# Quality Criteria for Online Distance Education in the Philippines: A Delphi Study

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***Sub-theme #3:*** *Problems, Barriers, Reforms and Solutions. This sub-theme focuses on issues and concerns in expanding the frontiers of OdeL, as well as initiatives to address these problems at the institutional, national, regional, and global contexts. Specific topics include: Quality Assurance*

***Keywords:*** *Online, Distance Education, Quality Criteria*

***Abstract***

*Recognizing the need to continually ensure quality, higher education institutions and accrediting agencies have conducted studies to establish quality criteria for distance education in general and for online distance education in particular. In the Philippine setting however, aside from the monitoring instrument created by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), there are no other instruments available to monitor quality of DE in the Philippines.*

*As can be seen from literature there are several quality frameworks and standards for online DE that are available for adaptation. The dilemma lies in which one/s would be most relevant to the local setting. While there are international standards of quality for educational provision, especially given the spread of 'transnational education', it is equally important that national standards of quality that are fit for purpose are specified for online DE providers in the Philippines.*

*This study aimed to determine which dimensions of quality and quality criteria for online DE are applicable in the Philippine setting. The first phase consisted of a review of the literature on quality criteria, standards, or benchmarks for online distance education courses and programs, including relevant policy documents such as CMO 27, Series of 2005 (Policies, Standards and Guidelines on Distance Education), and CMO 2, Series of 2008, (Policies, Standards and Guidelines on Transnational Education). The second phase was a Delphi survey involving local DE experts in the identification of relevant dimensions of quality and quality criteria for online DE in the Philippines. The Delphi survey consisted of two rounds. In the first round, the experts used a four-point Likert scale to rate seven dimensions of quality and 56 quality criteria. Items which did not receive a 70% consensus and a mean of three were eliminated prior to proceeding to the second round. All items received a mean of three, and four new quality criteria suggested by the experts were included in the second round. The final results were seven dimensions of quality and 58 quality criteria that the Philippine experts in DE agree are relevant to Philippine DE institutions. The study enabled us to formulate a more comprehensive set of quality criteria than what is now available in the Philippines and it can be used by institutions to assess their own DE programs and perhaps also by external accrediting agencies, in order to ensure the quality of online distance education in the Philippines.*

## Introduction

The Philippine higher education institutions (HEIs) are confronting the challenge of promoting the attainment of education. The advent of distance education has brought about a wide range of possibilities and opportunities for learners, teachers and educational institutions. The

rapid growth of technology has likewise provided distance education with an additional venue or means to connect with learners. Distance education or DE is a way for HEIs to extend its reach to new groups of learners, including those who are interested in further education but are unable to attend a conventional face-to-face program due to their geographic location and/or work commitments.

However, whatever the mode for distance education there are still those that are skeptical about the quality of education that can be produced via this method of teaching and learning, hence quality must be ensured every step of the way. Recognizing the need to continually ensure quality, higher education institutions as well as accrediting agencies in other countries have conducted studies to establish quality criteria for distance education in general and in several cases for online distance education in particular. In the Philippine setting however, this is not the case. Aside from the CHED issued CMO 27 Series of 2005 called, "Policies and Guidelines on Distance Education" which sets what appears to be minimum requirements, there are no other local guidelines for distance education. Philippine HEIs who are new to DE and e-learning need more detailed guidelines and in particular a detailed set of quality criteria against which to benchmark their online course and programs offerings (Commission on Higher Education 2005).

According to the Sloan Consortium, quality is a work in progress and each organization should seek to measure quality in terms of its own distinctiveness, its own dynamic and mission and the people who embody it (Moore 2005). It is with this in mind that this study was conceptualized. More specifically, the study was undertaken to contribute to the development of a set of dimensions of quality and quality criteria for online distance education for a higher educational institution in the Philippines. It is hoped that these dimensions of quality and quality criteria developed can be used by CHED and HEIs as a measure of quality of institutions offering DE in the Philippines.

## Conceptual Framework and Review of Related Literature

The study subscribes to Anderson's definition (2008) of online distance education as "the use of the internet to access learning materials; to interact with the content, instructor, and other learners; and to obtain support during the learning process, in order to acquire knowledge, to construct personal meaning, and to grow from the learning experience." According to Cole (2000), online learning allows the participants to collapse time and space, giving an individual access to resources whenever and wherever. Online DE courses usually make use of virtual classrooms powered by learning management systems, as well as various Web-based tool and resources, which provides access to learning materials as well as allowing interaction of the student with the learning materials, the instructor and fellow learners and it is through these interactions that the student learns and acquires knowledge (Anderson and Elloumi 2008).

What makes for quality DE in general and quality online DE in particular is one of the key themes in the DE literature. The quality standards that apply to traditional or face-to-face education are not necessarily applicable to distance education, and organizations specializing in DE and online learning have put forward various sets of quality standards for this mode of education.

In a study titled "Quality on the Line" the National Education Association (NEA) of the United States and Blackboard came up with 24 benchmarks for ensuring excellence in internet-based education. The study involved a comprehensive review of existing benchmarks used by various organizations. A total of 45 benchmarks were initially identified. The study resulted in the elimination of 13 benchmarks and an addition of three, resulting in 24 benchmarks which were categorized as follows: three institutional support benchmarks, three course development benchmarks, three teaching/learning benchmarks, four course structure benchmarks, four student support benchmarks, four faculty support benchmarks, and three evaluation and assessment benchmarks (The Institute for Higher Education Policy 2000).

The Sloan Consortium (Sloan-C), an organization promoting the integration of online education into mainstream higher education, has formulated a quality framework consisting of what it calls five pillars that support quality learning environments: learning effectiveness, cost effectiveness and institutional commitment, access, faculty satisfaction, and student satisfaction.

