

# A Case Study Evaluation of Quality Standards and Online Faculty Development

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A CASE STUDY EVALUATION OF QUALITY STANDARDS  
AND ONLINE FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Education  
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at the University of Central Florida  
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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation in practice was designed to provide an evaluation case study of two institutions, one college and one university, in the field of online learning and quality assurance. The writer evaluated these two institutions of higher learning to discover what online teaching criteria are required and what quality assurance processes are being used to assess the quality of the institutions' online courses.

An analysis of the data revealed that both institutions were at the appropriate stage of development, support, training and quality assurance measures for their sizes, online populations and for the length of time they have been involved in online learning.

Findings revealed that both institutions had a quality assurance process in place that is appropriate to their location, population and faculty. There is much to be learned by examining the two different credentialing and quality assurance approaches to online teaching and learning that these two different institutions employ for anyone interested in improving their institutions' processes.

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, who believed in me and supported me in all of my dreams, goals, and adventures. Mom and dad, you have always been proud of my accomplishments, prayed for me, and cheered me on.

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# CHAPTER 1

## THE PROBLEM AND ITS CLARIFYING COMPONENTS

### Introduction

As online and blended course offerings continue to increase and more faculty who have never taught online or have limited online teaching experience are transitioning to teaching in this format, the need for adequately preparing and supporting these faculty and their courses increases (Allen & Seaman, 2011, 2014). Additionally, as assessment and accountability in higher education is on the rise, measures of quality, benchmarking tools, quality assurance rubrics, and standards for online courses are becoming a key foci of many institutions of higher learning. This chapter explains the problem of practice, the purpose and scope, context, setting, limitations, and need for this type of study. This chapter also provides definitions of key terms to be used throughout this dissertation in practice.

At the time of this study, the researcher's institution was re-examining the online teaching credentialing and quality assurance processes it had in place in light of an external evaluation which was completed approximately two years ago. The researcher's institution has been engaged in offering online courses for over 10 years and has many faculty development training and support classes available to prepare online instructors. The institution also has used a quality assurance rubric to train online faculty in the design of courses as well as to assess their quality. Nevertheless, clear definitions of blended and online learning and consistent college, department or campus-wide credentialing procedures have not been established for new online faculty.

Thus, at the time of the present study, work groups had been formed to examine the following areas: faculty preparedness to teach online, student readiness and success data, course and curriculum design, dean, department chair and administrator training in regard to evaluating online courses and professional development offerings, training, and support. Also being considered were quality assurance measures and use of a quality assurance rubric.

#### Dissertation in Practice Problem

The problem of practice that this dissertation addressed was the inconsistent standards for online faculty and quality assurance measures at higher education institutions. This quality assurance evaluation used a multiple case study design and explored the criteria, preparation, and support of online faculty members at the two institutions that were the focus of this research. Additionally, this research study examined the quality assurance efforts at these two institutions. Moreover, this dissertation in practice observed the correlations between the requirements and preparation of online faculty as these credentials align with the quality assurance procedures at the given institutions. These findings were used to determine what stage the institutions were at in regard to adopting and supporting online teaching.

#### Research Questions:

1. What are the similarities of the institutions' best practices in quality assurance for online teaching and learning?

2. What are the differences between these institutions' best practices in quality assurance for online teaching and learning?
3. What stage are the institutions currently in supporting online learning teaching and learning?

#### *Sub-questions*

1. What credentials are faculty at the selected institutions required to have prior to teaching online?
2. How are faculty prepared to teach online classes at the selected institutions?
3. How do the selected institutions of higher learning assure the quality of online courses?
4. Does the training or expected credentials of the faculty match up with the online course quality expectations of the institution?

#### Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this dissertation in practice was to conduct a quality assurance evaluation using a multiple case study design to observe two institutions of higher learning and their approaches to online teaching. This study was conducted to explore how the target institutions train their online faculty, how they develop online courses, and how they support their online faculty and courses. The purpose of this study was also to examine the criteria required to teach online and the quality assurance measures in place

to evaluate online course quality. A related purpose was to determine if these criteria and these standards were aligned.

This study addressed the need for consistency in the quality of online courses. Often faculty development and training programs have template courses from which facilitators teach or offer template courses for credit, but colleges as a whole do not often have the same resources for credit courses (Burgess, Barth, & Mersereau, 2008). Likewise, there has often been a lack of consistency in the training, development and experience of online faculty members as well as the quality and format of their courses. These problems have been concerns at the researcher's institution and created the interest for conducting this research study.

This study provided the researcher with an opportunity to deeply investigate the actions other institutions were taking in order to compare and contrast these practices in order to identify best practices and expand the pool of research in this important area. As mentioned, this study enabled the researcher to make recommendations for improving or implementing some, all, or most of what the other institutions are doing to improve the processes for preparing, supporting and developing online faculty members. In turn, this may benefit colleges or institutions of higher learning as a more consistent course development system could ensure more consistency in the online courses offered and potentially improve course quality.

### Context and Setting of Evaluation

The settings for this quality assurance evaluation study, which used a multiple case study design, were The University of Central Florida and Lord Fairfax Community College. Case studies of institutional procedures and practices were created in order to deeply examine the context, setting, and practices of each institution. Some of the reasons why these two institutions were chosen are as follows. Both are multi-campus institutions with reputable online quality assurance and professional development practices. Lord Fairfax Community College is a community college which is similar to the researcher's institution and the University of Central Florida is where the majority of students from the researcher's institution transfer after earning an Associate degree. Additionally, the researcher compared and contrasted the quality assurance processes and requirements of online faculty members at a community college and a university in order to expand the knowledge base of such practices and to suggest potential improvements or validate the current structure and processes of the researcher's home institution.

Existing documents, protocols, credentialing criteria training, and quality assurance practices were gathered and assessed from each institution in order to complete the evaluation study. Furthermore, surveys of key stakeholders at each institution were conducted in order to gather deep, rich informative data to construct and develop the case studies.



### Delimitations

Some potential delimitations have been identified. This study was not conducted to specifically examine student or faculty readiness. Nevertheless, the impact of quality assurance measures on the student is an area for further research. Instead, this study addressed hybrid and blended courses and the development of faculty who teach these courses. This study was conducted to examine one institution that does and one institution that does not use the Quality Matters rubric (Quality Matters, 2015) for online course quality (See Appendix A). The researcher made this decision because the researcher's institution and experience has been with this rubric as a tool for assuring online course quality and course design. Therefore, by examining one school that did use the rubric and one that did not, the researcher was able to compare and contrast two different approaches to the problem of practice. This choice also offered the researcher a lens to able to view how one institution may use the rubric differently than the researcher's institution. Additionally, the researcher also learned what the institution that does not use the rubric uses to assure quality in its online courses and what processes are in place for its faculty as they develop online courses. Moreover, this decision helped the researcher to avoid bias and provided a new perspective on the problem of practice. The research was also directly applicable to new credentialing procedures, course and curriculum design initiatives, and other institutional quality assurance and evaluation processes that were under consideration.

### Limitations

Study validity depended on the participants' answers to the survey. Because the samples were taken from the University of Central Florida and Lord Fairfax Community College, the results applied to only those two schools, their online faculty, their criteria to teach online, and their online quality assurance measures.

The following limitations are acknowledged and may apply to this research study:

1. Generalization was limited to the samples in the selected institutions:  
University of Central Florida and Lord Fairfax Community College, 2015.
2. Validity was limited by the participants who voluntarily completed the survey and their honesty when responding to the questionnaire.
3. Because the sample was taken from Lord Fairfax Community College and UCF, the results may apply only to those particular populations.
4. Internal and external validity were limited to the reliability of the qualitative instrument used in the study.

### Assumptions

The subsequent assumptions were made while researching the research questions:

1. The participants were representative and knowledgeable in online education.
2. The participants in the study responded honestly to the survey questions.
3. The participants in the survey based their answers on their own observations and views.

4. The participants answered the questionnaire without the assistance of others.

### The Need for Quality Assurance in Online Learning

As an initial step, the ever present and growing need for this type of evaluation research study was established. The researcher found that there was a growing need for quality online courses (Little, 2009; Pascarl & Reimer, 2010). Little (2009) stated, “With an increasing number of higher education courses being offered online, educators are seeking improved methods of assuring quality in Web-based courses and accrediting agencies are demanding them” (p. 411). According to Lokken and Mullins (2014), reporting on the survey results of an instructional technology committee, “In 2014, the respondents ranked the need to adequately assess distance education courses and programs as their fourth greatest challenge” (p. 11). Their survey respondents “ranked course quality assessment as one of their top four challenges” since the survey began offering it as a response option (Lokken & Mullins, 2014, p. 11).

Many institutions have begun to use quality benchmarks or rubrics to evaluate the quality of their online courses. For example, a plethora of institutions of higher education use the Quality Matters Rubric (Quality Matters, 2015). Furthermore, “The standards developed by these institutions are used in four ways: as a foundation for designing new courses, as an instructor self-evaluation tool, as a rubric for peer review, and as the basis for awarding exemplary courses” (Little, 2009a, p. 411). Thus, the use of rubrics by an institution can have multiple purposes, and this use should not be assumed to only have the purpose of assessing online courses. In “Quality Online Instruction--A Template,”

the authors discuss consistency and effective course design (Burgess, Barth, & Mersereau, 2008). The course design template mentioned in their article was based on the Quality Matters rubric. Multiple applications of the rubric can be made, including course design and development, training, and a measure for awards.

One institution that is similar to the researcher's institution that has used the Quality Matters process is Seminole State College. At the time of the present study, Seminole State was a Quality Matters subscribing institution that had begun the process of using the Quality Matters rubric to review all of its online or distance learning courses. Seminole State College's website also mentioned that "Implementing this comprehensive review process assures that we have met all of the documentation and quality standards for DL[distance learning] courses in order to maintain our college accreditation" (Seminole State, 2015). Furthermore, they alluded to the future goal that successfully completing a QM course review will ". . . soon become a requirement for all online courses at Seminole State" (Seminole State, 2015). Additionally, completing the Quality Matters Rubric workshop has been required of all of distance-learning professors at this college. This practice may become one that other institutions follow as well as quality assurance and faculty preparation to teach online become key concerns.

Other measures of quality assurance have also been used by different institutions, and there are many organizations that have provided solid guidelines and best practices for online design and instruction. Some of those are : Sloan Consortium, Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions, Council for Higher Education, American Federation of Teachers and the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (Little, 2009b). These

standards and Quality Matters can serve as benchmarking tools for online courses throughout the U.S. (Little, 2009a, p. 414). The researcher also evaluated the participating educational organizations based upon their involvement with some of these groups, benchmarks, rubrics, and online standards.

Additional providers of quality online course rubrics or institutions that have created their own are the Blackboard Exemplary Course Rubric (2014), California State at Chico's (2015a) Rubric for Online Instruction (ROI), the University of Illinois' Quality Online Course Initiative [QOCI] (2010). Michigan State University's website also provides an effective evaluation tool for online courses with a wealth of resources (Montclair State University, 2015).

Moreover, the International Association for K-12 Online Learning (INACOL) is used as a benchmarking standard in online K-12 education. INACOL is a non-profit organization whose emphasis is on research. One of its goals is to contribute to improving policy for student-centered education. The purpose of this goal is to guarantee equity and access. Furthermore, INACOL creates and develops "quality standards for emerging learning models using online, blended, and competency-based education" (INACOL, 2015, par. 5). INACOL also supports continuous improvement of online teaching and learning through the ". . . professional development of classroom, school, district and state leaders for new learning models" (INACOL, 2015, par.5). Though not the focus of this study, it does support the problem of practice and the researcher's stance on the importance of benchmarking and quality assurance standards in online and blended courses.

A report authored by the Sloan Consortium, Kaplan University, Inside Higher Ed, and Pearson was of great benefit to the researcher in identifying how much online learning has grown and in identifying how online learning outcomes compare to face-to-face classes (Allen & Seaman, 2011). These groups collaborated to provide the ninth annual report on the state of online learning in the United States. The Babson Survey Research Group designed, delivered, and analyzed the survey results in addition to partnering with the College Board.

These groups researched the following questions:

- Is online learning strategic?
- How many students are online?
- Are learning outcomes comparable to face-to-face?
- Has faculty acceptance of online learning increased?
- What training do faculty receive for teaching online?
- What is the future for online enrollment growth?

In order for any institution that wants to adopt distance learning or improve their current distance learning program, these questions are essential to consider. This important resource from Sloan and these questions provided a framework for the researcher to begin evaluating the exemplar institutions' processes (Allen & Seaman, 2011).

In 2014, Allen and Seaman's provided definitions of online learning and massively open online courses (MOOCs) as well as their importance, growth, and potential. This report also addressed if this type of learning was strategic, if learning

outcomes were comparable to traditional courses, and how many students were learning online. Additionally, student self-discipline and retention were considered (Allen & Seaman 2014). Although this was not the researcher's primary focus, the information about strategic learning initiatives was helpful in providing background information to further establish a need for the study and provides ideas for further research in regard to the effects of online learning on students.

### Definition of Terms

Blended courses: combining both face-to-face traditional classroom elements with fully online elements or resources. This term is also correlated with distance learning. (DL). Usually at least 50% of the content is delivered online. According to the Online Learning Consortium (Gunter & Gunter, 2015), "Courses that integrate online content and activities with traditional F2F class activities in a planned, pedagogically valuable manner, and where a portion of the F2F course time is actually replaced by online activity" (p. 290).

Case study: a type of comprehensive qualitative research strategy which is used to investigate occurrences in real life settings; often addresses questions of "how" or "why" to shed light on decisions, organizations, processes, programs, institutions, people, events (Yin, 1994, pp. 1, 11-12); also "the study of one particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within certain circumstances" (Stake, 1995, p. xi).

Centralized: a consolidated organizational structure that relies on one central agency, administrative group or department to make decisions for the organization as a whole

Comparative case study: see case study; a type of case study that investigates more than one case and proposes to compare and contrast certain elements of them (Yin, 1994).

Credentialing: the means, processes, steps and criteria that faculty must meet or the ways in which faculty are “certified” or deemed ready to teach online courses at an institution.

Criteria: in this case, the requirements to become an online faculty member or the credentials needed to teach online or blended or courses; also the elements being quality assured in online courses.

Decentralized: multiple organizational entities give input and make decisions regarding the organization

Descriptive case study: focuses on the details such as “the problem, context, issues, and lessons learned” of each case and may trace the history of a case over time (Creswell, 1998, p. 36).

Distance learning (DL): training, learning, education and teaching that occurs over the Internet with reduced seat time or no seat time.

Evaluation study: a qualitative research method that in this case will use of the CIPP (context, input, process, and product) approach to evaluating each case (Stufflebeam, 1983).



Faculty development: a process by which faculty members engage in scholarly activities to improve their practice, skill set, pedagogy and technology skills in order to enhance their teaching and their students' learning.

Four frames: based on the work of Bolman and Deal (2008); a means of analyzing the leadership of an organization through the political, human resources, symbolic and structural frames.

Hybrid learning or courses: Sometimes referred to as blended. Hybrid courses use a variety of instructional strategies to integrate teaching, facilitation, and web-based activities. "Hybrid learning may include the use of videos, virtual field trips, Webcasts and Webinars, curriculum specific apps, mobile devices, collaborative software packages, social media, broadcasting, multimedia projects, and more (Gunter & Gunter, 2015, p. 290).

Human resource frame: organizational leadership style of being supportive and an advocate (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

Online courses: courses delivered and/or facilitated over the Internet. This term is also related to distance learning. (DL). Typically 80% of the course is delivered online. Courses where most or all content is delivered online with very few or no face-to-face meetings (Mayadas & Miller, 2014; Online Nation, 2014).

Professional development: learning opportunities and activities in which the participant is able to enhance his/her knowledge of best practices in his/her field of practice. These opportunities can be for credentialing purpose, formal and academic, mentoring opportunities, coaching and collaborative or individual. The purpose of such

development is to improve one's practice and/or enhance one's skill set. See also Faculty Development for a definition of this in an educational context.

Political frame: those in organization compete for power, resources, finances, etc. (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

Quality assurance (QA): the methods and measures of assessing and assuring the quality of online courses at an organization.

Structural frame: environment, experimentation, analysis and design are key factors in organizational leadership style (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

Symbolic frame: views organization as a theatre or stage (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

This quality assurance evaluation research study in multiple case study format study was conducted to explore the preparation, criteria and support of online faculty. It also examined the quality assurance efforts at two institutions. Also considered was the alignment between the requirements and preparation of online faculty as they connected to the quality assurance procedures at the target institutions. Additionally, these findings were used to gauge the level of the institution as defined by an adapted version of Graham, Woodfield, and Harrison's (2013) Blended Learning Adoption Framework in regard to adopting and supporting online courses. In this chapter the literature that informed this study is explored along with the elements of the theoretical frameworks that were used as a beginning point for the case study evaluation as well as the frameworks used to evaluate the findings. A review of the research literature is included in the chapter.

### Historical Perspective

The Institute for Higher Educational Policy (2000) in combination with Blackboard and the National Education Association produced a report, "Quality on the Line: Benchmarks for Success in Internet-Based Education" which provides a valuable historical and contextual perspective on the exceptional growth and interest in distance learning in higher education (Merisotis & Phipps, 2000). Although the value and quality

of online education has been debated, this Blackboard report provided research, reasoning, and benchmarks to measure the quality of online education. Moreover, the report acknowledged the need for quality assurance in this arena and provided strategies for success which encompassed subjects such as a faculty member's professional development, training, course development, student services, infrastructure, learning resources, and how outcomes are assessed. Merisotis and Phipps (2000) noted in the document that the quality assurance benchmarks being espoused by the contributing organizations can be applied to a wide range of institutional situations.

This document was written as a case study which was helpful for the structure of the researcher's own evaluation study case study process. The process the researchers followed for their case study was three-fold: (a) a substantive literature review which helped develop the 45 benchmarks used in the Blackboard study; (b) identification of institutions that had significant experience and leadership in online education; and (c) a site visit to these institutions to interview faculty, students, and administrators. The benchmarks included: institutional support, course development, teaching/learning process, course structure, student support, faculty support, and evaluation and assessment benchmarks (Merisotis & Phipps, 2000).

These groups were asked about the presence and importance of benchmarks, if they were being followed, and if they made a difference in course quality (Merisotis & Phipps, 2000). The six institutions that participated were: Brevard Community College, Regents College, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, the University of Maryland University College, Utah State University, and Weber State University. The benchmarks

fell under the following categories: institutional support, course development, teaching/learning, course structure, student support, faculty support, and evaluation and assessment benchmarks. These categories were also able to be correlated with Bolman and Deal's (2008) human resource and structural frames because support in all of the categories mentioned are human resource and structural elements of an institution's approach to supporting online learning.

Organizations contributing to the benchmarks included: the American Council on Education, the National Education Association, The Global Alliance for Transnational Education (GATE), the Southern Regional Electronic Campus, The Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States of Colleges and Schools, and the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications. However, the benchmarks needed to be re-examined to assess how suitable they were to determine the quality of online education. Thus, the NEA and Blackboard asked IHEP to try to substantiate the benchmarks in light of how realistic they were for distance education benchmarks (Merisotis & Phipps, 2000).

The results showed that some respondents were not pleased that traditional education has not come under the same scrutiny and review as online education. Suggestions to apply similar standards to on site classes were made. Also, faculty members in 2000, similar to many faculty members at institutions in 2015, volunteered to teach online and were allowed to develop their own courses (Allen & Seaman, 2011). In general, the researchers found that respondents believed the benchmarks were significant and tried to integrate them into their policies, practices and procedures. However, some

of the original 45 benchmarks were not considered necessary to ensure quality, and 13 were eliminated. The final result was that 24 benchmarks were found to be essential to ensure course quality (Merisotis & Phipps, 2000). This case study provided an interesting context for benchmarking, as 15 years later course quality was still a very high concern of proponents and opponents of online learning (Lokken & Mullins, 2014). Such research could be replicated with current quality assurance processes and benchmarks at institutions that offer online courses and degree programs to better address course quality. As online education continues to grow, change, and adapt to new students and online instructors' needs and experiences, so must the benchmarks used to evaluate these programs and courses.

#### Faculty Preparation to Teach Online

As distance learning course offerings, programs and institutions have increased, so has the number of faculty needed to teach these courses. Some faculty who were once face-to-face instructors have been required to meet the challenge of transitioning to online teaching; and with this challenge come issues of credentialing and quality assurance. Other concerns include sufficient training and support for instructors, developing curriculum, and supporting online programs (Lokken & Mullins, 2014). The University of North Carolina System conducted a survey to address the experiences, types, relevancy and topics of training, and ideas for further preparation. Their survey also examined whether this training was required before teaching online (Kosak et al.,

2004). This study was relevant to the researcher's goal of examining the credentialing practices of institutions of higher education in distance learning.

As many online faculty veterans know, adding technology alone will not help a new online instructor achieve his or her desired learning outcomes. "Education has changed dramatically with the Internet and mobile technologies, and educators who continue a strategy of a "sage on the stage" instead of a "guide on the side" are not going to fully engage today's students" (Johnson, Wisniewski, Kuhlemeyer, Isaacs, & Krzykowski, 2011, p. 66). In their work, the authors provided a boot camp model using leaning theories to help faculty transition to online teaching (Johnson et al., 2011). At the time of the study, the researcher's institution also offered a boot camp type training for new online instructors, which was in blended format.

Part of this training is reminding participants that converting a face-to-face course to an online one is not simply a matter of posting lectures as word processing documents or other types of media. Engaging, interactive activities that encourage participation and activity are essential components of online course development. Development and support in educating faculty about online pedagogy must be coupled with technology and other means of support (Johnson et al., 2011).

Moreover, online teaching can cause faculty to become frustrated or to feel reluctant to engage in the necessary steps to become adept at online pedagogy and technology. Online faculty often have to wear multiple hats such as instructional designer, technical support, facilitator, researcher, advisor, manager, social roles, and much more (Assessing Online Facilitation, 2012). Online course development is quite

time consuming, and initial course creation often takes more time than traditional class preparation. Questions of compensation for the extra time as well as intellectual property rights become areas of concern (Johnson et al., 2011).

Stakeholders such as administrators, deans, and students expect the same level of quality in online courses as face-to-face instruction. Student surveys, demographic data, satisfaction surveys in regard to service received, peer evaluations of online teaching and student success data have often been used as measures to assess online course quality and to show commitment to quality in both traditional and online courses (Kosak et al., 2004).

### Quality Assurance Processes and Providers

In addition to faculty support and development, evaluation systems and quality assurance processes need to be part of a mature system in an institution of higher education's online learning process and plan (Graham et al., 2014). The use of benchmarks and rubrics are often part of this process.

