

# THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

## POLICY ON QUALITY ASSURANCE OF ONLINE AND BLENDED COURSES AND PROGRAMMES AT THE UWI

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Policy is predicated on the quality dimensions of ‘Fitness for purpose’, ‘Fitness of purpose’ and ‘Adherence to high standards’ as outlined in the *Quality Policy of The University of the West Indies (FGP.P9J 2016/2017)*. The purpose of this Policy is to provide:

- (1) a standard set of definitions related to online delivery across The UWI; and
- (2) standards and guidelines for online delivery in courses and programmes.

Therefore, this Policy assures stakeholders (faculty, students and learners) of the high quality of education provision for online courses and programmes (quality assurance). The Policy addresses online, blended and Emergency Remote Teaching.

### 2.0 DEFINITIONS

**Face-to-Face Course:** A course in which teaching and learning takes place predominantly in a physical space where instructors and students or learners meet in-person. A face-to-face course is based on course contact hours standards.

**Online Course:** A course which has been intentionally designed so that all instruction takes place using technology and there are no requirements for face-to-face class meetings. An online course can be delivered synchronously, asynchronously or both.

**Synchronous delivery:** Teaching and learning which occurs when instructors and students/learners meet online at the same time.

**Asynchronous delivery:** Teaching and learning which occurs when instructors and students/learners interact with each other and the course material at different times.

**Blended course:** A course which has been designed to intentionally replace some of the face teaching and learning which takes place in a physical space with teaching and learning in the online environment. In order to qualify as a blended course, at least 1 credit hour (12 contact hours of face-to-face teaching or equivalent) must be replaced with teaching and learning in the online environment.

**Online programme:** A programme which consists of all online courses.

**Blended programme:** A programme which consists of any combination of two or more types of courses. This combination might be:

- face-to-face and blended courses
- face-to-face and online courses
- blended and online courses
- face-to-face, blended and online courses.

**Emergency Remote Teaching:** A temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode due to crisis circumstances<sup>1</sup> (Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust & Bond, 2020).

### 3.0 Readiness To Deliver Online And Blended Courses

Readiness for online and blended teaching and learning is a key consideration for both faculty and potential students or learners.

**3.1 DISCUS Readiness:** An assessment should be conducted within academic Departments, Institutes, Schools, Centres, Units and Sites (DISCUS) to ascertain whether the necessary structures and resources exist to support students and faculty in an online or blended environment. These support structures should include instructional, administrative and technical. The availability of adequate financial and human resources should also be assessed. DISCUS readiness also includes ensuring that courses and programmes have been designed as online or blended courses.

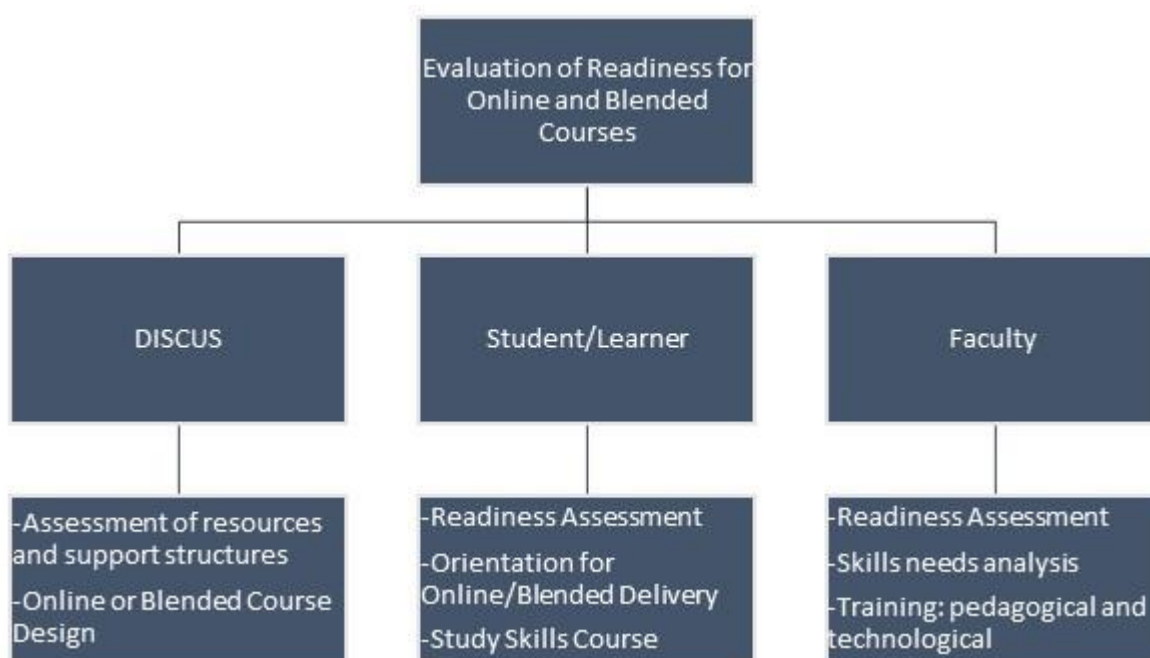
**3.2 Faculty Readiness:** It is critical to ensure that all persons involved in teaching online are equipped with the necessary skills and attributes to facilitate students/learners and therefore training is **mandatory** for all first-time online instructors. Re-training and orientation are required for members of faculty whenever new systems and tools are introduced. Training will be provided by The UWI Open Campus (The UWI OC) and/or the Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs).