The International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL), after a comprehensive review of existing online course standards, adapted in 2006 the Quality Online Course Standards used by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB). This includes 14 course content standards, 16 instructional standards, seven student assessment standards, seven course management standards, and one 21st century skills standard (North American Council for Online Learning).

The Quality Matters Program (QM) of the United States evaluates and certifies online and hybrid courses based on 40 specific elements which are categorized into eight broad standards, namely, course overview and introduction, learning objectives, assessment and measurement, resources and materials, learner engagement, course technology, learner support and accessibility. QM is a faculty-centered peer review process, and subscribers are provided with tools and processes which they can use to evaluate the quality of course design. The QM Rubric Standards has assigned point values and a course must meet all three-point essential standards and earn at least 72 points in order to meet the Quality Matters Review expectation (Maryland Online 2010).

Outside of North America, South Africa's Department of Education and Council of Higher Education use a Quality Standard Framework for Distance Education covering 13 criteria: policy and planning (11 elements), learners (9 elements), programme development (23 elements), course design (17 elements), course materials (8 elements with sub-elements), assessment (20 elements), learner support (23 elements), human resource strategy (15 elements), management and administration (28 elements), collaborative relationships (8 elements), quality assurance (8 elements), and information dissemination (7 elements) (National Association of Distance Education Organizations of South Africa 2003).

The MARA University of Technology in Malaysia has come up with the Q-Q 5Es Model which specifies four main principles: Quantity; Quality (defined as substance over form, prudence/conservatism and value for money); the 5Es which are Espirit de Corps, Economic, Efficiency, Effectiveness and Ethics; and Measure What Matters which signifies the importance of performance measurement in the university (Rmali 2009). They believe that using this framework has enabled them to produce quality distance education programs and graduates.

In the Philippines there are no accrediting bodies for distance education and e-learning. HEIs wanting to offer DE courses and programs, using whatever technology, are simply expected to comply with CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) 27, Series of 2005.

As can be seen from the literature there are several quality frameworks and standards for online DE that are available for adaptation. The dilemma lies in which one/s would be most relevant to the local setting. The fact that adapting universally acceptable quality criteria is difficult should be acknowledged. This is due to the variety of backgrounds, extent and level of program coverage, cultural considerations, as well as differences in government policies, among others. While there are international standards of quality for educational provision, especially given the spread of 'transnational education', it is equally important that national standards of quality that are fit for purpose are specified for online DE providers.

## Research Design and Methodology

To be able to address the research question the study required two phases namely: 1) a review of existing quality criteria in order to be able to develop a survey instrument and 2) a Delphi survey. The product of the study is the formulation of a set of dimensions of quality and quality criteria for online distance education in the Philippines.

## Phase I. Review of Existing Criteria and Development of the Instrument

The first phase was a review of the literature on quality criteria, standards, or benchmarks for online distance education courses and programs, including relevant policy documents such as CMO 27, Series of 2005 or Policies, Standards and Guidelines on Distance Education, and CMO 2, Series of 2008, or Policies, Standards and Guidelines on Transnational Education. This analysis provided a snapshot of local and international efforts towards the identification of online DE quality criteria, standards, and benchmarks.

The literature review led to the development of the survey instrument. In the literature several terms are used to denote quality criteria, such as: *indicators, best practices, benchmarks, standards and criteria*. These terms are often times used interchangeably. Among the different monitoring and survey instruments surveyed were those used by the Commission on Higher Education or CHED in monitoring DE programs in the Philippines and those used by the North American Council for Online Learning (NACOL), National Education Association (NEA), Southern Regional Electronic Campus (SRE), Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunication (WCET) and The Institute for Higher Education Policy.

The contents of the individual instruments were synthesized in order to create an instrument to be used in the second phase of the study which was the Delphi survey. There were considerable overlaps noted among the criteria used by the accrediting agencies and that of CHED. Consequently, similar items were combined and the final list of quality criteria numbered 56.

## Phase II. The Delphi Survey

The second phase of the research was a Delphi process involving local DE experts in the identification of quality criteria for online DE in the Philippines. The Delphi process or method is basically an iterative survey designed to obtain a response to a qualitative or quantitative question or a series of questions from a group of experts. The experts do not interact with each other and their responses are anonymous. Anonymity is essential in order to avoid undue influence and to be able to get independent and well-considered opinions in the absence of external persuasive influences. Anonymity also minimizes the "bandwagon effect" and allows experts to freely express their opinions, biases and critique others without fear of ridicule (Turoff and Hiltz 1996). A facilitator coordinates the Delphi process, sending out the initial questionnaire or survey, collecting and doing a statistical analysis of the responses, and sending out the results through a feedback mechanism to give the experts the opportunity to rethink their responses.

Traditionally the Delphi process involved a "paper and pencil based" communication process. However, with the advent of technology it is now possible to do a Delphi study via computer mediated communication (CMC), making the process easier in the sense that questions as well as feedback can be sent out and responses retrieved faster with a wider geographical reach. Aside from this, statistical analysis of the results can be done more readily (Skulmoski, Krahn et al. 2007).

**Selection of the Panel of Experts.** One of the key factors in the success of this research is the appropriate selection of the panel of experts. Panel members were chosen purposively – that is, based on their involvement in online DE in the Philippines. Indicators of this involvement are:

1. Membership in the CHED Technical Panel for Distance Education
2. Being a faculty member and/or administrator of an online DE course and program in an HEI known to offer online DE.
3. Being a faculty member of UPOU's Master of Distance Education program
4. Being an officer of the Philippine Society for Distance Learning (PSDL)
5. Being an officer of the Philippine e-Learning Society (PeLS)

The participation of identified DE experts was sought via email. Once consent had been obtained the expert participants were sent the URL to the online survey. Non-responders who had initially consented to join the study were sent email reminders for their continued participation.

