



APQN Standard for Online-Teaching Quality Assurance

Dissolving Boundaries for a Quality Region

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The Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN)

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APQN Standard for Online-Teaching Quality Assurance

I. Overview

In the past year (2020), in campus lockdown restrictions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, online teaching has emerged onto the global higher education stage as a leading means of “adjusting to new environments” which suggests becoming a “disruptor” in higher education where operations are typically embedded in historical constancy. This move to online/ virtual teaching and assessment was done quickly and under extreme pressure, requiring some degree-awarding bodies to enact emergency regulations to cover a range of contingencies to support staff and learners through this period.

Naturally, the definition of “quality” in higher education (HE) should be redefined amidst the rapidly changing expectations and conditions brought on by 2020. The question is how do internal quality assurance (IQA) and external quality assurance (EQA) monitor newly online teaching provision in higher education and develop future provision in a reliable and efficient manner? What is the quality of online courses and what are the outcomes of such training? Can we trust the quality of online education and the qualifications of graduates who have been trained online?

The results of “APQN survey on COVID-19 impact in Higher Education Institutions” conducted from March to May in 2020, shows 68% of the respondents are “not satisfied” with online teaching, while “APQN Survey on Effectiveness of On-line Teaching” conducted in July in 2020, shows 34% respondents think online teaching is “inefficient”. At APQN 8th forum entitled “Influence of COVID-19 on Higher Education Quality Assurance” held on July 28 in 2020, an urgent demand made APQN decided to develop APQN Standard for Online-Teaching Quality Assurance.

The key elements of standards for online-teaching quality assurance were developed by Delphi Method at the beginning of 2021. Based on the Survey on “APQN Standard for Online Teaching Quality Assurance” was conducted (<https://www.wjx.cn/vm/PiMFEzV.aspx>) in April, here is the final version of “APQN Standard for Online-Teaching Quality Assurance”, endorsed by the 6th Board of APQN.

Our intention has been to support the sectors in developing solutions to the unique demands that the COVID-19 scenario has placed on Higher Education providers and the sectors at large, such as Distance Education.

II. Purposes of Quality Standards

APQN Standard for Online-Teaching Quality Assurance are intended to provide a measure of quality insurance for online teaching in order to serve the online-teaching needs for higher education institutions(HEIs), non-traditional higher education(HE) providers. The standard is directed to HEIs that wish to offer online and blended teaching with other online-teaching

cooperation for degree programs.

The aims of the project:

- 1) To develop quality criteria for online teaching for HEIs and non-traditional HE providers.
- 2) To develop a PDCI (plan-do-check-improvement) plan to maintain quality standards for online teaching in HEIs and non-traditional HE providers.
- 3) To develop a feasible and efficient action plan to implement high-quality online teaching.

III. Principles of Quality Standards

The principles of quality standards for online-teaching quality assurance obey the following 5 principles:

1. Information principle. Relied on information technology, guided by modern education and teaching theory, it emphasizes the development of new teaching mode such as online and blended teaching; teaching content has stronger epochal to ICT tendency, and teaching is more suitable for learners' needs and characteristics of the young netizens.

2. "Teaching by learning" principle. Online teaching assessment standards focus from "teacher behaviors" to "student behaviors", and its foothold is learning, because the final goal of "teaching" is to serve "learning". Learning needs to pay attention to learning subjects (students), learning contents, learning activities, learning methods, learning assessment and learning effect; while teaching needs to pay attention to teachers, teaching objectives, teaching process, teaching methods and teaching effect, aiming at reflecting the modern student-centered teaching concept.

3. Development principle. Focus on the future development of the teachers and learners: (1) Based on both the reality and the future, know the development trend of teaching value; (2) pay attention to both the exploration of teachers' potentiality in teaching and the cultivation of learners' future motivation for sustainable development; (3) the assessors should strive to update their own teaching concepts, and the assessment methods are epochal and foresighted.

