

**SACS-COC SUMMER INSTITUTE  
J.W. Marriott Grande Lakes Orlando**

Break out Session  
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# *All content taken from SACS document, “The Quality Enhancement Plan”, 2007 edition*

## **I. Overview**

### **A. Overview**

1. The QEP should be embedded within the institution’s ongoing integrated institution-wide planning and evaluation process and may very well evolve from this existing process or from other processes related to the institution’s internal reaffirmation review.
2. Institutions report that the QEP “has caused us to become much more intentional and focused about an important element of our mission” and “helped us put in motion our creativity.”

### **B. Student Learning Defined**

1. Within the context of the QEP as a requirement for reaffirmation, the Commission on Colleges broadly defines student learning as changes in: knowledge, skills, behaviors, or values
2. Institutions must specify realistic measurable student learning outcomes appropriate for their focused topic.

### **C. Institutional Support**

1. How many people need to be involved in the development and implementation of their QEP’s and the hours involved in connecting with people.
2. Consensus among key constituency groups that the QEP, rather than being merely a requirement for reaffirmation of accreditation, can result in significant, even transforming, improvements in the quality of student learning.
3. Broad-based institutional participation of all appropriate campus constituencies in the identification of the topic or issue to be addressed by the QEP.
  - Involve faculty collectively
  - Direct impact on student learning
  - A bottom-up process

- Evaluation by the stakeholders
  - Helped to establish a strong basis of support for our project
4. Careful review of research and best practices related to the topic or issue.
  5. Allocation of adequate human and financial resources to develop, implement, and sustain the QEP.
  6. Implementation strategies that include a clear timeline and assignment of responsibilities.
  7. A structure established for evaluating the extent to which the goals set for the plan are attained.

## **II. Developing the QEP**

### **A. Overview**

1. Processes for developing the QEP will differ among institutions, depending on such factors as size, campus culture, internal governance structures, mission, the focus of the QEP, physical and human resources, and numerous other variables that may determine what is appropriate or even possible.
2. Sufficient time for extensive investigation, discussion, and refinement.
3. Time for drafts to be circulated, debated, and revised
4. Gather and build support for the QEP
5. Methodical, logical, and inclusive
6. Developing a QEP is a recursive rather than a linear process, much like any other important, deliberative, and reflective planning and writing.
7. Focus and framework
8. Shift and evolve as the research, writing, talking, and campus participation occur.

9. The focus will become sharper
10. The goals better defined
11. A substantial amount of ambiguity is to be expected during the creative phase of the development process.

## **B. Leadership**

1. The institution's Leadership Team is charged with providing oversight for both the Compliance Review and the development of the Quality Enhancement Plan.
2. Assign the day-to-day responsibility to a select group representing greatest knowledge, interest in the ideas, content, processes, and methodologies, expertise in planning and assessment and in managing
3. QEP Steering Committee. Steering Committees frequently establish sub-committees

## **C. Step One: Selecting the Topic**

### **1. Process**

- a. Explain the nature and purpose of the QEP to members of the institutional community.
- b. Public relations office
- c. Web pages, rallies, contests
- d. Vehicles that will work within their campus culture
- e. Engages a limited number of faculty, administrators, and students.
- f. Engage a wide cross-section, discuss potential topics.
- g. Smaller working group, more focused topics
- h. Institutions need to identify a process that harmonizes with their size and governance structure
- i. Ensure widespread participation by all pertinent institutional

constituent groups faculty, administrators, students, and perhaps even alumni and trustees

- j. Faculty members should be appropriately represented in the early phases of the development of the QEP
- k. Site Review Committees see less faculty involvement than expected, they are apt to write a recommendation calling for the involvement of faculty “in all decisions regarding the implementation of the QEP”

*Peer Evaluator’s Perspective: Has the institution demonstrated that various institutional constituencies have been involved in the identification of the topic for the QEP?*

## **2. Sources of Inspiration**

- a. Key issues emerging from institutional assessment
- b. Exploration of the institution’s culture, strategic planning, goals, mission, and assessment results is a good place to begin the search for an appropriate topic.
- c. Tapping into issues centered on student learning where shared interests, concerns, and aspirations have surfaced or where data have already been collected and analyzed may prove fruitful.
- d. Topic for the QEP need not be a brand new idea. QEP that extends, modifies, redirects, or strengthens an improvement that is already underway. Planning stages prior to the beginning of preparations for reaffirmation.
- e. May not, however, submit a QEP that describes initiative that are fully realized
- f. Base selection of the topic for the QEP on empirical data and analysis of these data.
- g. Studies on best practices in higher education and other national and peer group data derived from carefully designed research.
- h. Needs assessment
- i. Data such as attendance figures, survey feedback, student satisfaction and nationally standardized measures are examples

of information that can be used to justify the need for improvement.

*Peer Evaluator's Perspective: Does the topic link to the institution's mission/vision? How does it fit into the institution's strategic plan?*

### **3. Scope**

- a. A critical factor in the selection of the topic is the determination of the scope of the initiative. While the QEP is not expected to touch the life of every student at the institution, the topic does need to be sufficiently broad to be viewed as significant to the institution and as a major enhancement to student learning. On the other hand, it also needs to be focused enough to provide a manageable framework for development and implementation
- b. Goals and evaluation strategies must be clearly and directly linked to improving the quality of student learning.
- c. For a list of titles of QEP's submitted for Commission review, go to [www.sacs.coc.org](http://www.sacs.coc.org), click onto "Institutional Resources," and refer to Information.
- d. Selected topic requires definition. Develop operational definitions of terms

*Peer Evaluator's Perspective: has the institution provided a clear and concise description of the critical issues to be addressed?*

