

# The Quality Matters Program Grades 6-12 Rubric – Nine General Standards

## General Standard 1: Course Overview and Introduction

The overall design of the course is made clear to the student at the beginning of the course.

## General Standard 2: Learning Objectives

Learning objectives are clearly stated and explained. They assist students in focusing their effort in the course.

## General Standard 3: Assessment and Measurement

Assessment strategies use established ways to measure effective learning, evaluate student progress by reference to stated learning objectives, and are designed to be integral to the learning process.

## General Standard 4: Resources and Materials

Instructional materials are authoritative, up-to-date and appropriately chosen for the level of the course.

## General Standard 5: Learning Activities

Meaningful interaction between the teacher and students, among students, and between students and course materials is employed to motivate students and foster intellectual commitment and personal development.

## General Standard 6: Course Technology

Course navigation features and the technology employed in the course foster student engagement and ensure access to instructional materials and resources.

## General Standard 7: Learner Support

The course facilitates student access to institutional services essential to student success.

## General Standard 8: Accessibility

The face-to-face and online course components are accessible to all students.

## General Standard 9: Compliance Standards

This section of the Rubric is optional and may be tailored to particular requirements or mandates at the state or local level. These requirements may deal with subject matter standards, inclusion of specific information in the course outline or syllabus, mandated communications, etc. Up to 10 standards may be added in this section. No point value is associated with these standards, but the review summary will identify any that were not considered as met by the review team.

## Potential Users

- Teachers, Instructional Designers and Design Teams
- Students, Parents, Counselors
- School Administrators
- Public and Private Virtual Schools and Publishers
- School Systems, Local and State Boards
- Teacher Education Faculty
- College Admissions Officers
- College Instructors of Dual Enrollment Courses



A National Benchmark for Online Course Design

### Quality Matters Program

1997 Annapolis Exchange Pkwy  
Suite 300

Annapolis, MD 21401

Toll Free 1.866.851.4984

[www.qmprogram.org](http://www.qmprogram.org)

## Design Standards for Online and Blended Courses



2010 Edition

GRADES  
**6-12**  
**QM**<sup>TM</sup>  
Rubric



# Quality Matters Program

**Are you looking for a set of standards to design effective online instruction? Interested in evaluating**

**online and blended courses?** The Quality Matters Grades 6-12

Rubric (G6-12) is both broad and specific enough to accomplish these objectives.

Quality Matters (QM) is a leader in quality assurance for online education and has received national recognition for its peer-based approach and continuous improvement model in online education and student improvement. The G6-12 Rubric and QM's online resources for its implementation can play a key role in quality assurance for Middle and High School virtual learning programs. QM's workshops on interpreting and applying the rubric standards are outstanding professional development opportunities for teachers, instructional designers, and virtual program administrators. QM's ongoing tracking of research on effective online teaching, evolving online teaching tools, and a shifting regulatory environment assures users that bi-annually updated editions of the G6-12 rubric will help them in keeping pace with the rapid evolution of virtual education.

Schools and teachers use the Quality Matters Program in the following ways:

- Professional Development for Teachers
- Conducting Formal Reviews of Existing Online and Blended Courses
- Conducting Informal/Internal Course Reviews
- Disseminating Guidelines for Online/Blended Course Development
- Providing a Checklist for Self-Assessment by Faculty Members
- Contributing to Broader Quality Assurance Programs
- Preparing for Regional and Professional Accreditation
- Setting Institutional Policy on Distance Learning Standards

## Click or Call

Access to the web-based Grades 6-12 Edition of

**Quality Matters Rubric** is available with a **QM** subscription. Information on subscription options and QM training that support the various program components is available on the **Quality Matters** website: [www.qmprogram.org](http://www.qmprogram.org)

**Email us:** [info@qualitymatters.org](mailto:info@qualitymatters.org) or **Call us:** 1-866-851-4984

With the web-based **Quality Matters** Rubric, you will have access to the full annotations for all the standards in addition to scoring and reporting tools.



# Hallmarks of the Grades 6-12 Rubric: Integrating National Standards and Best Practices

The Grades 6-12 Rubric integrates existing national standards for K-12 online education promulgated by The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), The North American Council for Online Learning (iNACOL), The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), and The Partnership for 21st Century Skills.

The Grades 6-12 Edition of the Quality Matters Rubric is a set of 9 general standards used to evaluate the design of online and blended courses. The Rubric is complete with annotations that explain the application of the standards and the relationship among them.

**Example of General Standard 2, Standards 2.1-2.3. With the web-based G6-12 Rubric you will have access to the full annotations for all the standards in addition to scoring and reporting tools.**

## General Standard 2: Learning Objectives

**Review Standard:** Learning objectives are clearly stated and explained. They assist students in focusing their effort in the course.

