaching, Online courses evaluation rubric, Online teaching evaluation checklist, Distant learning rubric, and Higher education quality management system.

1. Introduction

As stated by Kumar and Jain (2018), any educational institute, whether it is a school or a college, values the importance of receiving feedback of teachers from students. [1] Traditionally, students can give their opinion based on a list of given criteria predetermined by the teaching institute, and in turn, this evaluation is frequently used to determine faculty teaching effectiveness [2]. This feature of learner-centered education allows students to make decisions about their own learning [3] This kind of feedback will help in making changes to the existing teaching approach, benefitting both college students and their faculties by further improving the teaching process. [2]

This is in line with Saudi Arabia's national transformation program, Vision 2030. The goal of the program is to encourage the private sector's participation in the investment in education, which includes the development of the electronic system supporting education. With the ongoing global Corona Virus pandemic, the popularity of online teaching has seen an unprecedented growth, and due to the

mandatory regulations set by the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia regarding teaching during these difficult times, and in order to maintain the quality of education, it was essential to establish clear, direct, and relevant guidelines for the evaluation of online teaching. The purpose for this is to keep online teaching at a level where it promotes the best practices and maintains instructional quality. Adding to that, online educators must understand the needs and the implications of integrating technology in education. While providing advanced and refined learning materials to e-learners is necessary, educators must develop new technological skills for course design, delivery, and evaluation in online environments [3]. This suggests that online teachers believe in a wide range of contributions to any course's evaluation and that it will help reach and frame a high quality of online teaching [3]

According to a study that was conducted by Harrington and Reasons in 2005 in the University of Southern Indiana, it concluded that the traditional evaluation systems were inadequate for evaluating the unique prospects and needs faced by online teaching within the institution [4]. Before the occurrence of the ongoing pandemic, and therefore

preceding the necessity of online teaching and its evolution, Al-Maarefa University followed the National Center for Academic Accreditation and Evaluation's regulations on the system of the design of face-to-face or on-campus teaching evaluation. This system was used for the evaluation of the existing online teaching process prior to the need for a new system. This system, based on traditional classroom concerns, did not accurately evaluate the key competencies of online teaching that introduced new aspects to the teaching process. It was found that educators must master new sets of skills and knowledge when teaching online, in addition to their face-to-face teaching skills. Educators must also understand the nature of online education, the characteristics of online learners, the online course design, and the diverse online teaching strategies [3]. A study carried out at Pennsylvania State University identified these key competencies, which are: active learning, facilitation of discussion, administration/leadership, grading visible for student tracking purposes, active teaching/responsiveness and helpful feedback on assignments and exams, multimedia technology and appropriateness for learning activities, classroom decorum and effective management of the course's communication, technological competence, and finally the competency of policy enforcement [5].

In the book *Evaluating Online Teaching, Implementing Best Practices*, it is stated that in the traditional face-to-face evaluation system, the evaluator completes their evaluation once per term, more precisely at the end of it, with it being their only contact with the faculty in the term regarding this matter. This type of solitary, formal interaction may be effective in an on-campus learning program, where evaluators and faculty members have some kind of informal interactions due to their physical and geographical proximity, which is usually not found in online classrooms. [6]

Based on a thorough review of the benchmark and best practices of online teaching, the Nursing Program at Al Maarefa University developed their evaluation system, aiming to achieve their goal of further educating faculty members regarding universal standards in online education, and parallelizing it with the key performance indicators of Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Education, and attributing this responsibility of best practices to the faculty members through evaluation of professional development.

2. Methods and Materials

The search strategy includes these electronic databases: CINAHL, and Medline, to find studies published between 2005 and 2020 that provide an evaluation system for online teaching. We carried out online research for a higher online education evaluation system. Searches included the following keywords "quality assurance of online teaching", "online courses evaluation rubric", "online teaching evaluation checklist", "distant learning rubric", and "higher education quality management system" on the search engine Google to find the most sought-after instruments.

