VISIONS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN ONLINE MBA PROGRAMS

by

Glori Lynn Hinck

A dissertation

submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Educational Technology

Boise State University

December 2016

BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE COLLEGE

DEFENSE COMMITTEE AND FINAL READING APPROVALS

of the dissertation submitted by

Glori Lynn Hinck

Dissertation Title: Visions of Quality Assurance in Online MBA Programs

Date of Final Oral Examination: 11 October 2016

The following individuals read and discussed the dissertation submitted by student Glori Lynn Hinck, and they evaluated her presentation and response to questions during the final oral examination. They found that the student passed the final oral examination.

Kerry Lynn Rice, Ph.D.   Chair, Supervisory Committee

Patrick R. Lowenthal, Ph.D.   Member, Supervisory Committee

Ross Perkins, Ph.D.   Member, Supervisory Committee

The final reading approval of the dissertation was granted by Kerry Lynn Rice, Ph.D., Chair of the Supervisory Committee. The dissertation was approved by the Graduate College.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

of learning- my parents Bernie and Lois Hinck, siblings Bill, John, Melinda and Brent, and nieces and nephews Tanner, Colton, Alison, Raelin, Raegan, Jordan and McKenna.

ABSTRACT

AACSB accreditation is known for challenging business programs to pursue excellence and continuous improvement. Online MBA programs accredited by the AACSB have undergone significant expansion in recent years. It is important that quality assurance measures keep pace with this growth and adequately address the unique parameters involved in online delivery. The purpose of this Delphi study was to identify and prioritize aspects of quality assurance specific to online delivery in AACSB-accredited MBA programs.

The Delphi methodology was used to facilitate a group conversation between expert administrators, faculty, and instructional designers around the topic of quality assurance for online MBA programs over the next 3-5 years. In Round One, twenty-two members of the expert panel generated 72 essay responses that were coded and consolidated into 46 item statements categorized into seven themes. The individual statements were rated and themes were ranked by the panelists in subsequent rounds. Expert panelists identified the following areas important to quality assurance in AACSB-accredited online MBA programs over the next 3-5 years, presented in order of importance: (a) academic integrity and rigor, (b) course content, design and delivery, (c) faculty qualifications, development and support, (d) quality frameworks (e) accreditation, (f) learner support and, (g) evaluation. Results of this study will help to direct the efforts of those involved in delivery of a quality online MBA program.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AACSB	Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
ACBSP	Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs
CHEA	Council for Higher Education Accreditation
CQI	Continuous Quality Improvement
HLC	Higher Learning Commission
IACBE	International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education
IHEP	Institute for Higher Education Policy
OLC	Online Learning Consortium
QM	Quality Matters
MBA	Master of Business Administration
NACIQI	National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity
NEA	National Educators Association
HEI	Higher education institution
IACBE	International Assembly for Collegiate Business Educators
IQR	Interquartile Range
QOLT	Quality Online Teaching and Learning
QSC	Quality Scorecard
ION	Illinois Online Network
SACSCOC	Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Science

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The demographics of learners in an online MBA program are typically much different from learners in a traditional classroom setting or in other online programs, often including older working part-time students with families who face challenges coordinating work schedules and work-related travel requirements (Cao, Park, & Honda, 2010; Gaytan, 2013; Top MBA, 2015). They may not want to disrupt their career or uproot their families to move to another city in order to further their education (Kidd Stewart, 2012). In 2014-15, almost 60% of MBA students were enrolled in part-time programs; only 23% attended a traditional full time two-year program (AACSB, 2016a).

A review of MBA program web sites shows the frequent use of terminology related to attracting students with busy, demanding schedules. Alexander, Perreault, Zhao, and Waldman (2009) surveyed students participating in online courses at institutions accredited through the AACSB, the leading accrediting body for business colleges, and found that one of the most important motivating factors for enrolling in an online course was flexibility. There has been impressive growth in online MBA offerings in response to this demand for more flexible learning environments and a corresponding need to maintain and increase market shares. Schools accredited by AACSB have increased from no online programs in 1989 to more than 222 institutions reporting that they offer entire online MBA programs in 2014 (Brooks & Morse, 2015).

Online and on-campus learning are very different modes of delivery and quality

assurance measures need to take this into account (Mariasingam & Inglis, 2012). Quality

assurance measures and accreditation standards have not kept pace with changes in

educational delivery methods. The AACSB first acknowledged the growth of distance

learning and addressed quality issues with this mode of delivery in their 1999 report; this

report was subsequently revised in 2007 (AACSB, 2007). The guidelines in this report

were intended to aid those who design and deliver online programs as well as those who

conduct quality reviews in distance learning. The 2007 report concluded with the

following summary,

> Quality distance learning requires careful attention to learning design, faculty
> training, organizational commitment to adequate program support, selection of
> appropriate delivery technology, and a focus on student learning outcomes
> (AACSB, 2007, p. 15).

Diverse groups of stakeholders including students, parents, faculty and staff,

institutional administrators, employers, accrediting bodies, governmental policy makers,

and professional organizations have an interest in the quality of online learning. Each of

these stakeholders may have conflicting views on how quality should be defined and

managed (Allen & Seaman, 2013; Harvey & Green, 1993; Jung, Wong, Li, Baigaltugs, &

Belawati, 2011; Jung, Latchem, & Herrington, 2012; Shelton, 2010; Vlasceanu,

Grunberg, & Parlea, 2007). For instance, the parent or organization providing financial

support may focus on quality as related to cost, the institution may focus on cost

efficiency, and employers may define quality through their recruitment efforts and, more

recently, through their tuition-assistance programs (Selingo, 2016). Faculty and

administrators, on the other hand, use learning outcomes as one measure of quality and

have differing views related to the successful achievement of these learning outcomes in

online learning (Allen, Seaman, Lederman, & Jaschik, 2012; Allen & Seaman, 2014).