**3.3 Student Readiness:** The determination of student readiness for learning in online and blended environments is vital to student success. Therefore, students should be assessed for readiness to engage in online and/or blended courses and provided with an appropriate orientation for online and/or blended delivery by their DISCUS, prior to beginning their online/blended programme. Those with identified weaknesses should be referred to an appropriate study skills course for online or blended courses and programmes.

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<sup>1</sup> Hodges, C., Moore, S., Lockee, B., Trust, T. & Bond, A. (2020, March 27). *The Difference Between Emergency Remote Teaching and Online Learning*. EDUCAUSE REVIEW.  
<https://er.educase.edu/articles/2020/3/thedifference-between-emergency-remote-teaching-and-online-learning>

Figure 1: Assessing Readiness for Online and Blended Course Delivery



#### 4.0 Course and Programme Development For Online and Blended Delivery

All new and revised courses including those with changes in the mode of delivery, **MUST** be submitted for formal approval<sup>2</sup> via the Campus Academic Quality Assurance Committee (AQAC) and Academic Board and/or the Campus Committee for Graduate Studies and Research (CCGS&R) to the relevant University Board. All new and revised programmes **must** be submitted for approval via BUS and BGSR, using the relevant approved templates from BUS and BGSR. The *Checklist for Submission of Proposals for Online and Blended Courses and Programmes* (See Appendix I) which has been approved by the Board for Undergraduate Studies and Graduate Studies and Research (BUS/BGSR, Feb, 2015/2016) **must** be submitted in addition to the templates.

The Open SUNY Online Course Quality Rubric (OSCQR) is a set of quality standards used to review and evaluate the instructional design and accessibility of online courses based on online best practices. This rubric includes standards for:

- Course overview and information
- Technology
- Design and Layout

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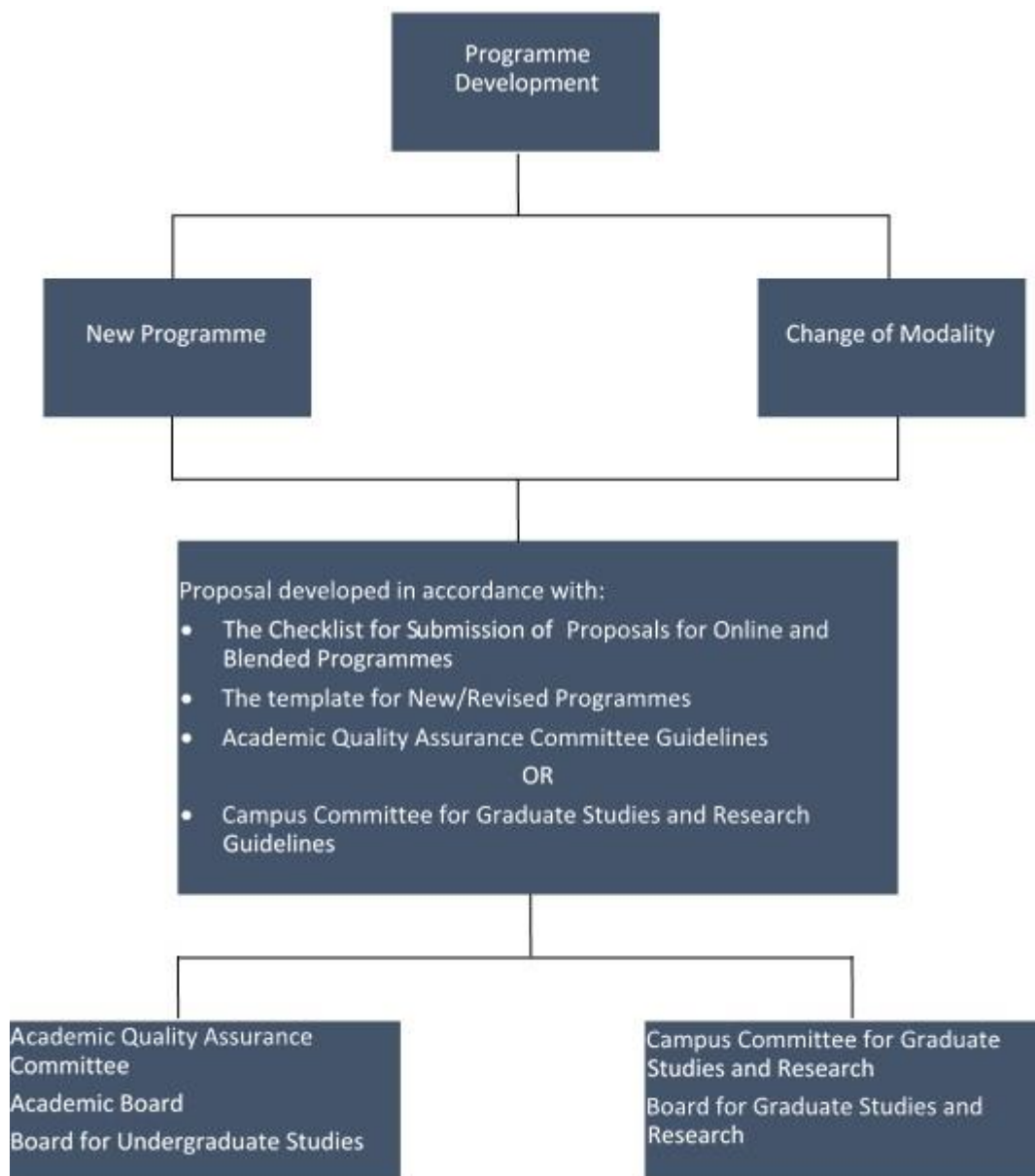
<sup>2</sup> The Programme Approval Guidelines for the various AQACs and CCGS&Rs stipulate that before a programme can be approved there must be consultation with various entities including the Library, Bursary and CETL.

- Content and Activities
- Interaction
- Assessment and Feedback

The rubric can be accessed in Appendix III or online at

<https://onlinelearningconsortium.org/consult/oscqr-course-design-review/>

*Figure II: Programme Development Approval Process*



## 5.0 Monitoring and Quality Evaluation of Courses

In order to monitor and evaluate the quality of online and blended courses, aspects of the Online Learning Consortium's Quality Scorecard suite should be used as follows:

- *Course Level Review*: OSCQR Course Design Review Scorecard
- *Online Facilitation*: Quality Course Teaching and Instructional Practice (QCTIP) rubric
- *Programme Administration*: Quality Scorecard for the Administration of Online Programs
- *Blended Programmes*: Quality Scorecard for Blended Learning Programs • *Student Support*: OLC Quality Scorecard for Online Student Support

The OSCQR Rubric which sets out standards for quality in blended and online courses and programmes should be used as the basis for monitoring and evaluating the development and delivery of courses and programmes. This monitoring includes assessment by the Faculty of pass/fail rates and student assessment of teaching for all new online and blended courses on a semester basis. Student assessment of teaching must include an end-of-course evaluation, but may also include a mid-course evaluation, as this will enable the faculty to readily address areas requiring immediate attention.