3. Results and Discussion

These searches provided us with a total of seven evaluation tools for review and analysis: Blackboard's Exemplary Course Program Rubric (2020), California Community Colleges' Online Education Initiative (OEI) Course Design Rubric (2018), The Open SUNY Course Quality Review Rubric (OSCQR) (2016), Quality Matters (QM) California State University Quality Online Learning and Teaching (QOLT) (2015b), Park University Online Instructor Evaluation System (OIES) (2005), and A Peer Review Guide for Online Courses at Penn State (2017)

Blackboard's Exemplary Course Program Rubric (2020)

This rubric values course style, interaction and collaboration, assessment, and learner support. The Blackboard Exemplary Course Program Rubric typically evaluates existing courses and demonstrates superior action in online course style. A platform known as Community is an online space provided by Blackboard, allowing educators, developers, and educational innovators to discuss and debate standard, conventional course design. The purpose of discussing the Community here is to bring about the notion of being a part of a group, rather than the student viewing themselves as a separate entity in their learning process. In addition, Blackboard measures the progress of students until the learning outcomes have been met, gives feedback to either side of the learning interaction, and provides analysis for either side. The Blackboard assessment feature describes and makes clear the quality of student assessments within the course as well as the type and standard of the assessments [7]

The California Community Colleges Course Design Rubric for the Online Education Initiative (OEI) (2018)

This rubric aims to determine course style standards, as well as the quality of interaction and collaboration, assessment, learner support, and how accessible high-quality learning surroundings are in order to help students progress and succeed while remaining faithful to existing rules. [8]. It was brought about by the joint efforts of the Foothill-De Anza Community College District and the Butte-Glenn Community College District (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2016). Since then, the rubric has been subject to several revisions and updates due to the revamping of academic technology and the evolution of feedback exchange between instructors and reviewers [9]. California Community College instructors can participate in workshops for additional understanding of every section of the rubric and how they can apply the relevant features to their online courses. It is mandatory for instructors who would like to become peer reviewers to complete online course review training. The rubric created by OEI is then used by trained peer reviewers to determine if courses can be deployed in the online course exchange structure [9]. The rubric is divided into four sections: Content Presentation, Interaction, Assessment, and Accessibility. An additional feature will be implemented to the rubric, which consists of three choices. These choices allow peer reviewers to accurately assess each part and its subcategories. Reviewing course accessibility is continuous search to make sure that there is fair access to the learning content and that this is preserved throughout the merely a moment that can pass in

the blink of an eye, therefore, instructors and administrators should take part in a course and all aspects of availability are provided [9].

The Open SUNY Course Quality Review Rubric (OSCQR) (2016)

The goal of the Open SUNY Course Quality Review (OSCQR) Rubric and Process is to provide online faculty with the assistance to increase the quality and accessibility of their online material [10], developed by the Open SUNY Center for Online Teaching Excellence (COTE). The non-evaluative rubric can be used as a developmental guide for new faculty members using the online learning system to help guide, inform, and direct the planning of their newly created online courses [11], The purpose of this rubric is to assist online faculty members when using research-based successful practices with high quality to enhance the standards, success, and potential of their online course style. The aim is not to evaluate online courses or provide quality assurance [11], The main aim is to set the faculty member on the path that allows them to construct effective and quality online courses. [12].

Quality Matters (QM) Higher Education Rubric (2018)

According to the Center for Teaching and Learning (2020), the sixth edition of the Quality Matters Higher Education Rubric, 2018, is a research-based and tested rubric. Its 8 General Standards and 42 Specific Review Standards are essential to determining the structure of online and blended courses. [13] Quality Matters Rubric is intended to assess the quality and assist in the course design of online and blended courses for higher education. Qualified and trained course evaluators use this rubric to decide how accurately an online course satisfies the standards of quality set by the QM. To meet the standards of QM and qualify analysis expectations, at least 23 essential standards need to be reached by the course and score a total score of no less than 85 out of 100 [13] On a regular basis, the rubric is constantly updated and revised to make sure that courses remain of high quality and meet the thorough standards set by the QM. Reviewing also helps the rubric stay up-to-date and keeping up with current news, standards, and quality, in a cycle that is reviewed every three years, the rubric can be downloaded on the internet but needs permission to be used. QM rubric is available on the internet for download but cannot be used without permission. [14]