The perspectives of all stakeholders must be taken into account as quality can only be

managed when it is clear whose interests are to be served (Mariasingam & Inglis, 2012).

Measurement of quality in higher education has recently changed from an output-driven

review of the course content, pedagogy and learning outcomes to a more process oriented

approach (Bremer, 2012; Online Learning Insights, 2015) such as the Online Learning

Consortium's Five Pillars of Quality Education (OLC, 2016) and the Quality Matters

Rubric (Maryland Online, 2014c) that may better address the views of multiple

stakeholders. This process oriented approach looks at the entire implementation process

rather than solely focusing on final output and can better address the following issues and

their impact on quality:

1. Fitness for and of purpose
2. Compliance to standards
3. Customer satisfaction
4. Efficiency
5. Transformation
6. Capacity for change (Bremer, 2012)

The significant growth in online MBA programs (Brooks & Morse, 2015; Byrne,

2013) brings with it a need for quality assurance measures that focus on parameters

unique to online learning that are not yet addressed in AACSB standards. If online MBA

programs are to deliver a quality education accepted and respected by all associated

stakeholders, it is important to understand the perceptions of quality among the diverse

groups of individuals involved in the delivery of these programs. While the literature

addresses the views of stakeholders such as administrators and faculty related to overall

perceptions of quality in online learning (Allen et al., 2012; Allen & Seaman, 2013; Allen

& Seaman, 2014), little information exists related to the views of stakeholder groups

directly involved in the delivery of online learning related to assurance of quality in online MBA programs.

Statement of the Problem

MBA programs are placing a greater focus on online learning as they recognize the potential benefits in using technology to bring together students, faculty, and practitioners to create and share knowledge (AACSB, n.d.). Increasing numbers of programs are offering online learning options not only because of the pedagogical benefits, but also to meet student demand while also generating new revenue streams (AACSB, 2007; Alexander et al., 2009; Bacow, Bowen, Guthrie, Lack, & Long, 2012; Brooks & Morse, 2015; Nelson, 2013). However, if the quality of these online programs is not adequately assured, the reputation of the online MBA degree may suffer. While first recognizing issues with online learning in 1999 (AACSB, 2007), the AACSB standards (AACSB, 2015c) only began to address online learning in a limited fashion in 2015 (AACSB, 2015c). Relying solely on accreditation standards may not adequately address the unique quality assurance needs of online learning. Implementation and focus of assessment may need to differ between online and face-to-face environments as the success of online learning is differentiated by a number of inter-dependent logistical, organizational and infrastructural factors (Martin, Parker, & Ndoye, 2011). Each phase of an online program or course needs to be assessed on an ongoing basis in order to guarantee success; an example of such assessment is the Quality Matters initiative (Martin et al., 2011). Accreditation processes are typically based on multi-year cycles with a focus on programmatic rather than course-level assessment. For example, AACSB accreditation is extended on a 5-year cycle (AACSB, n.d.).

The purpose of this study was to investigate stakeholder perceptions of the future of quality assurance in fully online AACSB-accredited MBA programs. Using the Delphi method, data was gathered from stakeholders across a range of business colleges with the goal of determining areas where consensus exists and those where it does not. Both within group and between-group data was analyzed to determine if the views of these three groups of stakeholders differed related to quality assurance.

This research was guided by three primary questions:

1. How should quality be assured for online MBA programs within the next 3-5 years?

2. Does the quality assurance vision differ between various stakeholder groups including program administrators, faculty, and instructional designers?

3. What are the potential implications of stakeholder views on implementation of quality assurance programs and future direction of AACSB standards?

Quality Assurance Framework

Quality

High quality higher education offers value to students by providing them with the knowledge, skills, and background necessary for success; quality assurance allows stakeholders to have confidence in the quality and value of the education that is offered (European Commission, 2016). Quality is an important factor driving student enrollments. Higher education institutions must meet basic quality criteria set by accrediting agencies in order for their students to be eligible for federal financial aid funds. Enrollments are influenced by perceptions of quality as students consider rankings

such as those presented by U.S. News and World Report (2016) or accreditation status (AACSB, n.d.a).

Quality in online learning has its own unique considerations. Online programs often face higher levels of scrutiny as relatively new entrants into the world of higher education (OnlineCollege.org, 2011). This is true in part because the reputation of online learning has been compromised by negative press related to the proliferation of online diploma mills (Pina, 2010), financial aid fraud in online programs (Federal Student Aid, 2011), and investigations of online for-profit schools (Associated Press, 2007). Placing an additional focus on quality and quality assurance will help online programs to overcome any negative perceptions related to this delivery modality. Many factors influence quality in both traditional and online education. Online and on-campus education rely on very different modes of delivery and quality assurance measures need to take this into account (Mariasingam & Inglis, 2012). Quality involves both the design of the online course as well as the delivery of the course by the instructor. Online education requires its own distinct quality metrics that are not always fully addressed by all accrediting agencies and quality assurance frameworks.

