

# QEP Newsletter

*Transparent Instruction in General Education and Gateway Courses for Student Success*

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## Syllabi Review

One of the internal assessment measures of our QEP is to review course syllabi for transparency. The rubric includes six questions using a 4-point Likert scale with 4 meaning “Very Transparent”. A team of eight faculty reviewed syllabi for Spring 2021 using the rubric. We encourage everyone to look at their syllabi and assignments to see where there is room for improvement to increase transparency for our students.

Our target goal with QEP course syllabi is to have 80 percent with all 3 or 4 scores on a 4-point scale. While we are continuing to make progress after 4 semesters of review, we still have not reached our goal. We improved from our fall 2020 results of 72.25 percent of syllabi with all 3’s or higher, to 76.3 percent in spring 2021.

With a total of 177 syllabi for the spring 2021 semester, here is the breakdown of the results by question:

**1. Instructor & Course Information:** A total of 7 syllabi were flagged with scores below 3 and the most common reason was that they were missing office hours and/or phone numbers. Virtual office hours could be listed and would satisfy this requirement.

**2. Course Learning Objectives:** We improved in this area, only 2 syllabi had scores below 3. The reviewers’ comments listed that there were no learning objectives.

**3. Mission Statement:** Great news – all syllabi had our LMU Mission Statement mentioned.

**4. Assessments/Evaluation Methods:** This is still the area where we have the greatest room for improvement. We certainly improved from 49 syllabi in fall 2020 scoring low, to only 26 syllabi in spring 2021. Most of these syllabi were listed as missing the Purpose, Tasks & Criteria (PTC) identified for two assignments. In some cases the assignments may have been listed, but they were vague or unclear. The full assignment does NOT need to be attached to the syllabi with multiple pages of materials, but rather an overview of the two assignments should be identified with clear PTC.

**5. Assignment Policies:** A total of 8 syllabi had scores below 3 for assignment policies. The reviewers’ feedback indicated that there were no policies listed regarding assignments.

**6. Attendance Policy:** Only 5 syllabi had scores below 3 in this area and they simply did not have an attendance policy. Online classes can mention that they are online, and equating participation in threaded discussions as a substitution for physical in-class attendance or something to this effect.

Overall, our syllabi have become much more transparent. In partnership with the General Education committee, our reviewers are helping look for ways that we can improve our processes. By streamlining our template, we may be able to improve syllabi beyond just the QEP courses.

# Instructional Assignment Review

We are so close! The same group of reviewers for syllabi also reviewed assignments. Each faculty member teaching a general education and/or gateway class submits two transparent instructional assignments. The assignment rubric includes three questions using a 4-point Likert scale with 4 meaning “Very Transparent”. The target goal of 85 percent is a little higher for assignments than syllabi. We greatly improved from 75 percent in fall 2020 to 84 percent this semester. With a total of 340 assignments, here is a breakdown of our results for spring 2021 by question:

**1. Purpose:** We had incredible improvement from 47 assignments in fall 2020 to only 12 assignments this semester identified with scores below 3 for purpose. Reviewers’ comments stated that there was no purpose stated for the assignment. If students can understand the “WHY” of the assignment and they can connect it beyond the class to having value, they may understand the bigger picture.

**2. Task:** Another great improvement! We had 42 assignments in fall 2020 identified with scores below 3 for task and only 19 in spring 2021. In most cases, the tasks were either not listed, were no specific, or they were unclear.

**3. Criteria:** While we had an improvement here, this is our area that needs the most focus. We had 73 assignments in fall 2020 with scores below a 3 for criterion and had 49 during spring 2021. The most common reviewer feedback stated that there was not a rubric included or not an annotated example to demonstrate exemplary work.

After two years of our QEP, we’ve made great strides in the transparency of our syllabi and assignments. With edits this summer, we can meet and exceed our target goals next year!

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## Report Support

The QEP appreciates the support from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness for assessment assistance. We continue to assess both internal and external measures related to progress with student success. Dr. Carl Larsen is the Director of Assessment. He is known on campus as the “OAR Guy” as he works with faculty regarding the Outcomes Assessment Reports. Dr. Larsen has a Bachelor Degree in Political Science from the University of California at San Diego. He earned a Political Science Master’s Degree and a Doctorate Degree from Rutgers University.



