

NAAS - iNACOL Standards for Quality Online Programs

Institutional Standards

Institutional standards address the organization's vision, mission, philosophy and beliefs. The institutional standards define those elements critical to creating the operational framework of the online program, including the governance, leadership, resources and organizational commitment to meet the program's vision and mission.

- 1 **Mission Statement** - A mission statement clearly conveys the purpose and goals of the online program. It serves as the basis for the program's day-to-day operations, as well as a guide for its strategic plans for the future. Communication between and buy-in from stakeholders is a critical component of a mission statement.
 - 1.1 Clearly states the purpose of the organization.
 - 1.2 Involves multiple stakeholders.
 - 1.3 Indicates that online learning is the focus of the organization.
 - 1.4 Is clear concise stating who the organization is, what it does and whom it serves.
 - 1.5 Is made available to the public and reviewed periodically.
 - 1.6 Demonstrates a commitment to measurable quality.

- 2 **Governance** - Governance is typically provided by a Board of Directors, an Advisory Board or a School Board. Governance and leadership work hand-in-hand, developing the operations policies for the program and its leadership and staff.
 - 2.1 Members should have knowledge of the K-12 online education field, or receive appropriate training after joining the board.
 - 2.2 Provide the administration of the organization with necessary resources.
 - 2.3 Fulfills the role defined for it in the by-laws of the institution.
 - 2.4 Works together with program leadership to develop policies and procedures that adhere to state educational statutes and/or regional accrediting agencies.
 - 2.5 The corporate status of the online program is clearly defined with no legal or proprietary ambiguities.

- 3 **Leadership** - Leadership is responsible to the program's governance body, and is responsible for setting and meeting the operational and strategic goals in support of the program's mission and vision statements.
 - 3.1 Provides a productive collaborative environment for learning and work, and leadership necessary to plan both day-to-day operations and the long-term future of the online program.

- 3.2 Is responsible for meeting the organization's annual goals and communicating these goals to its constituents.
- 3.3 Maintains a disciplined knowledge of its future with projections of income, expense, enrollment and trends in its educational and business environment.
- 3.4 Has measures in place to ensure quality, integrity and validity of information.

4 **Organizational Staffing** - Appropriate levels of staffing are critical to the success of an online program. Staff needs to be well-trained in order to successfully meet their performance goals, and need to be provided with appropriate levels of support, resources, feedback and management.

- 4.1 Professional teaching, administrative and support staff is adequate to carry out the mission.
- 4.2 The staff are adequately trained and educated to carry out the mission of the program.
- 4.3 The staff are certified (certificated) as required by state regulation:
 - a. Administrative Staff
 - b. Teaching Staff
 - c. Counseling Staff
- 4.4 There is a process for evaluating the program's staff and faculty.
- 4.5 Clearly defined roles and responsibilities are evident to create collegial team to assure effective delivery of quality education.

5. **Organizational Commitment** - Governance, leadership and staff are responsible for creating an organization that demonstrates a commitment to attaining the program's goals and mission statement. Everyone within the organization understands the mission statement and works to achieve it.

- 5.1 Activities and accomplishments of the organization are aligned to the mission statement.
- 5.2 Programs that function under the authority of another educational organization have a demonstrated commitment from the parent organization to support the implementation and ongoing operation of this program.
- 5.3 Sustainability of the program is articulated through strategic and operational planning and implemented through ongoing operations (e.g. commitment to sustainable funding, maintaining quality staff and compliance with applicable educational statutes.)
- 5.4 Is accredited by a recognized accrediting body.

6. **Financial and Material Resources** - Adequate financial and material resources are allocated to the mission of the organization. These resources are appropriately planned for and expended using sound business practices.
 - 6.1 Are provided to assure a quality educational experience in alignment with the organization's mission statement.
 - 6.2 Are managed in a responsible manner according to prescribed budget and accounting principles.
 - 6.3 Allocation in support of mission statement demonstrates sustainability over time.

7. **Equity and Access** - The online program's policies and practice support student's ability to access the program. Accommodations are available to meet a variety of student needs.
 - 7.1 Policies clearly state eligibility requirements of the program.
 - 7.2 Provides appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities.
 - 7.3 Ensures that students have equitable access to the program consistent with its mission and purpose.