Accreditation

In their overview of accreditation, the U.S. Department of Education (2016) describes the accreditation process and how it relates to student financial aid. Unlike many other countries, the United States does not have a centralized federal authority such as a Ministry of Education controlling the quality of higher education. Instead, the practice of accreditation evolved as a way to ensure that the education provided by higher education institutions (HEI) meets a basic level of quality. Accreditation is voluntary but

important; students are eligible to receive federal financial student aid only if they attend an institution accredited by an approved accreditor. The functions of accreditation are to (a) assess the quality of academic programs, (b) create a culture of continuous improvement designed to raise the standards, (c) involve faculty and staff in processes, and (d) establish criteria for professional criteria and licensure (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The government recognizes private accrediting bodies of regional or national scope who then develop evaluation criteria and use a peer evaluation self-study process to determine if an institution meets their criteria for accreditation. The accreditor will monitor an institution to verify that it continues to meet the standards and will periodically reevaluate each institution or program. There are two basic types of accreditation. Institutional accreditation is administered by regional and national accreditors and applies to the entire institution. Specialized or programmatic accreditation applies to a specific program, department, or school and is typically supplemental to institutional accreditation. It is important to note that while accreditors develop quality standards, they have no legal control over an institution (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Accreditation for Online Learning

Fully accredited online programs are recognized by the same regional or national accrediting bodies that also recognize traditional on-campus programs (OnlineCollege.org, 2016; SACSCOC, 2016). These accrediting bodies address online learning to variable degrees within their overall standards (CRAC, 2011). Online programs may also be accredited by other institutional, programmatic or specialized accrediting agencies. The Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC) (2016) is

one recognized specialized accreditor of distance education institutions and programs.
DEAC also offers Approved Quality Curriculum (AQC) (2016) as an external and peer
review system.

AACSB Accreditation

AACSB (n.d.a) is the leading accrediting body for business colleges and is an
example of specialized accreditation for discipline-specific programs. Like other
accrediting agencies, the goal of AACSB accreditation is to ensure that the education
provided by its member business schools meets acceptable levels of quality. In addition
to meeting basic requirements, AACSB standards are designed to promote excellence and
continuous improvement. Until 2015, the AACSB standards did not specifically address
the quality of online learning, and then, only on a limited basis (AACSB, 2013; AACSB,
2015c). As a result, business colleges have relied on internal quality assurance measures,
external quality assurance models such as California State University, Illinois Online
Network, Quality Matters, Online Learning Consortium (Chico, 2016; ION, 2015;
Maryland Online, 2014b; OLC, 2014) or specialized accrediting agency such as DEAC
(2016) if they choose to assess and ensure the quality of their online courses and
programs.

Summary

Accreditation is a key indicator of quality for students choosing a program and is
required for federal financial aid eligibility. In addition to accreditation, there are a
number of optional programs that have been developed specifically to evaluate and
improve the quality of online courses and programs. These programs can support an
official external review process leading to certification or can be used in an informal

internal review of online courses or programs. Maryland Online (2014b) developed the Quality Matters (QM) rubric as a national benchmark for online course design. The Online Learning Consortium has embraced a quality framework based on the Five Pillars of Quality Online Education and more recently supported by the OLC Scorecard for Online Learning (OLC, 2014; OLC, 2016). California State University (Chico, 2016) created an exemplary online instruction website and developed an instrument called Quality Online Teaching and Learning (QOLT) to evaluate the quality of online and hybrid courses. The Illinois Online Network (ION) (2015) developed a quality online course rubric and evaluation system designed to help colleges and universities improve the accountability of their online courses

Gaytan (2013) used the 2007 AACSB distance learning guidelines to develop a quality framework as an aid for business school faculty, administrators, and other educators in the creation and administration of online courses. However, neither the guidelines nor Gaytan's quality framework have yet been formally adopted into the accreditation standards and the reference to online learning in the current standards is limited. While many online MBA programs may use a supplemental quality assurance program to guide planning and delivery of online instruction, no summary of such information was found in the literature and institutional data were not available from organizations such as Maryland Online or the Online Learning Consortium due to confidentiality constraints (J. Mathes, personal communication, December 30, 2015).

The goal of national and regional accrediting bodies is to ensure a basic level of quality. Specialized accrediting bodies such as AACSB strive for an excellent level of quality and focus on continuous quality improvement. The application of quality

assurance measures and metrics designed specifically to improve the quality of online courses and programs can further strengthen and grow the online MBA programs already certified by AACSB.

Methodology

The Delphi methodology was used to survey a non-random, purposive group of expert administrators, faculty, and instructional designers selected from AACSB-accredited fully online MBA programs. Three rounds of iterative questionnaires starting with an initial broad, open-ended question were delivered sequentially to the expert panel over 10 weeks. Responses were analyzed and results shared with participants following each round; results were also used to inform the subsequent questionnaire. The questionnaires were created electronically using Qualtrics, an online survey application, with survey links embedded in a Google site that was created and used to share information and results with the participants. The link to the Google site was delivered to participants via email for each round. The Round One initial open-ended question was analyzed qualitatively with subsequent survey iterations in Round Two and Round Three analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The Delphi methodology was selected as it is a low-cost and efficient way to gather the opinions of a group of experts and to evaluate consensus as well as differences of opinion among and between groups.