A Quality Evaluation should be conducted by the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) during the first two offerings of any new online or blended programme.

### 5.1 Emergency Remote Teaching

Any course which uses Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) must adhere to the *Checklist for Emergency Remote Teaching* (See Appendix II). Emergency Remote Teaching ceases when the emergency/crisis ends.

The Chair of AQAC/CCGSR should be notified by the Head of the DISCUS or Dean of Faculty of any course being delivered by *Emergency Remote Teaching*.

## 6.0 Assessment Integrity

Two major security concerns regarding online and blended courses and programmes are the need to minimize opportunities for cheating and the related need to authenticate student identity. In order to address these concerns, *at least fifty per cent (50%) of all courses in an online programme must have a traditional face-to-face proctored examination, except for courses where an approved electronic proctoring system is employed. The face-to-face assessment must have a weighting of at least 40 per cent (40%) of the total course. Where a Campus feels that due to the nature of the discipline, a programme should have assessments that total more than 50 per cent coursework it must state explicitly the measures that will be taken to assure the integrity of the assessment process. For courses with more than 50 per cent (50%) coursework students will be required to pass both the face-to-face and coursework components.*

## **7.0 Quality Assurance Review**

The UWI has a well-articulated QA review process for academic programmes. However, for programme reviews which involve online and/or blended delivery, the review team should include a discipline-specific online expert and the review process should allow time for the team to interface with the online learning environment.

**Quality Assurance Unit**  
**VERSION 1: JANUARY 2016**  
**VERSION 2: FEBRUARY 2017**  
**VERSION 3: JUNE 2020**

## **APPENDIX I**

### ***REVISED CHECKLIST FOR SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS FOR ONLINE AND BLENDED COURSES AND PROGRAMMES***

#### **Introduction:**

An increasing number of Online and Blended courses and programmes are being presented for approval to the Board for Undergraduate Studies and the Board for Graduate Studies and Research. However, such programmes have unique features that are not addressed in the standard templates for New and Revised Programmes used by each Board. The following checklist has been developed to ensure that these programmes meet the required standards of development, delivery and student support. It is to be used in conjunction with the standard template for New and Revised Programmes. The completed checklist should be attached to the Programme Proposal for submission to the Board.

#### **1. Programme Development & Delivery:**

- ☐ Evidence of consultation with online instructional designer, education technologist or other online experts with respect to the design of the programme/courses for online delivery. A confirmation note from the online specialist, including any recommendation is required. A template for the confirmation note is shown below.
- ☐ For a blended programme, the structure should clearly indicate the online components and the associated delivery method (i.e. synchronous or asynchronous)
- ☐ Where delivery is largely asynchronous, provisions should be made for e-tutor support. Indicate the proposed etutor : student ratio
- ☐ For synchronous delivery (via videoconferencing or webconferencing), state the provisions for students' tutorial support and access to course materials
- ☐ Indicate the tools and methodologies that will be employed to create/facilitate a learning community.

**2. Technical Preparedness:**

**Provide evidence to show:**

- ☐ availability of reliable technical support for lecturers and students before and during
- ☐ availability of technical services to ensure continued ease of access to curricular materials such as video recordings. Submit confirmation from Campus IT Services of their ability to provide the necessary services, or submit alternative arrangements made/ to be made by Department.

**3. Faculty Preparedness for Online Teaching:**

**Provide evidence of /or plans for training initiatives to develop the competency of faculty to deliver quality online teaching in accordance with established best practices. This includes:**

- ☐ training in online pedagogy and
- ☐ training in the use of the chosen technology platform(s).

**4. Assessment and Evaluation:**

**Indicate:**

- ☐ the assessment tools that will be used – class tests, exams, projects, etc. and how they will be administered to remote students
- ☐ arrangements for proctoring of exams in remote locations, where applicable.
- ☐ arrangements for practicum and access to laboratory facilities, where applicable.