One provider of such a rubric is Quality Matters [QM] (2015). The QM rubric has been grounded in extensive research and literature focused on quality in the design of online and blended courses. It is worthwhile to recognize and discuss its history, processes, contributions and use. Due to the researcher's substantial experience with this rubric and process, only one institution that uses this rubric was selected as a subject in this study. Another institution that did not use the rubric was also selected for this study in order to avoid bias. This choice also offered the researcher a fresh perspective on the



problem of practice by being able to see how one institution may use a rubric differently than the researcher's institution. At the same time, the researcher also learned what was used by the second institution to assure quality and provide a quality framework for its faculty who create and teach online courses. It is beneficial, however, to note the contribution of Quality Matters to the field of quality assurance. Likewise, it is important to note the trend to provide a quality assurance mechanism for accreditation or other institutional concerns. This is an extremely timely topic as distance learning has grown so rapidly. It is essential that best practices are used to prepare instructors and their courses as well as assure quality in such courses and programs.

#### Benefits of the Use of Rubrics

Quality assurance rubrics have many benefits. Many rubrics such as Quality Matters (2015), Blackboard Exemplary Course Program (2015) and the Rubric for Online Instruction from California State at Chico (2015) are grounded in extensive literature reviews and provide for national standards and benchmarking tools. The choice to use a rubric for quality assurance purposes was supported by Little (2009). He described the process used by an instructor and instructional designer in piloting the use of two quality assurance programs: Public Health Online Course Standards and Quality Matters. He found the Quality Matters product to be superior in many categories such as ease of use and consistency of results (Little, 2009). The results of both mechanisms were helpful to the team in identifying areas for improvement and suggesting that further faculty training was needed. Little (2009) also observed that Quality Matters was a benchmarking tool

that could be used to compare online courses across the country. Representing the University of the Rockies and Ashford University, both Quality Matters subscribing institutions, Pascarl and Reimer (2010) conducted a similar study. They addressed quality assurance in online course development along with issues of alignment in course design, transparency, and accountability. They discussed ways to ensure quality in online course development, describing the goal of “the program [is] to increase student retention, learning and satisfaction in online courses by implementing better course design” (Pascarl & Reimer, 2010, para. 4). It was noted in the literature review that rubrics have multiple purposes and uses to improve online courses and teaching.

At the time of the present study, Quality Matters was being used at Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC) as well as many other institutions such as Maricopa Community College, Lord Fairfax Community College, and the University of West Indies. At NVCC,

The way ELI [Extended Learning Institute] designs and redesigns courses is changing. There is a focus on meeting standards set up by Quality Matters. Moving forward, it is my understanding that all courses will be required to go through Quality Matters course review when a new course is designed or an existing one is updated/redesigned (Fisher, 2015).

Maricopa Community College is another institution of higher learning that was using the Quality Matters Rubric at the time of the study. This institution provided a survey to the researcher, which was used in a mixed methods approach to assessing how Quality Matters training and implementation were disseminated across a multi-campus

institution. Through a mixed methods study, researchers at Maricopa Community College assessed how their 10 community colleges adopted Quality Matters as a quality assurance mechanism and trained 67 instructional designers, deans, and faculty members in the rubric. This researchers looked at the impact of training on “hybrid and online course development, faculty development programs, and teaching and learning practice” (Maricopa Community College, 2010, p. 1).

Quality Matters training is an ongoing collegial peer review of courses which are submitted for review by faculty, departments, and institutions of higher learning. There is a rigorous and specific rubric to which such courses must adhere in order to meet QM standards.

The QM Rubrics have been developed and regularly updated through a rigorous process that examines relevant research, data, and practitioner perspectives. They consist of Standards supported by detailed Annotations explaining the application of the Standards and are intended to support the continuous improvement of courses with constructive feedback. (Quality Matters, 2015, p. 3)

Quality Matters creator, Maryland Online, is a “statewide consortium of 19 Maryland community colleges and senior institutions.” The project was originally funded by the U.S. Department of Education Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education. However, when the grant ended, QM became a self-supporting program that began charging fees for its services (Little, 2009a; Quality Matters, 2015). The rubric can be used for assessing online courses and focuses on course design to support learning and not academic content. To meet standards, courses must pass at the 85% level; thus,

the rubric can also be used as a benchmarking tool to compare the quality of online courses in the United States (Quality Matters, 2015).

Quality Matters has described its purpose as “provide[ing] inter-institutional quality assurance in online learning. This is achieved through a not-for-profit subscription service providing tools and training for quality assurance of online courses.” (Quality Matters, 2015). Quality Matters’ principles are a main reason for many schools having adopted the rubric as it provides a faculty-driven, peer review process that is collaborative, collegial, continuous, and centered in research.

According to its website, the Quality Matters (2015) rubric is based on research and was established in combination with best practices in the field.” It is comprised of 41 specific standards within eight general categories. The research based rubric comes from a comprehensive review of the literature and a community of expert practitioners who deliver advice on each new version of the rubric (Quality Matters, 2015). If a course does not meet all of the standards at a certain level, the course can still be revised and resubmitted for review. Thus, the goal of the process is continuous improvement. The objective is not to pass or fail a course, but to provide more than one set of eyes to aid the instructor in creating the best course possible for students. To further illustrate this point the Quality Matters describes the rubric’s use in the review process as a diagnostic tool which helps improve the design of online courses(Quality Matters, 2015).

Quality Matters (2015) has also offered many different online training options in the use of its rubric. In the courses, trainees become familiar with the rubric, the process of peer review and complete a mock review of an online course. Once instructors pass

the QM training course, they should be very familiar with the rubric. Thus, instructors are able to peer review other online courses at their institutions and outside the institutions.

The Quality Matters rubric is used by many institutions and “the standards developed by these institutions are used in four ways: as a foundation for designing new courses, as an instructor self-evaluation tool, as a rubric for peer review, and as the basis for awarding exemplary courses” (Little, 2009a, p. 411). Also, there are many organizations that have provided helpful guidelines and best practices for online design and pedagogy. A few of these are the Sloan Consortium, the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions, the Council for Higher Education, the American Federation of Teachers and the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (Little, 2009b). Their standards and QM’s rubric can serve as benchmarking tools for online courses throughout the U.S. (Little, 2009b).

Additional providers of quality online course rubrics such as the Blackboard Exemplary Course Rubric (2015), Cal State at Chico’s ROI (2015), the University of Illinois’ Quality Online Course Initiative (QOCI), and Michigan State University’s website provide helpful evaluation tools for online courses and resources (Montclair State University, 2015). These tools are discussed in the following sections.

### *Rubric of Online Instruction*

California State University at Chico has created a rubric called the Rubric for Online Instruction (ROI) that addresses the problematic questions many institutions of

higher education face regarding the quality of online courses and how to assess that quality. The ROI was designed to support Cal State's first strategic priority which was to "create and enhance high quality learning environments" (California State, 2015a). The rubric was developmental in nature and can aid instructors in self-assessing their courses centered on the expectations of the university.

It is beneficial to review the method used in constructing the Rubric for Online Instruction. A representative cross section of teaching and learning employees at California State University at Chico was chosen to serve on the Committee for Online Instruction (COI). This team, created in 2002, was composed of 13 faculty members, one student, four staff members, and two administrators. The team met and reviewed best practices, learning styles, and standards such as Graf and Caines' WebCT Exemplary Course Rubric, Bloom's Taxonomy, and Chickering & Gamson's 7 Good Teaching Practices in Undergraduate Education. The rubric was offered to the campus community in 2003 and revised in 2009 when it recognized the Accessible Technology Initiative (California State, 2015a).

The rubric also provides a method for supporting and appreciating faculty member's strengths and efforts in growing their proficiency, knowledge and expertise in online teaching and learning. It has six categories: learner support and resources, online organization and design, instructional design and delivery, assessment and evaluation of student learning, innovative teaching with technology, and faculty use of student feedback. This rubric also uses a scale of baseline, effective and exemplary to gauge and assess proficiency in each of the categories (California State, 2015).

One way that quality assurance can be addressed is through course design and the rigorous process of implementing the use of rubrics. Many institutions have embraced this trend. Thus, the use of a rubric is one means of assessing the quality assurance and faculty development programs and training of institutions. The use of a rubric is also an indicator of an institution's commitment to quality. However, the Quality Matters (2015) rubric, as well as the other rubrics mentioned, are not the only gauges for quality assurance.

#### *Frameworks for Quality Assurance*

Chao and Tessler (2006) wrote about a pilot project that the Centre for Teaching and Educational Technologies (CTET) at Royal Roads University employed. This pilot project was completed in order to create a definition for "quality" in online courses and to produce a review process designed to provide continuous quality improvement.

The authors mentioned criteria such as institutional support, course development and instructional design, teaching and learning, course structure and resources, student and faculty support, evaluation and assessment, use of technology, and E-learning products and services. These criteria were included in many reports for e-learning standards (Chao & Tessler, 2006). The criteria addressed more than online pedagogy. They also helped institutions determine definitions of quality as "learning and service experiences" (Chao & Tessler, 2006, p. 33).

### The Role of Surveys in Quality Assurance

Some other usual techniques for determining course quality are end of term surveys or course evaluations. Faculty development trainings have often used these to determine if the training was beneficial to the faculty members participating. Additionally, students in online courses have often been polled at the end of the semester in course evaluation surveys to provide feedback on their learning experience courses (Kosak et al., 2004). However, these surveys often do not take technology, instructional design or how the course was developed into consideration.

### Quality Framework Structures

In addition to course surveys, Royal Roads University (RRU) has used a quality framework for its web-based courses. This framework includes curriculum design, teaching and facilitation, learning experience, instructional design, web design and course presentation. Academic units, instructional designers and web designers are involved in the process. For example, “Academic units ensure the curriculum meets quality standards for content and learning outcomes” (Chao, & Tessler, 2006, p. 34). The instructor’s knowledge and ability to guide online learning is encompassed in teaching and facilitation. To be able to teach well online is truly an art form. RRU has used both interim and end of term course evaluations to gauge and assess quality in the realm of online teaching and facilitation. The benefits of the learning experience to the learner have been assessed by these same interim and end of term surveys (Chao & Tessler, 2006).



Instructional design connects the pedagogical aspects of online teaching and learning (outcomes, activities, strategies) with media and technology usage. Royal Roads University has used a very collaborative process between instructional designers and faculty from academic units. Additionally, web design addresses usability, and this must match up with instructional technology to develop a quality online course. Finally, course presentation includes quality issues such as professional presentation, functionality, and consistency in the presentation of the material.

Chao and Tessler (2006) explained that the sampling for this project involved three online courses and a scale of unsatisfactory, somewhat satisfactory, satisfactory and very satisfactory with needed or required improvements corresponding with each potential score. Reviews took approximately nine hours per course. Some benefits of having criteria for quality assurance and conducting reviews were improving course quality with fewer resources. Limitations included that a review can only check the “static quality” (Chao & Tessler, 2006, p. 38) of an online course.

### Alignment

Alignment is an important component of design criteria for online courses. Many online rubrics such as Quality Matters (2015) comment on the importance of considering alignment in the design of an online course. Alignment between materials, activities and course design is further described by Pascarl and Reimer (2010). Postins (2013) also mentioned that alignment needs to occur between course materials, outcomes, and assessments. Thus, instructional strategies used to deliver the activities and assignments

must also correlate or align with the course competencies and outcomes (Pascarl & Reimer, 2010).

### Course Quality, Online Program Assessment and Faculty Credentialing

One purpose of this case study was to evaluate online learning program assessment in terms of assuring quality and preparing faculty to teach online. The researcher sought answers to questions about what institutions require of their online faculty members, how they support the development of their online courses, and how they expect to evaluate online course quality when they have reached a stage of maturity in adopting online learning as a strategic goal that enables them to do so. A comparison of two institutions' quality assurance measures and assessment methods, as well as the support and credentialing procedures was completed in order to identify best practices in online learning.

### Theoretical Framework

In regard to establishing theoretical frames surrounding this study, several works have been consulted. Primarily, Bolman and Deal's (2008) four frames were used to guide the needs analysis and quality assurance evaluation study which utilized a multiple case study design. The frames enabled the researcher to identify the political, structural, human resource, and symbolic elements involved in the organization and how they were employed in faculty development and online quality assurance. These frames also contributed to the researcher's identification of the target institutions' use of the four

frames. It was anticipated that this analysis would aid the researcher in creating a logic model for improving the quality assurance process of her organization (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

### The Four Frames

The following sections in this chapter contain descriptions of Bolman and Deal's (2008) structural, human resource, symbolic, and political frames as they can be applied to online teaching and quality assurance. Applications of Bolman and Deal's frames are also discussed in regard to how they can apply to the credentialing of online faculty, supporting online teaching and quality assurance initiatives.

#### *Structural Frame*

Many institutions have a requirement or credential to teach online, offer training to achieve this and some have quality assurance processes. This condition is much needed as more instructors are being asked to take their traditional classes online or hybrid with little to no online teaching experience. Having a credential correlates with a structural view that the institution's structural process chosen must "fit an organization's current circumstances; including its goals, technology, workforce and environment" (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 47).

Providing faculty with technology, pedagogy, quality assurance training, and a course review process can be a means to provide standards of good practice in online instruction while still maintaining individual instructors' academic freedom. Academic freedom can be a concern for many faculty. Some faculty members highly value

academic freedom and do not want to be required to use a “cookie cutter” model for designing their online course or be micromanaged. A delicate balance between clarity and creativity is essential to meet this dichotomy as well as providing enough autonomy and avoiding too much interdependence (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

### Structural Applications

Bolman and Deal’s (2008) structural frame addresses how organizations can establish and work toward goals and objectives. The authors also consider how the chosen structures must fit the organization’s circumstances. Their ideas relate to what stage the institution is at in terms of defining blended and fully online teaching and learning, having a credentialing process in place, and a quality assurance process in place. Applications that could be made to online teaching and an institution’s organizational structure are as follows:

- Online and blended learning being clearly defined at the institution
- Centralized or decentralized structure (i.e. campus devoted to online courses)
- Credentialing process for online faculty members
- Quality assurance process in place
- Use of a quality assurance rubric
- Formal and informal quality assurance reviews
- Internal and external quality assurance reviews in place

### *Human Resource Frame*

Bolman and Deal's human resource frame encourages organizations to invest in employees through learning and development opportunities (2008). Investing in training faculty as to what constitutes a quality online course also compares to Owens and Valesky's (2011) views that education is an investment in human capital. Their research showed that human resources are improved with personal and professional growth opportunities (Owens & Valesky, 2011). These ideas can relate to what stage the institution is at in terms of supporting online teaching and learning as well as quality assurance measures.

### Human Resource Applications

The following human resource applications can be made in supporting online teaching and learning at each institution: technology support and training as well as online pedagogy support and training. These applications relate to the support section of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013). This frame is concerned with supporting individuals, i.e., faculty, as they grow and improve their practice.

### *Symbolic Frame*

The symbolic frame is concerned with organizational symbols and culture. Bolman and Deal (2008) observed that “. . . what is important is not what happens but what it means. . . activity and meaning are loosely coupled; events and actions have

multiple interpretations as people experience life differently” (p. 253). This could relate to how the structures that are in place for credentialing and supporting online faculty translate into quality online courses being produced. Likewise if faculty are receiving honors, awards, publications and recognition, this also benefits the institution. Further, Bolman and Deal’s discussion of the importance of ceremony relates to rewards, publications, and other recognitions of excellence in online teaching and learning at an institution.

### Symbolic Applications

The subsequent symbolic applications correlate to the support (incentives category) of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013), which are discussed in depth later in this chapter. These applications could be potential incentives for faculty at each institution to engage in and encourage best practices in the implementation of online learning (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Graham et al., 2013). This frame is concerned with telling the story of the institution and celebrations (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Certainly publications could tell the story of the institution’s online programs, support, and development. Additionally, awards and publications are clearly reasons to celebrate the accomplishments of the faculty and institution.

### *Political Frame*

The organization’s political frame is influenced by competing for scarce resources, power, and budgets (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Developing and delivering online

courses and assuring course quality are an arena for these political concerns to play out. Bolman and Deal also mentioned that “the combination of scarce resources and divergent interests produces conflict” and that this conflict should not be “stamped out” (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 206). Conflict is a normal, inevitable part of an organization’s life. Furthermore, viewing online learning as less than face-to-face instruction can produce conflict. Other potential conflicts that can arise are intellectual property rights in regard to the creation of online courses. Conflict could also occur if the institution’s advocacy, expectations for, and policies for online course development clash with the support, training, and credentialing of their online faculty members.

Another application of the political frame is competition. Competing for scarce classroom and financial resources has factored into some institutions and departments asking more faculty to teach online. This new virtual “classroom availability” comes with the problem of assuring quality institution-wide. As the survey results for the present study revealed, both institutions relied heavily on adjuncts to deliver their online courses. This concern, as well as not having enough resources to meet the needs of all stakeholders, are applications that connect to the Bolman and Deal’s (2008) political frame. Owens and Valesky (2011) supported Bolman and Deal’s political frame assumptions in their power-coercive strategy using the psychological concept of behavioral psychology in which financial rewards can be used to gain compliance and participation from participants. This incentive can be connected to the incentives category in the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013). A mature

system would have a well-established incentive structure in place for its faculty who implement quality online course design and delivery.

### Political Applications

Political frame applications such as control, power, and resources can be made in regard to providing incentives for high quality online teaching and learning at each institution. This frame is concerned with competing for scarce resources as well as negotiating conflict in the workplace arena. Furthermore, the researcher has found that the following issues arise in regard to the political frame: institutions need to identify what resources are scarce, who is competing for them, who is in charge of offering and evaluating the online courses at the institution and determining the agenda of the institution as a whole compared to the department in charge of supporting online faculty. Likewise, the relationship of both the institution and the administration to the faculty member's agenda is a stakeholder concern and political application. Willing, qualified, and supported faculty to teach online are hallmarks of a successful program (Sлимп, 2014).

### Other Frameworks

Next, Clark and Estes' (2008) work aided the researcher in identifying the best solutions from the chosen organizations to be studied in order to apply best practices to other organizations for optimum results. Negative and positive impacts of various structures were considered, and these methodologies were a great benefit in refining which best practices should be implemented in order to make process improvements for



higher quality results. Creswell's (2006) principles of research and qualitative inquiry also helped the researcher organize and carry out the research design. Additionally, Owens and Valesky's (2011) work enabled the researcher to identify the leadership qualities presented in the selected institutions. The principles in this work also aided the researcher in identifying which best practices would be optimal choices for the target institution. Likewise, Owens and Valesky's work assisted the researcher to ascertain why certain best practices were being utilized by each case study institution. It also enabled the writer to identify the appropriate organizational behaviors and leadership qualities that are optimal in implementing any proposed process improvement and quality assurance measures.

Key stakeholders, e.g., deans and administrators, were identified by the researcher. Yang (2010) addressed the role of administrators in planning, managing, supporting, and motivating faculty. Because deans and other administrators are crucial stakeholders in implementing change for improving online course quality, Yang's writing was a valuable resource. Deans' and administrators' definitions of what constitutes quality in the online environment impacts their faculty development and online degree programs. Benson (2003) analyzed stakeholder definitions of quality, which impacted the development and planning of an online degree program for a university system in a qualitative study. Her discussion of the dimensions of quality in online programs signaled that online stigmas, accreditation, effective and efficient course design and effective pedagogy were key elements in developing and planning online degree programs (Benson, 2003). These elements were important to consider in each case study.

Quilter and Weber (2004) acknowledged that some stakeholders have been skeptical about the quality of online teaching and learning and that to address these concerns, it was necessary to find and share best practices for online learning and pedagogy. Constructive feedback on online learning can help faculty improve their courses and improve quality assurance. The authors shared that providing constructive collegial direction on the development, design and delivery of online courses in a non-threatening manner was central to quality assurance principles (Quilter & Weber, 2004). However, these measures needed to be evaluated and studied in order to determine which processes, protocols and practices would best impact the researcher's institution and meet its needs.

By using Gallimore and Goldenberg's (2001) cultural model to analyze the setting of the organizational environment, the researcher was able to better identify solutions, possible problems, and appropriate ways to implement change. Because providing better quality in online courses was one of the goals of this study, the researcher needed to identify the appropriate training model to help facilitate this change, support faculty, and better equip faculty to teach online. Kirkpatrick's (2012) four level training model was a valuable resource for this task (2012).

Fullan's (2001) writing about leadership and cultural change helped the researcher identify how to best present the proposed changes with the current practices, systems, and processes in place. Much like Fullan's work, Hickman's (2010) investigation of providing leadership to organizations in the 21st century assisted the researcher in

identifying how to best propose the suggested changes to the current practices, systems, and processes.

Through using cultural models and analyzing the setting of the organizational environment, the researcher was able to better identify solutions, possible problems, and appropriate ways to implement change (Gallimore & Goldenberg, 2001). Kirkpatrick's (2012) four level training model assisted the researcher in data collection. As providing better quality in online courses was one goal of the researcher, she needed to be able to identify the appropriate training model to help facilitate this change, support faculty, and better equip them to teach online.

#### Best Practices in Online Education

The North Central Association of Colleges and Schools Higher Learning Commission and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools are two organizations that promote and provide best practices. These systems and practices for electronically offered degree and certificate programs have been referenced. Additionally, the website for Maryland Online's rubric and training program provided a wealth of resources for online instructors, institutions of higher learning and others interested in the product and process. Quality Matters (2015) literature review, which supports how the rubric was developed and what benefits result from its use undergirded the evaluation study as well. However, Quality Matters is not the only provider of a quality assurance rubric. Many institutions create their own or use the Blackboard Exemplary Process (2015), Rubric for

Online Instruction (ROI) (2015), or Quality Online Course Initiative (2010) to name a few.

Another concern that was examined in this study was faculty resistance to or fear of teaching online. Faculty members are often reluctant to teach online due to anxiety associated with the use of technology. Johnson et al. (2011), in an article focused on overcoming faculty anxiety, presented a boot camp faculty development model that has been adopted as part of Carroll University's faculty development program which was successful in alleviating instructor anxiety about teaching online. This practice of providing an online boot camp is similar to one implemented at the researcher's institution. These boot camps support faculty in adopting technology, learning online pedagogy and making the transition to teaching in the online environment. Additionally, the boot camps are replicable for other higher education institutions (Johnson et al., 2011).

Rockwell, Schauer, Fritz, and Marx (2000) addressed similar needs, providing survey results from faculty in regard to the training and support they believe that they need to transition to teaching online. Rockwell et al. provided faculty responses as to what challenges them in teaching online and marketing online courses. Similarly, Lackey (2011) examined how faculty are prepared by higher education institutions to teach online. Faculty with a variety of online teaching experience were surveyed, and the results showed that collaborating with other experienced online instructors, one on one time with instructional designers, and technical and pedagogical training were key

(Lackey, 2011). Mentoring by senior online teachers has also been mentioned frequently as a valuable technique to getting started in transitioning to online teaching and learning.

Another area to explore in evaluating online course programs is the use of a course shell or template courses. The use of template or “shell” courses is also a common practice of some online organizations. Henry, Marcellas, Kurzweil, and Davis (2008) acknowledged the difficulties in creating online courses which were once taught in a traditional format. These writers also examined the use of online course templates for swiftly converting the courses to an online format for instructors to deliver. Methods and best practices that educational technology support teams should follow when creating template courses to be used in existing learning management systems were also discussed. Henry et al. reminded the reader of the benefits in ease of use, consistent format and other benefits of template courses. These practices were examined in the present study as the researcher completed the quality assurance evaluation using a multiple case study design of the two institutions.