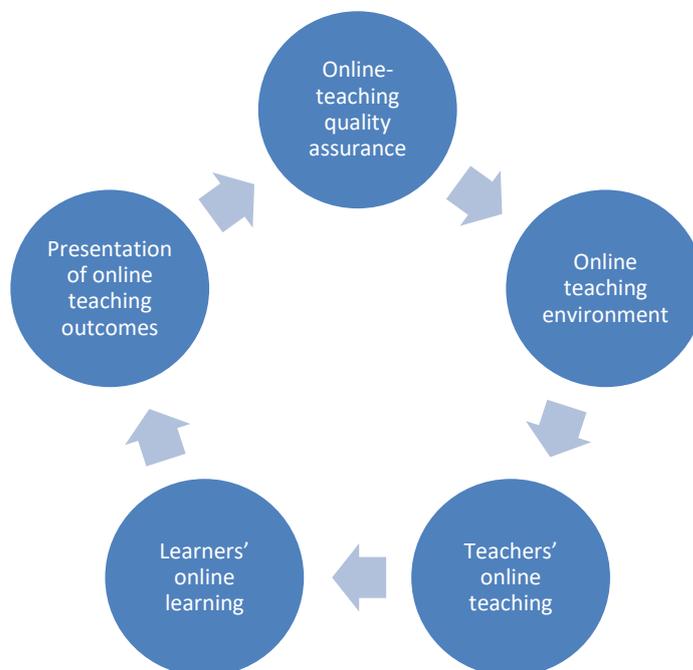
4. Validity principle. Based on the elements of the educational assessment system, the following 5 elements should be considered in the assessment process: (1) objective validity: the realization between assessment goal and educational idea; (2) content validity: the appropriateness of the contents or samples to be assessed; (3) cross validity: the consistency of mutual inspection and verification of various assessment methods; (4) subjective validity: the correctness and fairness of the assessment results of assessment subjects to assessment objects; (5) process validity: the effectiveness of the process of collecting various assessment information and data.

5. Objectivity/evidence principle. The assessment result and process should conform to objective reality, respect objective facts, and make correct conclusions based on evidences/proofs in the whole assessment process, preventing the subjective impression from replacing objective measurements.

IV. Criteria of Quality Standards

APQN Standard for Online-Teaching Quality Assurance is based on 13 criteria from difference countries/organizations such as "Report from ENQA Working Group on Quality Assurance &

E-Learning”(2018), “APEC Quality Assurance of Online Learning Discussion Paper” (2017), “HKCAAVQ Approach to Accreditation of Online Learning Programmes” (2018), “IIOE Quality Assurance: Institutional Self -Assessment on Quality Online and Blended Teaching and Learning” (2020), “China Reference Standard for Construction of Online Class”(2019), etc. Based on the 5 principles mentioned above, the framework of quality standards focuses on the 5 key words: environment, teaching, learning, outcomes and QA.



Based on 5 principles, the indicators consist of 14 key features: (1) service, openness, sustainability in criterion 1 embodies “information principle”; (2) teaching design, teaching process and teachers’ ICT literacy in criterion 2 and “learning process”, “learners’ ICT literacy” in Criterion 3, embody "teaching-by-learning principle", (3) objective achievement and satisfaction in Criterion 4 embodies “development principle”;(4) assessment method, assessment mechanism and quality improvement in Criteria 5 embody “validity principle”; and (5) objectivity principle is applied to all 5 criteria.

Principles	Criteria	Indicators
1.Information principle	1.Online teaching environment	Service
		Openness
		Sustainability
2. “Teaching by learning” principle as well as Development principle	2.Teachers’ online teaching	Teaching design
		Teaching process
		Teachers’ ICT literacy
	3.Learners’ online learning	Learning process
Learners’ ICT literacy		
3.Development principle	4. Presentation of online teaching outcomes	Outcomes of teaching and learning
		Objective achievement
		Satisfaction
	5. Online- teaching quality	Assessment method

4. Validity principle	assurance	Assessment mechanism
		Quality improvement
5. Objectivity principle is applied to all		

Quality standard consist of 5 criteria, 14 indicators and 46 observation points.

Criteria	Indicator	Observation point
Online teaching environment	Service	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. HEIs have at least one online-teaching department with necessary regulations, such as “Guideline for Online Teaching”, etc. 2. HEIs have online teaching platform technology, administration and other service supports, including online counseling, teaching, technology, technical training, etc. 3. E-teaching management platforms have availability and reliability, including help-desk for learners, good web response, linkage, navigation and positioning, etc.
	Openness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adequacy of online teaching resources, such as access to online teaching resources (both online and offline) ,i.e. anyone can learn any course at any time and any place 2. Openness and sharing of online teaching resources, such as access to teaching resources outside campus. 3. Publicity of information, such as the release of reliable, complete and up-to-date information on, including qualification recognition, teaching objectives, credits, requirements, assessment methods, timetable, etc.
	Sustainability	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To create “Information culture” for life-long learning 2. sustainability of online-teaching platforms, materials development and academic approaches 3. Sustainability of teachers and trainers skills, and HEIs’ active responses to online teaching
Teachers’ online teaching	Teaching design	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The goals of online teaching are clear, and teaching contents meet learners’ needs 2. There are various types of online teaching, such as "online teaching", "blended teaching" (online + offline), etc. 3. Appropriateness of online-teaching media (the most appropriate teaching forms for different types of courses), such as “recorded teaching”, “live teaching”, etc. 4. Teaching design emphasizes the use of online platform to attract learners’ attention, strengthen the interactions between teachers and learners, and highlight "student-centered" education concept
	Teaching process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Comprehensiveness of the online-teaching content, covering all teaching objectives, orientation, navigation, schedule and outcomes, such as online activities and assignments are clearly explained.

