

QEP Newsletter

Transparent Instruction in General Education and Gateway Courses for Student Success

2023-24 Transparent Instruction Faculty Awards

Our fifth and final year of our Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is now complete.

We set a record for the most faculty award nominations with a total of 64 compared to the prior year record of 47. The awards were announced at the All Faculty Meeting on August 15. The following faculty are recognized for their exemplary transparent instruction pedagogy in the 2023-24 academic year:

Faculty Awards	Faculty	Department
First Place - \$1,000	Dr. Jacques Debrot	English
Second Place - \$750	Dr. Thomas Shell	Chemistry
Third Place - \$500	Dr. Kevin Cooper	Physics
Honorable Mention - \$250	Dr. Carson Benn Dr. Shane Goad Dr. William Hardy	History Psychology History
Transparency Beyond QEP	Dr. Julie Hall	Biology

We thank the students, faculty, and staff that nominated individuals for these awards. A special note of appreciation to those that served on the award review committee for the past five years:

Dr. Alexander Parks, Assistant Professor of Education

Dr. Adam Rollins, School of Mathematics and Sciences Dean

Mrs. Sandra Southern, Assistant Professor of Medical Technology & Clinical Supervisor

Mrs. Natalie Sweet, Executive Director of the Office of Research, Grants & Sponsored Programs (23-24)

PURPOSE ~ TASKS ~ CRITERIA

Transparency Continues Through Syllabi

The QEP Steering Committee, with support from the General Education Committee, sees the value in continuing to follow the transparent instruction framework. The following statement will be added to the syllabi for those classes that have been part of the QEP over these past five years. If additional programs and classes want to also incorporate and embrace transparency, they are welcome to do so! Here is the new excerpt for the syllabi whereby faculty will be adding their own course-specific details:

Transparent Instruction

LMU is committed to teaching General Education and Gateway courses with a transparent framework. LMU is focused on providing clear purpose, tasks, and criteria (PTC) in syllabi and selected assignments. This is an effort to promote inclusivity for all learners.

Syllabi will outline course-specific purpose, tasks, and criteria. The Purpose will identify the learning objectives including the skills and knowledge to be gained—both for the class and beyond college. The Tasks will list the activities and steps that students will perform to complete the assignments. The Criteria will detail the grading rubrics and point structure.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this course . . .

TASKS:

In this class, students are expected to . . .

CRITERIA:

Grading in this course . . .

This section does not need to be included moving forward.

This language was endorsed by the General Education Committee at the April 2024 meeting for inclusion in the syllabi. Syllabi will be posted by the schools to the Academic Affairs Bulletin Board. Faculty can continue to use transparent assignments, but they do not need to submit them to a centralized person.



Spring 2024 Focus Group Findings

The final student and faculty focus groups were conducted in April 2024. A special thank you to Mrs. Sandra Southern, Assistant Professor of Medical Technology & Clinical Supervisor and a member of the QEP Steering Committee, for moderating these two sessions as well as several of the sessions over the past few years. Leading these discussions with consistency and tact, and trying to stay on top of the timing, is not always easy.

A total of 84 students were randomly selected to participate in the focus group for spring 2024. Five students agreed to participate, and three students actually logged into the Zoom call. The three students spoke during their sessions for a little over 40 minutes discussing their class syllabi and transparent assignments.

Students thought their syllabi contact information “was very thorough and very explained” leaving them with no questions. They were all able to identify learning objectives for their courses. Two students recalled seeing the LMU mission statement link in their syllabi and one did not remember seeing it. They were all able to identify the purpose of their course. Two of the three students were able to identify the tasks and one was not. There were mixed reviews on the criteria in the syllabi but, all were able to recall some assignment policies. Two students were discussing an online class, therefore, they said there was no attendance policy. Only one student had a non-general education class to compare their course to and stated that they preferred their major class as it was more relevant to their major.