### Evaluation Framework

A quality assurance evaluation using a multiple case study design was used to conduct this research. It is important to note that evaluation studies require knowledge of what occurs or has occurred and the impact of these measures or protocols. Thus, a case study approach to a program evaluation was the method the researcher used in order to address the problem of practice (Creswell, 2006; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994).

Furthermore, the Blended Learning Adoption Framework of Graham et al. (2013) was adapted (with permission) to analyze the data collected along; and Mazer's (2014) factors that influence the adoption of blended learning ) were also considered. Finally, Bolman and Deal's (2008) frame analysis was applied to each case. These frameworks assisted in the identification, assessment, and analysis of each institution's structure, frames and functions and how they apply in identifying the stage of the organization in the adoption, support, and criteria that were in place for teaching and developing courses and quality assurance of online learning.

Bolman and Deal's (2008) frame analysis, which include the political, structural, human resources and symbolic factors that are at play in an institution, provided a useful means to organize the analysis of data collected. For example, the structural frame permits a view of the organization as a factory and also looks at institutional goals, roles, and formal relationships. In contrast, the human resource frame enables one to see the organization as a family or extended family. One of the frame's goals is to tailor tasks to its people so that they can get the job done while feeling good about themselves and what they are working on. The political frame views the organization as a jungle, contest, or an arena for competing. Power and scarce resources are the main things being competed or contested for in this frame. Bargaining, negotiating, compromise and coercion are a normal part of the daily routine. Finally, the symbolic frame views the institution as theater, tribes, or carnivals. Ritual, ceremony, heroes, and ruling by myths more than policies are rules are common themes in this frame (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

This quality assurance evaluation study attempted to answer what organizational structure, human resource, politics and/or symbolic elements, issues, and challenges exist in the organization that may influence the institution's position in the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Graham et al., 2013).

### *Adoption of Blended Learning*

The need for this type of research study has been established by Graham et al. (2013). These researchers found that there is little research on institutional policies and distance education programs relating adoption issues with blended learning which also applies to online learning. They also reflected that other researchers have predicted that blended learning may become the new norm or new traditional model (Norberg, Dziuban, & Moskal, 2011; Ross & Gage, 2006). It is assumed that this trend will continue as the demand for online courses continues to grow and many institutions are looking for innovative ways to grow without using classroom space and potentially cutting expenses. Graham et al.'s (2013) framework was adapted with permission for fully online learning as well as blended and was used to assess the level of the two selected institutions in terms of their stages of development in adopting and supporting distance learning.

Graham et al.'s (2013) study was led by a team of researchers at Brigham Young University who familiarized themselves with a vast quantity of literature in relation to the adoption of blended learning in institutions. Their goal was to identify the essential issues and markers connected to an institution's strategies, structures and support in an effort to categorize and gauge the development and growth in the institution's blended

learning adoption phase (Graham et al., 2013). Their approach, like the researcher's, was to use a case study method to examine the practices of six institutions. The institutions that were selected represented various stages of implementation. These included: awareness and exploration, adoption/early implementation, and mature implementation/growth. The benefit the researchers saw to engaging in this study, and classifying each case in terms of its level of embracing blended learning, was that these case studies and research could help other administrators interested in this work as they implement, support and develop online programs, faculty and students.

Graham et al. (2013) acknowledged the work of Rogers who had found in 2003 that the key best practices of successful institutions who adopt new innovations were: agenda setting, matching innovations with organizational challenges, redefining or restructuring the innovation or structure to better align them, clarifying, which involves “stabilizing the relationship between the innovation and the organization” (p. 5) and routinizing or making the innovation a part of the organization's normal pursuits.

According to Graham et al. (2013) there are three key categories that institutions that are adopting and implementing distance learning need to consider and implement. These include: (a) strategy, (b) structure, and (c) support. Strategy includes task forces, showing how distance learning can help institution meet its goals or overcome its challenges, funding, and enough time to implement successfully.

Structure encompasses the technology, ownership, definitions/seat time, incentives, and evaluation of the online courses. Technology calls for a determination of whether the cost outweighs the benefits, and ownership questions how intellectual



property rights and accessibility are addressed? For definitions/seat time, how institutions advertise online courses and how they are structured if considered. Incentive address what financial incentives are present to develop and teach online courses, e.g., reduced load, equipment, tenure, promotion, awards. The support category addresses what professional development opportunities are present to prepare and support faculty as they develop and teach their first online course,

Garrison and Kanuka (2004) and Picciana (2006) have provided some guidelines for how to deliver professional development to faculty who teach online courses. These include: the proper use of technology, helping faculty experience online courses from a student's perspective, understanding what classes are best suited for online learning, and providing faculty with models of excellence of what best practices have worked and been successful in supporting and developing online faculty (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Picciano, 2006). Providing models and mentors as well as an awareness of technology and the differences between online pedagogy and face-to-face course pedagogy are mentioned by these authors as keys to delivering successful training for developing and teaching online courses.

Additionally, Mazer (2014) produced a helpful table in her dissertation after using the Blended Learning Adoption Framework and applying Bolman and Deal's four frames. She included the structural, human resource, symbolic, and political factors and how they influenced the dissemination of technology and pedagogy (Mazer, 2014). These elements were significant to this quality assurance evaluation using a multiple case study design.

### Research Questions or Objectives

The purpose of this quality assurance evaluation study was to examine the criteria required to teach online at a given institution and the quality assurance measures in place to evaluate online course quality. A secondary purpose was to determine if these criteria and these standards were aligned. The following research questions were based on these purposes.

#### Research Questions:

1. What are the similarities of the institutions' best practices in quality assurance for online teaching and learning?
2. What are the differences between these institutions' best practices in quality assurance for online teaching and learning?
3. What stage are the institutions currently in supporting online learning teaching and learning?

#### *Sub-questions*

1. What credentials are faculty at the selected institutions required to have prior to teaching online?
2. How are faculty prepared to teach online classes at the selected institutions?
3. How do the selected institutions of higher learning assure the quality of online courses?

4. Does the training or expected credentials of the faculty match up with the online course quality expectations of the institution?

Slimp's (2014) white paper from the Instructional Technology Council, was focused on trends that college leaders should consider in distance education. The paper was delivered to the American Association of Community Colleges Commission on Academic, Student and Community Development and contains a wealth of information on key questions such as:

- What is distance education?
- What is the role of distance education within my college's mission?
- How can my college manage "disruptive innovation"?
- How can my college maintain course quality in an online environment?
- How can my college maintain security while serving distance education students?
- What resources should be acquired or reallocated to meet the needs of distance learners?

Slimp's 2014 paper contained a section on maintaining course quality which included nine recommendations for assuring quality.

1. Appropriateness of the online program to the college's mission and purposes.
2. The planning process for distance education is integrated into the college's overall planning process.
3. Online learning is included in the college's system of governance and oversight.

4. Distance curricula are comparable in rigor to traditional instruction.
5. Distance learning is evaluated with the results used to improve instruction.
6. Faculty are qualified and supported.
7. The institution provides student and academic services.
8. Resources needed for program support and expansion are provided.
9. The integrity of the course offerings is maintained.

These recommendations were beneficial for the researcher to consider in evaluating the data collected from the two institutions. Furthermore, Slimp (2014) addressed how structural guidance and strategic planning are beneficial to assuring quality. This emphasis on structure can be correlated to the structural frame in Bolman and Deal's (2008) work which the researcher used in data analysis. Additionally, the use of peer-based rubrics such as Quality Matters (2015) or college created rubrics such as the California State University ROI (2015b) have been noted as being beneficial to maintaining a high quality online environment. "When embraced by faculty and supported institutionally, a course rubric will increase the standards of distance course design and program quality" (Slimp, 2014, p. 8). Therefore, the use of rubrics was considered an important element in identifying the stage of development the selected institutions exemplified.

### Summary

Research on what constitutes quality in online courses and how to quality assure them has increased; however, additional research in this area was justified, especially

with a focus on how online faculty are hired, credentialed, trained or developed, and supported. The use of quality assurance rubrics for training and quality assurance purposes has increased as well (Slimp, 2014).

Additionally, how faculty are credentialed to teach online and supported by the institution was a key area for research. Research into how an institution develops, trains and encourages its faculty to develop and deliver quality online and blended courses is necessary and more investigation is warranted to expand the pool of knowledge in this area (Graham et al., 2013).

Finally, research on the effectiveness of faculty development for new and experienced online faculty on how to create, develop, and continuously improve their courses is merited. If this type of faculty development demonstrates usefulness, it would further inform theory and practice

## CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

This quality assurance evaluation study using a multiple case study design explored the preparation of online faculty and examined the quality assurance efforts at two institutions. Moreover, this study was conducted to examine the connections between the requirements and preparation of online faculty as they connected to the quality assurance procedures at the given institutions. In addition, these findings were used to gauge what stage the institution exemplifies in regard to adopting and supporting online teaching and learning. This chapter will explain the design of the study, its population, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

### Research Objectives

The purpose of this study was to examine the criteria required to teach online and the quality assurance measures in place to evaluate online course quality. There was additional interest in the type and amount of training required and provided by the selected institutions in order to credential online faculty. A secondary purpose was to determine if these criteria and standards were aligned. The following research questions were the guiding questions for this study.

1. What are the similarities of the institutions' best practices in quality assurance for online teaching and learning?

2. What are the differences between these institutions' best practices in quality assurance for online teaching and learning?
3. What stage are the institutions currently in supporting online learning teaching and learning?

#### *Sub-questions*

1. What credentials are faculty at the selected institutions required to have prior to teaching online?
2. How are faculty prepared to teach online classes at the selected institutions?
3. How do the selected institutions of higher learning assure the quality of online courses?
4. Does the training or expected credentials of the faculty match up with the online course quality expectations of the institution?

#### Research Design

This quality assurance evaluation is presented in a multiple case study format with descriptive qualitative data that were analyzed. A descriptive case study was an appropriate approach to this topic as it sought to answer “how” and “why” questions as well as the focus being a “. . . contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context. . .” (Yin, 1994, p. 1). Yin (1994) and Stake’s (1995) case study methods, guidelines, and approaches were employed. Moreover, case studies provide robust data in telling the story of the institution (Creswell, 2006). These types of data provide the best mechanism

to showcase the findings in order to improve the quality assurance processes and faculty development criteria for new faculty at the researcher's institution.

Quantitative and descriptive data were collected, analyzed, and evaluated. The researcher gathered and assessed existing documents related to the institutional requirements for online educators, such as credentialing, professional development offerings and requirements, online protocols and processes, learning management systems, and quality assurance procedures. Documents reviewed for the University of Central Florida (UCF) included the following: website for Center for Distributed Learning, syllabus for IDL 6543, OFRA rubric, Dzubian award, student and faculty demographic data. Documents reviewed for Lord Fairfax Community College (LFCC) included the following: website for ITC, demographic data provided via email, Virginia Community College System website and course descriptions of TOTAL, MODEL, IDOL and syllabus for MODEL, and the Blackboard exemplary course process.

Follow up questions were sent via email, and online surveys were utilized to gather deeper understanding of the data. Surveys were used due to the time limitations of the time allotted to the study as well as a means to gather as much data as possible from as wide an audience as possible in a short amount of time. In addition to this, the supplementary data that were collected via the institutions' websites, existing documents, research literature and follow up emails were used to triangulate the data and enhance validity.

Next, the researcher designed and conducted the case study. Then, the evidence was collected and analyzed by using an adapted version of Graham et al.'s (2013)



blended learning framework and Bolman and Deal's (2008) four frame typology. Finally, the researcher analyzed, compared, and reported findings and made recommendations based on the evaluation of the findings.

### Study Population and Sample

A purposive sample from two institutions of higher education was chosen for this quality assurance evaluation study designed as a case study. The University of Central Florida and Lord Fairfax Community College were chosen due to their similarities and differences to each other and the researcher's familiarity with the institutions. As described in University of California, Davis (2014) materials, "A purposive sample is a non-representative subset of some larger population, and is constructed to serve a very specific need or purpose" (par. 10).

The University of Central Florida and Lord Fairfax Community College were selected because they provide online courses and have credentialing procedures in place for their online faculty. Lord Fairfax Community College was a multi-campus institution which was similar to the researcher's place of employment in that it had criteria for online teaching and a quality assurance process such as the Blackboard exemplary course program rubric and the use of the Quality Matters rubric. Further, the Virginia Community College System (of which Lord Fairfax Community College is a part) provides a training program, Teaching Online Program (TOP), and courses such as Multimedia for Online, Distance, and eLearning (MODEL), Topics in Online Teaching and Learning (TOTAL), Instructional Design for Online Learning (IDOL), and Engaging

Online Learners with Web 2.0 Applications (ENROLL 2.0) (VCCS, Educational-Technology-Resources, 2015).

The University of Central Florida (UCF) is also a multi-campus institution and is a close neighbor to the researcher's state college place of employment. Many students transfer from the researcher's college to UCF. This university also has developed criteria for teaching online and has its own quality assurance processes in place. The University of Central Florida's Center for Distributed Learning offers several training courses for its online faculty, such as Essentials of Webcourses, IDV Essentials for video lecture capture, ADL 5000, which is for those teaching a course developed by another faculty member, and IDL 6543, a professional development program for individuals who wish to design, develop and deliver their own online courses (UCF, Professional Development, 2015; UCF IDL 6543, 2015). This practice of institutionally created faculty development courses is also similar to that used in the researcher's institution, but unlike UCF's professional development course, IDL 6543, there are no capstone projects in place. Therefore, this university was selected as a model to consider in improving the processes at the researcher's institution.

Lord Fairfax Community College (LFCC) uses a similar quality assurance measure to that of the researcher's institution of employment. UCF offers a different way to assess quality assurance from the process at the researcher's institution. In the researcher's opinion, these differences were valuable to the study as they provided the researcher with a new perspective on the problem of practice and a greater ability to complete a case study comparing and contrasting the two programs.

The population of this study included the instructional design team and the faculty development/training team of the University of Central Florida and Lord Fairfax Community College. The study focused on classes that were taught online or in a blended learning environment at each institution. Six key stakeholders (including administrative and instructional design personnel and online faculty) participated in the study. Four stakeholders were chosen from one institution and two from the second institution. In order to protect anonymity, survey respondents were identified only by response number per institution.

#### *Lord Fairfax Community College*

Lord Fairfax Community College (LFCC) opened in 1970 and is a multi-campus public institution of higher education. This institution's three campuses include, The Fauquier, Middletown and Luray-Page County Center. Lord Fairfax Community College serves eight areas in the Shenandoah Valley and Piedmont regions. These include the following counties: Clarke, Fauquier, Frederick, Page, Rappahannock, Shenandoah, and Warren and the city of Winchester. It is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) (*About LFCC*, 2015a).

Lord Fairfax Community College offers over 75 associate degree and certificate programs in many different disciplines. The college serves more than 7,600 credit students and over 10,450 learners in professional development, business, and industry courses each year. Last year 819 virtual students were enrolled. Additionally, a four-year institution on site provides LFCC's students with access to bachelors, masters and

doctoral degrees. According to its website, it partners with the business community and offers workforce preparation programs for both employees and employers (LFCC, 2015a).

### *University of Central Florida*

The University of Central Florida is the second largest university in the United States and the state of Florida's largest university. In 2015, the university consisted of 12 colleges and served over 61,000 students. This size was comparable to the researcher's institution, a contributing factor in its selection. Moreover, UCF offers 210 different degrees and has one main campus as well as a hospitality and health science campus and other regional campus locations (UCF, 2015c).

At the time of the present study, the University of Central Florida provided 15 online baccalaureate programs, 24 online master's programs, one doctoral program and 30 online graduate certificates (UCF, 2015a). It also provided 21 online undergraduate minors. Furthermore, almost all of UCF's colleges delivered blended courses. Online learning courses produced at least 38% of UCF's credit hours (UCF, 2015a). In the fall of 2014, there were 485 World Wide Web courses, 286 mixed mode, and 111 video/reduced seat time courses. In the fall of 2014, sections offered included 1,489 total distance learning sections and in spring of 2014 there were 1,466 sections (Center for Distributed Learning, 2015). Online education at UCF has been increasing in contrast to on-site classroom courses. Web-enhanced courses have boasted a higher success rate compared to traditional courses (Center for Distributed Learning, 2015).

According to the Distributed Learning Impact Evaluation (2015), The majority of faculty teaching fully online or Web-enhanced courses at UCF are male (61%), and the majority are tenured (54%) or in non-tenured positions (19%). Twenty-six percent of these faculty are tenure-seeking. The average age of online faculty is 50, ranging from 32 to 67 years. Many faculty are veterans to UCF with the average time at the university being 13 years, ranging from 1 to 32 years. (UCF, 2015a, para. 9)

#### Center for Distributed Learning

The Center for Distributed Learning (CDL) at UCF “. . . coordinates, produces, and delivers fully online degree and certificate programs via Web . . .” (UCF, 2015a, para. 1). The Center for Distributed Learning also manages, creates, and delivers blended courses. As of 2014, 1,204 UCF faculty members had completed a professional development course created by CDL, such as IDL 6543 and ADL 5000. These are the faculty development and training courses for teaching online listed on the Professional Development section of the Online@UCF website (UCF, 2015a).

#### Quality Assurance Measures at UCF

The University of Central Florida’s Research Initiative for Teaching Effectiveness (RITE) has collected student success data in regard to online learning and effective teaching practices. This initiative has assumed responsibility for assessing the online learning environment at UCF since 1997. Those at RITE looked at the success rates of

online students (earning A, B, or Cs) and found that over 87% of fully online web students were successful compared with over 90% of blended students (UCF, 2015g). Student surveys of satisfaction show that 90% of fully online students were pleased with their learning experience (UCF, 2015d). Faculty members also expressed greater satisfaction teaching these types of courses (including more interaction with their students) and an overwhelming majority express interest in teaching them again (UCF, 2015d).

### Publications

The RITE (Research Initiative for Teaching Effectiveness) also supports faculty working on the scholarship of teaching and learning (UCF, 2015g). These initiatives are related to online teaching and learning and have resulted in faculty publishing in many journals in higher education (UCF, 2015g). This type of support in online teaching effectiveness shows a great commitment to quality.

### Data Collection and Instrumentation

This evaluation study used a case study format to compare the preparation and credentialing of online faculty as well as the quality assurance procedures and requirements. This, in turn, provided the researcher with rich and sufficient data and evidence to determine what overall stage each institution was at in terms of supporting online teaching and learning and quality assurance measures. Graham et al.'s (2013) Blended Learning Adoption Framework and Bolman and Deal's frame typology (2008)

were used to assess institutions' stages in terms of distance learning adoptions, support, criteria for online faculty, and quality assurance measures. These were helpful because the framework provided a lens through which the researcher could assess her own institution's development in comparison to the two institutions in the study. Bolman and Deal's frames (2008) also allowed the researcher to consider the multiple perspectives and structures in place at both of the participating institutions in comparison with her own.

### Instrumentation

Graham et al.'s (2013) blended learning framework encourages institutions that are adopting, implementing, and supporting distance learning programs to consider three key categories that need to be incorporated into their policies: (a) strategy; (b) structure; and (c) support. Strategy is related to the work groups and task forces whose role is to show how distance learning can help the institution meet its goals, overcome its challenges, secure funding, and provide stakeholders with enough time to implement the distance learning initiative successfully.

Structure refers to technology, ownership, definitions of online and blended courses and their required seat times, incentives for faculty who produce quality, and the evaluation and quality assurance measures of online and blended courses. Structural considerations include (a) technology considerations: cost/benefit analysis; ownership, intellectual property rights; definitions/seat time, advertising online courses, structure, seat time; and incentives, financial or other promotional incentives to develop and teach online courses such as reduced load, equipment, tenure, promotion, and awards.

Support addresses the professional development opportunities that are available to prepare and support faculty as they develop and teach their first online course. These categories are also described by three stages of growth: Stage 1, Awareness/Exploration; Stage 2, Adoption/Early Implementation; and Stage 3, Mature Implementation/Growth (Graham et al., 2013).

Graham et al.'s (2013) framework was chosen and applied to assess the stage of online implementation and growth of each institution investigated in the present study. The researcher also received permission from the author to reproduce the framework and adapt it to make applications to fully online courses, not just blended courses (Appendix B). The framework, displayed in Table 1, was very beneficial to the researcher's analysis as it was a helpful and clear means to evaluate the institutions' stages of growth.



Table 1

*Blended Learning (BL) Matrix*

Category	Stage 1 Awareness/Exploration	Stage 2 Adoption/Early Implementation	Stage 3 Mature Implementation/Growth
<b>Strategy</b>			
Purpose	Individual faculty/administrators informally identify specific BL benefits	Administrators identify purposes to motivate instructional adoption of BL	Administrative refinement of purposes for continued promotion and funding of BL
Advocacy	Individual faculty and administrators informally advocate	BL formally approved and advocated by university administrators	Formal BL advocacy by university administrators and departments/colleges
Implementation	Individual faculty members implementing BL	Administrators target implementation in high impact areas and among willing faculty	Departments/colleges strategically facilitate wide-spread faculty implementation
Definition	No uniform definition of BL proposed	Initial definition of BL formally proposed	Refined definition of BL formally adopted
Policy	No uniform BL policy in place	Tentative policies adopted and communicated to stakeholders, policies revised as needed	Robust policies in place with little need for revision, high level of community awareness

Category	Stage 1 Awareness/Exploration	Stage 2 Adoption/Early Implementation	Stage 3 Mature Implementation/Growth
<b>Structure</b>			
Governance	No official approval or implementation system	Emerging structures primarily to regulate and approve BL courses	Robust structures involving academic unit leaders for strategic decision making
Models	No institutional models established	Identifying and exploring BL Models	General BL models encouraged not enforced
Scheduling	No designation of BL courses as such in course registration/catalog system	Efforts to designate BL courses in registration/catalog system	BL designations or modality metadata available in registration/catalog system
Evaluation	No formal evaluations in place addressing BL learning outcomes	Limited institutional evaluations addressing BL learning outcomes	Evaluation data addressing BL learning outcomes systematically reviewed
<b>Support</b>			
Technical	Primary focus on traditional classroom technological support	Increased focus on BL/online technological support for faculty and students	Well established technological support to address BL online needs of all stakeholders
Pedagogical	No course development process in place	Experimentation and building of a formal course development process	Robust course development process established and systematically promoted
Incentives	No identified faculty incentive structure for implementation	Exploration of faculty incentive structure for faculty training and course development	Well-established faculty incentive structure for systematic training and implementation

*Note.* Reproduced with permission from “A Framework for Institutional Adoption and Implementation of Blended Learning in Higher Education,” by C. R. Graham, W. Woodfield, & J. B. Harrison (2013), *The Internet and Higher Education*. (Appendix B). Matrix representing the categories and stages in the blended learning (BL) adoption framework used to organize the findings of this study.