California State University Quality Online Learning and Teaching (QLT)

As a result of thorough and in-depth research, with special consideration given to existing rubrics for the assessment of a positive and successful learning process, the QLT evaluation system was created by the CSU. It can be accessed online whether to be viewed or printed as a Word document to allow for individual and peer-evaluation. [15] This rubric promotes simplicity in design, urging designers to lower the number of stages needed to reach the main content. In this way, any excessive content is limited and does not interfere with the student's learning goals.

Park University Online Instructor Evaluation System (OIES) (2005)

This rubric consists of two stages of interactions: evaluations that are formative and summative. Formative assessments provide feedback regarding individual instructor's online courses, and recommendations for continuous development, as is used in Park University.

These formative evaluations are not meant to be sent to the faculty department that the instructor belongs to, but rather used as a guide. Every instructor is formatively evaluated 5 times throughout the term, where each evaluation specifies a particular aspect of the online learning process. The summative evaluation, however, is carried out at the end of the term as a summarizing assessment of the entire course, and the instructor's faculty of integrating changes can also be implemented to past formative reviews. [16]

A Peer Review Guide for Online Courses at Penn State (2017)

Seven principles are implemented to online courses by the Pennsylvania State University, on both undergraduates and postgraduate students, allowing for effective peer review of these online courses. These seven principles are: encouraging interaction between students and instructors; enhancing reciprocal attitudes and cooperation among learners; encouraging students to become active learners in their academic careers; giving prompt review and feedback; encouraging the positive relationship between time and tasks; discussing high expectations; and appreciating various talents and styles of learning. [17]

Ten common criteria were discovered at the end of our search. They include: objectives become clear when they are in line with assessment; incorporating technology process becomes engaging in the teaching and learning process by allowing active learning to emerge and strengthening peer interaction; the purpose of communication and exercises is to encourage discussions among communities; faculty members' contact information has now become available to students; guidelines have now been set in terms of the quality of debates and participation; grading for assignments and assessments are now more readily accessible; learning portals and other institutional links are available; the courses accommodate those with disabilities and diverse backgrounds; and behavior expectations are set by the course. Table number 1 illustrates the characteristics of included studies.

4. Conclusion

The sudden and unexpected transition to online teaching due to the current global circumstances made us become aware of the need of a system with a top-quality level of evaluation of all members of the learning and teaching process. The goal was not only to evaluate the faculty members in their assigned online courses, but it was also to observe and further improve the online teaching skills of each faculty member. From the above comprehensive review of the aforementioned evaluation tools, the nursing program at Al Maarefa University decided to adopt the Park University Online Instructor Evaluation System OIES, which depends on digitizing the evaluation in order to achieve the

maximum benefits, minimize time and cost, and establish accuracy and security [18]. Since there is no straightforward answer or generic model that may match each institution's online course assessment and evaluation needs as Berk (2013) states, applicable rating scales and alternative measures of teaching effectiveness must be specifically tailored to our online courses, faculty, students, culture, and resources at each institution [19]. We further modified the OIES to be completely compatible with the university's education and learning policies, taking the key performance indicators of the University's Learning Management System (LMS) into consideration.

Five formative reviews are carried out to evaluate each faculty member during the fifteen-week course term, where each of these evaluations focuses on a particular aspect of online teaching. One final summative evaluation is carried out at the end of the semester by the head of the department, the students, and self-evaluation. This evaluation system does not only provide high tier evaluation criteria but also serves the purpose of continuous quality improvement of the educational process.