**Description of the Delphi Rounds.** The initial survey instrument was designed to collect demographic data, recommended quality criteria, and elicit perceived importance of dimensions of quality as well as the quality criteria themselves. More specifically, the first part of the survey instrument was composed of questions regarding the demographical data of the expert respondents. The second part of the instrument started with a qualitative question regarding the characteristics of quality online education: *"What characteristics do you think should a good quality online distance education course or program demonstrate? Please list as many characteristics as you think are necessary."* This was followed by two tables to be scored using a Likert Scale with 1 being the lowest score and 4 the highest score. The first table contained Dimensions of Quality for Distance Education based on CHED CMO 27, Series of 2008. The second table contained a list of 56 quality criteria for online DE derived from instruments used by foreign accrediting agencies as well as the CHED CMOs and monitoring instrument. In the analysis of results for both Delphi rounds, dimensions and quality criteria which did not meet the predetermined concurrence value of at least 70% and a weighted mean of 3 were eliminated.

There were 33 expert respondents identified. They were sent an invitation to join the Delphi Survey through email. Out of the 33 invitations, 16 or 48.48% of the invited experts consented to join the study and completed the first round.

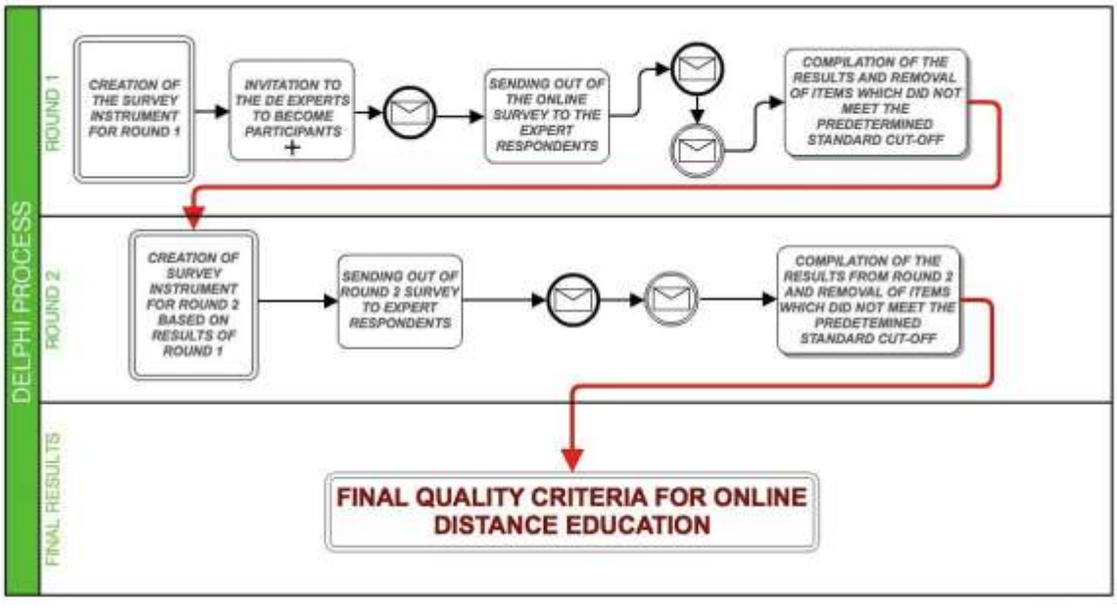


**Figure 1 the Delphi Data Collection Process**

The end result of this study was the development of the quality criteria for online DE drawn from the Delphi rounds. The set of criteria which resulted from the study were further categorized by the researcher into the Dimensions of Quality which had been previously identified by CHED and with which the respondents had concurred during the Delphi survey. The instrument developed can be used for/by institutions in the Philippines intending to offer or which are currently offering courses or programs via online distance education.

## Results

### Demographics

Ten or 62.5% of the respondents were female. Majority belonged to the 41 to 50 age group. With regards to their involvement in distance education, majority held multiple responsibilities in various aspects of distance education either as members of the CHED technical panel for distance education or involved in management of distance education programs while at the same time being faculty or part of the teaching complement. A majority of them (75%) were involved in teaching or as faculty in distance education programs. One respondent was directly involved in CHED under the Office of the Distance Education Programs and two others were involved in CHED as part of the technical panel for distance education while being actively involved in teaching institutions either as faculty or part of management. Mean years of involvement was 8.33 years, the shortest number of years of involvement in distance education was 2 years, and the longest involvement was more than 20 years. This is an indicator of the credibility of their opinions regarding quality criteria for online education which is a subset of distance education.

**Delphi Survey Round 1**

In the first round, responses to the first qualitative question (*"What characteristics do you think should a good quality online distance education course or program demonstrate? Please list as many characteristics as you think are necessary."*) were stated in various ways, however on analysis, most were similar to those already stated in the survey instrument (see annex A), hence they were disregarded. From the responses given by the expert respondents, four were added to the initial list for the second round as shown below (Table 1).