Next, the institution's use or non-use of a quality assurance assessment instrument or rubric was employed as a measure of quality assurance and gauging the stage at which the institution is at in adopting and measuring online course quality (Graham et al., 2013, Slimp, 2014). As Slimp (2014) stated, "When embraced by faculty and supported institutionally, a course rubric will increase the standards of distance course design and program quality" (p. 8). Furthermore, the blended learning framework (Graham et al., 2013) suggests that an institution which is at Stage 3 (mature implementation and growth) will have institutional evaluations that address learning outcomes and are systematically reviewed. Most online course quality rubrics contain sections that address learning outcomes.

Mazer's (2014) factors influencing adoption of blended learning were also considered in analyzing the data collected. They are reproduced with permission and are displayed in Table 2. The factors, in conjunction with Bolman and Deal's (2008) four frames, were beneficial to the researcher. Both the factors and the frames were used to shape the study and analyze the data in regard to the institutions' stage of development in adopting, supporting and developing faculty and assuring online course quality.

Table 2

*Factors Influencing the Adoption of Blended Learning*

Frames	Factors
Structural factors	Technology infrastructure Blended learning definition and institutional awareness Strategic and implementation plan Blended learning courses recognized in registration and scheduling system Formal course evaluation system
Human resource factors	Support systems; technologic and pedagogic Incentive systems for support to transition courses Conflict in intellectual property
Symbolic factors	Changing role of instructor Faculty belief in status quo culture; didactic teaching methods Faculty belief that face-to-face teaching methods are superior Tenure and promotion system: misalignment of faculty and institutional goals
Political factors	Individual's propensity to adopt innovation Diffusion of innovation through institution; advocacy Change management process

*Note.* Adapted and reproduced with permission from “An Evaluation of the Iowa State University Learning Ecosystem” by C. Mazer (2014). See Appendix C.

Survey

The survey was created after a review of the literature and other surveys of this kind (Graham et al., 2013; Allen & Seaman, 2011, 2014; Maricopa, 2010; NEA, 2000).

The survey consisted of 31 items and included demographic information, definitions of distance education terminology, types of training required, types of training available, institutional structure, assessment of training, assessment of faculty satisfaction with

training, quality assurance measures, online credentialing procedures, and positives and negatives of online learning. A survey was used rather than interviews due to the time constraints of the study. The researcher would like to suggest that further research could be enhanced by incorporating follow up interviews to the survey. This would allow for greater follow up opportunities to the answers provided and allow the researcher to clarify any questions for the participants. This may have encouraged them to more deeply share their experiences and expertise.

The survey questions that the researcher asked of the selected institutions are provided in Appendix D. Demographic data regarding years of experience were also collected in order to develop the case study of each institution. Next, it was determined that three main research questions would be investigated and a selection of supporting sub-questions would follow. The survey was designed to address these questions:

1. What are the common definitions of online and blended learning?
2. How long has the institution been engaged in online education?
3. What support for online teaching is currently in place?
4. What is the structure of the institution?
5. What are the criteria for teaching online courses?
6. How involved and participatory are faculty in training and development courses?
7. What quality assurance measures are in place?
8. What are the perceptions of the support provided for online learning?
9. What awards have faculty won for their online teaching and course design?

The survey items included different formats of questions, including multiple choice, short text answer items, and Likert-scale questions. After being approved by UCF's Institutional Review Board, (Appendix E) the survey was distributed to the six respondents from the two institutions. For ease of use and distribution, the survey was created using the Qualtrics program, distributed via respondents' institutional email addresses, and completed online. Participants were first asked to give their informed consent as a yes or no item in the survey before proceeding to answer the rest of the survey questions.

Once the survey was created and the appropriate recipients were identified, each participant was notified via email with an invitation to voluntarily participate in the research study (Appendix F). The response time was left open ended, but respondents completed the survey within one week of receipt. Only a few follow up emails were required to encourage participants to finish the survey as most did so within one week of receiving the survey. A few participants emailed the researcher to ask questions about the questions to clarify what was being asked. These follow up emails proved to be helpful to the researcher in gathering more data and in determining ways to improve the study if it was to be replicated in the future.

#### Data Collection Procedures

Existing data such as syllabi for professional development or faculty development courses, artifacts and criteria for teaching online were requested via email by the researcher. Some of this existing data was located or obtained via online research on

each institution's website as well as the websites of the relevant departments at each institution. The existing data that were examined included demographic data, FTE, online enrollment, the number of years the university or college has offered online courses, the number of online faculty, faculty credentialing procedures, the educational level and achievements of online faculty members, the number of years the online faculty members have taught online courses and the faculty training and professional development courses offered by the institution. Additionally, any awards or publications the university or its faculty had earned in the area of online education or distance learning were examined and evaluated in terms of the Graham et al. (2013) stages of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework and Bolman and Deal's (2008) symbolic frame. Furthermore, quality assurance processes and standards and guidelines for online faculty were also researched and evaluated using both Graham et al.'s (2013) and Bolman and Deal's (2008) constructs.

#### Data Analysis Procedures

A case study format was used to compare and contrast the preparation of online faculty and their credentialing as well as the quality assurance procedures in this evaluation study. As a result, the researcher was able to determine each institution's stage of development in terms of supporting and online teaching and delivering online learning. Bolman and Deal's four frames (2008) were utilized as a means to analyze the culture, environment, support, resources and stage of the institution in regard to online teaching and learning and quality assurance. Mazer's (2014) factors that influence the

adoption of blended learning were used and adapted to analyze the data collected in regard to organizational structure. Finally, Graham et al.'s (2013) Blended Learning Adoption Framework was adapted and employed to discover and determine each institution's stage of development in terms of supporting online teaching. These three frameworks enabled the researcher to answer Research Questions 1, 2, and 3. Reporting the similarities and differences between the institutions was accomplished by identifying the key themes from the survey data and existing documents and identifying which of Bolman and Deal's (2008) frames (human resource, structural, symbolic, or political) applied to each element, i.e., organization structure, support, competitions, resources, policies and procedures. Mazer's (2014) work was beneficial in this identification.

Graham et al.'s (2013) blended learning framework was adapted and applied to assess stages of maturity the institutions evidenced in regard to adopting and supporting not only blended but also fully online learning (Stage 1, Awareness/Exploration; Stage 2, Adoption/Early Implementation; or Stage 3, Mature Implementation/Growth).

### Delimitations

Certain potential delimitations were identified. This quality assurance evaluation study in multiple case study format was not conducted to specifically examine student or faculty readiness. The evaluation study addressed hybrid and blended courses; however, the researcher's primary interest was in fully online course development. This quality assurance study was also conducted to examine one institution that did use the Quality Matters' rubric and one that did not (Quality Matters, 2015) for online course quality.



The researcher made this decision because the researcher's institution and experience has primarily been with the use of this rubric as a tool for assuring online course quality and course design. Therefore, in the researcher's opinion, by examining one institution that employed the rubric and one that did not, a comparison and contrast of two different approaches to the problem of practice could be achieved. Choosing to examine how one institution used the rubric also offered the researcher a lens to see how this institution used the rubric differently from the researcher's institution. Additionally, the researcher also learned what tool the institution that did not use the rubric used to assure quality in its online courses and what was used as a quality framework for its faculty in developing online courses. Moreover, this decision helped the researcher avoid bias and provided a new perspective on the problem of practice.

### Summary

This quality assurance evaluation research study in multiple case study format allowed the researcher to delve into the existing data and to explore in depth through interviews and survey questions. Case studies provide rich, robust, and meaningful research in story form which is relatable and understandable for many readers (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994). This study was conducted to explore the credentialing of online professors at two institutions and their quality assurance processes. The data were analyzed using Bolman and Deal's (2008) four frames and Graham et al.'s (2013) blended learning framework. The results of the survey and analysis of the existing documents which were collected are reported in Chapter 4.

## CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

### Introduction

This chapter contains the survey results and the analysis of existing documents and relevant research collected and examined during the spring semester at a department at the University of Central Florida and a department at Lord Fairfax Community College. This narrative begins with a general description of the institutions, the department, and the employees who participated in the study. The framework used for this study will help the reader understand the online development stage of each institution as it relates to the credentialing and quality assurance processes of each institution. From there, the discussion is organized around Graham et al.'s (2013) Blended Learning Adoption Framework which was adapted with permission to be used to assess fully online or distance learning as well and Bolman and Deals' four frames (2008). Specific stages and discussions related to the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (2013) are provided. The separation into different cases was designed to help distinguish the approaches of the two institutions of higher learning in regard to online education, support, training, credentialing, and quality assurance measures.

This quality assurance evaluation research study used a multiple case study format to investigate the preparation of online faculty members and to evaluate the quality assurance efforts at two institutions of higher learning. The study was conducted to explore the connections between the required credentials or credentialing procedures of the two institutions and how they were related to the quality assurance procedures at

the given institutions. Lastly, these findings were used to gauge the stages of development of the institutions with regard to adopting and supporting online teaching and learning.

Existing artifacts and documents from each institution such as data about online teaching and learning, descriptions of the types of distance learning courses offered, and demographic data which could be located on their respective Websites along with relevant research literature were the starting points of this research study. Professional development syllabi provided to the researcher by contacts at each institution or located on the institutions' websites were also examined. This information was used as a data source and was also a starting point for the research. Next, surveys of key stakeholders in online teaching and learning who represented multiple perspectives (administrative, technical, and faculty) at each institution provided additional data, both qualitative and quantitative. A total of six people participated in the study. Four participants were from one institution and two participants were from the other.

The design for this study was a quality assurance evaluation study using a multiple case study design. The researcher sought to explore the preparation of online faculty and examine the quality assurance efforts at two institutions. Furthermore, this study examined the connections between the requirements and preparation of online faculty as they connect to the quality assurance procedures at the target institutions. Additionally, these findings were used to gauge the institutions' stages of development in regard to adopting and supporting online teaching and learning. The following research questions were the focus of this quality assurance evaluation study:

### Research Questions:

1. What are the similarities of the institutions' best practices in quality assurance for online teaching and learning?
2. What are the differences between these institutions' best practices in quality assurance for online teaching and learning?
3. What stage are the institutions currently in supporting online learning teaching and learning?

### *Sub-questions*

1. What credentials are faculty at the selected institutions required to have prior to teaching online?
2. How are faculty prepared to teach online classes at the selected institutions?
3. How do the selected institutions of higher learning assure the quality of online courses?
4. Does the training or expected credentials of the faculty match up with the online course quality expectations of the institution?

### Blended Learning Framework

The Blended Learning Adoption Framework (2013) and Bolman and Deal's four frames (2008) were used to analyze each case. Additionally, Graham et al. (2013), the creator of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (2013) granted the researcher permission to use and adapt the framework for the purposes of this dissertation in practice

(Appendix B). Thus, this framework was used to determine the target institutions' stages of development in regard to blended and fully online learning.

This chapter presents the data in a case study format. Each of the participants and their institutional frameworks are introduced. Next, the responses from each anonymous participant in regard to various areas of online course development such as support, training, credentialing criteria and the quality assurance measures available and required are presented. Additionally, publications, incentives, and awards that each institution has won in the area of online education are shared. Each section contains highlights of some of the important details of the findings. A summary discussion of the similarities and differences of each institution of higher learning system is presented at the conclusion of the chapter.

### University of Central Florida

An overview of the University of Central Florida (UCF), which is the second largest university in the United States and the largest university in Florida, was presented in detail in Chapter 3. UCF is similar in population to the researcher's home institution as both serve over 60,000 students. This university is part of the State University System of Florida. According to the Academics page of its website, UCF is composed of 12 different colleges and provides education to more than 61,000 students (University of Central Florida, 2015d).

Online education at UCF is on the rise in contrast to online course offerings (UCF, 2015c). This university provides multiple online baccalaureate and masters

programs, one doctoral program and many online graduate certificates (UCF, 2015a). Almost all of UCF's colleges deliver blended courses. UCF's online learning courses produced almost 38% of UCF's credit hours (UCF, 2015a). Similarly the researcher's institution has a growing online program and the offering of online degrees is under consideration.

### *The Department Setting: UCF*

The Center for Distributed Learning (CDL) at the University of Central Florida provided the data for this study. The Center for Distributed Learning at UCF “. . . coordinates, produces, and delivers fully online degree and certificate programs via Web. . . .” (UCF, 2015a). The Center for Distributed Learning also manages, creates, and delivers blended learning and mixed mode courses. The Online@UCF website mentions that as of 2014, 1204 UCF faculty members have taken a professional development course created by CDL. These courses are IDL 6543 and 653 and ADL 5000, which are the faculty development and training courses for teaching online (UCF, 2015a).

Instructional designers and administrators in this department who were knowledgeable about the credentialing procedures, support, training and development available and required for their online faculty members as well as quality assurance procedures participated in this study.

### *History of Faculty Development at UCF*

In 1996, UCF began its intense faculty development program (Sorg & Darling, 2000, p. 9). This included IDL 6543, (Interactive Distributed Learning for Technology-Mediated Course Delivery). Sorg and Darling described the course as “an eight-week faculty development program designed to create interactive on-line environments to support mainstream faculty as well as early adopters and innovators” (p. 9). At that point in time, 2000, faculty were given a course release or dual compensation, a new computer and course design and production support to participate in the IDL course. (Sorg & Darling, 2000, p. 9). It is worthy of note that at the time of the present study, the course was 10 weeks in length.

Currently, faculty are hired at institutions of higher education with a variety of experience and expertise in regard to teaching online. The University of Central Florida’s Center for Distributed Learning uses the OFRA (Online Faculty Readiness Assessment) process and a rubric to determine if incoming faculty with online teaching experience should receive a full exemption from IDL6543 which stands for Interactive Distributed Learning or a partial exemption (Cavanagh, 2011). If they qualify for an exemption, an instructional designer from CDL meets with the individual faculty members to review any gaps. Another scenario would be that the instructor would be required to complete certain online modules from a CDL training course in order to receive the exemption.

If no exemption to the OFRA process is granted, the incoming faculty member must complete IDL 6543 prior to teaching online. The Center for Distributed Learning

recommends that department chair approval is obtained in order to participate in this course (UCF, 2015g). The 80-hour IDL 6543 course is described as modeling “how to teach online using a combination of seminars, labs, consultations, and web-based instruction and is delivered in an M (mixed) mode” (UCF, 2015g). Though delivered in blended format, its purpose has been to help faculty members to teach both online and blended courses and provide hands-on training. Additionally, IDL 6543 incorporates technology skills, online pedagogy, and the coordination and organization involved in and required for teaching online at the University of Central Florida (CDL, 2015g).

The Center for Distributed Learning describes the process as needing both the faculty members’ and their department chair’s agreement to participate in IDL 64543. Next, CDL will put the faculty member on the IDL6543 potential participant list for the college in which the faculty member teaches. “Each college communicates its online priorities to the Center for Distributed Learning. CDL’s administrators will start the initial communication when you are scheduled to participate in IDL6543” (UCF, 2015g). After this is accomplished, CDL’s instructional designers guide participants through the process of developing their online courses. The faculty member’s college determines whether or not the faculty member will receive funding or course release time in order to participate in IDL6543. The faculty member must successfully complete IDL6543 in order to design and deliver in the UCF online environment (UCF, 2015g).

Another credentialing option to teach online is the online self-paced course, titled ADL 5000, Advanced Distributed Learning for Technology-Mediated Delivery. The course requires 35 hours of the faculty member’s time to complete it (UCF, 2015f). The



course is described on the CDL Website as “a non-credit, online course for faculty who want to teach an existing online course” (UCF, 2015f). The UCF Website describes ADL 5000 in this manner: “This course is designed to help the faculty member succeed in the delivery of the course they inherit from another faculty member” (UCF, 2015f, para 1). This course addresses many selected pedagogical, logistical, and technological issues involved in delivering effective online courses” (UCF, 2015f). The CDL Website also states that some faculty who have online teaching and learning management system experience can potentially complete this course in one or two days (UCF, 2015f).

### *The Subjects*

The research participants offered their personal perspectives including their online teaching and course development philosophy, expectations for online faculty, and the support, training and courses available for these faculty in order to prepare them to teach online. To protect their identities, the four UCF employees, one male and three females, were assigned numbers. As shown in Table 3, these UCF employees ranged in experience in their current positions from six years to more than 15 years.

Table 3

#### *Participants Years of Experience at University of Central Florida*

Participant	Years in Current Position
1	11-15 years
2	6-10 years
3	More than 15 years
4	More than 15 years

### *Number of Courses Taught at UCF*

Participants were also asked how many online courses were taught by faculty members per term. Five of the six participants from both institutions responded to this question and they all indicated two to three courses were taught per term by their faculty members. They were also asked how many online courses were taught per year by the faculty at the institution. Respondent 1 replied that 1800 courses were taught. Respondent 2 said that there were 1996 fully online courses in the 2014-2015 academic year. Respondent 3 said that in the 2013-14 academic year, “1,884 online sections, 1,011 blended sections.” This respondent also shared that in the 2014-15 academic year (not including summer) that there were 2,996 online sections and 1,106 blended sections. Respondent 4 said, “Academic year 2013-14: 1,884 online sections, 1,011 blended sections; Academic year 2014-15 (does not include summer 2015): 2,996 online sections, 1,106 blended sections.” These responses indicated that a considerable number of online and blended courses have been offered at this institution. This speaks well for its experience with adopting online learning.

### *Definitions of Online Learning at UCF*

Respondents were asked to share their definitions of online learning. This question was asked as Graham et al.’s (2013) framework has a category, strategy, with a related sub-section, definition. According to Graham et al., an institution that is mature in its implementation of online learning will have a “refined definition” for online learning.

In answer to this question, Respondent 1 said, “All instructional activity is conducted over the Internet.”

Respondent 2 indicated: “Fully Web-based course with no campus attendance requirement.”

Respondent 3 from this institution replied, “An online course (World Wide Web) is conducted via Web-based instruction and collaboration. Some courses may require minimal campus attendance or in-person/proctored examinations. According to Florida Statute 1009.24(17), at least 80% of the direct instruction of online courses must be delivered via distance technologies. If faculty members elect to include up to 20% campus attendance, they must provide alternatives for students truly at a distance.

Lastly, Respondent 4 indicated,

Within the context of this survey I would define it as fully online instruction where 100% of the course delivery is technology-mediated. Some would add the assumption that it is self-paced, asynchronous, but I disagree with that. My definition is broad enough to include live, synchronous online meetings as well as self-paced asynchronous.

Further definitions of types of online courses can be found at the UCF Online Website which describes several types of courses offered at UCF. UCF refers to these as course modalities. These include W-World Wide Web, V-Video Streaming, RV-Video Streaming/Reduced Seat Time and M-Mixed Mode/Reduced Seat Time as well as P-Face to Face Instruction (UCF, 2015c). These answers all seemed to indicate that there were refined definitions present at each institution, which indicated Stage 3 of the Blended

Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013). Graham et al. considered having a developed definition in place as a hallmark of an institution in stage 3, mature/implementation and growth. These responses also have direct implications for the researcher's institution as it has a clear definition for online classes, but not for blended.

### *Definitions of Blended Learning at UCF*

Participants were asked to provide a definition of blended learning. This question was posed to address Graham et al.'s (2013) framework and its category, Strategy, which refers to the institution having a refined definition for online learning. Furthermore, the Support: Pedagogical section of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013) was addressed by asking this question. Likewise, the structural frame of Bolman and Deal's work (2008), which Mazer (2014) noted correlated to definitions of blended learning, can be applied to analyzing participants' responses to this question.

Respondent 1's reply was "Courses include both required classroom attendance and online instruction."

Respondent 2 remarked, "Courses include both required classroom attendance and online instruction. Classes have substantial activity conducted over the Web, which will substitute for some classroom meetings."

Respondent 3 indicated,

A blended course (called Mixed Mode/Reduced Seat Time at our institution) includes both required classroom attendance and online instruction. Classes have substantial activity conducted over the Web, which will substitute for some

classroom meetings. The percentage of online instruction can range from 20-80% of the course. A key component to our definition for blended requires a reduction in classroom attendance or seat time.

Respondent 4's definition was:

Any combination of online and face-to-face course delivery. While it does not need to be an even 50/50 split, the online components should include course content and activities that reinforce the course objectives, which is more than just a repository of course handouts or slides that are merely supplementing a face-to-face class.

These responses all seemed to indicate that there were refined definitions present at each institution. Therefore, the institutions would fall into Stage 3 of the Definition section of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et. al., 2013). These responses will be very beneficial to the researcher's institution as it begins to refine its current definitions of blended learning and decide upon a clear definition of blended learning.

#### *Structure of the Institution (UCF): Centralized or Decentralized*

In order to determine the structure of the institution, the researcher asked the participants if they had a campus fully devoted to online or if it was decentralized and to explain. The researcher had previous experience at a community college in the northern part of the U. S. that did have a main campus from which online courses were created, developed, and taught. The researcher posed this question in order to determine the

structure of the institution. Having a decentralized or centralized campus does not necessarily indicate maturity in regard to the framework provided by Graham et al. (2013). This question was presented in an attempt to help answer the two research questions which dealt with similarities and differences between the two selected institutions.

Only one of the six respondents indicated “yes,” but remarked that he/she was not sure what was meant by this question. This respondent indicated that there was an online program guide which lists all programs that are online and that this program guide “provide(s) support for the online faculty, courses and students.” This respondent also shared that the colleges and departments manage registration and advising.

Another insight that the participant shared was that

Some institutions deliver all online courses through a distance learning or continuing education department. Although they use faculty from the departments to teach the course, [they are] not necessarily coordinated with the needs of the department. At my institution, each college/department decides whether to deliver their courses in an online or blended format depending on the needs of their students and competition from other organizations.

The respondent believed that the benefit of centralization in his/her own department was that it “allows us to provide consistent faculty development and support to faculty and students.” This respondent’s answer shows that there were “emerging structures primarily to regulate and approve BL courses” (Graham et al., 2013, Table 2). The remaining three respondents from this institution indicated that there was no

centralized online campus. One of the four of the five respondents provided an explanation. Those four shared the following: “No campus; however, our strategic planning, faculty development, and support is done centrally.” Another respondent indicated that it is “just overseen w/in each division” and the last respondent shared that the institution is “decentralized across multiple campuses.”

After further consideration, the researcher determined that further research into centralization or decentralization was necessary in order to weigh benefits and disadvantages in regard to an institution’s online implementation maturity level. This type of structure also correlates to Bolman and Deal’s (2008) structural and human resource frames which shows the formal practices, patterns and processes that are in place for communicating or adjusting new ideas, innovations and technologies as well as the types of support available.

#### *Positives and Negatives of UCF’s Organizational Framework of Online Learning*

Next, the participants were asked to state, from their perspective, the positive and negatives of their current institutional organization of online learning. Once again, the purpose of this question was to help answer the three main research questions as to similarities and differences of the institutions’ best practices in quality assurance for online teaching and learning and the stages of development of the institutions in supporting online learning teaching and learning?