Significance of this Research

This research has the potential for significant impact as the field of business represents the largest segment of online learning enrolling more than one-quarter of all undergraduate and graduate students (Clinefelter & Aslanian, 2014) and online MBA programs are likely to continue to experience continued growth (Baron, 2014; Online

MBA Today, 2015). While the AACSB (2007) acknowledged quality issues in distance learning in their 1999 and 2007 reports, they did not address online learning in their standards until the inclusion of several references to online learning that first appeared in the 2015 revision (AACSB, 2015c). A focus on these accreditation standards alone could result in gaps in the quality assurance process related to the online MBA student experience. Available supplemental quality assurance programs such as Quality Matters or the OLC Scorecard could be used to further guide online course quality. This study explores how faculty, administrators and instructional designers think quality should be assured in online AACSB-accredited MBA programs and compares and contrasts the opinions of these various stakeholders.

Assumptions and Limitations

There are many stakeholders involved in MBA online learning programs. However, this study is limited to only three groups: (a) administrators closely involved in online MBA programs, (b) faculty teaching online or courses in an MBA program, and (c) instructional designers creating course content for an online MBA program. The following assumptions are influenced by Garson (2014):

1. The members of the panel are truly experts in the field of online learning in MBA education.
2. The panelists will be motivated to participate as the topic is related to their area of expertise and professional environment.
3. The members of the panel consider the feedback of others but their own opinions will not be influenced by this feedback.
4. The researcher will remain neutral throughout the investigation and personal opinions will not influence analysis of results or feedback provided to panelists.
5. As stakeholders, the members of the panel will be invested in this research.

6. Delphi methodology is appropriate for these research questions.

The following limitations have been identified,

1. Research bias may exist due to the subjective component involved in the coding of the qualitative data obtained through the initial open-ended question. The investigators opinions or biases could influence the development of the round 2 and round 3 questionnaires. However, this potential bias is addressed through the peer debriefing process.

2. Unintentional leading of the respondent feedback may result from the selection of the qualitative information supplied after each round (Dalkey & Helmer, 1963).

3. Low response rates limited the number of initial participants and the multiple rounds of questionnaires involved in a Delphi study resulted in attrition over the three rounds with final groups containing small sample sizes of administrators (n=7), faculty (n=5), and instructional designers (n=6). These small sample sizes may decrease the power of the statistical analysis related to between-groups differences.

4. Researcher bias may exist related to the potential political ramifications of addressing AACSB accreditation while employed as a staff member in an AACSB-accredited institution.

Delimitations

This study was planned as a means of gathering information regarding the opinions of specific stakeholders related to online learning in AACSB-accredited online MBA programs. Results may not be generalizable to online learning in general, overall graduate education, or even to other online business programs as purposive sampling was used with participants selected based on specific criteria indicating expert status in the field of online learning in AACSB-accredited MBA programs.

Organization of the Study

This dissertation includes five chapters, references, and appendices. A review of the literature related to the prevalence and growth of online learning, quality assurance in higher education and online education, and MBA education is presented in Chapter II. In Chapter III the research design and methodology is described, highlighting and defining the Delphi process and providing details regarding data collection and other procedures. In Chapter IV, the data collected from the three rounds of questionnaires are analyzed and in Chapter V the discussion and summary of findings are presented along with conclusions and recommendations for future research. The paper concludes with the references and appendices.

Definition of Terms

AACSB: The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business is an organization that provided specialized accreditation for business and accounting programs at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral level in support of excellence and continuous improvement (AACSB, n.d.a).

Accreditation: "The process by which a (non-)governmental or private body evaluates the quality of a higher education institution as a whole or of a specific educational program in order to formally recognize it as having met certain pre-determined minimal criteria or standards" (Vlasceanu et al., 2007, p. 25).

Benchmarking: An ongoing, systematic process used to compare an institution's policies, programs, or standards to the best practices of peer organizations as a means of improving performance.

Blended Program: An educational program in which a significant percentage of the

credits required for program completion are offered fully online.

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI): An ongoing process of quality improvement

embedded within day-to-day processes and designed to make an organization

more efficient, effective and equitable (Park, Hironaka, Carver, & Nordstrum,

2013).

Delphi Method: A structured communication process used to gather data from a group of

experts through an iterative series of questionnaires with the purpose of building

consensus or forecasting the likelihood and outcome of future events.

Higher Education: Education beyond the secondary or high school level such as that

provided by a college or university.

Hybrid vs. Blended: These two terms have often been applied at both the course level and

program level without differentiation. The definitions proposed by Mayadas et al.

(2015) use "hybrid" at the course level and "blended" at the program level.

Instructional Designer: A professional tasked with creating instruction and related

resources designed to meet the learning needs for defined audiences and settings

including the online environment. Instructional designers collaborate with subject

matter experts and faculty in the management, implementation, and evaluation of

online instruction (Wilson, 2004).

MBA: Master of Business Administration

Online Program: An educational program in which all of the required credits are offered

as fully online courses (Mayadas, Miller, & Sener, 2015).

Online Learning: Often used synonymously with e-learning or distance learning. Describes the learning that occurs through access to an educational curriculum, instructor, and peers outside of a traditional classroom, typically through the use of a computer or mobile device and the internet.

Peer Review: "Assessment procedure regarding the quality and effectiveness of the academic programs of an institutions, its staffing, and/or its structure, carried out by external experts" or peers who are specialists in the field and knowledgeable about higher education" (Vlasceanu et al., 2007, p. 66).

Quality (Academic): "Quality in higher education is a multi-dimensional, multi-level, and dynamic concept that relates to the contextual settings of an educational model, to the institutional mission and objectives, as well as to specific standards with a given system, institution, program, or discipline" (Vlasceanu et al., 2007, p. 70)

Quality Assurance: An ongoing, continuous systematic process used to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning and the processes that support them to make sure that accreditation standards are met and that the quality of the student learning experience is being safeguarded and improved (QAA, n.d.).