**Table 1. Additional Quality Criteria for Online Education Derived from Delphi Survey Round 1**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Faculty engaged in online teaching are provided with incentives such as but not limited to Merit Pay. |
| 2 | Courses developed include in their syllabi research in Open Distance eLearning (ODeL) and related areas. |
| 3 | Well-equipped learning centers are available and are conducive to learning. |
| 4 | There is a provision for synchronous online interaction such as "Backchannel Communication or Backchanneling" (secondary electronic communication that takes place at the same time or in synchronous with a conference, lecture or a faculty-led activity). |

The second question was with regard to the dimensions of quality in DE derived from CHED CMO 27 Series of 2005 (see Table 2). The experts were asked to score each dimension in terms of their importance. All items got a weighted mean of above 3 and most got a concurrence of 100% except for *"institutional qualification"* which got a concurrence of 87.5% and the lowest mean of 3.80 (Table 4). In the CHED Monitoring Checklist for Distance Education Program, "institutional qualifications" include the following:

- Level III Accreditation in Liberal Arts(to offer general education subjects)
- Level III Accreditation in the degree program applied for, or
- CHED Center of Excellence (COE) status in the degree program applied for, or
- Certification of Compliance with the CHED Quality Assurance system for Distance Education

It seems that although CHED puts much value towards accreditation levels given by external accrediting agencies and being identified as centers of excellence by CHED itself, the expert respondents felt that this is not as important as the other dimensions of quality. However,

"institutional qualification" was not eliminated from the dimensions of quality for round 2 of the Delphi survey since it is above the cut-off of 70 concurrence and 3.0 as a weighted mean.

**Table 2. Scores of the Dimensions of Distance Education Delphi Survey Round 1**

| DIMENSIONS OF DISTANCE EDUCATION | % Concurrence | Weighted Mean |
|---|---|---|
| Institutional Qualifications | 87.50 | 3.80 |
| Institutional Management and Commitment | 100 | 4.00 |
| Curriculum Development and Approval | 100 | 4.00 |
| Instructional Material Development | 100 | 4.00 |
| Delivery Mode and Strategies | 100 | 3.93 |
| Student Assessment | 100 | 3.93 |
| Student Support Services | 100 | 3.87 |

The third question involved 56 randomly listed quality criteria for online distance education derived from accepted criteria used by DE accrediting agencies in other countries and the CHED CMO on Distance Education. The 56 criteria are listed in Annex A. In the first round of the Delphi survey, all criteria got a mean score of above 3 and a concurrence of above 70%, hence none of the criteria were removed. This could be explained by the fact that most of the criteria used by foreign accrediting agencies were already results of studies done to streamline the quality criteria and are accepted by practitioners in the field of DE in their respective countries. The criteria set by CHED is a result of the work done by the technical panel in distance education. Members of the said panel are long-time practitioners. Hence they have experience in the field of DE.

**Delphi Survey Round 2**

For the second round of the Delphi survey, the qualitative questions were eliminated. The responses or recommendations derived from the first round qualitative questions were listed and similar items were combined. The dimensions of quality remained as seven (7) items.

For the quality criteria, after the streamlining the suggestions given by the expert respondents by way of combining related items and deleting very similar items suggested by the said respondents the outcome was compared to those already listed in the first round. Items suggested by the expert respondents which were similar to those already in the list of quality criteria were then removed. As a result, four (4) new items or quality criteria were identified and included in the original number of 56 quality criteria making a total of 60 quality criteria for the second round.

Of the 16 experts who participated in Round 1, only 15 participated in Round 2. With regards to the dimensions of quality, all items got a concurrence of 93.33%, and none of the items got a weighted mean of less than 3 in the second round, hence all were retained.

As to Quality Criteria for Online DE, similar to round 1, all items got a percentage of concurrence of above 70%. However, there were two criteria which got a mean of less than 3: the item with regard to graduate tracer studies and the level of institutional accreditation, hence they were subsequently removed.

It seems that that the level of accreditation of the institution is of less importance to the respondent experts as well as career paths after accomplishment of online studies. This finding is congruent with the findings in the first round wherein the experts scored "Institutional Qualifications" lower than other dimensions of quality. Although graduate tracer studies are encouraged by the CHED, there has been no local studies published to establish a difference in the

career paths of those graduating from traditional courses as compared to those who accomplished their course online.

**Comparison of Delphi Survey Round 1 and Round 2 Results**

Comparing the results of the first and the second round, there was no significant difference with regard the results regarding dimensions of quality. When comparing the results of the quality criteria for online DE between the two rounds, except for 18 items (out of 60), majority of the responses for both rounds did not show a significant difference (see Annex B). Of those with a significant difference, two showed to be highly significant, attaining lower mean scores in the second round as compared to that of the first round: *"The institution has a strategic and financial plan for online distance education course and program offerings"* and *"The institution has Level III accreditation or is a Center of Excellence in the field in which it has a DE course or program".* This could be taken to mean that though these are still considered by the expert respondents as important, the institutional qualifications do not hold as much importance for them as compared to those with regard to the other elements of distance education. It is worthwhile mentioning that in the second round the criteria on the institutional level of accreditation was eventually eliminated because of a weighted mean of less than three (3). This is consistent with the previous results with regard to dimensions of quality wherein "institutional qualifications" received a lower rating compared to the other dimensions.

Other items which were noted to have a statistically significant difference in results when comparing the two rounds are: 1) the consistency of the purpose of DE with the institutional mission, vision and goals; 2) the presence of a DE unit with its own mission, vision goals and academic policies; 3) the institution has the necessary prerequisites to offer the distance education program; 4) faculty have the proper credentials and training to teach; 5) presence of a faculty development program geared for improving faculty skills for teaching in distance education; 6) the presence of technical support for both faculty and student alike as well as prompt feedbacking; 7) completeness of course syllabi and clarity of requirements and course policies; 8) availability and use of proper technological infrastructure and multimedia resources; 9) learning outcomes for traditional and distance education are comparative; 10) regular evaluation of the course as to effectiveness. There was a notably decrease in the scores in these items in the second round, suggesting that although the items were still noted to be important, they did not hold as much importance as the other items in the survey instrument.