The following responses were provided:

Respondent 1: Pro: “All students are eligible for online enrollments and campus enrollments. Con: “Lack of metrics and stats about our online students.”

Respondent 2: Pro: “Only one LMS, everyone plays by the same rules and regulations. Con: “Change must occur slowly, massive amount of resources required, cannot meet all needs of everyone.”

Respondent 3: “The pros of our design is it meets the needs of students and keeps the academic activity within the department. Also, funding can be targeted to provide consistent technical and programmatic support for the entire university. Also, the learning management system can be integrated with university ERP system for efficiency. A disadvantage is trying to meet the needs of everyone on the campus. For example, we have one learning management system for everyone. Unfortunately, you never get agreement on the “one” system to be adopted.”

Respondent 4: Pro: “Administration has supported CDL's mission from the very beginning. Requiring faculty to complete the credentialing process helps us ensure that they receive the support they need to be successful with online learning.” Con: “Faculty members have complete control over their courses (pro & con), so there is no centralized quality control process other than department chair oversight. The instructional designers are consultants and we can make recommendations, but we are not empowered to enforce any quality standards. That resides within the academic departments.”

The answer of Respondent 4 seems to indicate that UCF was at Stage 3 in the Support category of Graham’s Blended Learning Adoption Framework (2013). This answer correlated with Graham et al.’s Blended Learning Adoption Framework as his



description of Stage 3 in the Support category describes “well established technological support to address the online needs of all stakeholders. . . .” as well as “robust course development process established and systematically promoted (Graham et al., 2013, Table 2). The support for the work of the Center for Distributed Learning by administration at this institution was a key piece of evidence that enabled the researcher to determine an appropriate stage. Likewise, learning that this institution has a required credentialing process will be a beneficial recommendation that the researcher can take back to her institution as options for the credentialing process are being considered.

#### *Credentialing Procedures for Online Faculty at UCF*

Participants were asked what the credentialing procedures to teach online were at their institution in order to answer the first sub-question: What credentials are faculty at the selected institutions required to have prior to teaching online? This question was also posed in an effort to address Bolman and Deal’s (2008) structural and human resource frames which Mazer (2014) noted correlates to Support Systems, Technology, Pedagogy, and Institutional Awareness. This question also correlates to the Support: Pedagogical section and the Strategy: Implementation section (Graham et al., 2013).

Participants’ responses, and the likely stage of development indicated by the response in terms of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013) is noted after each response. A summary discussion of overall findings from the responses to this question are also presented.

Respondent 1 shared that “Successfully completing prescribed faculty development, or being favorably evaluated in a formal Online Faculty Readiness Assessment.” This response indicated Stage 3, Support/Pedagogical and Stage 3, Strategy/Implementation (Graham et al., 2013)

Respondent 2 mentioned that there is a “required faculty development program before developing and delivering an online or blended course.” This response indicated Stage 3, Support/Pedagogical and Stage 3, Strategy/Implementation (Graham et al., 2013)

Respondent 3 indicated that “Faculty must complete a faculty development offering from our department to teach an online or blended course. IDL6543 is offered for faculty who want to design an online or blended course and deliver it. ADL5000 is for faculty taking over an existing online or blended course and delivering it. Note that ADL5000 credentials do not allow the faculty to design online/blended courses.” This response indicated Stage 3, Support/Pedagogical and Stage 3, Strategy/Implementation (Graham et al., 2013)

Respondent 4 stated, “An instructor must complete a 10-week professional development course to become credentialed to teach online or blended courses at this institution. There is a process to apply for an exemption if a new faculty member comes to UCF with extensive online teaching experience. The exemption may result in full credentials or completion of a subset of the coursework in order to receive the credential. The 10-week course (IDL6543) is taught in a blended format. This response indicated Stage 3, Support/Pedagogical and Stage 3, Strategy/Implementation (Graham et al., 2013)

These responses show that the University of Central Florida can be assessed as a Stage 3: Mature Implementation and Growth in regard to the pedagogical support and training required and available for online faculty. Having a required credentialing procedure for faculty with a variety of levels of online teaching experience indicates that an institution is “strategically facilitat[ing] wide-spread faculty implementation” (Graham et al., 2013, Table 2) by offering many supportive ways to become certified to teach online. This finding can be applied to the researcher’s institution as it considers best practices for faculty preparedness.

#### *Course Quality and Quality Assurance Measures: UCF*

In order to answer the first two research questions and the third and fourth sub-questions, the next section of survey questions addressed course quality. This relates to the Structure: Evaluation and Pedagogical sections of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013) and Bolman and Deal’s (2008) structural frame which included having a formal course evaluation system in place (Mazer, 2014).

Survey participants were asked to explain their standards for quality in course design and how they were assessed. Respondent 1 stated, “Quality course design is assured by rigorous faculty credentialing and eligibility for online course delivery.” This answer indicates a Stage 3 of the Structure: Pedagogical section of the blended learning framework (Graham et al., 2013).

Respondent 1 indicated, “. . . quality is addressed in faculty development. Faculty are taught how to build quality courses and given rubrics.” This answer reveals a Stage 3

of the Structure: Pedagogical section of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework because there is the building of “a formal course development process” at this institution (Graham et al., 2013, Table 2).

Respondent 2 stated, “We have a list of guidelines to support course design and quality. . . . Also, we follow the Southern Regional Education Board principles of good practice. In our IDL6543 course, participants receive a course rubric to assist with the design of their course.”

Respondent 3 also indicated that other faculty participants use the rubric to provide feedback on each other’s courses. This respondent also shared that the rubric is also used by the instructional designers who are assigned to each participant in IDL6543. Respondent 3 indicated that they “use the rubric during consultations to guide faculty through the process of converting their course to an online/blended environment” and that occasionally faculty request a review of their courses. This respondent indicated that a “Quick Check Quality Guide” is used for this type of review.” A robust response shows that this institution falls into a Stage 3 of the Support: Pedagogical section of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework because such an institution would have “robust course development processes established” (Graham et al., 2013, Table 2).

Respondent 4 stated, “See above” indicating a prior answer was appropriate for this response.

Survey participants were asked if their institution had a quality assurance person or department. This question was used to determine the answer to Research Question 3 as to the institution’s stage of development in supporting online learning teaching and

learning and sub questions 3 and 4 as to how quality is assured and if the training or expected credentials of the faculty match up to the online course quality expectations of the university, respectively.

Only one respondent indicated that there was a quality assurance person or department at the institution. The others reported that there was no quality assurance person. The one positive respondent shared, “The institution has quality assurance staff. However, they do not review online courses. The instructional designers in our department serve as the point of contact for quality assurance in online/blended courses.” These responses appear to indicate a Stage 2 of the Structure: Evaluation section of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013) because there is not yet a quality assurance department or person(s) responsible for quality assurance evaluations. Stage 2 indicated that this institution was in the adoption/early implementation stage of this category. However, the institution may overall exhibit Stage 3: Mature Implementation and Growth Characteristics. Additionally, a centralized quality assurance person may not be necessary depending on the other structures in place to achieve course quality. These findings are particularly relevant to the researcher’s institution as at the time of the study, the use of a quality assurance rubric and an online evaluation form were currently in use and further quality assurance measures were being considered.

### *Quality Assurance Concerns at UCF*

The following discussion relates to the data collection conducted to answer sub-question 4 as to whether the training or expected credentials of the faculty match up to the online course quality expectations of the university. To respond to this question, participants were asked what their quality assurance concerns were. Related to this question is the Structure: Evaluation and Pedagogical sections of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013) and the structural frame (Bolman and Deal, 2008) which involves having a formal course evaluation system (Mazer, 2014). Furthermore, the answers to this question helped the researcher determine the institution's stage of development of the Structure: Pedagogical section of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013).

The following responses from this institution were

Respondent 1 answered, "The same concerns that academic depts. have for classroom quality."

Respondent 2 simply stated, "Faculty can do what they want. Sometimes they cut corners."

Respondent 4 replied, "Some faculty members are brilliant within their disciplines but have very little training in curriculum design or instruction. If quality assurance lies with the department chair, who in many cases is a peer because they rotate the position within the department, quality standards may not be checked, upheld, or even established. And it's certainly not consistent across the university if it lies at the departmental level."

In comparison to the responses about the pedagogical and technology support and guidance offered by the institution, these responses showed that quality was still a concern. Nonetheless, these concerns may still be present in an institution which is at Stage 3 of Graham et al.'s (2013) Framework (2013). Simply having evaluation processes in place does not guarantee that all quality issues are resolved. Nevertheless, an institution which has a quality assurance process in place does show a commitment to quality and mature growth and implementation of online support and evaluation structures.

#### *Use of Quality Assurance Rubrics: UCF*

One of the major questions that this dissertation addressed was how the selected institutions of higher learning assured the quality of online courses? The Structure: Evaluation section and the Support: Pedagogical and Technological sections of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013) as well as Bolman and Deal's (2008) structural frame correlate to this question. The major purpose of this research was to examine the use of quality assurance in institutions of higher learning as they align with the pedagogical and technological support and training available and required.

When asked if they used any rubrics or some other measure in preparing their online faculty members, five of the total participants from each of the institutions answered, "yes." Though Lord Fairfax Community College's responses will be described in detail, the researcher wanted to note that the majority of respondents at both

institutions confirmed the use of a rubric. This question was used to answer Research Questions 1 and 2 that compare and contrast the quality assurance best practices being used by the institution. Furthermore, the responses to this question also help to answer the last two sub questions.

Of those who answered “yes” from UCF, one respondent stated, “We have a formal 9-week program including assessments and required work product.” Another mentioned, “Yes, we provide rubrics during faculty development. They mirror the Quality Matters rubrics.” The next respondent from UCF shared that there existed a course for this called IDL6543 and said that it “has a course and a module rubric that participants use to design their courses. These rubrics are based on the Quality Matters rubric.” The last respondent from UCF also alluded to the IDL 6543 course and said, “During IDL6543, we use a module rubric and a course rubric to assist participants in evaluating the online courses they are developing during the 10-week program.” These responses are indicative of an institution at Stage 3 of the Structure-Evaluation section of Graham’s Blended Learning Adoption Framework (2013). The mention of their rubric being based upon the Quality Matters (2015) rubric was particularly interesting to the researcher because her home institution uses this rubric. These answers could be a justification for continued use of a rubric that another exemplary institution considers in developing its own quality assurance rubrics.

Next, the participants were asked how the quality of online courses was assessed.

Respondent 1 simply stated “na.”



Respondent 2 said, “Quality is handled at the department/college level with the various accrediting bodies.”

Respondent 3 said,

Standards for face-to-face and online courses really do not differ and evaluation is the same. The variable is the delivery mode. Departments are responsible for insuring that all courses meet their requirements for a quality. This responsibility belongs to the departments because they have the content expertise to evaluate courses. My centralized support unit will assist in a course review upon request to add our expertise in online pedagogy.”

Respondent 4 said, “Each department has their own set of standards.

Although these answers were helpful in determining that there were structural procedures to verify quality in place at the department level, follow up interviews would have been helpful to the researcher in assessing which stage of Graham et al.’s (2013) Framework was exemplified in the Structure: Evaluation category. Similar departmental procedures were in place at the researcher’s institution. As at UCF, faculty development and instructional designers often provide the gateway to quality assurance at the researcher’s institution.

#### *Training and Support: UCF*

Another important question this dissertation addressed was: Does the training or expected credentials of the faculty align with the online course quality expectations of the university? Thus, the next set of questions addressed the training available for online

faculty, asking about what training is required or offered for online faculty. This question referred to Bolman and Deal's (2008) human resource frame which should address having support systems for technology and pedagogy in place (Mazer, 2014). The Support: Technical and Pedagogical section of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013) can also be used to evaluate the responses to this question.

Respondent 1 said, “

Instructor led 9 week preparation course for designing and delivering online courses; Self-paced mentor directed preparation course for delivering an already-designed online course; Self-paced preparation for delivery of a course with lecture capture technologies; Self-paced preparation for using the campus LMS system.

Respondent 2 indicated that “different courses are offered for developing and delivering online/blended courses, delivery only, and to develop/deliver streaming media courses.”

Respondent 3 said,

IDL6543 is required for faculty designing and delivering online courses.

ADL5000 is required for faculty taking over an existing online course and delivering it. The existing course must be designed by an IDL6543 credentialed faculty member and the ADL5000 participant is assigned a department mentor with IDL6543 credentials. Ideally the course designer and mentor are the same person.

Lastly, Respondent 4 said, “We offer a wide variety” and provided a Web address for more information.

The university clearly offers a wealth of technology and pedagogical support. Their responses reveal that UCF exemplifies qualities of Stage 3 of the Support: Technical and Pedagogical section of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013). This institution has a variety of training options. This is similar to the researcher’s institution, but at the time of the study none were required. A required process was currently being considered by the researcher’s institution as well as having a required capstone project at the end of the training (similar to that which was described in IDL 6543). These responses were particularly helpful in regard to the problem of practice being faced.

#### *Training for a Variety of Online Faculty Statuses: UCF*

Participants were also asked to share if the training their institution provided was the same for full time, tenured, contract, or adjunct instructors. This question addressed Bolman and Deal’s (2008) symbolic frame which relates to the changing role of the instructor. Responses could also be correlated to the human resource frame as it deals with support systems. This also relates to the Support: Technical and Pedagogical section of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework and could be correlated to Incentives of this same category section (Graham et al., 2013).

All of the respondents indicated that training was the same for all faculty. Only one offered an explanation that

. . . they all have access to the same training. However, there is a cost associated with the 10-week course because participants receive a stipend, so they must be approved by the department chair or dean. The result is that full-time and tenured faculty often get priority over contract and adjunct instructors.

It would have been beneficial to interview a sampling of online faculty to assess how they view the Center for Distributed Learning, their role as online course developers, and the organization's structure as a whole. By inviting the other stakeholders to share their views future research could be more informed.

The next question asked was if the institution had an alternative training for adjuncts and instructors who work full time for another organization. Only one respondent from UCF said "yes," and the other three from UCF responded "no." The one who answered "yes" shared a lengthy explanation.

We are responsible for helping all staff and faculty who want to teach online/blended courses at our institution regardless of the organization where they work. For faculty coming to UCF who have experience teaching online/blended courses, we have an alternative to our IDL6543 course. The new faculty member can complete a form providing information about their experience and artifacts from their online/blended courses to demonstrate course design. The submission is reviewed by two instructional designers and a recommendation is sent to our department director on whether the submission is equivalent to our IDL6543 credential. The recommendations might range from (pass) granting the IDL6543 credential or (fail) requires completion of the IDL6543 course. For a submission

that falls between the two extremes, faculty receives additional training to any area of deficiency.

This response indicates that there is “well established technological support to address online needs of all stakeholders as well as a “robust course development process” as described in the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013, Table 2). Therefore, UCF would fall into Category 3: Mature Implementation/Growth of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework in the areas of Support: Technical and Support: Pedagogical. Furthermore, this response also suggests that there is an incentive process in place for systematic training which correlates to Stage 3 of the Support: Incentives part of Graham et al.’s (2013) Framework. These responses are recommendations that are currently being considered at the researcher’s institution.

#### *Responses to Training Provided: UCF*

One of the sub-questions that this dissertation in practice sought to answer was if the training or expected credentials of the faculty align with the online course quality expectations of the university of college. Participants were then asked to explain the training provided. This relates to the Bolman and Deal’s (2008) symbolic frame which mentions how one’s belief in the status quo culture can influence or inhibit change. This view can be applied to online faculty members who may feel that face-to-face teaching methods are superior (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Mazer, 2014). The Support: Technical, Pedagogical and Incentives sections of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework

(Graham et al., 2013) are applicable to analyzing the training responses of the stakeholders.

Respondent 1 said, “Credentialed faculty are provided permanent access instructional designer faculty consultant, and no-charge media production, delivery and support services.”

Respondent 2 also indicated that each faculty participant is assigned an instructional designer. This respondent also indicated the types of support faculty were given and “included technical, video, and graphic support.”

Respondent 3 described the IDL 6543 course in detail:

IDL6543 is a blended course delivered three times a year to approximately 40 participants in each cohort. Each participant is paired with an instructional designer to help them apply the principals to their course. Most of the content is delivered online and participants work in groups for feedback and discussions. There are three meeting in the classroom to bring the participants together and impart key components in a face-to-face environment. Technology and online pedagogy are integral components of the course. Faculty design their online/blended course and it is peer reviewed during the IDL6543.

Respondent 4 provided a description of IDL 654 similar to that of Respondent 3.

The majority of these answers indicated a ranking of Stage 3 in the Support: Technical and Pedagogical section of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013). From what these respondents shared, it is clear that UCF has an effective course development process as well as providing the necessary technological

support for a variety of stakeholders. Likewise, the researcher's institution relies heavily on instructional designers for support, mentoring and training its online faculty members.

Next, the survey participants were asked how they determined if the training was meeting the faculty members' need and to offer an explanation. This question relates to the Structure: Evaluation category and section of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013) as the question being asked was whether the training itself was being evaluated. Graham et al. (2013) indicated that evaluation data and outcomes need to be reviewed periodically in order to achieve a Stage 3 and show that an institution is at a mature level of implementing and growing online learning.

Respondent 1 stated that there is a "regular assessment of faculty completers."

Respondent 2 indicated that there are ". . . various surveys in the PD courses and periodic focus groups."

Respondent 3 mentioned that "IDL6543 has periodic surveys during the course and a final survey at the end of the course. Also, we survey participants after they teach their first online/blended course to determine the effectiveness of the IDL6543 content."

Respondent 4 said:

We survey the participants at three key points over the 10 weeks to elicit formative feedback and then once at the end for summative feedback. In addition, the Research Institute for Teaching Effectiveness (RITE) performs large scale effectiveness assessments across the institution.

Evaluation is a structural concern of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013) which was also being applied to fully online courses in this

dissertation in practice. Furthermore, evaluation is a key part of each of Bolman and Deal's four frames (2008). In the human resource frame, evaluation is concerned with helping individuals grow and improve. The majority of these answers indicated the organization was at Stage 3 in the Structure: Evaluation section of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013) and that the appropriate measures were being taken by the UCF Center for Distributed Learning to help their individual instructors and instructional designers improve their practice. Surveys were also being used at the researcher's institution. The responses here provide additional ideas for incorporating formative and summative feedback loops into the evaluation cycle.

#### *Quality Assurance Reviews: UCF*

The major questions this quality assurance evaluation study in multiple case study format addressed are as follows:

- What are the similarities of the institutions' best practices in quality assurance for online teaching and learning?
- What are the differences between these institutions' best practices in quality assurance for online teaching and learning?
- How do the selected institutions of higher learning assure the quality of online courses?

In order to answer these questions, respondents were asked how many courses had been internally reviewed with some quality assurance measure. Internal reviews was defined as the use by employees of an institutionally decided upon outside quality



assurance rubric or institutionally created rubric at the institution to review its own courses.

Respondent 1 stated, “Nominated courses are reviewed for faculty teaching awards.”

Respondent 2 replied, “None, we do not use QM.”

Respondent 3 stated, “During IDL6543, the instructional designers are reviews the courses for quality. Upon request, my office will review a course. However, I don’t have a count on the number of courses formally or informally reviewed. Also, most of the ongoing quality assurance occurs in the department.

Respondent 4 shared, “Nothing formal. May occur at the department level, but I’m out of the loop.”

The next question asked if any courses were externally reviewed with a QA measure. By external reviews, the researcher means that qualified individuals outside the home institution used some type of quality assurance rubric to evaluate the quality of the institutions’ courses for an objective perspective.

The following answers were provided:

Respondent 1: “rarely.”

Respondent 2: “None, we do not use QM”

Respondent 3:

Two faculty members have received external awards for their online/blended courses from the Online Learning Consortium (formerly Sloan-C Consortium).

Four received the WebCT Exemplary Course Award. One faculty member

received the United States Distance Learning Association Individual Excellence Award. All three groups use rubrics to evaluate the quality of the courses being reviewed. For all three awards, the individuals were competing against faculty from the United States and Canada.

Respondent 4: “None that I know of.”

The Blended Learning Adoption Framework views evaluation as a structural matter (Graham et al., 2013) and Bolman and Deal’s structural frame (2008) has evaluation implications present in its design. The structural frame views evaluation as a means to allocate rewards and dispense penalties or control performance (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The majority of these answers, which show an attempt to address quality assurance and the awards won by the faculty members who teach online and the UCF Center for Distributed Learning, signified a commitment to continuous improvement. It is also interesting to note that Quality Matters was mentioned by several respondents. This could indicate that it is seen as a national standard of online course excellence.

#### *Awards and Excellence: UCF*

An important question the researcher sought to answer was: What stage is the university currently falls into in supporting online learning teaching and learning? One way to determine this stage is by looking at what awards or achievements are being earned by faculty or the institution or department in charge of online courses. This question connects to the Structure: Incentives section of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013).

Two questions dealt with awards for excellence in online teaching. The first question asked about internal awards, and the follow up question asked about external awards. The respondents indicated that there were awards such as an annual internal award titled Award for Excellence in Online Teaching which was determined by peer review. A respondent from UCF offered the following:

We are in our fourth year of our excellence in online teaching award. To date, we [have] three winners and five honorable mentions for the award. The faculty evaluating the submissions for the awards use a rubric based on the IDL6543 course rubric. Our faculty development course, IDL6543, has received several awards...However, I would not say the IDL6543 was reviewed for quality assurance.”

This response was interesting as it revealed a need to not only quality assure “for credit” courses, but also faculty development training courses.

When asked what external awards had been won, the responses were as follows:

Respondent 1 replied that there were 16 awards from the Online Learning Consortium (previously Sloan Consortium,) from 2003-2014 and that there were three awards from Educause from 1999-2008. This respondent also mentioned the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCET) Award, 2013, and the receipt of two awards from the United States Distance Learning Association plus many vendor awards from Blackboard and Tegrity, and productivity awards from Florida TaxWatch. The rest of the respondents referred the researcher to the awards section of the UCF online Website.

The Blended Learning Adoption Framework sees evaluation as a structural issue and incentives as a support matter (Graham et al., 2013). As previously mentioned, Bolman and Deal's structural frame has evaluation implications as well. The structural frame looks at evaluation as a tool to allocate rewards and encourage good performance (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The awards won by the UCF online faculty members and the UCF Center for Distributed Learning attest to a commitment to quality and high performance in the arena of online teaching and learning. Therefore, this institution would be a Stage 3 in the Incentives category of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework. Likewise, encouraging faculty to submit their online courses for awards is a recommendation that the researcher would like to make to her institution. This could be an extra means of incentivizing externally assurance quality.

#### *Publications: UCF*

The last question in the survey focused on publications that had been published by the institution or its faculty in the field of online learning or quality assurance. This question related to the research question focused on the stage of development of the university in supporting online learning teaching and learning. Additionally, this section correlates to the Bolman and Deal's (2008) symbolic frame and the Structure: Incentives section of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013). Also in the study conducted by Mazer (2014), it is mentioned that a tenure and promotion system may require online faculty to publish in their field.