| STANDARDS  | POINTS             | ANNOTATIONS   |                      |                  |                 |                    |
|--|--------------------|---|----------------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| <p><b>2.1</b> The course learning objectives describe outcomes that are measurable.</p> <p><b>Alignment</b></p>  | 3                  | <p>Measurable course learning objectives precisely describe what students are to gain from instruction, and then guide teachers to accurately assess student accomplishment. Objectives describe student performance in specific terms that correspond to observable accomplishments. If this specificity is not possible (e.g., internal cognition, affective changes), check for clear indications that the learning objective is meaningfully assessed. Note that at some schools, learning objectives may be referred to as learning outcomes.</p> <p><b>Examples of measurable objectives:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop a comprehensive, individualized wellness action program focused on overcoming a sedentary life-style.</li> <li>2. Describe the relationship between the components of an ecosystem.</li> <li>3. Explain the factors that contribute to economic inflation.</li> </ol> <p>In a course in which students are expected to demonstrate analytical skills and/or ability to express themselves effectively in writing or in other forms of communication, the learning objectives include reference to these objectives in addition to objectives that relate to mastery of content.</p> <p>In addition to measurable objectives, a course may have objectives or desired outcomes that are more difficult to measure, such as increased awareness, sensitivity, or interest in certain issues or subjects, but these outcomes do not substitute for clearly measurable objectives.</p> <p><b>Alignment:</b> Alignment refers to an interdependence among critical course components that ensures students achieve desired learning outcomes. Measurable course and module/unit-level learning objectives form the basis of alignment in a course. Other elements of the course, including those addressed in Standards 2.1 through 2.5, 3.1, 4.1, 5.1, and 6.1, contribute to the accomplishment of the course objectives. It may not be possible to complete the course review if measurable learning objectives are not present. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that the review team chair communicate with the course representative early in the process to rectify this deficiency before proceeding with the full review.</p>  |                      |                  |                 |                    |
| <p><b>2.2</b> The module/unit learning objectives describe outcomes that are measurable and consistent with the course-level objectives.</p> <p><b>Alignment</b></p> | 3                  | <p>Measurable module- or unit-level learning objectives are important. They precisely describe the specific competencies, skills, and knowledge that students should be able to master and demonstrate at regular intervals throughout the course. The objectives enable students to clearly understand the expected learning outcomes on a weekly, modular, or unit basis.</p> <p>Module or unit-level objectives can come from a variety of sources, including the teacher, the course developer, or the textbook. Regardless of origin, these objectives are prominently displayed in the online classroom; e.g., at the beginning of each module or in the syllabus.</p> <p>Module/unit learning objectives enable teachers to accurately assess student accomplishment. Objectives describe student performance in specific, observable terms. Note that at some schools, learning objectives may be referred to as learning outcomes.</p> <p>The module/unit-level objectives are consistent with the course-level objectives. The module/unit objectives may either be implicitly or explicitly consistent with the course-level objectives. For example, the module/unit objective "Students will write sentences that demonstrate correct use of commas, semicolons, and periods." is implicitly consistent with the course objective "Students will demonstrate a mastery of rules of punctuation."</p> <p><b>Alignment:</b> See the statement in the annotation to Standard 2.1.</p>   |                      |                  |                 |                    |
| <p><b>2.3</b> The course is designed to meet state standards and prepare students for relevant assessments.</p>  | 3                  | <p>Where state standards or benchmarks exist for the subject area of the course, those standards are reflected in the content and objectives of the course. Courses may be enriched by going beyond state standards, but, at a minimum, those standards must be met.</p> <p>These are examples of how state standards may be interpreted as course objectives:</p> <p><b>State Algebra Standard:</b> Graph polynomial functions with and without technology and describe end behavior.<br/> <i>Course Objective:</i> The student will graph polynomial functions with and without technology and describe end behavior.</p> <p><b>State Spanish Standard:</b> Recognize various activities and celebrations in which children participate in the target culture (e.g., games, songs, birthday celebrations, storytelling, dramatizations, and role playing).<br/> <i>Course Objective:</i> The student will identify various activities and celebrations in which children participate in the Spanish culture.</p> <p><b>State Economics Standard:</b> Compare the basic characteristics of the four market structures (monopoly, oligopoly, monopolistic competition, pure competition.)<br/> <i>Course Objective:</i> The student will analyze market types and assess their place on a spectrum from most competitive to least competitive.</p> <p>Examine the course and module/unit learning objectives as a whole to ensure they describe knowledge and skills appropriate to the course level and emphasize 21st century skills. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills provides a comprehensive inventory of those skills. <i>21st Century Skills include</i></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>1. Technology skills</td> <td>3. Career skills</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Media skills</td> <td>4. Learning skills</td> </tr> </table> <p>State standards may incorporate core learning skills and critical thinking skills. Core learning skills, including critical thinking are typically those that transcend an individual course and are integrated across the curriculum. Core learning skills are sometimes called "core competencies."</p> <p><i>Core learning skills may include</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Written and oral communication skills</li> <li>2. Ability to compute and process mathematical information</li> <li>3. Manipulation and organization of information in various ways or using different tools</li> <li>4. Understanding what one knows and how one knows it, and also understanding what one does not know and what one needs in order to find it out</li> </ol> <p><i>Critical thinking skills may include the ability to</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Distinguish between fact and opinion</li> <li>2. Distinguish between primary and secondary sources</li> <li>3. Identify bias and stereotypes</li> <li>4. Evaluate information sources for point of view, accuracy, usefulness, timeliness, etc.</li> <li>5. Recognize deceptive arguments</li> </ol> <p>In AP courses, AP standards must also be met.</p> <p>As national standards emerge in various fields, reviewers should take these into account in assessing whether a course meets all the relevant external standards.</p> <p>If there are no applicable state standards, the points for this standard should be awarded to the course with the note "DNA" (does not apply).</p> | 1. Technology skills | 3. Career skills | 2. Media skills | 4. Learning skills |
| 1. Technology skills   | 3. Career skills   |   |                      |                  |                 |                    |
| 2. Media skills  | 4. Learning skills |   |                      |                  |                 |                    |