**5. Student Support:**

**Indicate:**

- ☐ arrangements for the training/orientation of students in the use of the relevant technologies
- ☐ provisions to ensure that remote students have access to and are able to effectively use the library resources
- ☐ provisions for advising students in academic matters.

**Template for Confirmation Report**



- 1. Programme Name:**
- 2. Delivery Mode (Online or Blended):**
- 3. Name and Job Title of Online Consultant:**

**I certify that consultation on the programme has taken place with (Department/Lecturer) and that the proposed programme structure, the instructional materials and delivery systems are aligned with the learning objectives of the programme.**

**Recommendations:**

**Signed: Online Consultant**  
**Affiliation (Open Campus, CETL, other)**

**REVISED: JUNE 2020**

## **APPENDIX II**

### **CHECKLIST FOR EMERGENCY REMOTE TEACHING**

Emergency Remote Teaching refers to a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode due to crisis circumstances<sup>1</sup> (Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust & Bond, 2020).

This Checklist has been developed to ensure that courses which have transitioned to ERT meet a minimum standard for course delivery, technical preparedness, faculty preparedness, student support, assessment and evaluation. This Checklist should be completed by the instructor and submitted to the Head of DISCUS or Dean of Faculty.

**Course Delivery:**

- ☐ **The structure of the course should clearly indicate the online components and the associated delivery method (i.e. synchronous or asynchronous)**
- ☐ **For synchronous delivery (via video-conferencing or web-conferencing), state the provisions for access to course materials, and state the dates and times for instructional delivery.**

**Technical Preparedness:**

- ☐ **Availability of /or plans to acquire the required technology resources to deliver online teaching and to support online learning. Online delivery platforms include learning management system (such as Moodle), web-conferencing system or virtual classroom (such as Blackboard Collaborate), or a videoconferencing system at the delivery and receiving endpoints.**
- ☐ **Availability of reliable technical support for lecturers and students before and during synchronous online sessions**
- ☐ **Availability of technical services to ensure continued ease of access to curricular materials such as video recordings.**

**Faculty Preparedness for Online Teaching:**

- ☐ **training in the use of the chosen technology platform(s).**

**Assessment and Evaluation:**

- ☐ **the assessment tools that will be used – class tests, exams, projects, etc. and how they will be administered to remote students**
- ☐ **arrangements for proctoring of exams in remote locations, where applicable.**
- ☐ **arrangements for practicum and access to laboratory facilities, where applicable.**

**Student Support:**

- ☐ **arrangements for the training/orientation of students in the use of the relevant technologies**

- ☐ provisions to ensure that remote students have access to use the library resources
- ☐ provisions for advising students in academic matters.

**Course Code and Name:**

**Signed:**

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**Instructor/Head of DISCUS/Dean of Faculty**

### **APPENDIX III**

## OSCQR 3rd Edition

	Sufficiently Present	Minor Revision	Moderate Revision	Major Revision	Not Applicable	Action Plan
<i>Estimated time needed for revision:</i>		<i>1/2 hour or less</i>	<i>1/2-2 hours</i>	<i>2+ hours</i>		

1. COURSE OVERVIEW AND INFORMATION						
1	Course includes Welcome and Getting Started content.					
2	An orientation or overview is provided for the course overall, as well as in each module. Students know how to navigate and what tasks are due.					
3	Course includes a Course Information area that deconstructs the syllabus for learners in a clear and navigable way.					
4	A printable syllabus is available to learners (PDF, HTML).					
5	Course includes links to relevant campus policies on plagiarism, computer use, student grievances, accommodating disabilities, etc.					
6	Course provides access to campus and Open SUNY resources (technical help, orientation, tutoring).					
7	Course information states whether the course is fully online, blended, or web- enhanced.					
8	Appropriate methods and devices for accessing and participating in the course are communicated (mobile, publisher websites, secure content, pop-ups, browser issue, microphone, webcam).					
9	Course objectives/outcomes are clearly defined, measurable, and aligned to student learning activities and assessments.					
10	Course provides contact information for instructor, department, and program.					
2. COURSE TECHNOLOGY & TOOLS						
11	Requisite skills for using technology tools (websites, software, and hardware) are clearly stated and supported with resources.					
12	Technical skills required for participation in course learning activities scaffold in a timely manner (orientation, practice, and application - where appropriate).					
13	Frequently used technology tools are easily accessed. Any tools not being utilized are removed from the course menu.					
14	Course includes links to privacy policies for technology tools.					
15	Any technology tools meet accessibility standards.					