Quality Scorecard (QSC): An evaluation system based on a set of criteria for excellence in the administration of online programs. Available through an institutional subscription to the Online Learning Consortium (OLC, 2015a)

Standards: "Statements regarding an expected level of requirements and conditions against which quality is assessed or that must be attained by higher education institutions and their programs in order for them to be accredited or certified" (Vlasceanu et al., 2007, p. 89)

Stakeholder: Anyone who is invested in the welfare and success of a school and its

students, including but not limited to, administrators, teachers, staff, students,

parents, families, community members, local business leaders, elected officials

and collective entities (Great Schools Partnership, 2014).

Summary

Chapter One introduced the study with a discussion of the demographics of

learners in MBA programs and the influence of these learners on the growth of online

MBA programs. The importance of looking at quality through the lens of multiple

stakeholders and the lack of information related to the views of stakeholders involved in

online MBA programs is addressed. The quality assurance framework outlines the

importance of quality, addresses general concepts of accreditation as well as accreditation

specific to online learning and AACSB, and reviews select quality frameworks for online

learning. The Delphi methodology used in the study is summarized and the potential

impacts and value of the research, assumptions and limitations, delimitations, and

definitions of terms are presented.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study is to determine the views of select stakeholders related to quality assurance in online MBA programs. This review of the literature addresses the following areas related to quality assurance in online courses and programs: Definitions of online learning, growth of online learning, quality in higher education, quality in online learning, quality assurance in MBA programs, quality assurance and select stakeholders, and the Delphi methodology. People have argued that there is relatively little in the literature related to quality assurance in distance and online learning (Bates, 2015; Jung et al., 2012). However, a review of the literature does not support this view. Bates (2015) suggests that rather than a lack of quality standards, there is no single source where these standards can be compared and presents an initial list of international e-learning quality assurance standards, organizations, and research. The literature is limited in the area of quality assurance specific to online MBA programs.

Definition of Online Learning

Throughout the literature there is an inconsistent use of terminology related to delivery modes for learning environments (Moore, Dickson-Deane, & Galyen, 2011). The U.S. Department of Education has defined distance learning as "education that uses one or more technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor synchronously or asynchronously" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015, p. 1). However, it does not differentiate blended or hybrid learning. The AACSB

(2007) defines distance learning similarly as "any learning system where teaching behaviors are separated from learning behaviors" (p. 4) and that may involve different variations of technology and faculty-student interaction. According to Allen and Seaman (2014), the prototypical definition for an online course is one in which most or all (80+%) of a course is delivered online and there are typically no face-to-face meetings; a traditional course involves no online technology and has 0% of content delivered online. Between these two extremes are web-facilitated and blended/hybrid courses.

This literature review will reflect the terminology used by individual authors using the terms 'online learning', 'distance learning', and 'e-learning' interchangeably while also taking a more specific approach based on the definitions suggested by Mayadas, Miller, and Sener (2015) to further define online and blended programs as presented in Table 1.1. While business programs may offer varying degrees of online content in either a blended or fully online format, this research study addresses only fully online programs.

Table 1.1   Definitions of Online Learning

Key Term	Definition
Online Learning	Often used synonymously with e-learning or distance learning. Describes the learning that occurs through access to an educational curriculum, instructor, and peers outside of a traditional classroom, typically through the use of a computer or mobile device and the internet.
Online Program	"All credits required to complete the program are offered as fully online courses. Students can complete the program completely at a distance, with no required face-to-face meetings." (Mayadas et al., 2015, p. 6).

(table continues)

Table 1.1(Continued)   Definitions of Online Learning

Key Term	Definition
Blended Program	"A significant percentage, but not all of the credits required for program completion are offered fully online. Typically, up to 30 percent of the curriculum may be offered as face-to-face or hybrid courses or other face-to-face formats or as independent study" (Mayadas et al., 2015, p. 6).
Hybrid vs. Blended	These two terms have often been applied at both the course level and program level without differentiation. The definitions proposed by Mayadas et al. (2015) use "hybrid" at the course level and "blended" at the program level.

Growth of Online Learning

Online enrollments continue to grow, even as overall college enrollments decline, with 28% of higher education students taking at least one course at a distance in 2014 (Allen et al., 2016). A greater integration of online, hybrid and collaborative learning is occurring as universities work to make content more dynamic, flexible and accessible to a larger number of students (Johnson, Adams Becker, Estrada, & Freeman, 2014). The most common rationale for expansion of online degree programs is a need to increase revenue by attracting non-traditional students who may be unable to participate in a traditional classroom model of instruction due to work, geographic restrictions, military service, or other constraints (Bacow et al., 2012). High quality online education can change how schools compete for students and can allow expansion into new market segments and locations (AACSB, 2007). A trend impacting competition among schools

has emerged of students enrolling in institutions further from home (Clinefelter & Aslanian, 2014). The quality of online course offerings directly impacts their marketability; quality is even more important in a marketplace that is not dependent upon geographic location as students have more options to choose from (Heischmidt & Damoiseau, 2012). Although cost is a top selection factor, students are evaluating the quality of a program as well with 79% of online graduate students indicating that they did not select the least expensive program available; surveyed students indicated they were balancing quality and cost (Clinefelter & Aslanian, 2014). If growth in online learning is to continue, it is important to have strong quality assurance measures in place in order to meet the quality standards of a global marketplace (Marklein, 2015; Ossiannilsson, Williams, Camilleri, & Brown, 2015).