Respondent 1 stated that there were an “average of 24 publications and 80 presentations per year,” but did not indicate what types of publications these were.

Respondent 2 simply said, “Yes, many.”

Respondent 3 shared, “Unfortunately, we don’t have an accurate count of articles written by faculty. We have been researching and writing about online and blended courses since the inception in 1996 and participate on numerous boards and conferences.”

Respondent 4 said, “Yes, we have several listed on the Website: However, instructional designers and individual faculty members also publish and present on this topic regularly.”

Follow up interviews would have been helpful to gather additional data in regard to this question, yet these somewhat limited responses show that this institution would earn a Stage 3 in the category of Incentives in the Blended Learning Adoption Framework. This is justified as many of their faculty are engaged in publishing in their field and the field of online learning and quality assurance. The researcher would like to recommend that her institution encourage faculty to make publications in the field of online learning and quality assurance as an incentive structure.

This concludes the presentation of the data for the University of Central Florida case study. The data for the Lord Fairfax Community College case study is presented using the same reporting categories in the following sections of this chapter.

### Lord Fairfax Community College (LFCC)

In 1970, Lord Fairfax Community College (LFCC) was begun and at the time of the study was a multi-campus public institution of higher education. Its three campuses serve eight areas in the Shenandoah Valley and Piedmont regions. These campuses include, The Fauquier, Middletown and Luray-Page County Center. Lord Fairfax Community College offers over 75 associate degree and certificate programs in many different disciplines (LFCC, 2015a). The researcher's institution is also a provider of many associate degrees. This college serves over 7,600 credit students and served 819 virtual students in 2014 (LFCC, 2015a). Lord Fairfax Community College is accredited by the Southern Association of Community Colleges and Schools (LFCC, 2015a) and is a part of the Virginia Community College System (VCCS).

#### *The Department Setting : LFCC*

The department under study is the Instructional Technology and Distance Learning Office (ITO) at Lord Fairfax Community College which is an office that resides in the Academic and Student Affairs unit at Lord Fairfax Community College (LFCC). This office works with faculty, staff, and students in “using technology to support LFCC’s academic mission” (LFCC, 2015b, par. 1). The ITO office also leads the “online learning initiatives at the college.” (LFCC, 2015b, par. 1). Its primary mission is described as “provid[ing] vision, leadership, and support in the appropriate use of educational technology and media for teaching and learning and in the development and continuation of quality distance education programs” (LFCC, 2015b, par. 2).

Lord Fairfax Community College's Instructional Technology and Distance Learning Office coordinates and provides the "instructional technology resources, services, and support for faculty and students, in partnership with the College's Technology Services department" (LFCC, 2015b, par. 3). This office also encourages the use of technology and best practices in improving online teaching and learning in order to increase accessibility for Lord Fairfax's academic programs. The ITO team also works with faculty to develop their use and knowledge of technology to enhance teaching and learning as well as providing both hands-on workshops and special events and individual assistance and computer based training to instruct faculty and staff in using current and emerging technologies. Additionally, the ITO office is charged with assuring the quality of distance learning courses and curriculum (LFCC, 2015b).

### *The Virginia Community College System*

Lord Fairfax Community College is part of the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) which has been in place since 1966 and is comprised of 23 colleges. One goal of the VCCS is ". . . to address Virginia's unmet needs in higher education and workforce training" (VCCS, 2015). The VCCS continues to pursue excellence in education with its Achieve 2015, a six-year strategic plan for Virginia's Community Colleges. Furthermore, the VCCS contributes to online teaching and learning through its Teaching Online Program, which is described on its EdTech@VCCS website (VCCS, 2015). These courses were developed by contributors from several community colleges in the state and provide faculty with the opportunity to develop their online teaching and

design skills. Some of the courses they offer are: Instructional Design for Online Learning (IDOL); Multimedia for Online, Distance, and eLearning (MODEL); Engaging Online Learners with Web 2.0 Applications (ENROLL 2.0); Topics in Online Teaching and Learning (TOTAL); and Learning on the Go (LOGO). These training courses are part of the credentialing process at Lord Fairfax Community College for new online instructors. Other options include the Blackboard Exemplary process and a Quality Matters' review.

The following sections contain the responses of the participants from Lord Fairfax Community College to the survey distributed by the researcher.

*Positives and Negatives of Organizational Framework of Online Learning: LFCC*

Respondents were asked to state, from their perspective, the positive and negatives of their current institutional organization of online learning. The purpose of this question was to address the first three main research questions as to the similarities and differences of the institutions' best practices in quality assurance for online teaching and learning and the stage of development of the institution in supporting online learning teaching and learning?

The following responses by the two respondents from LFCC were provided:

Respondent 1: "Because we have elected not to centralize online services - it is sometimes slow moving individuals in various departments to recognize the online students and operationalize ways to serve them."



Respondent 2: “It would be better to have an online center or some other centralized group overseeing quality and scheduling.”

These responses were indicative of an institution at Stage 2: Adoption/Early Implementation in regard to the Strategy category of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework in the area of Implementation (Graham et al., 2013) because individual faculty members were implementing the courses and there were no departments facilitating the implementation.

#### *Definitions of Online Learning: LFCC*

Respondents were asked to share their definition of online learning. This question was asked as Graham et al.’s (2013) Framework has a category, strategy, and a section, definition, that refers to the institution having a “refined definition” for online learning (Graham et al., 2013, Table 2).

In answer to this question, Respondent 1 acknowledged, “Course materials and interactions are located at a web portal - such as a learning management system. No requirements to attend a physical location.”

Respondent 2 wrote, “full online for coursework except for a few proctored exams on campus in testing centers.”

In comparison to the University of Central Florida, Lord Fairfax has a resource page titled, “You and Online Learning” found on their Website and an online courses home page which provide their definitions of online and hybrid courses (LFCC, 2015c). However, one of their administrators communicated with the researcher via email that

Instructors and students see a “Note” on the course listing that states the following for Hybrid: HYBRID distance class. Includes both classroom meetings and significant additional online work which replaces some classroom meetings. Instructor is present at this location. Internet access required.” They see the following for Online: “ONLINE class begins 8/24. Internet access required.” Additionally, the LFCC policy manual defines these terms in detail according to SACS standards.

This response relates to the Scheduling section of the Structure category of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework as it shows that efforts have been made to designate hybrid and online courses in the registration and catalog system (Graham et al., 2013). The answers from these two respondents from LFCC indicate that they are on their way to creating refined definitions though currently only initial definitions are present. This shows that they fall into Stage 2 of the Strategy: Definition section of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013). Their stage and online definitions are similar to those of the researcher’s institution.

#### *Definitions of Blended Learning: LFCC*

Respondents were surveyed as to their definition of blended learning, and they responded as indicated below.

Respondent 1 had the opinion that “More than 50% (but less than 100%) of course work and assignments are done outside of a meeting time and use online web portal/LMS.”

Respondent 2 said, “meeting no more than 50% of the time, about a 50/50 split face-to-face and online.”

Lord Fairfax Community College falls into Stage 2 of the Strategy: Definition part of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework which was adapted in this dissertation in practice to also apply to fully online courses (Graham et al., 2013). Likewise, Bolman and Deal’s structural frame (2008) factors into an institution having a definition of and institutional awareness of distance learning courses (Mazer, 2014). The researcher’s institution was at a similar stage to Lord Fairfax Community College. The definitions combined with the responses from the University of Central Florida will be helpful for the researcher’s institution to consider in developing/refining its own definitions.

#### *Credentialing Procedures for Online Faculty at LFCC*

Participants were asked about the credentialing procedures at their institution to answer the first sub-question as to the credentials faculty are required to have prior to teaching online. This question was asked in an effort to address Bolman and Deal’s (2008) structural and human resource frames and the Support: Pedagogical section of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013). Participant responses, along with the likely stage of development in terms of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013) are discussed in this section.

Respondent 1 stated, “They must have passed a QM review in the past 5 years, taken a 3 credit course targeting online learning; or complete an 8-week in house program.” This response indicated Stage 3, Support/Pedagogical (Graham et al., 2013)

Respondent 2 shared that LFCC was “only just started requiring this--there are several possibilities--some grad. level courses, several workshops on best practices, working with our inst. tech dean to create a course she reviews” This response indicated Stage 1, Support/Pedagogical (Graham et al., 2013)

The differences in the information provided by each respondent make it difficult to fully assess the stage this institution would fall into in regard to the Blended Learning Adoption Framework. Thus, more data would need to be collected, perhaps via interview, to appropriately and accurately assess the correct stage of the framework. However, the use of an external Quality Matters review to credential faculty is interesting to the researcher’s institution as a potential credentialing procedure or quality assurance measure.

#### *Course Quality and Quality Assurance Measures: LFCC*

In order to answer the first two research questions and the third and fourth sub questions, the next section of survey questions addressed course quality. This question connects to the Structure: Evaluation section and the Structure: Pedagogical section of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013), as well as Bolman and Deal’s (2008) structural frame and the Structure: Pedagogical section. Participants were asked to explain their standards for quality in course design and how they are assessed.

Respondent 1 shared, “We use the QM rubric - peer and dean review on that basis.”

Respondent 2 acknowledged, “my standards are based on my coursework and training that I’ve taken. I did a Bb catalyst submission and have used QM standards before.”

These answers indicated that Lord Fairfax Community College was at a Stage 2 of the Structure: Pedagogical section of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013), because they did not quite have a robust course development process in place. However, LFCC was at a Stage 3 of the Structure: Evaluation part of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework, because outcomes were being “systematically reviewed” (Graham et al., 2013). Similar procedures were in place at the researcher’s institution. It is also useful to note that other similar multi-campus institutions were using comparable processes at the institutional and departmental levels.

Survey participants were asked if they had a quality assurance person or department. This question was used to determine a response to Research Question 3 which addresses the institution’s stage of development in supporting online learning teaching and learning and sub questions 3 and 4 as to how quality of online courses is assured. Further, this question helped the researcher answer Research Questions 1 and 2 as to the similarities and differences in institutional practices.

Of all participants from both institutions, only one responded that a quality assurance person was at the institution. The others all indicate that there was no quality assurance person. Further data collection measures such as an interview are necessary to assess the stage that Lord Fairfax Community College exemplifies in regard to this question.

### *Quality Assurance Concerns: LFCC*

Participants were asked what their quality assurance concerns were in order to answer sub question 4: Does the training or expected credentials of the faculty match up to the online course quality expectations of the university? The Structure: Evaluation and Support: Pedagogical sections of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013) conveys the need for a mature system to evaluate online learning outcomes regularly and also to provide a robust course development process to achieve quality instruction. Additionally, this section relates to Bolman and Deal's (2008) structural frame which mentions having an evaluation process in each of the frames with differing purposes, such as promotion, controlling performance, distributing penalties, and as opportunities to take on new roles and exercise power.

When participants were asked about their quality assurance concerns, both LFCC respondents answered.

Respondent 1 shared that, "We use a large number of adjuncts, so this can be challenging for all types of course delivery - particularly with online."

Respondent 2 stated, "Many adjuncts are "teaching" with publisher provided content and multiple choice quizzes, so it's a very passive experience."

These answers show that quality was a concern even though this institution used a quality assurance rubric to train and evaluate its courses. The Blended Learning Adoption Framework's category Strategy: Implementation addresses how distance learning is being conducted at the institution (Graham et al., 2013). These responses

showed that individual faculty members were implementing and were at Stage 1, awareness and exploration level in this category.

Similar concerns of passive experiences and a massive utilization of adjuncts are present at the researcher's institution. It is useful to consider how this might inform future research into addressing passivity in online teaching and how adjuncts are credentialed and supported at an institution.

#### *Use of Quality Assurance Rubrics: LFCC*

One of the major questions that the researcher asked was: How do the selected institutions of higher learning assure the quality of online courses? The Structure: Evaluation section and the Structure: Pedagogical section of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013) were addressed by posing this question as well as through Bolman and Deal's (2008) structural frame which involves having a formal course evaluation system (Mazer, 2014).

When asked if their institution used any rubrics in preparing online faculty members or if there was some other measure of quality assurance, only one LFCC respondent replied affirmatively. The other respondent was uncertain if a rubric was used. This question was presented to answer Research Questions 1 and 2, comparing and contrasting the quality assurance best practices being used by the institution. This question also helped to answer the last two sub questions. The LFCC respondent who said that that a rubric was not used indicated that the "QM and Blackboard Exemplary Course" was used. The researcher's institution also uses the Quality Matters product but

might consider another alternative. This response could indicate that this institution was at Stage 2 of the Structure--Evaluation section of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013). Further data could be gathered to fully determine the stage because there were only two participants.

Next, the participants were asked how the quality of online courses was assessed.

Respondent 1 said, "Design according to standards and student success in terms of # of students completing with A, B, or C. Withdraws are considered unsuccessful"

Respondent 2 shared, "We haven't yet--deans are supposed to look at online courses, just as they would a face-to-face course observation, but I don't think that's happening."

These responses indicated that the institution was at Stage 2 of the Structure--Evaluation section of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013) because "limited institutional evaluations" were present. Previous responses, which shared a use of a rubric in evaluating and developing quality assurance measures indicated that this institution was progressing toward a more mature approach to distance learning.

#### *Training and Support: LFCC*

To respond to the research question asking if the training or expected credentials of the faculty align with the online course quality expectations of the university, survey questions addressed the training available for online faculty. The participants were asked



what training was required or offered for online faculty. This question referred to Bolman and Deal's (2008) human resource frame which correlates to support systems for technology and pedagogy. This question also was associated with the Support: Technical and Pedagogical section of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013). Furthermore, the Strategy: Advocacy section of the Framework was used as a measure to assess LFCC's stage of development in regard to supporting online learning (Graham et al., 2013).

Respondent 1 referred to a previous answer and said, "Mentioned above - we have an 8 week in house training; faculty can also complete a 3 credit course elsewhere. We also have workshops throughout the semester."

Respondent 2 said, "There are grad edu courses on teaching with technology, workshops about varying topics (accessibility, time management, etc.) and our own online design camp to create a course ahead of the semester you'll teach it."

It was apparent that Lord Fairfax Community College offers technology and pedagogical support. The responses provided for this question indicated that LFCC fell into Stage 3 of the Support: Technical and Pedagogical section of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013). There were a variety of pedagogical and technological options available to the LFCC faculty both through their institution and through the Virginia Community College System. The variety of options to support faculty was under consideration at the researcher's institution as well.

### *Training for a Variety of Online Faculty Statuses: LFCC*

The next question in the survey asked if this training was the same for full time, tenured, contract, or adjunct instructors. All of the respondents from Lord Fairfax Community College and UCF stated that the training was the same for all faculty. Participants were also asked if their institutions had an alternative training for adjuncts and instructors that work full time for another organization. Only one participant said “yes,” and the other five said “no.” Two of the respondents who indicated “no” also provided explanations. One of these was from LFCC. This respondent mentioned, “Not for the credential, but we do have training options.”

These questions addressed the Bolman and Deal’s (2008) symbolic frame. By examining if the training was the same for all online faculty, an assessment of the stage of the Support: Technical and Pedagogical section of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework could be made. Additionally, the responses to this question also provided some insight into Lord Fairfax’s stage of development in regard to Incentives of this same category section (Graham et al., 2013).

### *Responses to Training Provided: LFCC*

One of the sub-questions that this dissertation in practice sought to answer was: Does the training or expected credentials of the faculty match up to the online course quality expectations of the university? Participants were asked to explain the training provided. The following responses were provided.

Respondent 1 acknowledged, “Support may be course review, feedback; peer review; workshop training.”

Respondent 2 was unsure. The majority of these answers seemed to indicate a developmental Stage 2 in the Support: Technical and Pedagogical section of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework as it showed there was a focus on support for faculty and a course development process in place (Graham et al., 2013).

Next the participants were asked how they determined if the training was meeting the faculty members’ need and to offer an explanation. This question related to the Structure: Evaluation category and section of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013) as the training itself was being evaluated.

Respondent 1 said “. . . other than the 8 week course - faculty are surveyed each year for their interest. We ask for feedback on every training we do.”

Respondent 2 from LFCC did not know. Because course outcomes were systematically reviewed and evaluation data were addressed, Lord Fairfax Community College was considered to be at Stage 3 in the Structure: Evaluation section of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013).

#### *Quality Assurance Reviews: LFCC*

Respondents were asked how many courses had been internally reviewed with some quality assurance measure. Only one respondent from Lord Fairfax Community College had an answer for this question. This respondent gave a numerical answer with no explanation, “50-100 courses.” The other respondent did not know and stated it was

not his/her area of work. The next question was a follow up, asking if any courses were externally reviewed with a QA measure. Neither respondent from Lord Fairfax Community College indicated external reviews were conducted or required.

Having an internal review process in place shows that LFCC had a commitment to quality assurance, yet a lack of an external review indicates this could be an area in which they could grow in maturity in supporting their online program. The Structure: Evaluation part of the Framework (2013) does not indicate that external reviews have to take place but simply states that learning outcomes in regard to distance learning need to be systematically reviewed. Thus, LFCC could be considered to be at Stage 3 in this category (Graham et al., 2013).

#### *Awards and Excellence: LFCC*

This evaluation study sought to address the institution's stage of development in supporting online learning teaching and learning. One way to determine this is by documenting awards or achievements earned by faculty, the institution, or department in charge of online courses. Thus, two questions were asked dealing with awards for excellence in online teaching. The first question asked about internal awards and the follow up question asked about external awards.

For internal awards the responses were as follows:

Respondent 1: Yes - we award an eLearning badge to faculty who voluntarily offer their courses up for peer review and who use the feedback to make improvements.”

Respondent 2 did not know.

Having an eLearning badge is currently under consideration at the researcher's institution, so this response provided more support for considering this option.

For external awards, only one respondent from Lord Fairfax Community College was able to provide an answer. This respondent stated, "We have one faculty who was awarded a Blackboard Exemplary Course award last year." The researcher's institution currently has a few faculty members in the process of submitting their course to Blackboard. Certainly, this should be encouraged as both an external quality assurance process and incentive option.

#### *Publications: LFCC*

The last question in the survey asked if the institution or its faculty in the field of online learning or quality assurance had any publications. This question related to the research question addressing the institution's stage of development in supporting online learning teaching and learning? This question also connects to the Structure: Incentives section of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013) and this section relates to Bolman and Deal's (2008) symbolic frame. As noted by Mazer (2014), tenure and promotion were part of the symbolic frame. Neither respondent from Lord Fairfax Community College indicated that publications had occurred. These responses indicate that publications may not be part of the incentive process at LFCC, but could be considered for further growth.

### Summary: Institutions' Stages in the Blended Learning Adoption Framework

The Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013) was used to assess the stages of development of the two target institutions in the study in regard to adopting, supporting and implementing online teaching and learning. Rather than applying this framework only to blended courses, it was applied to fully online courses as well. Tables 4, 5, and 6 provide a visual summary of the stages the researcher attributed to each institution after evaluation of their survey responses and analysis of other existing data.

Table 4

*Blended Learning Adoption Framework: Strategy*

STRATEGY: University of Central Florida (UCF) and Lord Fairfax Community College (LFCC)					
Category	Stage 1 – Awareness Exploration	Stage 2 – Adoption/Early Implementation	Stage 3 – Mature Implementation /growth	UCF	LFCC
Strategy – Purpose	Individual Faculty/administrators informally identify specific BL/O benefits	Administrator identify purposes to motivate institutional adoption of BL/O	Administrative refinement of purposes for continued promotion and funding of BL/O	3	2
Strategy – Advocacy	Individual faculty and administrators informally advocate	BL/O formally approved and advocated by university administrators	Formal BL/O advocacy by university administrators and departments/colleges	3	2
Strategy – Implementation	Individual faculty members implementing BL	Administrators target implementation in high impact areas and among willing faculty	Departments/colleges strategically facilitate wide-spread faculty implementation	3	2
Strategy – Definition	No uniform definition of BL/O proposed	Initial definition of BL/O formally proposed	Refined definition of BL/O formally adopted	3	3
Strategy – Policy	No uniform BL/O policy in place	Tentative policies adopted and communicated to stakeholders, policies revised as needed	Robust policies in place with little need for high level of community awareness	3	3

*Note.* Adapted with permission from “A Framework for Institutional Adoption and Implementation of Blended Learning in Higher Education,” by C. R. Graham, W. Woodfield, & J. B. Harrison (2013), *The Internet and Higher Education*. (Appendix B). Used in this dissertation to stage fully online (O) and blended (BL) teaching and learning.

Table 5

*Blended Learning Adoption Framework: Support*

SUPPORT: University of Central Florida (UCF) and Lord Fairfax Community College (LFCC)					
Category	Stage 1 – Awareness Exploration	Stage 2 – Adoption/Early Implementation	Stage 3 – Mature Implementation /growth	UCF	LFCC
Support – Technical	Primary focus on traditional classroom technological support	Increased focus on BL/online technological support for faculty and students	Well established technological support to address the online needs of all stakeholders	3	2
Support – Pedagogical	No course development process in place	Increased focus on BL/online technological support for faculty and students	Well established technological support to address the needs of all stakeholders	3	2
Support - Incentives	No identified faculty incentive structure for implementation	Exploration of faculty incentive structure for faculty training and course development	Well established faculty incentive structure systematic training and implementation	3	2

*Note.* Adapted with permission from “A Framework for Institutional Adoption and Implementation of Blended Learning in Higher Education,” by C. R. Graham, W. Woodfield, & J. B. Harrison (2013), *The Internet and Higher Education*. (Appendix B). Used in this dissertation to stage fully online (O) and blended (BL) teaching and learning.



Table 6

*Blended Learning Adoption Framework: Structure*

STRUCTURE: University of Central Florida (UCF) and Lord Fairfax Community College (LFCC)					
Category	Stage 1 – Awareness Exploration	Stage 2 – Adoption/Early Implementation	Stage 3 – Mature Implementation /growth	UCF	LFCC
Structure – Governance	No official approval or implementation system	Emerging structures primarily to regulate and approve BL/O courses	Robust structure involving academic unit leaders for strategic decision making	3	2
Structure – Models	No institutional models established	Identifying and exploring BL models	General BL/O models encouraged not enforced.	3	3
Structure – Scheduling	No designation of BL /O courses as such in course registration/catalog system	Efforts to designate BL/O courses in registration/catalog system	BL/O designations or modality metadata available in registration/catalog system	3	2
Structure – Evaluation	No formal evaluations in place addressing BL learning outcomes	Limited institutional evaluations addressing BL/O learning outcomes	Evaluation data addressing BL/O learning outcomes systematically reviewed	3	2

*Note.* Adapted with permission from “A Framework for Institutional Adoption and Implementation of Blended Learning in Higher Education,” by C. R. Graham, W. Woodfield, & J. B. Harrison (2013), *The Internet and Higher Education*. (Appendix B). Used in this dissertation to stage fully online (O) and blended (BL) teaching and learning.

## Summary

This study was conducted during the spring semester at the University of Central Florida and Lord Fairfax Community College. The study population consisted of six administrators, instructional designers and faculty members knowledgeable in the field of online teaching and learning and professional development at their respective institutions.