Another item noted to have a significant difference in scores between the first and second rounds was the faculty's exposure to distance education as a student, specifically *"Faculty members have taken a course via distance education and are able to apply experiences as a distance education student to develop and implement successful strategies for online teaching"*. There was an increase in the level of importance of this item in the second round. Although no explanation was sought from the respondents, one could hypothesize that an effective distance education faculty must have had the opportunity of being a distance education student so that he or she could better grasp the needs of a student in the distance learning environment.

## Conclusion

Learning is a continuous process and with the advent of technology a learning institution's reach is no longer limited to its individual confines or localities. The world has become a smaller place because of technology. Reach and accessibility however is not the only concern of a teaching institution but more importantly, the quality of what it imparts is of essence.

This study looked into the quality criteria for distance education in general and online DE in particular already existing in other countries. The Delphi survey was able to identify 58 criteria of quality for online distance education based on the opinion of experts in the field of distance education. The quality criteria produced from the Delphi Study was further categorized into the identified quality dimensions as stated in the CHED CMO 27, Series of 2005 producing a final usable instrument to measure quality in online distance education (see Table 3). The instrument could be used locally to determine the quality of online distance education in HEIs in the Philippines.

As a result of this study, the criteria produced in the Delphi survey was used to develop a survey instrument which could be used by HEIs to evaluate their Online Distance Education Programs whether existing or in the development phase. With the presence of these criteria the institution will be able to do a self evaluation prior to embarking on an online distance education program as well as evaluating an already existing online distance education program or course. A self-evaluation may also be done prior to undergoing evaluation from an external agency to assure the institution of its fitness to offer online distance education programs.

Further studies can still be done to further refine the instrument such as categorizing the criteria into subsets as to which criteria should be present in a developing DE program, an ongoing DE program and a well established DE program. The criteria could also be further divided into course requirements versus program requirements and institutional requirements to give a more holistic picture of an institution's status with regard to distance education. It is only with further research and the application of such research can we continue to improve for the benefit of the learners of the future.

**Table 3 Dimensions and Quality Criteria Survey Instrument for Online Distance Education**

| DIMENSIONS AND QUALITY CRITERIA OF ONLINE DISTANCE EDUCATION |
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| **1.Institutional Qualifications** |
| 1.1 The institution has been granted by CHED the "Permit to Operate" and/or "Recognition" to provide programs via the distance education mode and has a "Certification of Compliance" from the CHED Quality Assurance System for Distance Education. |
| **1.** |
| **2. Institutional Management and Commitment** |
| 2.1 Faculty engaged in online teaching are provided with incentives such as but not limited to Merit Pay. |
| 2.2 A faculty development program is in place for faculty to update their academic knowledge, knowledge of distance education, and knowledge and skills in the use of relevant instructional technologies. |
| 2.3 Data on enrollment (enrollment and attrition rates), costs and successful / innovative uses of technology are systematically collected and used to evaluate program effectiveness. |
| 2.4 Delivering online distance education courses or programs is consistent with the mission, vision and goals of the institution. |
| 2.5 Faculty demonstrates the ability to modify and add content, assessment and using online learning management software (LMS) if needed. |
| 2.6 Faculty members have access to the prerequisite technology to teach online and are assisted in the transition from classroom teaching to DE instruction. |
| 2.7 Faculty members have taken a course via distance education and are able to apply experiences as a distance education student to develop and implement successful strategies for online teaching. |
| 2.8 Institutional marketing plans include the promotion of the institution's distance education courses and programs |
| 2.9 Policies and procedures pertaining to the management of distance education courses and programs are in place. |
| 2.10 Systematic and comprehensive evaluation of the faculty handling distance education courses is done. |
| 2.11 Technical assistance in course development is available to faculty, who are encouraged to use it. |

| DIMENSIONS AND QUALITY CRITERIA OF ONLINE DISTANCE EDUCATION |
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| 2.12 The appropriate technological infrastructure for online DE is in place. |
| 2.13 The course is evaluated regularly for effectiveness – i.e. whether it meets the intended course outcomes and program standards. The findings are used as a basis for improvement of the course. |
| 2.14 The distance education program or unit has its own mission and vision statement, as well as academic policies (e.g. admission and retention policies, grading policy, completion policy) that are clear and easy to understand. |
| 2.15 The DE program or unit is headed by a qualified program manager or coordinator. |
| 2.16 The institution has a strategic and financial plan for online distance education course and program offerings. |
| 2.17 The institution has a technology plan that includes security measures which are in place and operational to ensure both quality standards and integrity and validity of information |
| 2.18 The institution has an internal quality assurance management system appropriate to DE programs. |
| 2.19 There is technical support for faculty especially in course management. |
| |
| **3. Curriculum Development and Approval** |
| 3.1 Course content is aligned with acceptable national standards and is of sufficient rigor, depth and breadth to teach the standards being assessed. |
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| **4. Instructional Material Development** |
| 4.1 Courses developed include in their syllabi research in Open Distance eLearning (ODeL) and related areas. |
| 4.2. Course materials are updated periodically (i.e. at most every five years) to ensure timeliness and compliance with program standards. |
| 4.3. Course materials are well-written, well-structured and tested to comply with principles of guided didactic conversation and self-instruction. |
| 4.4. Distance education course development experts (i.e. instructional design specialists, production design specialists, editors) are involved in the development of learning packages. |
| 4.5. Student learning outcomes in distance education courses are assessed and compared with student learning outcomes achieved by traditional methods. |
| 4.6. The appropriate laws and policies on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) are observed in the development and utilization of course materials, including pre-developed course materials from other institutions whether local or international. |
| |
| **5. Delivery Mode and Strategies** |
| 5.1. Well-equipped learning centers are available and are conducive to learning. |
| 5.2. There is a provision for synchronous online interaction such as "Backchannel Communication or Backchanneling" (secondary electronic communication that takes place at the same time or in synchronous with a conference, lecture or a faculty-led activity). |
| 5.3. A complete and clear course overview and syllabus is provided to the student at the beginning of the course. The overview and syllabus include course policies and requirements, deadlines, the grading system, and contact details of the faculty-in-charge. |
| 5.4. Course design provides opportunities for appropriate instructor-student interaction, student-student interaction and student-content interaction. |
| 5.5. Course goals and objectives are clearly stated and their attainment is measurable. |
| 5.6. Course instruction and activities are designed in such a manner that students are engaged in active learning while taking into consideration a variety of learning styles and preferences while encouraging students to bring real-life examples into the distance education classroom. They enable students to engage in higher-order thinking (analysis, synthesis and evaluation), critical reasoning activities, and thinking in increasingly complex ways. |
| 5.7. Expectations regarding intellectual honesty and etiquette/netiquette in the conduct of learning activities, discussion and communications, and student submissions are clearly communicated to students. |
| 5.8. Faculty provides prompt and constructive feedback about assignments and questions, communicates high expectations, and respects diverse talents and learning styles. |
| 5.9 Learning outcomes and not the availability of technology determine the choice of technology to delivery content. |
| 5.10. Teaching and learning tools and software used are appropriate and effective relative to the target course outcomes. |
| 5.11. Technology selection is based on needs, resources and capabilities of the learners and providers and the purpose of the programs being offered. |
| 5.12. The course design includes the use of multimedia and visual resources. |
| 5.13. The course makes use of either synchronous or asynchronous tools for teacher-student interaction. |