		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Regularity of online teaching, including the accessibility of courses. 3. Effectiveness of interactive communication and feedback between teachers and learners, among learners, including the use of platforms, forums, emails, interactive groups and other communication channels, etc. 4. Traceability of teaching platform, including records of learning track, progress, task, etc. 5. Ensure that the teachers are qualified and appropriately trained to deliver high-quality learner supports in the online environment and assessment
	Teachers' ICT literacy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ability of web-based teaching design and innovation of online teaching, e.g. each online course has an open and clear syllabus, which can innovative previous teaching 2. Control ability of online classroom under the web-based environment, e.g. being skillfully use network platform and technology to successfully complete teaching tasks. 3. Ability of online-teaching assessment and reflection in the information age, e.g. ability to analyze teaching effect, making rules for learners to study and to be in exams honestly, and taking the measures to prevent plagiarism. 4. Ability to continuously improve information ethics and information literacy, including academic integrity, moral behaviors, electronic security measures, etc.
Learners' online learning	Learning process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Offline assignments assigned by teachers are related to the online-teaching contents and learners' learning outcomes. 2. Learners' initiatives and enthusiasm, being able to regularly know their own online learning rate, browsing frequency, interaction, assignment completion and other information. 3. Assignments can promote learners' critical thinking, self-reflection and problem-solving ability, and the clear scoring rules can help learners know how to score themselves. 4. Learners receive an orientation session to the online environment and technical requirements for studying on the course, prior to the commencement of learning and teaching activities and assessment as well.
	Learners' ICT literacy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ability to acquire, manage and integrate online teaching information by using data technology and communication tools. 2. Assessment ability of online learning, usage of network technology or IT tools to improve their own learning and assessment efficiency. 3. Ability to continuously improve network ethics and information literacy, including academic integrity, moral behaviors, electronic security measures, etc.
Presentation	Outcomes of	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Submission of learners' learning outcomes (LLOs), such as

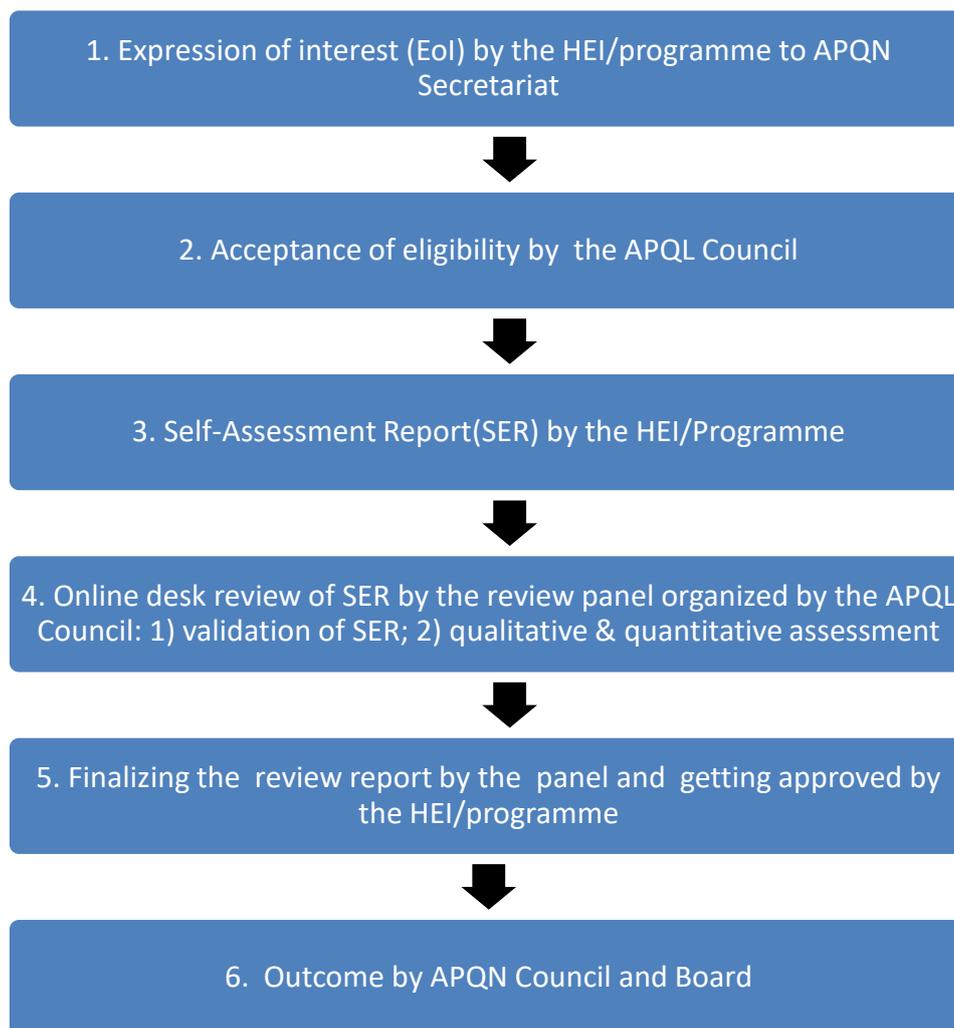
of online teaching outcomes	teaching and learning	<p>course papers, curriculum design, etc.</p> <p>2. Teaching and learning outcomes and qualification recognitions, e.g. SLOs' display, teaching achievement awards, online excellent course, etc.</p> <p>3. HEI's report on success stories of online teaching to a central office which could share these with other entities in the HEI.</p>
	Objective achievement	<p>1. Realization of online teaching to achieve the expected teaching and learning outcomes</p> <p>2. Achievement of online teaching outcomes, passing rate, dropout rate and others.</p> <p>3. Improvement of learners' solve problem-solving ability and learners' own development.</p>
	Satisfaction	<p>1. Learners' satisfaction with online teaching.</p> <p>2. Teachers' and learners' overall satisfaction with online teaching.</p>
Online-teaching quality assurance	Assessment method	<p>1. Formative assessment, e.g. pre-online teaching, mid-term assessment, online tracking records, etc.</p> <p>2. Summative assessment, e.g. final assessment at the end of online teaching.</p> <p>3. Developmental assessment, e.g. assessment results promoting quality of online teaching and the improvement of teachers and learners.</p>
	Assessment mechanism	<p>1. Teachers' mutual assessment online, i.e. a peer assessment mechanism.</p> <p>2. Supervisors' online teaching assessment, such as supervisors' entering online classrooms to evaluate.</p> <p>3. Learners' assessment online teaching assessment, learners can evaluate each online course.</p>
	Quality improvement	<p>1. HEIs, schools and departments have the mechanism of regularly monitoring and evaluating the online teaching quality.</p> <p>2. HEIs, schools and departments publish the assessment results publicly.</p> <p>3. Both teachers and learners can use the assessment results for future quality improvements for online teaching and learning.</p>