All students were able to identify skills to be learned as a result of the assignment such as typing skills, research, finding sources, writing, using tables, and giving presentations. Similarly, knowledge to be gained included research, writing, using program-specific terminology, examining cells, and learning about President Lincoln’s history. While all three students said that they couldn’t relate their assignment to life outside of school, one student did say that they did gain knowledge. Only one student had courses beyond the QEP to be able to compare and said that they preferred their major class because there was “more to pull from.” Below is a chart that reflects the coded responses from the student focus group:

SP24 Student Focus Group Findings

	Positive	+ %	Negative	- %	Total
Syllabus	152	92%	14	8%	166
Assignment	78	86%	13	14%	91
Total	230	89%	27	11%	257

In a separate group, Mrs. Sandra Southern met with six faculty to discuss their syllabi and assignments. Everyone said that they follow the LMU template with contact information and include the course number, course name, section, time, place, and credit hours. One person said they indicate that their class is “web enhanced.” Some faculty provide a paper copy of the syllabus to their students and others said it is available through Canvas. In addition to the template link to the LMU Mission Statement, three faculty said that they also provide their department and program mission statements. One person said that they highlight the community service component of the mission statement because that is part of the focus of the class. Everyone said that they have the QEP statement in their syllabus and referenced it as the “boiler plate”. Three people said that they include the purpose, tasks, and criteria in their assignments and not in their syllabus beyond the template statement. Three people said that they do include the purpose and go over it with their students. One person mentioned that they continue to revisit the syllabus when “a new deliverable or a new milestone is met”. One person said, “we have the tasks outlined for each of the assignments in the syllabus, as well as on Canvas”. All faculty said that they have an attendance policy. One person commented that “a lot of us learned how to be professors not by positive, but by negative examples” and expanded on having 1-2-page syllabi as a student that was missing so much of the important content.

When discussion the assignments, all faculty were able to describe the purpose of their assignments such as doing research, gathering sources, making an argument, taking a stance, being persuasive, presenting in front

of “a live audience using logos, pathos, and ethos”, writing from personal experiences, providing feedback, “practice listening comprehension”, using critical thinking skills, analyzing works, communicating with peers, and “simulate the classroom environment”. When talking about connecting the purpose to life beyond the classroom, one person said the assignment “will make you a better employee, employer, caregiver, voter, consumer, and citizen of the world”. All faculty were able to articulate specific steps for the assignment tasks. Specific descriptions included formatting, word count, components needed to be included in an essay, readings, a “scaffolding structure” to use as a guide, as well as timelines and due dates. All faculty stated that they have a “detailed rubric” or a “rudimentary checklist” for their assignments. When comparing assignments, one person said, “I think the assignments post QEP are better” and mentioned that the transparent “framework” was helpful to “use the same language and the same structure for assignments. It made everything more consistent and easier for them to refer to and easier to teach”. Another person said that they think the framework “has lent to more consistency”. Another person said, “it does give more of what I would call quality control”. This same person, however, said that some “students use the template too literally” and then some students have difficulty with assignments not “exactly spelled out for them.” Below is a chart that reflects the coded responses from the faculty focus group:

SP24 Faculty Focus Group Findings

	Positive	+ %	Negative	- %	Total
Syllabus	377	96%	14	4%	391
Assignment	292	96%	12	4%	304
Total	669	96%	26	4%	695

When asked if there was anything additional that they wanted to add, two people had additional comments. One person reflected on the importance of communicating to the students about the assignments and how “we are taking for granted our own experience, our own knowledge, and the trick here is to get into the shoes of the audience, the student, and look at it from their perspective. I think that was the best thing about the whole Idea. I found that very useful.” Another faculty member commented on “the importance of the critical thinking you get from writing, and from making” and talked about stressing the purpose and values of our assignments and how they benefit students beyond college.

Spring 2024 & Final Student Survey Results



Over the past five years, students have been asked to complete a 10-question survey at the beginning and end of each semester for each general education/gateway class. The responses were in the form of a five-point Likert scale from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree” or responding on a continuum of “Not at All” to “A great deal”.