| DIMENSIONS AND QUALITY CRITERIA OF ONLINE DISTANCE EDUCATION |
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| 5.14. The course reflects a multicultural perspective and is free from cultural bias. |
| 5.15. The faculty in-charge (i.e. the instructor or course facilitator) contacts students who are not participating in the course. |
| 5.16. The faculty in-charge (i.e. the instructor or course facilitator) creates a warm and inviting atmosphere that promotes the development of a sense of community among participants. |
| 5.17. The faculty in-charge (i.e. the instructor or course facilitator) has academic credentials in the field in which he or she is teaching, the minimum qualification being that of a Master's degree in the field of specialization. |
| 5.18. The faculty in-charge monitors learner progress with available tools and develops an intervention plan for unsuccessful learners. |
| 5.19. The faculty-in-charge (i.e. the instructor or course facilitator) encourages interaction and communication among students and encourages active learning. |
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| **6. Student Assessment** |
| 6.1. Assessment strategies and tools used for grading make the student continuously aware of his / her progress in class and mastery of the content. |
| 6.2. Examinations (paper, online, demonstration of competence) require firm student identification to assure integrity of student work. |
| 6.3. Methods and strategies for assessing and evaluating student learning are consistent with the course goals and objectives, and representative of the scope of the course. |
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| **7. Student Support Services** |
| 7.1. Student service personnel provide immediate and accurate feedback. |
| 7.2. Student support services (e.g. registration support, academic progress information, counseling, grievance, etc) are available. |
| 7.3. Students are able to register and pay fees without having to visit the institution. |
| 7.4. Students are provided with hands-on training and information to aid them in securing material through electronic databases, interlibrary loans, government archives, news services and other resources. |
| 7.5. Students have sufficient access to resources stated in the course guide and materials, as well as to other library resources which may include the "virtual library" accessible through the World Wide Web. |
| 7.6. Students receive information about programs, including admission requirements, tuition and fees, books, supplies, technical and proctoring requirements, and student support services. |
| 7.7. Technical support is available to the student throughout the duration of the course or program. |
| 7.8. There is pre-admission and pre-registration student advising to determine student readiness to learn via online DE mode. |
| 7.9. Tutors qualified to provide student support are available. |

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## ANNEX A
## DELPHI SURVEY ROUND 1 SURVEY

Thank you for participating in this Delphi study. The goal of the study is to get a consensus from a panel of DE experts regarding what criteria of quality should be applied to online distance education courses and programs in the Philippines.

This is the first round of the Delphi survey. The survey will take approximately 30-40 minutes. Upon completing the survey, please click "submit" at the end of the questionnaire.

Your answers will be anonymized. But I would appreciate your filling in the following personal details.

Name: _____

Gender *(please tick)*: _____ Male _____Female

Age *(please tick)*:

_____ 25-30
_____ 31 - 35
_____ 36 - 40
_____ 41 – 45
_____ 46 – 50
_____ 51 – 55
_____ 56 – 60
_____ 61 – 65
_____ 66 – 70

_____ > 70

Your Institution or Organization _____

Your involvement among the following: *(please tick all that apply)*

____ CHED Technical Panel member
____ Administration
____ Faculty
____ Technical Support
____ Library Services
____ Other Support Services *(please specify)* _____
____ Officer of _____ PSDL _____PeLS

Number of years engaged in DE: _____

1. What characteristics do you think should a good quality online distance education course or program demonstrate? Please list as many characteristics as you think are necessary.