V. Process of Quality Standards

Any HEIs/programs may request APQN to implement the online review of A APQN Quality Label for Online-Teaching Quality Assurance or request APQN and another QAA who has been registered with Asia Pacific Quality Register (APQR) by APQN to implement a joint review.

The APQN Board is responsible for organizing the online review, ensuring good practice in the

review process and selecting and briefing the members of the panel to be responsible for the review. The assessment process is below:



V. Review Result

The review result would be four categories: 1) fully achieved; 2) substantially achieved; 3) partially achieved; 4) non-achieved, based on the standards and criteria against the Chiba principal.

The review result will be valid for a period of five years. The APQN Board has the right to cancel the APQN Quality Label if there are circumstances that question the substantial adherence of the HEI/programme to the review criteria. An application for renewal is mandatory after the first five years expire. This application should include documentary evidence of how the quality criteria are being upheld and other improvements are being made. A visit of the expert group can be organized to re-review the status quo.

The award of APQN Quality Label may take place at the APQN Annual Conference and AGM during which the HEIs/programs receive certificates.

The logo of APQN Quality Label is designed as follows:



VII. Cost

The total cost is 3000 USD: 1500 USD is taken as an indicative figure for the Secretariat's services, as well as income for APQN. Honorarium for 3 reviewers is 1500 USD, each 500 USD as a lump-sum amount. For the whole reviewing process, the costing would be:

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Item Amount</i>	<i>USD</i>
1	Services of APQN Secretariat for APQN Quality Label	1500
2	Honorarium for 3 reviewers (each 500 USD as a lump-sum amount)	1500
Total (USD)		3000

Note: (1) In case of the site-visit is conducted, the air fare and accommodation and all related expenses are to be borne by the applicant HEI/programme directly. (2) The reviewers will be chosen from APQN Consultant Database (<http://www.apqn.org/services/search-consultants>) consisted of 236 consultant from over 53 countries and territories.

VIII. Further Information

1. The quality assurance agencies who are interested in the international accreditation of HEIs and educational programs with APQN recognition are welcomed to submit a proposal to APQN Secretariat.
2. Any other feedbacks are welcomed to APQN Secretariat (apqnsecretariat@163.com) and Prof/Dr. Jianxin Zhang, Project Leader (948661302@qq.com).