We collected a total of 37,302 surveys – 9,864 were in-person while the remaining 27,438 were online. We consistently had students respond the most positive to the question/statement “Assignments are connected to course goals”. This positive affirmation that the assignments really match the course outcomes and the purpose

of the class is noteworthy. In 19 out of 21 instances, the lowest rated question has been, “This class is incorporating my interests”. This consistency to this question does not surprise us since students often take a class because it is a pre-requisite for another class, is considered a developmental class, or because it is a required course to satisfy a university requirement.

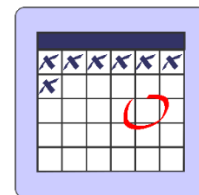
In this final year, surveys were deployed completely online with Qualtrics through the Canvas platform. Prior to this year surveys were distributed in person and then moved completely electronic when we were working through the pandemic. In general, survey scores for the end of spring 2024 on a 5-point scale ended between 3.761 – 4.411. Below you will find the chart for all five years:

Student Survey Scores

Year	Order	Semester	Early/Late	Total Surv	In-Pers. Surv	Online Surv	1 Wrk Eval Ave. Pts.	2 Direct. Ave.	3 Crse Goals Ave	4 Purpose Ave.	5 Content Ave.	1B Confid. Ave.	2B Interests Ave.	3B Global Ave.	4B Outside Class Ave.	5B Probl. Ave.	TOT AVE
2019	1	Spring	Late	2158	1910	248	4.484	4.501	4.622	4.500	4.334	3.995	3.711	3.804	3.944	3.944	4.184
2019	2	Fall	Early	3796	3077	719	4.426	4.445	4.499	4.445	4.432	4.044	3.779	3.945	4.062	4.047	4.217
2019	3	Fall	Late	3451	2756	695	4.526	4.488	4.600	4.520	4.425	4.071	3.867	3.972	4.090	4.082	4.264
2020	4	Spring	Early	2789	2083	706	4.483	4.488	4.536	4.490	4.427	4.132	3.907	4.057	4.132	4.104	4.277
2020	5	Spring	Late	1610	38	1572	4.378	4.294	4.462	4.324	4.194	3.922	3.683	3.802	3.930	3.907	4.095
2020	6	Fall	Early	2513	0	2513	4.396	4.363	4.419	4.355	4.317	4.133	3.886	4.077	4.163	4.113	4.221
2020	7	Fall	Late	1655	0	1655	4.435	4.390	4.475	4.397	4.312	4.193	3.938	4.019	4.143	4.134	4.240
2021	8	Spring	Early	1443	0	1443	4.351	4.332	4.420	4.367	4.328	3.987	3.785	3.936	3.993	3.989	4.149
2021	9	Spring	Late	1610	0	1610	4.212	4.137	4.286	4.191	4.144	3.845	3.705	3.760	3.827	3.815	3.992
2021	10	Fall	Early	1601	0	1601	4.332	4.277	4.400	4.338	4.288	3.917	3.638	3.836	3.935	3.892	4.085
2021	11	Fall	Late	1810	0	1810	4.234	4.138	4.325	4.235	4.142	3.867	3.664	3.781	3.879	3.885	4.015
2022	12	Spring	Early	838	0	838	4.465	4.411	4.522	4.469	4.446	4.100	3.863	4.005	4.087	4.093	4.246
2022	13	Spring	Late	1212	0	1212	4.310	4.265	4.389	4.317	4.242	4.032	3.882	3.947	4.048	4.045	4.148
2022	14	Fall	Early	1419	0	1419	4.397	4.386	4.456	4.393	4.379	4.056	3.785	3.956	4.026	3.995	4.183
2022	15	Fall	Late	1443	0	1443	4.207	4.124	4.242	4.167	4.088	3.886	3.626	3.673	3.812	3.790	3.962
2023	16	Spring	Early	648	0	648	4.351	4.332	4.389	4.357	4.312	3.976	3.713	3.841	3.962	3.967	4.120
2023	17	Spring	Late	959	0	959	4.255	4.177	4.295	4.224	4.146	3.968	3.714	3.760	3.933	3.897	4.037
2023	18	Fall	Early	1585	0	1585	4.383	4.358	4.463	4.37	4.353	3.988	3.945	3.941	4.023	3.976	4.159
2023	19	Fall	Late	2279	0	2279	4.235	4.219	4.389	4.287	4.18	3.845	3.599	3.714	3.859	3.856	4.019
2024	20	Spring	Early	858	0	858	4.407	4.343	4.448	4.392	4.328	3.944	3.783	3.919	4.016	3.987	4.157
2024	21	Spring	Late	1625	0	1625	4.296	4.234	4.411	4.277	4.223	3.938	3.761	3.839	3.991	3.950	4.092
		Total		37302	9864	27438											
		Average					4.360	4.319	4.431	4.353	4.288	3.992	3.773	3.885	3.993	3.975	4.136