Growth of Online Learning in Business Education

The first online MBA program was offered by Aspen University in 1987 and by 1989 the number of online programs had grown to three, none of which were accredited by the AACSB (Online MBA Today, 2015; QS Blogger, 2013). However, by 2008 almost one-third of all online business programs were AACSB accredited (Alexander et al., 2009). The popularity and availability of online business education has since continued to grow. According to the *Online College Students 2014* report, business was the most popular distance learning degree making up 28% of all students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels (Clinefelter & Aslanian, 2014). A survey of AACSB-accredited business schools (n=480) found that the number of fully online MBA programs grew from 68 to 93 over a 5-year period from 2007 to 2012. Students and faculty report that the greatest motivating factors for enrolling in online courses are

flexibility and increased opportunities (Alexander et al., 2009). This could be why online MBA programs attract different student demographics than face-to-face programs with online programs attracting more part-time students, women, and students older than 35 (Cao et al., 2010). Just as online learning as a whole has grown, online MBA programs specifically have grown over the years. For instance, according to U.S. News and World Report, two hundred and twenty-two institutions indicated they would be offering online MBA degrees in 2014-15, with this number increasing to 228 institutions planning online program offerings in 2015-16 (Brooks & Morse, 2016). These numbers do not take into account blended online programs; while no data were found specifically related to prevalence of hybrid or blended MBA programs, significant growth is also anticipated in this sector. Richard Lyons, Dean of UC-Berkeley's Haas School of Business, predicts that hybrid (blended) MBA's will cause major disruption in business schools with as much as 50% of the content digitally delivered in select programs (Baron, 2014).

Quality in Higher Education

Quality must first be defined before the concept of quality assurance in online learning can be addressed. The literature offers a variety of definitions and descriptions of quality. Vlasceanu, et al. (2007) describe quality in an academic setting as a "multi-dimensional, multi-level, and dynamic concept that relates to the contextual settings of an educational model, to the institutional mission and objectives, as well as to specific standards within a given system, institution, program, or discipline" (p. 70). This suggests that quality may have different or even conflicting meanings based on a number of contextual factors. Each individual stakeholder may have their own intuitive understanding of the concept of quality that may be difficult to articulate (Harvey &

Green, 1993). In the past, the quality of higher education may have been taken for granted but this is no longer the case. Shelton (2010) states that "because of the changing landscape in higher education and accountability, it is now an industry that is being challenged to re-conceptualize the tools used to indicate quality and excellence" (p. 38).

Evaluating the quality of course offerings is a relatively new concept in higher education and is likely influenced by the new perspective that higher education is a service offered to a customer (i.e., the student) (Boyd, 2012; Heischmidt & Damoiseau, 2012). While it is important to look at quality from the view of the customer (Boyd, 2012; Mariasingam & Inglis, 2012), it can be difficult to define 'customer' in higher education and to determine the degree to which the views of the customer should be considered. Unlike other business transactions, "students are buying a service (education) that isn't geared toward customer enjoyment" (Currie-Knight & Horwitz, 2016). Whether or not the student 'likes' the educational experience may not be the best measure of the quality of the institution (Currie-Knight & Horwitz, 2016). In addition to the student as customer, there are many others with a stake in the quality of higher education including the educational institution, faculty and staff, employers, government and its funding agencies, accreditors, professional bodies, and parents (Auvinen & Mariasingam, 2012; Great Schools Partnership, 2014; Harvey & Green, 1993; Jung et al., 2012; Panova & Erkovich, 2005).

In their seminal paper, Harvey and Green (1993) identified five different ways that people conceptualize quality in higher education. Each of these conceptualizations has a purpose and fits a need but each alone may not be appropriate for measuring quality in higher education. Key aspects of each of these categories are summarized below:

- Quality as *exceptional-* exclusive, distinctive or embodied in excellence or meeting minimum standards,
- Quality as *perfection or consistency-* zero defects, getting things right the first time, based on a quality culture,
- Quality as *fitness for purpose-* a functional definition of quality, to what extent does a product or service fit its purpose,
- Quality as *value for money-* accountability to funders and customers, effectiveness and efficiency, performance indicators,
- Quality as *transformative-* enhancing and empowering the consumer (participant), value added, learner-centered.

Accreditation

In the United States, institutions of higher education self-regulate quality through a system of accreditation that relies on a process of self-study and peer-review (CHEA, 2015; Eaton, 2007) based on the services of large numbers of volunteer professionals and paid for by the institutions seeking accreditation (CAAHEP, n.d.; Eaton, 2012). While technically voluntary, it is difficult for institutions to forgo accreditation if they wish to compete for students (CAAHEP, n.d.) as accreditation is required for federal student financial aid and unaccredited institutions may be perceived as a 'diploma mill'. The accreditation process is roughly equivalent to the ministerial recognition commonly used to recognize educational institutions internationally. In most other countries, the power to establish, evaluate and sanction higher education institutions is controlled, and paid for, by the government (CAAHEP, n.d.). In the United States, the governing boards of colleges and universities, rather than government agencies have been entrusted with maintaining and enhancing quality (Eaton, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2008). This accreditation system is designed to protect academic freedom by allowing

educational institutions "to conduct their educational missions without inappropriate influence from external centers of power" (AAUP & CHEA, 2012, p. 1) and direct government interference (Bates, 2015).