2. CHED CMO 27 Series of 2005 as well as CMO 2 Series of 2008 stipulates the following dimensions of quality for DE programs in the Philippines. Please indicate your opinion of each dimension by ticking your preferred value from 1 to 4. The values correspond to the following:

4 = Very Important
3 = Important
2 = Slightly Important
1 = Not at all Important

| DIMENSIONS OF DISTANCE EDUCATION | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Institutional Qualifications | | | | |
| Institutional Management and Commitment | | | | |
| Curriculum Development and Approval | | | | |
| Instructional Material Development | | | | |
| Delivery Mode and Strategies | | | | |
| Student Assessment | | | | |
| Student Support Services | | | | |

3. What other dimensions of quality should be included for <u>online</u> DE programs and why?

4. Please indicate your opinion of each of the quality criteria for online DE listed below by ticking one of the values given. The values mean the following:

4 = Very Important
3 = Important
2 = Slightly Important
1 = Not at all Important

| CRITERIA | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A complete and clear course overview and syllabus is provided to the student at the beginning of the course. The overview and syllabus include course policies and requirements, deadlines, the grading system, and contact details of the faculty-in-charge. | | | | |
| A faculty development program is in place for faculty to update their academic knowledge, knowledge of distance education, and knowledge and skills in the use of relevant instructional technologies. | | | | |
| Assessment strategies and tools used for grading make the student continuously aware of his/her progress in class and mastery of the content. | | | | |
| Course content is aligned with acceptable national standards and is of sufficient rigor, depth and breadth to teach the standards being assessed. | | | | |
| Course design provides opportunities for appropriate instructor-student interaction, student-student interaction and student-content interaction. | | | | |
| Course goals and objectives are clearly stated and their attainment is measurable. | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Course instruction and activities are designed in such a manner that students are engaged in active learning while taking into consideration a variety of learning styles and preferences while encouraging students to bring real-life examples into the distance education classroom. They enable students to engage in higher-order thinking (analysis, synthesis and evaluation), critical reasoning activities, and thinking in increasingly complex ways. | | | | |
| Course materials are updated periodically (i.e. at most every five years) to ensure timeliness and compliance with program standards. | | | | |
| Course materials are well-written, well-structured and tested to comply with principles of guided didactic conversation and self-instruction. | | | | |
| Data on enrollment (enrollment and attrition rates), costs and successful/innovative uses of technology are systematically collected and used to evaluate program effectiveness. | | | | |
| Distance education course development experts (i.e. instructional design specialists, production design specialists, editors) are involved in the development of learning packages. | | | | |
| Delivering online distance education courses or programs is consistent with the mission, vision and goals of the institution. | | | | |
| Examinations (paper, online, demonstration of competence) require firm student identification to assure integrity of student work. | | | | |
| Expectations regarding intellectual honesty and etiquette/netiquette in the conduct of learning activities, discussion and communications, and student submissions are clearly communicated to students. | | | | |
| Faculty demonstrates the ability to modify and add content, assessment and using online learning management software (LMS) if needed. | | | | |
| Faculty members have access to the prerequisite technology to teach online and are assisted in the transition from classroom teaching to DE instruction. | | | | |
| Faculty members have taken a course via distance education and are able to apply experiences as a distance education student to develop and implement successful strategies for online teaching. | | | | |
| Faculty provides prompt and constructive feedback about assignments and questions, communicates high expectations, and respects diverse talents and learning styles. | | | | |
| Graduate tracer studies are conducted to verify career placement. | | | | |
| Institutional marketing plans include the promotion of the institution's distance education courses and programs. | | | | |
| Learning outcomes and not the availability of technology determine the choice of technology to deliver content. | | | | |
| Methods and strategies for assessing and evaluating student learning are consistent with the course goals and objectives, and representative of the scope of the course. | | | | |
| Policies and procedures pertaining to the management of distance education courses and programs are in place. | | | | |
| Student learning outcomes in distance education courses are assessed and compared with student learning outcomes achieved by traditional methods. | | | | |
| Student service personnel provide immediate and accurate feedback. | | | | |
| Student support services (e.g. registration support, academic progress information, counseling, grievance, etc) are available. | | | | |
| Students are able to register and pay fees without having to visit the institution. | | | | |
| Students are provided with hands-on training and information to aid them in securing material through electronic databases, interlibrary loans, government archives, news services and other resources. | | | | |
| Students have sufficient access to resources stated in the course guide and materials, as well as to other library resources which may include the "virtual library" accessible through the World Wide Web. | | | | |
| Students receive information about programs, including admission requirements, tuition and fees, books, supplies, technical and proctoring requirements, and student support services. | | | | |
| Systematic and comprehensive evaluation of the faculty handling distance education courses is done. | | | | |
| Teaching and learning tools and software used are appropriate and effective relative to the target course outcomes. | | | | |
| Technical assistance in course development is available to faculty, who are encouraged to use it. | | | | |
| Technical support is available to the student throughout the duration of the course or program. | | | | |
| Technology selection is based on needs, resources and capabilities of the learners and providers and the purpose of the programs being offered. | | | | |
| The appropriate laws and policies on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) are observed in the development and utilization of course materials, including pre-developed course materials from other institutions whether local or international. | | | | |
| The appropriate technological infrastructure for online DE is in place. | | | | |
| The course design includes the use of multimedia and visual resources. | | | | |
| The course is evaluated regularly for effectiveness – i.e. whether it meets the intended course outcomes and program standards. The findings are used as a basis for improvement of the course. | | | | |
| The course makes use of either synchronous or asynchronous tools for teacher-student interaction. | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| The course reflects a multicultural perspective and is free from cultural bias. | | | | |
| The distance education program or unit has its own mission and vision statement, as well as academic policies (e.g. admission and retention policies, grading policy, completion policy) that are clear and easy to understand. | | | | |
| The DE program or unit is headed by a qualified program manager or coordinator. | | | | |
| The faculty in-charge (i.e. the instructor or course facilitator) contacts students who are not participating in the course. | | | | |
| The faculty in-charge (i.e. the instructor or course facilitator) creates a warm and inviting atmosphere that promotes the development of a sense of community among participants. | | | | |
| The faculty in-charge (i.e. the instructor or course facilitator) has academic credentials in the field in which he or she is teaching, the minimum qualification being that of a Master's degree in the field of specialization. | | | | |
| The faculty in-charge monitors learner progress with available tools and develops an intervention plan for unsuccessful learners. | | | | |
| The faculty-in-charge (i.e. the instructor or course facilitator) encourages interaction and communication among students and encourages active learning. | | | | |
| The institution has been granted by CHED the "Permit to Operate" and/or "Recognition" to provide programs via the distance education mode and has a "Certification of Compliance" from the CHED Quality Assurance System for Distance Education. | | | | |
| The institution has a strategic and financial plan for online distance education course and program offerings. | | | | |
| The institution has a technology plan that includes security measures which are in place and operational to ensure both quality standards and integrity and validity of information. | | | | |
| The institution has an internal quality assurance management system appropriate to DE programs. | | | | |
| The institution has Level III accreditation or is a Center of Excellence in the field in which it has a DE course or program. | | | | |
| There is pre-admission and pre-registration student advising to determine student readiness to learn via online DE mode. | | | | |
| There is technical support for faculty especially in course management. | | | | |
| Tutors qualified to provide student support are available. | | | | |