# OSCQR 3rd Edition

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		<i>Estimated time needed for revision:</i>					
			<i>1/2 hour or less</i>	<i>1/2-2 hours</i>	<i>2+ hours</i>		
<b>3. DESIGN AND LAYOUT</b>							
16	A logical, consistent, and uncluttered layout is established. The course is easy to navigate (consistent color scheme and icon layout, related content organized together, self-evident titles).						
17	Large blocks of information are divided into manageable sections with ample white space around and between the blocks.						
18	There is enough contrast between text and background for the content to be easily viewed.						
19	Instructions are provided and well written.						
20	Course is free of grammatical and spelling errors.						
21	Text is formatted with titles, headings, and other styles to enhance readability and improve the structure of the document.						
22	Flashing and blinking text are avoided.						
23	A sans-serif font with a standard size of at least 12 pt is used.						
24	When possible, information is displayed in a linear format instead of as a table.						
25	Tables are accompanied by a title and summary description.						
26	Table header rows and columns are assigned.						
27	Slideshows use a predefined slide layout and include unique slide titles.						
28	For all slideshows, there are simple, non-automatic transitions between slides.						
<b>4. CONTENT AND ACTIVITIES</b>							
29	Course offers access to a variety of engaging resources that facilitate communication and collaboration, deliver content, and support student learning and engagement.						
30	Course provides activities for students to develop higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills, such as critical reflection and analysis.						
31	Course provides activities that emulate real world applications of the discipline, such as experiential learning, case studies, and problem-based activities.						
32	Where available, Open Educational Resources, free, or low cost materials are used.						

33	Course materials and resources include copyright and licensing status, clearly stating permission to share where applicable.						
34	Text content is available in an easily accessed format, preferably HTML. All text content is readable by assistive technology, including a PDF or any text contained in an image.						
35	A text equivalent for every non-text element is provided ("alt" tags, captions, transcripts, etc.).						
36	Text, graphics, and images are understandable when viewed without color. Text should be used as a primary method for delivering information.						

### OSCQR 3rd Edition

		Sufficiently		Moderate		Not	
37	Hyperlink text is descriptive and makes sense when out of context (avoid using "click here").						

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5. INTERACTION						
38	Expectations for timely and regular feedback from the instructor are clearly stated (questions, email, assignments).					
39	Expectations for interaction are clearly stated (netiquette, grade weighting, models/examples, and timing and frequency of contributions).					
40	Students have an opportunity to get to know the instructor.					
41	Course contains resources or activities intended to build a sense of class community, support open communication, and establish trust (at least one of the following - Ice-breaker, Bulletin Board, Meet Your Classmates, Ask a Question discussion forums).					
42	Course offers opportunities for student to student interaction and constructive collaboration.					
43	Students are encouraged to share resources and inject knowledge from diverse sources of information in their course interactions.					
6. ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK						
44	Course grading policies, including consequences of late submissions, are clearly stated in the course information area or syllabus.					
45	Course includes frequent and appropriate methods to assess students' mastery of content.					
46	Criteria for the assessment of a graded assignment are clearly articulated (rubrics, exemplary work).					
47	Students have opportunities to review their performance and assess their own learning throughout the course (pre-tests, automated self-tests, reflective assignments, etc.).					
48	Students are informed when a timed response is required. Proper lead time is provided to ensure there is an opportunity to prepare an accommodation.					
49	Students have easy access to a well designed and up-to-date gradebook.					
50	Students have multiple opportunities to provide descriptive feedback on course design, course content, course experience, and ease of online technology.					

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