*Peer Evaluator's Perspective: Has the institution identified a significant issue related to student learning and justified its use for the Quality Enhancement Plan?*

## **D. Step Two: Defining the Student Learning Outcomes**

### **1. Establishment of specific student learning outcomes**

- a. Process outcomes listed below describe what the institution will do as part of its QEP rather than what student will do as a result of the experience.
  - The college will establish baseline performance measures for mathematics skills

- The faculty will use technology resources to develop and implement at least twelve web-enhanced classes over a five-year period.
  - The Graduate School will provide professional development opportunities for faculty and staff
- b. Knowledge, skills, behaviors, and values of students. What will we expect students to know post-implementation of the QEP that they don't know now? What will we expect them to do then that they can't do now? How do we expect their behavior to change? What changes in values do we anticipate?
- Graduates will be able to describe the fundamental elements of the social, political, and economic reality of a country or region other than [their own]
  - Graduates will be able to describe a single event from their own cultural point of view and from that of another culture
  - Student who take the developmental math courses will succeed in the next level math course
  - As the sender, the graduating student will generate respectful communications that have a clear purpose and are well organized, grammatically correct, and appropriate to the audience and mode of communication.

Notice how these statements focus on changes in knowledge, skills, behaviors, or values. Notice they are (1) specific, (2) focused, and (3) measurable

*Peer Evaluator's Perspective: Has the institution identified the benefits to be derived from the QEP?*

*Peer Evaluator's Perspective: Has the institution described the relationship between the QEP topic and student learning?*

*Peer Evaluator's Perspective: Has the institution provided relevant and appropriate goals and objectives to improve student learning?*

*Peer Evaluator's Perspective: Has the institution developed student learning outcomes that can be expected to lead to observable results?*

## **E. Step Three: Researching the Topic**

### **1. QEP should be grounded in a review of best practices**

- a. Take full advantage of the available literature on the topic
- b. Many institutions use this step as an opportunity to build a broad base of support for the initiative by engaging a wide range of colleagues in the development of executive summaries of the items on the bibliography
- c. Supplement that paper review with conversations with current practitioners.
- d. Might also help to uncover potential consultants for the professional development component of the QEP or to find that conferences and workshops as an initial strategy for involving key individuals
- e. Identifying this evaluator early on carries with it the obvious advantage of getting on that person's calendar

*Peer Evaluator's Perspective: Does the QEP provide evidence of careful analysis of the institutional context in which the goals will be implemented and of consideration of best practices related to the topic?*

## **F. Step Four: Identifying the Actions to be Implemented**

1. Needs to sift through that research and identify the actions to be taken and the activities to be implemented on campus to bring about the desired enhancement of student learning. Ensuring that the list is complete

## **G. Step Five: Establishing the Timeline for Implementation**

### **1. Timeline for the actions identified**

- a. Activities needed to produce the anticipated student learning outcomes and the realities of the human and financial resources available throughout the life of the project.
- b. Not prescribed a set timeframe
- c. All activities are included on the timeline, rolled out in an orderly and manageable sequence.

- d. Actions that will probably affect the desired learning outcomes
- e. A timeline with a high probability of adherence

*Peer Evaluator's Perspective: Is the timeline realistic? Does it include professional development activities and administration of assessments? Does it position the institution to develop a meaningful report five years after reaffirmation?*

#### **H. Step Six: Organizing for Success**

1. Organize to develop the Quality Enhancement Plan. Peer evaluators expect the institution to have organized to implement the Quality Enhancement Plan
2. Describe the infrastructure for the implementation and the continuation of the QEP. Who is responsible for each activity? Are they qualified to fulfill those responsibilities? Who is responsible for keeping within budget, for monitoring progress, or for modifying the plan? Do these individuals have sufficient time to complete their task? Will they be appropriately compensated for their efforts?

*Peer Evaluator's Perspective: Has the institution assigned qualified individuals to implement and sustain the QEP? Are appropriate administrative processes in place?*

#### **I. Step Seven: Identifying Necessary Resources**

1. Important step: Estimating the costs of the physical and human resources necessary for developing, implementing, and sustaining the plan.
2. Does not require substantial investment
3. Every plan requires identification of personnel time, money, and material necessary for its successful implementation.
4. Anticipate all the personnel costs, costs for instructional and testing materials, and all of the other related expenses.
5. Strategies for faculty development be specified and that budgets for their implementation be detailed, is a common theme in recommendations writing by On-Site Review

6. Appropriately detailed budget: Identify the sources of the funds. How much is new money and where will it come from? How much is a re-allocation?

*Peer Evaluator's Perspective: Has the institution provided evidence of sufficient financial, physical, and human resources to implement, sustain, and complete the QEP? Have sufficient academic resources been allocated?*

#### **J. Step Eight: Assessing the Success of the QEP**

1. QEP should be multifaceted, attention to key objectives and benchmarks to be achieved in the planning and implementation, as well as to overall goals of the plan
2. Overall goals of the QEP, primary emphasis needs to be given to the impact of the QEP on the quality of student learning.
3. Expect details---names of assessment instruments, timelines for their administration, processes for the review of the assessment results---rather than general descriptions of intentions.
4. Multiple strategies using both quantitative and qualitative measures should be employed, and student learning outcomes will require careful analysis for consistency of results across measures and for variation among the outcomes. Measures both valid and reliable, Comprehensive plan: flexible, subsequent changes to implementation activities and timelines as a result of the analysis of previous assessment results

*Peer Evaluator's Perspective: Has the institution developed means for assessing the success of its QEP? Has the institution identified relevant internal and external measures? Has the institution developed a system for monitoring its progress? Has the institution described the process by which the results of evaluation will be used to improve student learning?*

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