

FINDINGS OF THE DELPHI STUDY ON QUALITY CRITERIA AND BENCHMARKS FOR ONLINE DEGREE PROGRAMS

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study was:

To develop a comprehensive quality framework for assessing the quality of online degree programs – a framework that would consist of a set of quality criteria and anchored benchmarks for each criterion to facilitate measurement.

Research Questions

More specifically, the five main research questions addressed in the research study were:

1. What are the criteria and benchmarks that are relevant for assessment of the quality online degree programs?
2. Of the relevant criteria and benchmarks in (1) what are the criteria and benchmarks that form a core set that all institutions should use for all online degree programs to assure high quality online education?
3. What is the extent of the current use of the criteria in institutions?
4. If it would be not possible for institutions to use any of the relevant criteria what are the reasons for it?
5. Is there any relevant criterion missing in the list of 67 criteria developed?

The Delphi Study

There were two stages in the Delphi study. In Stage 1 the developed quality criteria and benchmarks – 67 criteria and associated benchmarks – were presented to the Delphi panel and the panel was requested to respond to the above research questions. In Stage 2 the findings of Stage 1 were presented to the members of the Delphi panel who participated in Stage 1 and the validation of the results of Stage 1 and further comments were requested.

Summary of the Findings of the Study

In **Stage 1**, invitations were sent to 50 participants that included six international

participants. Thirty five of them participated in the survey in Stage1. Their responses led to the following results at the end of Stage1.

- Twenty criteria were ranked as core criteria, 42 criteria were ranked as relevant criteria and five criteria were rated as not relevant.
- Some criteria and benchmarks were revised for wording, concept, or level of measurement. Some had minimal revisions while some criteria had significant revisions.

In **Stage 2**, the panel reviewed the revised criteria and benchmarks and re-rated the five criteria that were rated as not-relevant in Stage 1 as relevant criteria and re-rated four of the 42 relevant criteria as core criteria. With these revisions, all 67 criteria were considered by the panel as relevant and 24 of them were ranked as core. The panel approved all the revisions to the wording of the criteria. For the request to suggest additional criteria [research question 5], no suggestions for additional criteria were received.

The complete final set of 67 criteria and the benchmarks is available at:

<https://mywebspace.wisc.edu/mmariasingam/Myweb/DelphiStudyFinalResults/QualityBenchmarksforOnlineDegreePrograms.doc>

A summary of all the criteria and benchmarks also is available at:

<https://mywebspace.wisc.edu/mmariasingam/Myweb/DelphiStudyFinalResults/QualityBenchmarksQuickGuideD.doc>

A summary of the 24 core criteria and the thresholds is available at:

<https://mywebspace.wisc.edu/mmariasingam/Myweb/DelphiStudyFinalResults/CoreCriteriaWithThresholdsTable4.doc>