

A review of relevant scholarly research continues to be a key activity in updating and improving the Quality Matters Rubric™. Scholarly research findings are used to inform and support the improvement of the QM Rubric in setting standards of quality in online course design and contribute to the validity of the rubric. The first rubric version in the early 2000s was supported by a broad compilation of online distance education literature and research. Subsequent rubric editions (the 2006-2007, 2008-2010, and the new 2011-2013 editions) followed this pattern of surveying the research literature published since the previous edition.

During the winter of 2010-2011, the scholarly research literature was again surveyed to identify new findings and emerging practices that would inform the refreshment of the 2008-2010 edition of the rubric.

- The following 2008-2010 peer- reviewed journals were surveyed for online course design themes. Selected articles were reviewed.
 - *The American Journal of Distance Education*
 - *Distance Education*
 - *Open Learning*
 - *The International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*
 - *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*
 - *Quarterly Review of Distance Education*
 - *The Internet and Higher Education*
 - *Educational Technology Research and Development*
 - *MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*
- The 2008-2010 Dissertation Abstracts were searched for online course design themes. Selected abstracts and dissertations were reviewed.
- Educational databases were consulted for specific online course design issues related to the QM standards. Selected articles in other peer- reviewed journals, such as *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, were reviewed.

In preparing the 2011-2013 rubric, emerging issues that were receiving significant attention in the online learning literature were explored, though the review was not intended to be a comprehensive documentation of all course design literature.

Notes from the 2010-2011 review of scholarly work in online learning:

- The field of instructional design continues to evolve with the interaction of dominant educational philosophies and their application. The field of online learning is increasingly impacted by constructivist learning theories, while keeping the established instructional design traditions of [ADDIE](#) (Analyze, Design, Develop, Implement, Evaluate). Therefore, it is important that Quality Matters stay abreast of nuanced as well as obvious changes in recognized best practices. (See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Instructional_design for brief explanation of instructional design systems and learning theories.)
- The concept of alignment is widely accepted as a key course design backbone; it is evident throughout the best practices and research literature.

- The topic of interaction continues to be a dominant theme in online learning. As noted during the [QM Interaction Summit held in November of 2010](#), the interplay of student-instructor, student-content, and student-student forms of interaction within the design of a single course is complex, and the relative importance of each type of interaction continues to be debated. There is some suggestion in the literature that the value of social networking technologies occurs at a community-building institutional level.
- The topic of mobile learning is threaded through the professional literature and to a lesser extent through the research literature. At this point the focus is primarily on the adaptation of existing course presentation components to mobile learning technologies. A recent special issue of *Open Learning: The Journal of Open and Distance Learning* (2010), 25(3) noted that “Mobile learning research and evaluation methods are in fact evolving in tandem with the evolution of mobile learning” (p. 183) and that “with its strong emphasis on learning rather than teaching, mobile learning challenges educators to try to understand learners’ needs, circumstances and abilities even better than before” (p. 181).
- The need to ensure cultural inclusivity in teaching and learning continues to be noted in the research literature and increasingly in QM practice. The topic was raised frequently by panelists during the [QM Interaction Summit](#). QM’s commitment to inclusivity was operationalized particularly in the revisions to Rubric Standard 8, Accessibility. In the 2011-2013 Rubric, the U.S.-centric focus on ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) is replaced by a way of framing accessibility that is relevant for educational delivery in all countries.

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