Accreditation and Financial Aid

Accreditation is essentially a process by which an institution meets a set of minimum standards and is thereby accredited, or, it does not meet these standards and may be offered a probationary period before ultimately losing accreditation (Jung et al., 2012). Only educational institutions that are accredited by federally recognized accrediting agencies are eligible for federal Title IV student financial aid funds (Eaton, 2007). Accreditation agencies play a gatekeeper role for financial aid with government enforcement of quality in higher education primarily related to the threat of loss of funding for institutions not meeting minimum standards (Bates, 2015; Spellings, 2006). The U.S. government has a significant financial stake in higher education and in 2013 had an overall outlay of $75.6 billion at the federal level, $72.7 billion by states, and $9.2 billion by local governments (Urahn & Conroy, 2015). In 2013, federal and state funding comprised 37% of the institutional revenue for public college and university budgets (Urahn & Conroy, 2015). Even with this significant investment, the U.S. government has not regulated higher education directly. Rather, collegiate quality and the appropriate expenditure of funds is assured by a system of self-governance and self-regulation by institutions and accrediting organizations codified by the Higher Education Act (HEA) (Eaton, 2007). The HEA is the federal law originally enacted in 1965 that governs the administration of federal student financial aid funds (TG, 2016). While overdue for an

update, observers do not anticipate a rewrite or reauthorization of the HEA during the 2016 presidential election year (Camera, 2016).

Accrediting Bodies

Quality assurance and accountability for higher education are primarily addressed by regional and discipline specific accreditation organizations such as the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) (2015) and the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) (AACSB, n.d.a). There are eight accrediting commissions in the U.S. including six regional accrediting commissions and two national accrediting organizations (Keil & Brown, 2014). Regional and national accreditation both address the entire institution. Geographic scope is one way in which regional accreditation differs from national accreditation. The six regional accreditors each operate out of a specific geographical area of the country but work closely together in the development of common statements and policies; national accrediting organizations accredit schools anywhere in the U.S. (Antol, 2015). Regionally accredited higher education institutions are typically non-profit or state-owned and degree-granting; nationally accredited schools are often non-degree granting institutions such as trade or vocational schools (Antol, 2015). Accreditation is carried out by associations "comprised of institutions and academic specialists in specific subjects, who establish and enforce standards of membership and procedures for conducting the accreditation process" (U.S. Department of Education, 2008, p. 1).

Accreditation Process

According to the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA, 2015), the accreditation process typically involves three major activities:

1. A self-study by an institution or program using the standards or criteria of an accrediting organization,

2. A peer review of an institution or program to gather evidence of quality,

3. A decision or judgment by an accrediting organization to accredit, accredit with conditions or not accredit an institution or program (p. 2).

Specific details of the accreditation process vary by accrediting body and by the status of the institution or program. Following is a summary of the steps involved in AACSB accreditation (AACSB, n.d.b).

1. The school submits an eligibility application which undergoes a preliminary review with appropriate applications forwarded to the Initial Accreditation Committee (IAC) for approval.

2. A volunteer business school administrator is assigned as a mentor to assist with the development of the Initial Self Evaluation Report (iSER).

3. The school evaluates and documents alignment with the 15 business standards in the iSER and completes a gap analysis outlining the actions to be taken for any areas that are not in alignment.

4. The IAC reviews the iSER and either (a) accepts the document and allows the institution to develop a Final Self Evaluation Report and apply for an Initial Accreditation Visit, (b) conditionally accepts the document or, (c) does not accept the iSER upon determination that the applicant school will not be able to align with the AACSB standards within the allowable time frame.

5. A Peer Review Team chair is appointed approximately 2 years in advance of the anticipated accreditation review visit and works with the school to develop its final Self Evaluation Report (SER).

6. The IAC appoints the additional members of the Peer Review Team who review the SER.

7. The Peer Review Team conducts a site visit and writes a report including recommendations for accreditation, deferral, or no accreditation that is forwarded to the IAC for concurrence.

8. Recommendations or denial for accreditation are ratified by the IAC and forwarded to the AACSB Board of Directors for ratification.

Accreditation and Quality

Accreditation serves as a quality assurance process by requiring institutions to critically self-reflect on their educational processes as compared to a set of standards followed by a review of these processes by peers from other similar institutions. These quality reviews are "collegial, primarily qualitative, formative, and focused on improvement" (Eaton, 2012, p. 9). Accreditation can help to guide continuous quality improvement efforts.

Accreditation Controversy

While accreditation has been viewed as a highly successful form of quality review, it is not without controversy. In 2005, the Commission on the Future of Higher Education was established by U.S. Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings, to scrutinize accessibility, affordability, quality standards, and accountability of higher education (Spellings, 2006). The final report of this commission, referred to as the Spellings Report, noted shortcomings in the U.S. accreditation system and suggested that accreditation should be more transparent regarding academic quality, provide a basis for comparisons among institutions, better support innovation, and focus more on performance measures (Spellings, 2006). The Spellings Report resulted in significant criticism and controversy among higher education leaders spurring Judith Eaton, president of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) to write an essay about the 'appropriate relationship' between accreditors, higher education institutions,

and the government (Eaton, 2007). In this document, Eaton offered five suggestions to serve as the foundation of a new relationship between these entities to help prevent the loss of the long history of self-regulation and self-governance in higher education through federalizing of accreditation. The controversy around the role of accreditation in higher education has continued with President Obama's administration pushing accreditation agencies to focus more on student outcomes, college costs, and the value of a college education when judging colleges and universities (Stratford, 2015). The National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI) is an advisory body that makes recommendations to the U.S. Secretary of Education related to accreditation, eligibility and certification processes for institutions of higher education. In 2015 the NACIQUI issued a report that included recommendations to simplify the accreditation and recognition process, reassess the relationship between quality assurance processes and Title IV funds, and establish the NACIQI as the "final decision-making authority on accrediting agency recognition" (Phillips, 2015, p. 8).