**Dr. Carl Larsen**

Dr. Larsen will be helping pull reports for the QEP regarding completion data. The DWF reports allow us to narrow our focus on courses which may have the greatest need for completion assistance. This data can be helpful as we look for trends and relationships between variables. Dr. Larsen’s support for our Quality Enhancement Plan is appreciated as we focus on our third year of the QEP!

# QEP Faculty Training

Since the start of our commitment to QEP and Transparent Instruction at LMU, we have had over 80 full-time and adjunct faculty go through training. The focus of training is to learn about the pedagogy of Transparent Instruction and understand the components and importance of Purpose, Tasks and Criteria. The ultimate reason why we are committed to Transparent Instruction is because LMU is committed to our students and their success.

Training sessions includes information regarding the demographics of LMU students, learning about formative and summative assessment, and learning how to incorporate transparency into syllabi and assignments. Faculty take a pre-test and a post-test so that we can determine if we are making an impact. Based on the results of a paired t-test of mean scores for the past five semesters, we have consistently demonstrated a positive statistical difference every semester. Way to go faculty!

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## Faculty Award Nominations Open



We are seeking nominations for faculty doing outstanding work with their transparent assignments. We want to recognize and celebrate exemplary faculty initiatives. If you know someone that you think is making a difference with students through creative transparent instruction pedagogy, please submit a nomination form – up to six faculty will be recognized in the fall. First prize will receive \$1000, followed by awards of \$750, \$500, and three awards of \$250. Last year, Dr. Jeffrey Darrow from the Math Department was awarded First Place. The nominations will close on June 30, 2021. Please submit nominations at the following link:

[https://lmu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_9zXZ0bty4PpFJ5z](https://lmu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9zXZ0bty4PpFJ5z)

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## Important 2021 Dates

March 8-April 12	National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) available for students
April 18-May 7	End-of-semester QEP student surveys available to students
August 5	QEP Steering Committee Meeting
August 16	Fall 2021 Classes Begin
August 18-Sept. 4	Student Surveys Available
August 30	Due date for fall 2021 syllabi & assignment submission

# Course Evaluations

One of our internal assessment measures for the QEP are course evaluations. A specific question was added to course evaluations for the QEP – asking students if the course “helped them to feel like they are a member of the LMU learning community.” The intent was to determine if students felt a sense of belonging academically at LMU. Our target goal is 80 percent and we have exceeded that goal every semester for the past three semesters. Considering the challenges of the past two semesters with the global pandemic, we are especially pleased with our results!

Semester	Agree/Strongly Agree
Fall 2019	83 %
Spring 2020	85 %
Fall 2020	86 %



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## Faculty Testimony

Hear faculty testimony from Dr. Julie Hall, Chairperson of the Biology Department, and Dr. Jason Fowler, Biology Associate Professor. They speak in this video about their experiences of using Transparent Instruction in their classrooms: <https://animoto.com/play/1RNSD2D4oMT0w2qqBztlcw>

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## By The Numbers . . .

1,443

Number of student surveys returned from the beginning of the semester in spring 2021 through Enterprise Surveys.

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4.149

Average Score for beginning of the semester QEP student surveys, spring 2021 on a 5-point scale.

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76.3

Percentage of spring 2021 transparent syllabi that scored all 3's and 4's on a 4-point scale. Target goal is to reach 80 percent – making progress.

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84

Percentage of spring 2021 transparent instructional assignments that scored all 3's and 4's on a 4-point scale. Only one percentage point below target goal of 85 percent!

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Number of transparent assignments that should be included in each general education and gateway course to reflect transparent instruction.

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**PURPOSE ~ TASKS ~ CRITERIA**

Thank you for reading our newsletter. The QEP Office is located in 118 Grant Lee. If there is something you would like added to future newsletters, please email [Molly.Duggan@LMU.net](mailto:Molly.Duggan@LMU.net).