Title: Guidelines for Quality Control Process

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Scope:
In order for the LCTCS Institutions to ensure quality courses that are aligned with the Southern Regional Education Board’s (further known as SREB) Best Practices, the Institution must make certain the quality of the content and the credentials of the Faculty.

Framework:
Courses should have certain elements that are common in structure. While not all courses will have the same structure and elements, certain aspects should be present. The following is a possible list of elements:

- **High Standards**: a team of instructors, curriculum specialists, and subject-matter experts to ensure the highest national and local standards of quality should develop every online course.
- **Innovative Multimedia**: As budgets permit, Video, graphics, sound, and text should be integrated into all courses to challenge the imagination, stimulate thinking, and strengthen skills, engendering lifelong curiosity and enthusiasm for learning.
- **Wide Range of Subjects**: offer courses in a variety of subjects including mathematics, science, social studies, and language arts.
- **Accountability**: Student progress and mastery of materials needs to be proven with a wide range of tools and strategies. An online instructor should provide guidance and grading of subjective assessments. All assessments are tracked in an Online Grade book. Instructors have access to all student tests and quiz results, and have complete control over grading. Reporting features in the Blackboard platform allow instructors to view course accesses for individual students or groups, in a variety of ways.
- **Flexibility**: Online instructors should have the ability to supplement and customize courses. Content can be added to fill gaps in state standards or local requirements, and teachers can add material in order to meet personal preferences or student needs. Instructors can also adapt or create assessments (either subjective or objective) and make full use of a variety of communications tools.
Introduction:

The Electronic Learning Committee of the LCTCS (ELC-LCTCS) regards this Guide as an important contribution to the development and maintenance of quality assurance mechanisms in system. Adoption of the practices identified below and modified where appropriate to meet local needs, will provide colleges and campuses with a means of demonstrating that their course development and review procedures provide an important contribution to their quality assurance mechanisms and evidence of the steps taken to ensure that accountability requirements are met.

The guidelines have been developed so that institutions can adopt them, where appropriate, to:

- demonstrate that courses are consistent with, and assist in, the achievement of institutional mission, purpose, and objectives;
- make clear the purpose and objectives of each of the courses offered by each university;
- contribute to monitoring, maintenance and improvement of standards and quality;
- support and enhance student learning;
- demonstrate to interested parties the detailed procedures followed in course development;

The following encapsulation of much of the current best practice within the SREB will assist in fulfilling these objectives, by providing the system with a useful model, which can be adapted to suit local requirements.

Development of new Course Proposals:

Effective course development will include the following steps:

1. The establishment of administrative mechanisms and procedures to ensure that administrative, academic and resource implications are thoroughly examined and that there are well publicized and commonly accepted routes for course development proposals to be considered, rejected, revised and/or adopted.

2. Development of preliminary plan and discussion within the system, stating the perceived need for the course and setting out the relationship of the proposed course to the system’s mission and strategic plans. Initial proposals for courses may spring from departmental innovation, special reviews undertaken in response to advances in knowledge, system restructuring, inter-departmental discussions, evidence of demand arising from consultations with students and graduates, discussions with professional bodies or employers, or in response to perceived national or local priorities.

3. Preparation of a formal detailed proposal, which includes:
   - the purpose of the program of study;
• the academic content, structure, and level of the program and the learning objectives;
• assessment practices and criteria which reflect the aims and objectives of the course;
• the teaching methodology to be employed;
• the lines of responsibility for the conduct of the course;
• comment on resource implications, including support services;
• the place of the new proposal within the system’s profile and the impact on the system;
• impact on other courses; and
• outline of the ways by which the course will be regularly evaluated.

4. Wider consultation involving and inviting comment from the community, relevant professional associations, students and groups largely composed of academic and professional peers to assess matters such as the demand and necessity for the course and the amount of support which can be given to it.

5. Detailed proposal to be subjected to formal accreditation processes of the system involving the chief academic bodies of the system.

6. Inclusion of the course in the system’s educational profile.

7. Establishment of review mechanisms and timetables.

**Monitoring and review of existing programs of study:**

The effective delivery of courses also depends on having in place appropriate mechanisms for the monitoring of existing programs of study to ensure that they continue to operate to fulfill institutional mission and objectives.

Colleges and campuses need to ensure that reviews of all courses are undertaken on a rolling basis so that every course is regularly reviewed on a similar basis as that established for the development of new courses.

- **Effective course review will involve:**
  - Examination of each course in the context of the changes which have taken place since its development and/or last review, and as for course development will focus on the purpose of the program of study and its continuing relevance;
  - the academic content, structure, and level of the program and the learning objectives;
  - the continuing appropriateness of the assessment practices and criteria to the aims and objectives of the course;
  - the lines of responsibility for the conduct of the course;
  - comment on any changes to the resource implications, including support services;
  - the place of the course within the system’s current profile and its contribution to the systems’ goals and mission;
  - impact on other courses, particularly newer courses;
• comment on the operation and success of the course from professional associations, their client base, employers, students and graduates.

• systematic collection and analysis of data on matters such as application and enrolment rates, entry standards, non-completion rates, degree results, employability;

• detailed analysis of these data undertaken first at departmental or school level, and then by faculty or academic board, involving professional bodies where appropriate and peer review input leading to recommendations for expansion, revision or cessation made to the chief academic bodies of the system.

Background:

Working as a system to ensure quality course and superior electronic learning programs, this guideline serves as a template to steer faculty and administration in making quality decisions about courses that will be delivered electronically. The following areas should be observed and implemented:

1. Completeness: A course is considered complete when the following content is available: course syllabus; complete listing of either chapters, tutorials, or learning units with objectives; plans for either asynchronous or synchronous learning; appropriate assessments and/or surveys; an instructor profile along with other personnel as appointed by the instructor; the course follows the correct format (see Format section for guidelines); and content is present to support the course as if it was conducted in a classroom environment.

2. Credentials: A course will be considered having high credentials when the instructor of record has completed the appropriate training as outlined by the institution, has delivered a course online for at least three semesters, and student and administrative surveys indicate the performance of the instructor is at least above average.

3. Standardization: A course will be considered in good practice when all issues of layout are correct and are adhered to. A Quality Assurance Committee as appointed at the campus and district levels will consider a course as adhering to standardization when a checklist is completed for the course. A score of at least 90% must be achieved in order to consider a course as standard.

4. Validity: A course will be considered valid when it is registered and approved by the appropriate licensing board or agency. If a degree, diploma, or certificate program is not offered online, but 25% or more of the courses are offered online, the courses must be submitted to the Board of Regents for approval. If a degree program is not offered online but more than 50% of the courses are offered online, the Board of Regents and SACS-COC or COE must be notified and the courses registered to be considered valid. If a degree program is to be offered online, approval from the Accreditation Agency, the Board of Regents and the governing Boards must be valid.

Summary:

a. All electronic and hybrid course(s) must be reported to the System and the Board of Regents.

b. Courses that are a part of a degree program, and have between 25% and 49% of the total courses offered online; require the approval of the Board of Regents.
c. Courses that are a part of a degree program, and have between 50% and 100% of the total courses offered online; require the approval of the Governing Board, Board of Regents, and Accreditation Agency.

5. The QUICK Checklist can be used to score and survey a course. The checklist should be forwarded to the E-Learning Program Coordinator and then to the Blackboard Administrator for reporting and classification purposes. (The SREC “Electronic Campus” only wants courses and programs that are delivered 100% electronically, entered into the databases.)

The ELC-LCTCS recommends that each college or district develop, within the framework set out in these guidelines, its own set of course development guidelines which reflect the institution's own structure and priorities.