The time frame of the evaluation process for the implementation of online teaching at the nursing program at Al Maarefa University is illustrated in the Figure number 1

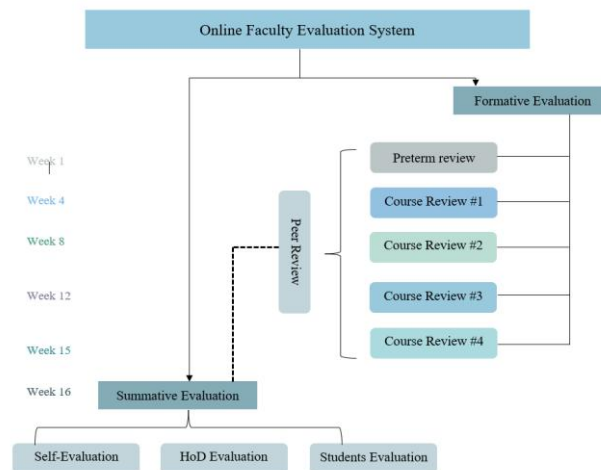


Figure 1: Online Faculty Evaluation System Implementation Framework

To implement this framework, the nursing program created six surveys that evaluated the following criteria shown in table 2 below.

Table 1: Characteristics of included studies

	1. Blackboard	2. OEI	3. OSCQR	4. QM	5. QLT	6. OIES	7. Peer Review of Online Teaching
Developer	learning management system company Blackboard	California Community Colleges'	Open SUNY Center for Online Teaching Excellence	Department of Education Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE)	California State University,	Park University	Penn State University
Current Version	2020	2018	2016	2018	2020	2005	2017
Purpose	Share best practices and rate courses	Establish standards to promote student success and conform to existing regulations	Continuous improvement of quality and accessibility	Peer review and continuous improvement. Also "certifies course as meeting share standards of best practice"	Support and identify exemplary practices for design and delivery	Monitoring-professional development and quality improvement in virtual classrooms.	Peer review and Continuous improvement.
Number of components	4 categories, 17 sub-categories, 63 elements	6 sections, 56 elements	6 sections, 50 standards	8 general standards, 43 specific review Standards	10 sections, 57 items	6 categories, 24 criteria	7 Principles
categories, sub-categories	Course Design	Content Presentation	Course Overview & Information	Course Overview & Introduction	Course Overview and Introduction	Course Organization	Good practice encourages contact between students and faculty.
	Interaction & Collaboration	Interaction	Course Technology & Tools	Learning Objectives	Assessment and Evaluation of Student Learning	Instruction	Good practice develops reciprocity and cooperation among students.
	Assessment	Assessment	Design & Layout	Design & Layout	Instructional Materials and Resources Utilized	Interaction and Discussion	Good practice encourages active learning.
	Learner Support	Accessibility	Content & Activities	instructional Materials	Students Interaction and Community	Assessments, Grading and Feedback	Good practice gives prompt feedback.

		Institutional Accessibility Concerns	Interaction	Learner Activities and Learner Interaction	Facilitation and Instruction	Classroom Climate	Good education emphasizes time on task.
			Assessment and Feedback	Course Technology, Learner Support	Technology for Teaching and Learning, Learner Support and Resources	Professional Engagement	Good practice communicates high expectations.
				Accessibility and Usability	Accessibility and Universal Design		Good practice respects diverse talents and ways of learning.
					Course Summary and Wrap-up		

Table 2: Surveys Evaluation Criteria

Instructor Pre-Term Review	Formative Review #1	Formative Review #2	Formative Review #3	Formative Review #4	Summative Evaluation
Course Plan and Organization	Creating an interactive climate	Interaction	Execution of Assessments	Course climate	Course Organization & guidance
	Community Development				Interaction and Discussion
Syllabus	Utilize of forum discussion	Discussion Assistance	Feedback and Grading	Course Organization	Virtual Classroom Climate Assessments, Grading, and Feedback
Virtual Classroom Organization	Course organization and planning	LMS Performance Indicators	Final Exam Arrangement (if any)	Additional Educational Resources (Instructor – Added)	Professional Commitment
				LMS Performance Indicators	LMS Performance Indicators

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