8. **Integrity and Accountability**- Leadership is transparent in its management of the program, providing regular and timely information on progress towards achievement of goals, alignment with policies and standards, and achievement of student learning outcomes.
 - 8.1 The online program discloses accurate information relating to its mission, accreditation, courses and programs, services, policies, fees, recruitment processes and incentives and other factors considered important to prospective and current students and stakeholders.
 - 8.2 The program results in learning appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the course, program or diploma completion requirements.

Teaching and Learning Standards

Teaching and learning standards focus on how an online program develops or chooses its curricula; how the program's teachers deliver that curriculum to students; and how students' progress in the curriculum is assessed. The NAAS/iNACOL National Standards of Quality for Online Courses focus on issues of curriculum and assessment at the individual course level, while the iNACOL National Standards of Quality for Online Teaching focus on ensuring individual teacher quality. These standards assume that a quality online program meets those individual course and teacher level standards and identifies the most critical aspects of those standards as well as a more comprehensive, "macro-level" set of standards to truly be considered a **quality online program**.

9. Curriculum - A quality online program will have a well thought-out approach to its curriculum and course design whether it develops its own courses and/or licenses curriculum from other educational providers.
 - 9.1 Has clearly stated and attainable educational goals.
 - 9.2 Is clear and coherent in its organization.
 - 9.3 Utilizes quality instructional materials and appropriate technology that enables and enriches student learning
 - 9.4 Demonstrates rigorous course content aligned with state standards.
 - 9.5 Provides for high-degree of interaction between teacher, learner, parents and among learners themselves.
 - 9.6 Embeds critical thinking, problem solving, analysis, integration and synthesis abilities in learning activities.
 - 9.7 Meets requirements:
 - a. Appropriate state and national standards.
 - b. American with Disabilities Act.
 - c. Copyright and fair use.
 - 9.8 Is designed to accommodate different learning styles.
 - 9.9 Is designed with consideration for time and place limitations of students.
 - 9.10 Information is provided to students, parents and mentors on how to communicate with the online teacher and course provider, including information on the process for these communications.

10. **Instruction** - A quality online program takes a comprehensive and integrated approach to ensuring excellent online teaching for its students. This process begins with promising practices but is equally committed to continuous improvement and adaptation to student learning needs through professional development.
 - 10.1 Is grounded in the program's mission, beliefs and expectations for student learning.
 - 10.2 Is supported by research and best practice.
 - 10.3 Is continually based on assessment of stakeholder's needs.
 - 10.4 Is adaptable to best serve different student learning styles.
 - 10.5 Includes frequent teacher to student interaction, teacher to parent interaction and fosters frequent student-to-student interaction.
 - 10.6 Is sensitive to time and place limitations of students.
 - 10.7 Faculty:
 - a. Holds the required state certification.
 - b. Are trained in and demonstrate competency in:
 - i. Online instructional methodologies.
 - ii. Online teaching and learning technologies.
 - 10.8 The course instruction includes activities that engage students in active learning.
 - 10.9 Readability levels, written language assignments and mathematical requirements are appropriate for the course content and the students.

11. **Assessment of Student Performance** - A quality online learning program values student academic performance and takes a comprehensive, integrated approach to measuring student achievement. This includes use of multiple assessment measures and strategies that align closely to both program and learner objectives, with timely, relevant feedback to all stakeholders.
 - 11.1 Enables:
 - a. Students to monitor their own learning process>
 - b. Teachers to adapt their instruction to meet learner needs.
 - 11.2 Uses multiple methods to assess student performance.
 - 11.3 Assesses a variety of types of student performances.
 - 11.4 Informs ongoing course design and revisions.
 - 11.5 Measures student attainment of course's educational goals.
 - 11.6 Ensures academic integrity to maintain validity and reliability of assessments – monitored by school staff.
 - 11.7 Grading policy and practices are easy to understand.
 - 11.8 The passing score for any "test for credit" options are determined by the district or school.

Support Standards

Support standards address the organization's academic, administrative, guidance and technical services that are critical to meeting the needs of all participants in the online program.