The purpose of this study was to examine the credentialing procedures for online and blended learning faculty and quality assurance measures and processes at each institution. The Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013) was used and adapted to analyze the qualitative data in order to establish which stage of development each institution exemplified in regard to supporting and implementing online learning. This was helpful to the researcher as she was able to compare and contrast the similarities and differences between the participating institutions and make connections to what was currently under study for revision at her home institution. Additional data were gathered via email as well as by conducting online research of existing documents and processes at each institution. These data were analyzed using the Blended Learning Adoption Framework and Bolman and Deal's (2008) four frames. The four frames enabled the researcher to categorize the themes that emerged from the data as well as to make implications for how these elements could be applied at her home institution. Chapter Five provides an interpretation of the results of the qualitative analyses and contains recommendations for further research.

## CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

### Introduction

Chapter 5 offers a discussion of the results of the data that were analyzed and presented in Chapter 4. Additionally, recommendations for further research are provided. This quality assurance evaluation research study in multiple case study format sought to explore the preparation, criteria, and support of online faculty at two institutions of higher learning. It also examined the quality assurance efforts at these two institutions. Furthermore, this study was conducted to investigate the alignment between the requirements and preparation of online faculty as they relate to the quality assurance processes at the chosen institutions. The findings were also used to assess the stages of development of the institutions in regard to adopting and supporting online teaching and learning. Following are the research questions which guided the study.

### Research Questions:

1. What are the similarities of the institutions' best practices in quality assurance for online teaching and learning?
2. What are the differences between these institutions' best practices in quality assurance for online teaching and learning?
3. What stage are the institutions currently in supporting online learning teaching and learning?

### *Sub-questions*

1. What credentials are faculty at the selected institutions required to have prior to teaching online?
2. How are faculty prepared to teach online classes at the selected institutions?
3. How do the selected institutions of higher learning assure the quality of online courses?
4. Does the training or expected credentials of the faculty match up with the online course quality expectations of the institution?

### Overview of the Study

This quality assurance evaluation study using a multiple case study design was conducted to explore the preparation of online faculty and examine the quality assurance efforts at two institutions. This dissertation in practice study was conducted during the spring semester at the University of Central Florida and Lord Fairfax Community College. The study participants consisted of a combination of six faculty, administrators, and instructional designers. The purpose of the study was to examine the credentialing of online faculty members, the institutions' quality assurance measures, and the support available to teach online at each institution. The purpose of the study was also to determine the institutions' stages of development in regard to an adapted version of Graham et al.'s (2013) Blended Learning Adoption Framework.

Additionally, the researcher sought to determine what applications Bolman and Deal's (2008) four frames could be made in regard to the organizational structure,

political, symbolic and human resource elements of each institution. Data were gathered via surveys, emails, and the analysis of existing documents such as the institutions' websites for online learning, professional development syllabi and the credentialing procedures of online faculty members. These data were analyzed using a case study methodology. This chapter provides an interpretation of the results of the analyses. Recommendations for further research are also offered.

#### Discussion of Results: Research Question 1

What are the similarities of the institutions' best practices in quality assurance for online teaching and learning?

This section contains a categorized list of the results of the survey data used to respond to Research Question 1. The similarities have been grouped according to four categories that connect to the themes addressed in this dissertation as well as the evaluation frameworks used to analyze the data.

##### *Credentialing, Faculty Development, and Training Similarities*

1. Both institutions had a credentialing process that was required for their faculty to be able to teach and develop online courses.
2. Both had training programs in place to prepare faculty to teach online.
3. All said the training available was the same for full time, tenured, contract and adjunct instructors.

4. All described a variety of training styles (face-to-face, online, blended, self-paced, and collaborative) and support available.
5. Surveys were mentioned by the majority of respondents as a means to evaluate the training and support provided to the faculty.

### Implications

At the time of the present study, the researcher's institution was in the process of determining what credentialing requirements or processes will be used for new online instructors and also what "grandfathering" procedures or continuous improvement options will be employed. Other considerations under review were the use of a rubric or portfolio process by which new or veteran online instructors can show their online pedagogical and technological skills and thereby be exempt from any required credentialing training. The findings from these two institutions have provided the researcher with a wealth of options to share and recommend.

The variety of trainings available in-house at each institution and also those that were recommended externally informed the researcher in multiple ways. First, the researcher's institution already provides a wealth of blended, fully, online, hands on, and traditional faculty development courses in the areas of pedagogy and technology. To date, none of these courses have a definite "capstone" project and not many have "take away" products that a faculty member must create to pass the faculty development course and show expertise in online course development. The capstone project that the University of Central Florida's IDL 6543 course utilized would be a beneficial addition

to the digital teaching certification process that the researcher's institution employs currently. Likewise, the recommended course offerings that are available via the Virginia Community College system for credentialing purposes at LFCC is another helpful addition to the researcher's recommendations for improving her institution.

While no consortium developed courses were provided in the researcher's state, other local universities offer webinars that the researcher's institution could encourage or require as a credentialing option. Also, an alternate credentialing option for a faculty member at LFCC was to take a graduate course to show expertise in the field. This is another recommendation that the researcher would like her institution to consider in order to offer faculty a wealth of credentialing options rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. Follow up surveys like the ones mentioned by both LFCC and UCF to assess faculty responses to the new capstone and other processes can also be used to assess the success and further develop and improve the process.

#### *Structural Considerations and Definitions*

1. Both found that the disadvantages to their online structure involved difficulty in meeting the needs of all stakeholders.
2. All agreed that no or minimal onsite attendance was the definition of online learning.

## Implications

Similar to Lord Fairfax Community College and the University of Central Florida, the researcher's institution has had considerable difficulty in meeting all stakeholder needs, especially across five campuses with differing strategic campus plans and goals. More research needs to be conducted in this area to improve processes across campuses and college-wide.

The definition of online learning at the researcher's institution is no face-to-face attendance, but it may be worthwhile to consider adding "minimal" to the definition if accountability and academic honesty become more problematic. Examining the UCF website and Lord Fairfax descriptions of the varied online courses offered will help the researcher's institution develop a clearer and refined definition of each modality which will also enhance marketing and advertising of these types of courses. It is also hoped that a more transparent definition, which provides students with a clear expectation of what the course entails and requires, could positively impact student preparedness to take online courses.

### *Quality Assurance and Course Evaluation*

1. The majority indicated that they did not have an online quality assurance person department.
2. The majority of responses from both institutions indicated that quality assurance concerns involved academic freedom and utilizing many adjuncts



3. The majority of responses from both institutions indicated that their institution used a quality assurance rubric to prepare online faculty for teaching online and that instructional designers used this rubric to train and work with online faculty.
4. The majority of responses from both institutions indicated that the assessment of the quality of the institution's online courses resides at the department level and some of that is in development currently.
5. The majority of responses from both institutions indicated that the assessment of the quality of the institution's online courses is accomplished in part through the instructional design team's work with faculty in developing their online courses.
6. The majority of respondents indicated that there were no external reviews and minimal internal review of online courses. There was some discussion of internal awards and reviews.

### Implications

Because one institution (LFCC) uses the same rubric (Quality Matters) as the researcher's institution and the participants from the other institution (UCF) mentioned basing its own rubrics on the same rubric, there appears to be a clear rationale to continue with this product as part of the quality assurance process. On the other hand, the process of quality assurance is much like a concentric circle with many outer parts. Use of a rubric is not the only measure of quality. Similar to these two institutions, quality is

largely handled by working with instructional designers employed by the institution or at the department level at the researcher's institution. These other quality assurance checkpoints represent the outer circle of the process, as they are based on the use of a rubric or evaluation tool to assess quality assurance or help with course design.

Internal reviews are a part of the researcher's institutional processes, so in that respect, the researcher's institution has made effective strides in assessing quality. Though a likely future consideration, no external reviews have been made a part of the process. Similar quality assurance processes are in place at both LFCC and UCF in that both use rubrics to train faculty, and LFCC requires an incoming faculty member to have had a course reviewed by Quality Matters in the past five years. It is a bit unclear, though, if faculty members are obliged to pay for the review prior to hire. This is worth investigating further in order to gather data that could help the researcher's institution use a similar process.

#### *Incentives, Awards, and Publications*

1. The majority of respondents indicated that there was some type of internal award for excellence in online teaching.
2. The majority of respondents indicated that there had been external awards won by their online faculty

## Implications

At the time of the study, the researcher's institution had used a few awards to recognize teaching excellence for tenure track candidates in regard to their portfolio work. Nevertheless, after reviewing the internal awards offered at LFCC and UCF, additional awards for technology and online pedagogy would be wise additions to increase motivation and incentivize quality work by faculty in this important area. Badging is a current consideration, and it would be beneficial to further investigate the use of badges at LFCC and other similar institutions. External awards for technology excellence have not been an integral part of the researcher's institution, but presently some faculty are engaged in working toward going through the Blackboard Exemplary process. It would be advantageous to also encourage faculty to apply for the awards mentioned by the University of Central Florida. Further applications are discussed in the symbolic and political frame discussion later in this chapter.

### Summary: Research Question 1

The similarities between each institution show strengths and a mature status in the area of credentialing by requiring some type of institutional or formal training in technology and online pedagogy. Additionally, both institutions offer a variety of support options for their online faculty. Each institution, while using a rubric to train faculty in online pedagogy and course development, could grow in the area of using the rubric internally as a quality assurance evaluation measure or consider external quality assurance reviews. In comparison, the researcher's institution should consider external

quality assurance reviews for an objective view of the quality of its online course offerings.

### Discussion of Results: Research Question 2

What are the differences between institutions' best practices in quality assurance for online teaching and learning?

Lord Fairfax Community College used the Quality Matters rubric and Blackboard Exemplary Course Certification as part of the credentialing, training, and quality assurance process. Lord Fairfax is also part of the Virginia Community College System which has a series of workshops faculty can complete to earn a credential to teach online as well, TOP, IDOL, and MODEL.

In contrast, UCF has its own internal OFRA rubric that faculty members can use to qualify for an exemption. UCF offers ADL 5000 and IDL 6543, UCF created professional development courses, to qualify to teach online depending on whether faculty members are going to teach an already developed course or create and teach their own.

UCF was the only institution who indicated that their faculty had published in the field of online teaching and learning or quality assurance.

### *Implications*

The main differences between the two cases studied were dissimilarities in the types of training available. Like the researcher's institution, LFCC used externally

developed rubrics to credential its faculty. LFCC differed, however, in that it was part of a consortium of community colleges that contribute to professional development offerings. This is not an option in the researcher's state at this time, although partnering with the university nearby and their webinars could be an option to consider. It is hard to draw firm conclusions or make recommendations due to the difference in the two colleges' sizes and state systems; therefore, more research is recommended.

The University of Central Florida created its own trainings and employed capstone projects as an additional part of the coursework. This is similar to part of the researcher's institution's offerings. As mentioned previously, a capstone project is needed to show expertise in the area of online pedagogy.

Encouraging publishing not only in community college and discipline specific publications but also in technology, online excellence, and online pedagogical journals would be a recommendation for the researcher's faculty after reviewing the UCF case study. Also, it is possible that publishing has already occurred, but there is no record of it. Thus, investigating what faculty members have published in the field and sharing this information college-wide would be a good first step. Further applications are discussed in the symbolic and political frame discussion later in this chapter.

#### Summary: Research Question 2

These results show a unique approach to credentialing and quality assurance appropriate to the location, faculty involved, and size of the institution. The difference can be attributed to Lord Fairfax Community College being a part of the Virginia

Community College System which collaborates to assemble pedagogical and technological training for its faculty and colleges. In contrast, UCF has a long standing history and reputation for its faculty development trainings and initiatives and is much larger in size than LFCC.

### Discussion of Results: Research Question 3

The following framework was applied and adapted to encompass fully online and blended courses with permission from the author. The framework was used to assess the stage that each institution exemplified in regard to adopting, supporting and implementing online teaching (Graham et al., 2013). After examining all of the categories and subcategories of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Graham et al., 2013) as well as the data collected in the survey and the review of existing documents, the global categorization of each institution by category was established. Table 7 presents a holistic summary of the demonstrated stages of development of each institution in regard to the framework categories and subcategories. The following discussion of the findings for each institution has been organized around the Framework categories of strategy, structure, and support.

Table 7

*Blended Learning Adoption Framework: Summary of Stages and Institutional Standing*

Category	Stage 1 Awareness Exploration	Stage 2 Adoption/Early Implementation	Stage 3 Mature Implementation/growth
Strategy:		LFCC	UCF
Purpose			
Advocacy			
Implementation			
Definition			
Policy			
Structure:			UCF
Governance			LFCC
Models			
Scheduling			
Evaluation			
Support:		LFCC	UCF
Technical			
Pedagogical			
Incentives			

*Note.* Adapted with permission from “A Framework for Institutional Adoption and Implementation of Blended Learning in Higher Education,” by C. R. Graham, W. Woodfield, & J. B. Harrison (2013), *The Internet and Higher Education*. (Appendix B).

*Strategy*

The Strategy category has five subcategories which are: purpose, advocacy, implementation, definition, and policy. Lord Fairfax Community College was found to be at Stage 2: Adoption/Early Implementation for the following reasons. Its definition of online and blended learning has been initially developed, but further clarity and refinement is needed, especially for blended learning. As it currently stands, it is assumed to be a 50/50 split per the survey responses; and it was mentioned that instructors see a “note” on course listing as having “significant additional online coursework”. This blended or hybrid definition could be clarified for all stakeholders. Also, LFCC has a

start toward having its credentialing options and procedures in place. This speaks to its growth in implementation and policy. One respondent mentioned these credentialing procedures were in the beginning stages of implementation, and the other shared that because of decentralization of online services sometimes progress is slow moving among departments at the college and that individual departments might not always recognize online students and operationalize ways to best serve them.

In this category, the University of Central Florida was found to be at Stage 3: Mature Implementation/Growth due to the following reasons. UCF has well developed definitions of online, blended, and video streaming courses to designate and delineate among them for faculty and student awareness and expectation setting. There are also clear purposes and definitions for the types of training provided, such as ADL 5000 and IDL 6543. These definitions also show a purposeful implementation of online learning programs and robust policies which are communicated to stakeholders (e.g., new online faculty, current faculty, and online students). Advocacy and support for the work of the Center for Distributed Learning was clearly evidenced in the survey comments and through a robust Website with substantive data available, also contributing to the Stage 3 designation.

### *Structure*

The Structure section of the framework has four subcategories: governance, models, scheduling, and evaluation. Lord Fairfax Community College was found to be at Stage 3 for the following reasons. There are general blended and online learning models



in place per their definitions, as discussed in the strategy reflection. This college also has modality designations in its registration system, and there are evaluation processes in place for quality assurance such as the Blackboard Exemplary and Quality Matters rubrics. Similarly, the University of Central Florida was found to be at Stage 3 because it also has similar characteristics. One way that this institution provides models is the option for some faculty to teach from another instructor's course, offering the ADL 5000 course as the preparation for this experience. There are also clear designations in the catalog and website for types of distance learning courses, and there are evaluation processes in place such as the OFRA rubric and capstone project in IDL 6543.

### *Support*

The Support part of the Framework encompasses three subcategories: technological, pedagogical and incentives. Lord Fairfax Community College was found to be at Stage 2 for the following reasons. It has some technological and pedagogical support available for most of its stakeholders. Although it is necessary to note that support for one stakeholder, the student, was described as “slow moving” at the institution. Also, there was no mention of an incentive structure, although some internal and external awards were noted. In contrast, the University of Central Florida was found to be at Stage 3 as it has multiple pedagogically and technologically focused courses for multiple types of online faculty as well as incentives such as internal awards like the Chuck D. Dziuban Award for Excellence in Online Teaching Rubric (See Appendix G)

and others. UCF faculty are also engaged in publishing in the field of online learning and award winning efforts externally.

### Discussion of the Four Frames

The next sections contain a discussion of the application of the structural, human resources, symbolic and political aspects of the stage each institution is in with regard to online teaching and quality assurance (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Table 8 displays summary thematic data collected from the surveys and existing documents as they relate to each frame. This table was constructed in an effort to apply the themes, structures, processes, and elements of support in regard to the credentialing of online faculty, supporting online teaching, and quality assurance initiatives.

Bolman and Deal's (2008) work asks an institution to consider its current structures when approaching problems of practice. By examining the problem of practice through these lenses as well as the stages described previously (Graham et al., 2013), the researcher was able to reflect on the problem and envision possible improvements and solutions more clearly. The researcher's institution is currently considering all of these potential solutions in a variety of work groups. The presence of work groups is also a recommendation of Graham et al. (2013) for institutions in the beginning stages of adopting and supporting online learning. Following is a description of discoveries made by the researcher in regard to each frame and its applications to the researcher's home institution.

Table 8

*Application of the Four Frames to Distance Learning Programs, Online Faculty Credentialing and Quality Assurance Procedures*

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Applications by Frame
Structural Frame
Online and blended learning defined at institution
Centralized or decentralized structure (i.e., campus devoted to online courses)
Credentialing process for online faculty members
Quality assurance process in place
Use of a quality assurance rubric
Formal and informal quality assurance reviews
Internal and external quality assurance reviews in place
Human Resource Frame
Technology support and training
Online pedagogy support and training
Political Frame
Resources: Who is competing for scarce resources and what are these resources?
Power: Who is in charge of offering and evaluating online courses?
Agenda: What is the institution's or department's agenda?
Incentives: What incentives are in place to encourage competition for resources?
Symbolic Frame
Awards
Publications

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*Structural Frame*

The researcher discovered that many institutions have differing definitions of online and blended learning, but consensus institution-wide is an essential element of establishing the structure for faculty to know what to expect in regard to designing their courses according to the institutional definition. A tactful balance between clear expectations and allowing for academic freedom is essential to meet this dichotomy

(Bolman & Deal, 2008). Faculty need to have enough autonomy to be creative and use their strengths. Too much interdependence could result in “cookie cutter” passive experiences in the online course (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

The researcher also discovered that many institutions of higher learning have a “credential” that is required to teach online. Some of these options include institutionally created faculty development coursework which often requires capstone projects to “show” that the participant has a good grasp of online pedagogy and technology. Other options include course offerings outside the institution such as graduate courses in instructional design. One of the institutions (UCF) studied also has a rubric which instructors can use to submit their online course to show competence in online teaching. As more instructors are being asked to take their traditional classes online with little to no online teaching experience, it becomes essential that institutions of higher learning consider how they hire, credential, and train their online faculty.

Quality assurance structures also fit within this frame. Both institutions studied had a quality assurance process in place. One used a rubric that is often viewed as a national standard of quality in online course design but also supplemented this rubric with another. The other institution had created its own rubric based on the literature and offers substantial pedagogical and technological support, another means of assuring quality.

These discoveries correlate with a structural view that the structural process selected by the institution must “fit an organization’s current circumstances; including its goals, technology, workforce and environment” (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 47). Bolman

and Deal's structural frame speaks to how organizations can determine and accomplish goals and objectives. The chosen structures must fit the organization's circumstances. Bolman and Deal's structural frame correlates with the stage the institution exemplifies in defining blended and fully online teaching and learning, having a credentialing process in place and a quality assurance process in place.

#### *Human Resource Frame*

Bolman and Deal's (2008) human resource frame supports institutions investing in their employees through learning and development opportunities. This frame pairs nicely with ideas of technological and pedagogical training and support. By reviewing the data, the researcher determined that both institutions offer an appropriate variety of development opportunities to support their online faculty. Investing in preparing online faculty in designing a quality online course connects to Owens and Valesky's (2011) views that education is an investment in human capital. This research demonstrated that human resources are improved with professional development opportunities. These findings related to the stage of development of the institutions in regard to supporting online teaching quality.

#### *Symbolic Frame*

The symbolic frame discusses organizational symbols and institutional culture. Bolman and Deal (2008) compared this frame to theatre, ceremony and celebration. Certainly, winning awards and publishing in one's field or practice fits with this frame.

When online faculty earn and receive honors, awards, publications and recognition, there is celebration. These achievements also benefit the institution and show a commitment to and demonstration of quality. The researcher discovered that both institutions have some type of internal award for quality online course design and teaching and one institution has won substantial external awards and its faculty have numerous publications.

The researcher found that these awards and publications could be potential incentives for faculty at her institution to encourage engagement which would also encourage best practices and implementation of online learning (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Graham et al., 2013). Telling the story of the institution (which the symbolic frame is concerned with) could be achieved positively with celebratory accomplishments. If online faculty publish in the field of online learning, their accomplishments could optimistically portray the story of the institution's commitment to online programs and quality.

### *Political Frame*

The political frame brings up concerns over competing for scarce resources, power, and budgets (Bolman & Deal, 2008). It is often described as a "jungle" by Bolman and Deal. Political elements play out in the arena of developing and delivering online courses and assuring course quality. The authors state that the combination of scarce resources and divergent interests produces conflict and that this conflict should not be "stamped out" (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 206). Conflict and competition are customary and predictable parts of an institution. From examining the responses to the

publication and award questions in the survey, political applications can be made. Providing incentives for high quality online teaching and learning at each institution or publishing and winning awards could be “healthy” areas for competition at the institution. Also, this could be an extra means to assure quality if faculty are engaged in making strides in their subject and practice through publishing and competing for awards. This would afford an opportunity for both internal and external measures of quality to be addressed in a fresh way. The Support: Incentives category of the Blended Learning Adoption Framework (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Graham, et.al, 2013) further connects to this framework as it encourages a developed incentive structure.

In her review of the data, the researcher found that identifying scarce resources was important. Equally important was who is competing for those resources. Scarce resources in the area of online support is something organizations need to consider when developing online programs and faculty.

Another political factor involved in online teaching is power. In other words, who is in charge of offering and evaluating online courses? Survey data revealed that this authority often resides at the department level. Likewise, identifying the institution’s or department’s agenda is needed in order to determine appropriate credentialing, support, training, and quality assurance measures. If the institution’s advocacy, expectations for, and policies for online course development clashes with the support, training, and credentialing of its online faculty members, there will also be areas ripe for conflict. From the survey results, it was learned that having a very supportive

administrative structure is a benefit to promoting the technological and pedagogical training and achievements of online faculty.

### Discussion of Results of Sub Questions

The following sub-questions were posed in this dissertation in practice. These were embedded in the survey questions and relate to the three main research questions. The majority of these have already been discussed in the results for each research question in this chapter as well as in the discussion of the four frame typology (Bolman & Deal, 2008). A global summary is provided for each of the sub-question findings sections.

*What credentials are faculty at the selected institutions required to have prior to teaching online?*

In regard to this question, Lord Fairfax Community College had begun requiring a Quality Matters course review for courses under five years old, participation in coursework through the Virginia Community College System's online course offerings, or a graduate education course. In comparison, the University of Central Florida offered an exemption rubric (OFRA) or two courses depending on the faculty members' purposes titled, ADL 5000 or IDL 6543.