ANNEX B

**Quality Criteria with Significant Difference**

| | CRITERIA | ROUND 1 | ROUND 2 | COMPARISON OF ROUND 1 TO ROUND 2 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | % of Concurrence | Weighted Mean | SD | % of Concurrence | Weighted Mean | SD | t-value | | Significance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (1) | A complete and clear course overview and syllabus is provided to the student at the beginning of the course. The overview and syllabus include course policies and requirements, deadlines, the grading system, and contact details of the faculty-in-charge. | 100 | 4.00 | 0.00 | 93.33 | 3.67 | 0.62 | 2.55 | 0.022 | * |
| (1) | A faculty development program is in place for faculty to update their academic knowledge, knowledge of distance education, and knowledge and skills in the use of relevant instructional technologies. | 100 | 4.00 | 0.00 | 93.33 | 3.67 | 0.82 | 2.30 | 0.036 | * |
| (1) | Delivering online distance education courses or programs is consistent with the mission, vision and goals of the institution. | 100 | 3.88 | 0.34 | 93.33 | 3.67 | 0.62 | 2.45 | 0.027 | * |
| (1) | Faculty members have access to the prerequisite technology to teach online and are assisted in the transition from classroom teaching to DE instruction. | 100 | 4.00 | 0.00 | 93.33 | 3.67 | 0.82 | 2.30 | 0.036 | * |
| (1) | Faculty members have taken a course via distance education and are able to apply experiences as a distance education student to develop and implement successful strategies for online teaching. | 87.5 | 3.44 | 0.73 | 100 | 3.33 | 0.49 | 2.15 | 0.048 | * |
| (1) | Student learning outcomes in distance education courses are assessed and compared with student learning outcomes achieved by traditional methods. | 100 | 3.63 | 0.50 | 80 | 3.20 | 0.77 | 2.33 | 0.034 | * |
| (1) | Student service personnel provide immediate and accurate feedback. | 100 | 3.75 | 0.45 | 93.33 | 3.40 | 0.63 | 2.55 | 0.022 | * |
| (1) | Technical assistance in course development is available to faculty, who are encouraged to use it. | 100 | 3.94 | 0.25 | 93.33 | 3.60 | 0.83 | 2.18 | 0.046 | * |
| (1) | Technical support is available to the student throughout the duration of the course or program. | 100 | 3.94 | 0.25 | 93.33 | 3.60 | 0.83 | 2.18 | 0.046 | * |
| (1) | The course design includes the use of multimedia and visual resources. | 100 | 3.81 | 0.54 | 93.33 | 3.47 | 0.64 | 2.44 | 0.028 | * |
| (1) | The course is evaluated regularly for effectiveness – i.e. whether it meets the intended course outcomes and program standards. The findings are used as a basis for improvement of the course. | 100 | 3.88 | 0.34 | 93.33 | 3.53 | 0.83 | 2.18 | 0.046 | * |
| (1) | The distance education program or unit has its own mission and vision statement, as well as academic policies (e.g. admission and retention policies, grading policy, completion policy) that are clear and easy to understand. | 100 | 3.81 | 0.40 | 86.66 | 3.47 | 0.92 | 2.18 | 0.046 | * |
| (1) | The faculty in-charge (i.e. the instructor or course facilitator) creates a warm and inviting atmosphere that promotes the development of a sense of community among participants. | 100 | 3.88 | 0.34 | 93.33 | 3.60 | 0.63 | 2.18 | 0.045 | * |
| (1) | The faculty in-charge (i.e. the instructor or course facilitator) has academic credentials in the field in which he or she is teaching, the minimum qualification being that of a Master's degree in the field of specialization. | 100 | 3.94 | 0.25 | 93.33 | 3.47 | 0.83 | 2.67 | 0.018 | * |
| (1) | The institution has been granted by CHED the "Permit to Operate" and/or "Recognition" to provide programs via the distance education mode and has a "Certification of Compliance" from the CHED Quality Assurance System for Distance Education. | 100 | 3.81 | 0.40 | 93.33 | 3.53 | 0.64 | 2.44 | 0.028 | * |
| (1) | The institution has a strategic and financial plan for online distance education course and program offerings. | 100 | 3.94 | 0.25 | 93.33 | 3.47 | 0.83 | 3.10 | 0.007 | ** |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (1) | The institution has Level III accreditation or is a Center of Excellence in the field in which it has a DE course or program. | 87.5 | 3.44 | 0.89 | 80 | 2.93 | 0.80 | 3.31 | 0.005 | ** |
| (1) | There is technical support for faculty especially in course management. | 100 | 3.94 | 0.25 | 86.66 | 3.53 | 0.92 | 2.32 | 0.035 | * |

Legend: ns = not significant, * = significant (PV<0.05), ** = highly significant (PV<0.01)