12. **Faculty:** The online learning program supports the faculty by providing opportunities for them to develop their professional skills through mentoring, professional development, and technical assistance.
 - 12.1 Provides and encourages participation in induction and mentoring programs.
 - 12.2 Provides regular feedback regarding teacher performance.
 - 12.3 Provides a wide variety of professional development opportunities.
 - 12.4 Provides timely, effective technical support.
13. **Students:** Student support services address the various needs of students at different levels within the organization. The levels of support are appropriate and adequate for a student's success.
 - 13.1 Provides an orientation to online technologies and successful online students practices.
 - 13.2 Provides academic and administrative services that match their academic and developmental needs .
 - 13.3 Provides support services for individual needs.
 - 13.4 Provides access to learning and assessment content, instruction, technologies and resources.

- 13.5 Establishes standards for teacher to student communication.
 - 13.6 Provides timely and meaningful assessment feedback.
 - 13.7 Provides timely, effective technical support.
14. **Guidance Services:** Guidance services support students and parents to ensure the success of the online program. Depending on the program, these services are either directly provided by the program or a service provider, or in the case of supplemental programs, these services may be provided by the local school.
- 14.1 Ensures academic advising is provided for students to meet requirements of the program and/or school.
 - 14.2 Provides staff training in unique student needs of online learning.
 - 14.3 Provides tools and/or information to assist students in determining the appropriateness of specific courses for their academic needs.
 - 14.4 Understands the network of services available to support online learning.
15. **Organizational Support:** Organizational support oversees the instructional learning environment as it is conveyed through technology. Some organizational support services may be distributed between the program and other entities, depending on the physical location where the students are taking their online courses.
- 15.1 Provides an online learning environment that is appropriately maintained, secure and is a productive and safe work environment for students and staff.
 - 15.2 Provides a work environment consisting of the resources, tools and organizational policies that enables staff to implement the program's mission, beliefs and objectives.
16. **Parents/Guardians:** Parents and guardians plan an integral part in their students' educational life. They work as a team with faculty, administrators, guidance services, and organizational support to ensure a quality educational experience for their students.
- 16.1 Are provided information about the program and successful online students practices.
 - 16.2 Receive timely responses from faculty and staff.

Evaluation Standards

A culture of continual program improvement is critical in becoming a quality online program and maintaining that status. Evaluation efforts are utilized to both verify the program is meeting its intended purposes and identify where improvements can be made. The cycle is completed by taking this information and developing concrete plans for program improvement.

17. **Program Evaluation:** Program evaluation is both internal and external and informs all processes that effect teaching and learning. Internal evaluations often are more informal in nature and may provide immediate feedback on a targeted area of inquiry. External programs normally look at the entire program from an external perspective that will bring additional credibility to the results.

17.1 Conducts ongoing internal evaluations that include:

- a. Regularly conducting and analyzing data based on national, state or program metrics.
- b. Regularly using clearly articulated measures to evaluate learners.
- c. Determining program success by measuring student achievement and satisfaction based on valid and reliable assessment techniques.
- d. Ensuring students participates in state or national standardized testing, as appropriate and evaluating results against state and national data.
- e. Consistently evaluating faculty to assure instructional quality, using clear, consistent policies, measure and procedures.
- f. Reviewing and evaluating courses to ensure quality, consistency with the curriculum, currency and advancement of the student learning outcomes.

17.2 Conducts periodic external evaluations that include:

- a. Validating internal evaluations process and results.
- b. Independently assessing program toward goals, mission and strategic plan of program.
- c. Informing an improvement plan for the online program.

17.3 Communicates evaluation results to program stakeholders.

18. **Program Improvement** - Improvement planning focuses on using program evaluations, research, and promising practices to improve student performance and organizational effectiveness. It fosters continuous improvement across all aspects of the organization and ensures the program is focused on accomplishing its mission and vision.

18.1 Uses strategic, long-range and operational planning and evaluation to continuously improve its educational programs and services.

18.2 Is based on:

- a. Advancement of program's vision and mission.
- b. Student achievement.
- c. Internal and external evaluation.
- d. Current research in the relevant areas.
- e. Best practice.

18.3 Includes provisions for:

- a. Beta testing and peer review.

- b. Satisfaction surveys by students, parents, teachers and schools as appropriate.
- c. Evaluation of curriculum and instruction as it relates to student achievement.
- d. Regular online teacher performance evaluations.
- e. Reviewing and updating policies and procedures.
- f. Reviewing appropriateness, effectiveness and quality of teaching and learning technologies .

18.4 In alignment with the strategic plan, organizational goals are updated annually based on past year's accomplishments.