*How are faculty prepared to teach online classes at the selected institutions?*

Lord Fairfax Community College offered in house eight week trainings, shorter trainings which are available throughout the semester, and other offerings are available through the Virginia Community College System as well. The University of Central



Florida offered two courses, ADL 5000 and IDL 6543, through the Center for Distributed Learning; and a team of instructional designers was available to assist faculty in developing their online courses. This team also delivered additional workshops throughout the semester.

*How do the selected institutions of higher learning assure the quality of online courses?*

Lord Fairfax Community College and the University of Central Florida both mentioned that this responsibility largely rested in departments. Each institution also used rubrics (external and internally created) to aid faculty in designing their courses. These rubrics can also be used as a quality assurance assessment tool.

*Does the training or expected credentials of the faculty match up with the online course quality expectations of the institution?*

The researcher does not believe that there was sufficient evidence to fully answer this question. From the survey responses to the question on how trainings are evaluated by the institution, the participants' answers did not seem to indicate that aligning course quality expectations with expected credentialing procedures was a consideration. Further research is warranted in this area in order to inform the literature and improve alignment between credentials, training, support, and quality expectations.

### Significance of the Study

This study has relevance because online learning has come to the forefront of many institutions' strategic plans for targeting a new generation of students, their demand

for online courses as well as being able to offer more courses with less cost to the institution in terms of buildings, classrooms, etc. With growth, comes the challenge of assuring quality. The quality of online courses compared to that of traditional face-to-face instruction has been debated in higher education for many years. This topic is now even more in the spotlight as many institutions have decided to incorporate improving their online courses as part of their strategic goals and have embraced quality assurance rubrics and processes as a potential solution.

### *Motivation for the Research*

The researcher's home institution uses the Quality Matters rubric for assuring quality in online course design and also as a training mechanism for faculty new to developing online courses. The reason for this quality assurance evaluation research study in multiple case study format was based upon the researcher's experience with this tool and desire to look at what other institutions were using in terms of training and quality assurance and online credentialing.

As mentioned in the literature review, the Quality Matters training comes from Maryland Online and is an ongoing collegial peer review of online and blended courses which are submitted for review by faculty, departments, and institutions of higher learning. Quality Matters provides a faculty-driven, peer review process that is "collaborative, collegial, continuous, and centered" in literature and best practices (Quality Matters, 2015).

There is a rigorous and specific rubric to which such courses must adhere in order to meet QM standards. Over the years, the QM rubric has been updated through a thorough process which includes an extensive literature and practitioner experiences. The standards are supported by detailed annotations which explain how each standard in the rubric can be applied to the instructor's course. Supporting the continuous improvement of courses with constructive feedback is the goal of this process (Quality Matters, 2015).

Many institutions use the Quality Matters rubric as a method for training faculty in the design of online courses and also as a self-evaluation tool for instructors. Further, there are many organizations that have provided "best practice" guidelines for online design and instruction such as the Sloan Consortium, the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions, the Council for Higher Education, the American Federation of Teachers and the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (Little, 2009b, p. 382). These standards and QM's can serve as benchmarking tools for online courses throughout the U.S. (Little, 2009, pg. 414).

### *Applications and Recommendations*

The researcher's institution has been using the Quality Matters rubric for approximately 10 years to train their faculty on best practices in course design as well as a means to assure quality in online courses. However, recent college-wide initiatives have brought more of a focus as to how this institution trains and evaluates its online faculty members and their courses. As a result, the researcher wanted to discover what

other institutions were doing in this arena to compare, contrast and make recommendations to improve her institution's processes. Certainly, there is more than one way to address course quality. From the review of the literature, the survey responses and a close look at the existing documents; the researcher has discovered multiple ways to add to the existing quality assurance measures, training offerings, and to suggest credentialing options at her institution. Some recommendations would be (a) adding a capstone project to the current training, (b) providing incentives for publishing and winning awards in the field of online teaching, and (c) having a required credential or credentialing practice for online instructors.

As courses become the focus of a quality assurance process, the preparation of faculty is also a key concern. This study considered the question: How are institutions hiring, credentialing, developing, training, and supporting their online faculty as part of their quality assurance process? This dissertation also helped inform the work of the researcher's institution and her involvement in the online work teams and professional development course revisions.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

Following are some recommendations for further research that could take the findings of this study to the next level. These recommendations would add to the pool of knowledge, inform the literature and practice in the field of online teaching and quality assurance. The research would improve the pedagogical and technological practices of institutions of higher learning and have a significant impact on student learning as

students would benefit from higher quality distance learning courses being taught by well-trained and supported online faculty.

1. Further research should be conducted to explore what institutions are doing that do not use quality assurance rubrics to assure online course quality. Although rubrics are an indication of an institution's being committed to developing and supporting quality courses and faculty, there are other measures of quality being used. It would be useful to explore what those are to add to the literature on this subject.
2. Further research should be focused on students' definitions and perceptions of quality in online courses and the impact of a quality assured course on student achievement. While some of this research has been completed, further research should focus on all stakeholders: faculty, administration, and students.
3. Further research should address how students are prepared to take online courses, especially at institutions that have a well-developed plan and practice of preparing their online instructors. Although there is literature on best practices, it would be beneficial to examine what "credentials" students are required to have before taking an online course in order to be more successful. This field continues to change and student demographics shift over time as well, so further research is warranted even in terms of generational differences.

4. Further research should be conducted to determine if faculty continue to pursue quality assurance in their courses after their initial training. After a credential to teach online has been earned, how does an institution still incentivize and encourage its faculty to continue to pursue excellence in online pedagogy and technology? Thus, further research should also consider what continuous improvements colleges employ to assure and potentially incentivize online course quality.
5. Further research should be conducted to investigate the hiring practices of institutions when recruiting new online faculty members. This research could further inform the types of online credentials that institutions require before hiring faculty to teach online.
6. Further research should compare how institutions with centralized structures compare to those with decentralized structures in regard to policy, procedure, hiring practices for online faculty, support, and student success rates. Research in this area could improve organizational structures of institutions adopting and supporting online programs.
7. Further research should explore what intervention strategies colleges employ to assure online course quality with less successful courses. Accountability, assessment, and continuous improvement are considerations in higher education. These themes, in connection with improving less successful online courses, would be an area to explore that could facilitate positive change in online learning.

8. Further research should be conducted to determine what kinds of incentives are used to encourage faculty to develop and facilitate quality courses.

Research has been completed in this area, yet more research is warranted as budgets become tighter and online course offerings grow. Quality assurance concerns still remain. Therefore, how to incentivize quality course development with a strategic budget is an area that needs more research.

9. Further research should examine how face-to-face instructors move to online teaching and job satisfaction ratios. As student readiness assessments exist for taking online courses, perhaps a faculty readiness instrument would be beneficial in assessing and diagnosing who would be a good candidate to teach online. Research in this area could inform practice and the literature.

### Summary

As online education continues to grow and change, selecting appropriate quality assurance methods and professional development offerings that support the credentialing and quality assurance processes of an institution warrant much reflection. Institutions' methods for selecting and developing online faculty as well as how they approach quality in course design and assessment are complex issues (Lokken & Mullins, 2014, p. 11; Slimp, 2014, p. 8). A multi-framed approach to the problem is merited. Bolman and Deal's (2008) constructs recommend viewing a problem through multiple frames or lenses. By having two differing approaches to consider, an institution can then make a more informed decision as to what best practices will work for their institutional structure

and culture in light of the structural, human resource, symbolic, and political constructs present.

The findings in this study indicated that both institutions, though different in size and type, had appropriate structures in place for implementing and supporting online learning. Much can be learned by other institutions of higher learning from examining the credentialing procedures required at both Lord Fairfax Community College and the University of Central Florida. One relies on external sources of credentialing (Virginia Community College System courses such as TOTAL, MODEL, and IDOL, Blackboard Exemplary, & Quality Matters Rubrics), and the other has well-developed award winning internal procedures (such as ADL 5000 and IDL 6543). Other institutions of higher education could benefit by examining both of these institutions' approaches to credentialing and training online faculty as well as examining their quality assurance and credentialing practices.

Reflecting upon the methods and practices of other institutions like Lord Fairfax Community College and the University of Central Florida is a useful first step for other higher education institutions as they begin, refine, and develop their own structures, credentialing procedures, and quality assurance methods. Considering Graham et al.'s (2013) Blended Learning Adoption Framework also provides a useful lens for an institution to assess its current stage of development and the qualities needed for reaching the mature level of online program implementation desired. Every community college and university has a unique mission, purpose, structure and differing stakeholder needs. Therefore, by examining the approaches that Lord Fairfax Community College and the



University of Central Florida employed, a wealth of new perspectives could be gained by an institution that is just starting to adopt distance learning or one that is attempting to refine or redevelop an existing process and structure that needs to be adjusted or revised.

APPENDIX A  
PERMISSION EMAIL QUALITY MATTERS

Barbra Burch <bburch@qualitymatters.org>  
Wed 1/28/2015 3:54 PM  
To: erin.o.ucf <erin.o.ucf@knights.ucf.edu>;  
Cc: Kay Shattuck <kay.shattuck@qualitymatters.org>;  
Benjamin Daniel <bdaniel@qualitymatters.org>;  
You replied on 1/28/2015 8:04 PM.  
Hi Erin!

Thank you for getting in touch with Quality Matters regarding your dissertation! It would certainly be possible to do research using the QM Rubric. It would be best for you to stay in contact with QM's Director of Research Kay Shattuck - shattuck@qualitymatters.org regarding your project. A first step would be for you to write a brief outline of your project to submit to Kay, and then she can give you some guidance. We have a list of QM-related publications on our website, which includes some dissertations: <https://www.qualitymatters.org/related-publications> Also, we have a toolkit for developing research projects, which focuses on the early stages of project development, such as developing a research question: <https://softchalkcloud.com/lesson/serve/irsu5Mk1P8WFR4/html>

Again, thank you for your interest in incorporating QM into your dissertation. Please contact me with any further questions you have, and we'll look forward to hearing from you.

Have a great day!

Barbra Burch  
**Barbra Burch, MPA**  
Research and Development Coordinator, Quality Matters  
Ph: 1.410.497.8070  
Fax: 1.301.576.8661  
Skype: bburch.qm  
bburch@qualitymatters.org

From: erin.o.ucf  
Wed 1/28/2015 1:23 AM  
To: info@qualitymatters.org;  
Hello!

I am an institutional representative, APPQMR facilitator, faculty member, and course reviewer at Valencia College, but I am working on my dissertation at UCF. I have been impressed with Quality Matters for some time and would like to do research on online quality assurance procedures at some sample institutions that also use the QM rubric as Valencia does. Would it be possible for me to do this?  
Do you have any other dissertations that have mentioned Quality Matters?

Thanks!  
Sincerely,  
Erin O'Brieneobrien@valenciacollege.edu  
erin.o.ucf@valenciacollege.edu

Kay Shattuck <kay.shattuck@qualitymatters.org>  
Thu 5/14/2015 1:35 PM  
To:  
erin.o.ucf;  
Cc:  
Barbra Burch <bburch@qualitymatters.org>;  
You replied on 5/14/2015 3:11 PM.  
Hi Erin -

Thanks for coming up for air from dissertation-writing-land to give an update!

We're glad you will be referencing QM Rubric and noting the standards. [You wrote: I am just going to reference QM as a great standard and online rubric for assessing online courses and course design.]

I just wanted to make sure you understand that the QM Rubric™ is NOT openly available online. While the QM Standards documents are available at <https://www.qualitymatters.org/rubric>, that listing of standards is NOT the complete Rubric. The complete Rubric, which includes necessary annotations for application to a course review is available online (password-protected) to faculty and staff at subscribing institutions.

Just wanted to give you a heads-up for clarification. I suggest that as long as you're just calling out QM Rubric as an example of quality standards, you include:

- [for in-text references to QM information found on the QM website. This would avoid confusion with the complete QM Rubric with annotations.]
  - “Standards from the Quality Matters Higher Education Rubric, 5th Edition. In Quality Matters. Retrieved from <https://www.qualitymatters.org/node/2305/download/QM%20Standards%20with%20Point%20Values%20Fifth%20Edition.pdf>”
- [To explain about the QM Rubric™ you can use the following:] "The QM Rubrics have been developed and regularly updated through a rigorous process that examines relevant research, data, and practitioner perspectives. They consist of Standards supported by detailed Annotations explaining the application of the Standards and are intended to support the continuous improvement of courses with constructive feedback."

Please let me know if you have any questions about the above, and please let me know with the dissertation is available. I really would like to read it.  
Happy writing :)

APPENDIX B  
PERMISSION TO USE AND ADAPT  
THE BLENDED LEARNING FRAMEWORK

From: charles.r.graham@gmail.com  
on behalf of  
Charles Graham <charles.graham@byu.edu>  
Fri 3/20/2015 2:18 PM

Absolutely - use it in any way that you find useful to your work. I am including below a couple of follow-up studies done by Wendy Woodfield Porter that you might find interesting. The prepublication versions of the articles can be downloaded at: <https://byu.academia.edu/CharlesRGraham/1-Blended-Learning-Research>

Graham, C. R., Woodfield, W., & Harrison, J. B. (2012). A Framework for Institutional Adoption and Implementation of Blended Learning in Higher Education. *The Internet and Higher Education*. doi:10.1016/j.iheduc.2012.09.003

Porter, W. W., & Graham, C. R. (2015). Institutional drivers and barriers to faculty adoption of blended learning in higher education. *British Journal of Educational Technology*.

Porter, W. W., Graham, C. R., Spring, K. A., & Welch, K. R. (2014). Blended learning in higher education: Institutional adoption and implementation. *Computers & Education*, 75, 185–195. doi:10.1016/j.compedu.2014.02.011

Good luck in your research!  
Charles

erin.o.ucf  
Fri 3/20/2015 1:32 AM  
Sent Items  
To:  
charles.graham@byu.edu;  
Hello Dr. Graham,

I am doing my dissertation at the University of Central Florida and came across Cherie Mazer's dissertation where I discovered your Blended Learning Adoption Framework. It will be very valuable to my comparative case study analysis. I was wondering if I could have permission to use and adapt it. I am going to be looking at not only blended but fully online courses.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

All the best,  
Erin O'Brien  
Doctoral Candidate - UCF  
English Professor - Valencia College

APPENDIX C  
PERMISSION TO USE FACTORS  
INFLUENCING ADOPTION OF BLENDED LEARNING



Hi Cherie,

Thank you so much!

This is the table.

Table 1: Factors Influencing Adoption of Blended Learning- Mazer

Appreciate the support.

All the best,

Erin

On 6/25/15, 12:02 PM, Cherie Mazer, Ed.D. wrote:

-----  
Erin,

Good afternoon. Sorry I am so late answering this. Of course I will grant permission and am glad you found my dissertation useful. Let me know which table you plan to use. Wishing you all the best as you prepare to finalize your candidacy!

Cherie

On 6/19/15, 4:36 PM, Erin O'Brien wrote:

-----  
Hi Cherie!

I have Dr. Gunter as my chair and read your dissertation and was VERY impressed. There is a table you created with the applications to the four frames that I would like to use/reproduce/adapt in my own dissertation. Would you be willing to grant me permission to do so and cite your work?

Thanks!

Erin O'Brien, Doctoral candidate, UCF

APPENDIX D  
SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Below is a list of the survey and interview questions that the researcher will be asking the selected institutions or gathering from existing data.

#### Instrumentation

- Demographic:
  - What is your gender?
  - What is your position at the institution?
  - How many years of experience do you have in your current position?
  - What year did your institution start moving courses to an online format?
  - Does your institution offer blended and fully online courses?
  - How many years has your institution offered 100% fully online courses?
  - How many years has your institution offered blended courses?
  - Demographic that describes the institution: Please explain your definition of “online”?
- Please explain your definition of “blended”?
- What are your institution’s credentialing procedures for online faculty?
- How many online courses do faculty members teach per term?
- How many online courses are taught per year by your institution?
- Do you have a campus fully devoted to online or is it decentralized? Explain.

- Please share what you view as the pros/cons of your current institutional organization of online learning.
- Please explain your standards for quality in course design and how you assess them.
- Do you have a quality assurance person(s) or department?
- What quality assurance concerns do you have?
- Do you use any rubrics in preparing their online faculty members or some other measure? If so, share the details.
- How does your institution assess the quality of their online courses?
- What training courses for online faculty are offered or required?
- Is the training the same for full time, tenured, contract or adjunct instructors?
- Do you have an alternative training for adjuncts and instructors that work full time for another organization?
- How many faculty members have taken the training courses provided?
- Explain the support and training offered.
  - How do you determine if the training is meeting the faculty members' needs? Explain.
- How many of these courses have been internally reviewed using a QA measure? How many of these courses have been externally reviewed?
- Have any internal awards been earned by the institution or its faculty in the field of online learning or quality assurance?

- Have any external awards been earned by the institution or its faculty in the field of online learning or quality assurance?
- Have any publications been published by the institution or its faculty in the field of online learning or quality assurance?

APPENDIX E  
UCF IRB APPROVAL LETTER



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board  
Office of Research & Commercialization  
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501  
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246  
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276  
[www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html](http://www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html)

### Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1**  
**FWA00000351, IRB00001138**

To: **Erin O'Brien**

Date: **March 23, 2015**

Dear Researcher:

On 03/23/2015, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review:	Exempt Determination
Project Title:	Dissertation in Practice
Investigator:	Erin O'Brien
IRB Number:	SBE-15-11158
Funding Agency:	
Grant Title:	
Research ID:	NA

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the [Investigator Manual](#).

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joanne Muratori".

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 03/23/2015 12:42:09 PM EDT

IRB Coordinator

APPENDIX F  
SURVEY PERMISSION EMAIL



From: erin.o.ucf  
Tue 3/24/2015 4:11 PM  
Sent Items

I recently received IRB approval to conduct my study. Attached is the survey in Qualtrics. I really appreciate you taking the time to complete it. Your insights will be very valuable to my dissertation study on institutional criteria for faculty who teach online and quality assurance measures.

[https://ucfcd.az1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_07fyHSeiaN3NIQ5](https://ucfcd.az1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_07fyHSeiaN3NIQ5)

All the best,

Erin O'Brien

APPENDIX G  
CHUCK D. DZIUBAN AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE  
IN ONLINE TEACHING RUBRIC

Chuck D. Dziuban Award for Excellence in Online Teaching Rubric

Nominee's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

College/Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Part 1: Creation of a Pedagogically Sound Course

	<b>Minimal 1 point</b>	<b>Meets Requirement(s) 2 points</b>	<b>Exemplary 3 points</b>	<b>Points</b>
Course Organization	The faculty has not provided a clear starting point.	The faculty provided a clear starting point (e.g. syllabus documents).	The faculty provided a clear starting point and tips for successfully navigating the course (e.g. syllabus documents and getting started module or module 0, clear start here area).	
	Course syllabus, schedule and protocols are missing or incomplete.	Course syllabus, schedule and protocols are included or present.	Course syllabus, schedule and protocols are included (e.g., includes clear assignment due dates, clear course expectations, etc.).  Provides student direction on how to be successful within the course.	
	Course content is difficult to read or disorganized.	Course content exists and is organized. Key components of course are clear.	Course content exists and is organized. All components of course are clear.	
	Missing several required syllabus components such as: office or Web hours, makeup exam policy, and final exam	Contains all required syllabus components such as: office or Web hours, makeup exam policy, and	Contains all required syllabus components and several suggested syllabus components such as	

	date and time.	final exam date and time.	Disability/Accessibility, Copyright, Third Party FERPA.	
Assessment Strategies	Basic assessment strategies are implemented ( <i>e.g.</i> all M/C question exams) but assessments are <b>not</b> sequenced so it's difficult to gauge student progress.	Basic assessment strategies are implemented and assessments are sequenced so student progress is easily observed.	A variety of assessment strategies and learning choice is implemented. Assessments are sequenced so student progress is easily observed.	
Learning Community	Instructor provides minimal feedback to students.  No additional student support provided.	Instructor provides some feedback to students using only one method of communication.  Basic support information from various campus departments is included for students ( <i>e.g.</i> Online@UCF Support, UCF Service Desk, etc.).	Instructor provides adequate feedback to students in a variety of ways ( <i>e.g.</i> email, IM, audio/video).  Additional student support information various campus departments is included for students ( <i>e.g.</i> Online@UCF Support, UCF Service Desk, Counseling Center, SDS).	
Interaction [student to content, student to instructor, student to other students]	Incorporate interaction on two levels.	Incorporate interaction on three levels.	Incorporates a high level (Blooms') use of student interactions on three or more levels.	
Learning Objectives	Course goals are not clearly defined and learning objectives are missing.	Course goals are adequately defined but learning activities may not completely align to learning objectives.	Course goals are clearly defined and learning activities are aligned to learning objectives.	
<b>Total Points</b>				

Part 2: Learner Support and Technology

	<b>Minimal</b> 1 point	<b>Meets Requirement(s)</b> 2 points	<b>Exemplary</b> 3 points	<b>Points</b>
Copyright	Course does not address copyright issues.	Course addresses some copyright issues.	Course addresses most copyright and fair use issues.	
Accessibility and Universal Design for Learning	Course provides limited visual, textual, kinesthetic, and or auditory activities to enhance student learning.  Does not address accessibility concerns ( <i>e.g.</i> no video captions).	Course provides adequate visual, textual, kinesthetic, and or auditory activities to enhance student learning.  Addresses accessibility issues ( <i>e.g.</i> <i>some</i> videos are captioned).	Course provides multiple visual, textual, kinesthetic, and or auditory activities to enhance student learning.  Addresses accessibility issues ( <i>e.g.</i> , all videos have captions and all web pages are visually and functionally consistent and accessible throughout the course).	
Instructor Addresses Use of Technology in Course	No list provided of technology requirements to successfully navigate the course.	Provides a list of some of the technology requirements to successfully navigate the course.	Provides a list of all of the technology requirements to successfully navigate the course and provides students with directions to locate and test the technology.	
<b>Total Points</b>				

Part 3: Innovative Teaching & Effective Use of Technology

Category	Exemplary	Points 3 points per category
Technology Aligns with Objectives	Integrated technology supports the learning objectives and was appropriately chosen to deliver the course content.	
Application-based Learning	The learning activities conducted in the course encourage students to learn the material while applying real world skills (e.g. build a portfolio, create PowerPoint presentations, Excel, or video projects, , create e-portfolios for job interviews).	
Incorporation of Technology	The course uses technology effectively to help facilitate learning (such as blogs for creation of journals, wiki projects for collaboration, use of social media to create a learning community, e.g., Facebook, Twitter).	
<b>Total Points</b>		

Other/Extra Credit

	Other/Extra Credit	Points 3 points
Demonstration of Innovation	The course provides students with an opportunity to produce a product that extends beyond course goals (e.g., publish an article/paper, win an award or grant, submit an art piece in a gallery) that helps prepare them for careers in the field.	
<b>Total Points</b>		

Final Score

Round	Total Points
Part 1: Creation of a Pedagogically Sound Course	
Part 2: Learner Support and Technology	

Part 3: Innovative Teaching & Effective Use of Technology	
Other/Extra Credit	
<b>Total Score</b>	

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