Important 2024 Fall Dates

- August 19 Fall 2024 Classes Start
- September 2 Labor Day, No Classes
- October 24-25 Fall Break
- November 27-29 Thanksgiving – No Classes
- December 9-13 Final Exams
- December 14 Commencement





Thank You Document Reviewers

Each semester, faculty would submit their syllabi and two assignments for each class. A team of eight faculty would review the materials for transparency using a 4-point Likert-scaled rubric. A special thank you to following people for reading through all of these materials for the past five years and providing feedback to faculty for how to improve their documents:

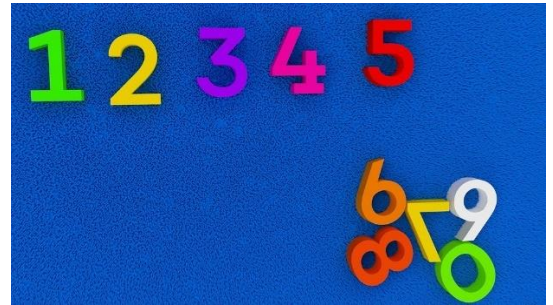
Dr. Anita Black	Associate Professor of Criminal Justice
Dr. Muthu Dharmasena	Associate Professor of Biology
Dr. Jason Fowler	Associate Professor of Biochemistry
Mr. Michael Giles	Associate Professor of Art, Chair of Fine Arts & Communications & Program Director of Art
Dr. Jessey Gilley	Associate Professor of Geography
Dr. Lee Gilroy	Associate Professor of Psychology & Program Director of Psychology
Dr. Wanda Morgan	Associate Professor of Marketing
Mr. Michael Neff	Instructor of Mathematics

In total, we have reviewed 1,898 syllabi and 3,075 assignments over the past five years. This was a daunting task, and the hard work of these individuals was greatly appreciated!



Important 2025 Spring Dates

January 6	Classes Begin
January 20	Martin Luther King Jr. Day – No Classes
February 12	Founder's Day
March 1	5 th Year Impact Report due to SACSCOC
March 24-28	Spring Break
April 18	Good Friday – No Classes
April 28 – May 1	Final Exams
May 3	Commencement



By The Numbers . . .

37,302	Student surveys submitted for transparency between spring 2019 – spring 2024.
3,639	Assignments reviewed for transparency for the QEP between fall 2019 – spring 2024.
1,898	Number of syllabi reviewed for transparency for the QEP between fall 2019 – spring 2024.
1,625	Student surveys submitted at the end of spring 2024 semester – nearly double of the submissions at the beginning of spring 2024 – 858.
169	Faculty that completed the transparent instruction training since spring 2019.
90	Percent of course completion for the general education/gateway courses for spring 2024.
4.866	Average faculty post-training survey score on a 5-point scale. Pre-training average score was 4.335.
4.136	Average score from student surveys since spring 2019 on a 5-point scale. The lowest average score was at the end of fall 2022 with 3.962. The highest average score was at the beginning of spring 2020 with 4,277. Average scores below a 4.0 only happened twice – end of spring 2021 and end of fall 2022.
2	The minimum number of transparent assignments that faculty included in each general education and gateway course to reflect transparent instruction over the past five years.

Thank you for reading the QEP 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.