Quality Ranking Systems

Quality in the eyes of the consumer may often be related to reputation, which is influenced by rankings such as those conducted by U.S. News and World Report (Morse, Brooks, & Mason, 2015). In a study of online college students, Clinefelter and Aslanian (2014) found that reputation was the highest rated selection criteria used by students when deciding which institution to attend; accreditation was overwhelmingly the most important factor used in defining reputation; and holding a high ranking in the U.S. News and World Report was an additional important factor selected by 27% of graduate students. Much of the data used by rankings like U.S. News and World Report are self-

reported by institutions and include such things as retention of students, faculty resources, student selectivity (as based on ACT and SAT scores), financial resources, alumni giving and graduation rate performance. Rankings are also based on the Carnegie classification of colleges and universities and the opinions of peer institutions. These ranking systems are controversial due to concerns regarding methodology, objectivity, validity and the greater emphasis placed on research performance rather than quality of teaching and learning (Jung et al., 2012).

Quality Assurance

While quality control and quality assurance both involve evaluating quality, comparing it to a quality goal, and stimulating corrective action as needed, the prime purpose of each differs (Juran & DeoFeo, 2010). Quality assurance is used to inform those who have a need to know but are not directly responsible with conducting operations; the prime purpose of quality control is to help those in charge regulate current operations (Juran & DeoFeo, 2010). According to United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO) (2015), quality assurance is defined as,

> The systematic review of educational programmes to ensure that acceptable
> standards of education, scholarship and infrastructure are being maintained (p. 1).

Harvey & Green (1993) suggest that,

> Quality assurance is not about specifying the standards or specifications against
> which to measure or control quality. Rather, quality assurance is about ensuring
> that there are mechanisms, procedures and processes in place to ensure that the
> desired quality, however defined and measured, is delivered (p. 12).

There may often be a tension between compliance/accountability and continuous improvement/innovation and it is important that accountability, compliance, and accreditation quality assurance processes are not mistaken for true quality improvement (Daniel & Uvalic-Trumbic, 2013). While a variety of quality assurance processes and procedures exist, the ultimate goal should be that "students receive a high quality and relevant education and are awarded credentials that are widely recognized by governments and employers" (Belawati & Zuhairi, 2007, p. 1).

Quality in Online Learning

How does quality in online learning differ from quality in the traditional classroom? Specifically evaluating the quality of online learning in higher education is a relatively new concept (Heischmidt & Damoiseau, 2012) and many different evaluation approaches can be found in the literature. Shelton (2010) summarized fourteen of the most important paradigms used to evaluate the quality of online education programs which are presented chronologically below:

1. Principles of Good Practice for Academic Degree and Certificate Programs Offered Electronically (WCET, 1997)

2. Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs (WCET, 2001)

3. Quality on the Line: Benchmarks for Success in Internet-Based Distance Education (Phipps & Merisotis, 2000)

4. ACTIONS Model of Quality (Bates, 2000)

5. Eight Dimensions of e-Learning Framework (Khan, 2001)

6. Accreditation and Quality Assurance study CHEA, 2002)

7. Quality Standards in e-Learning: A Matrix of Analysis (Frydenberg, 2002)

8. Using Quality Assurance Strategies for Online Programs (Lee & Dziuban, 2002)

9. An Assessment Model and Methods for Evaluating Distance Education Programs (Lockhart & Lacy, 2002; Shelton, 2011)

10. The Sloan Consortium Quality Framework and the Five Pillars (Moore, 2011)

11. The Concentric Support Model (Osika, 2004)

12. Assessment Recommendations (Moore & Kearsley, 2005)

13. Six-Factor Solution (Harroff & Valentine, 2006)

14. Quality Indicators of Distance Education (Chaney et al., 2009)

Perspectives on how the quality of online learning should be evaluated lie on a continuum. On one end of the continuum are those that suggest that online learning should be judged by the same standards and criteria used in face-to-face education; on the other end of the continuum are those who believe that online learning is so different from face-to-face education that separate and specific guidelines and quality assurance processes must be applied to these programs (Jung et al., 2012). There are even those who believe that quality assurance in online and distance learning "should be mandatory, externally managed, and concerned with accountability" and others that believe that quality assurance "should be voluntary, conducted internally, and concerned with developing an institutional culture of quality" (Jung et al., 2012, p. 13). It is important to address the issue of quality management in online learning due to increased scrutiny and greater numbers of stakeholders interested in quality and accountability (Jung et al., 2012; Shelton, 2010). Online education stakeholders (e.g. governmental policy makers,

institutional administrators, teaching staff, and students) have different priorities; faculty may be more concerned with learning outcomes while students may be more concerned with cost, flexibility, and interactions with their peers (Jung et al., 2011). Quality assurance will involve reconciling diverse perspectives (Jung et al., 2011).

There are commonalities between quality practices in the face-to-face classroom and the online environment. For instance, Chickering and Gamson's (1987) *Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education* are relevant for both traditional and online classrooms today:

1. Encourages contact between students and faculty
2. Develops reciprocity and cooperation among students.
3. Encourages active learning.
4. Gives prompt feedback.
5. Emphasizes time on task.
6. Communicates high expectations.
7. Respects diverse talents and ways of learning (p. 2)

The *Seven Principles* has helped to inform many of the subsequent guidelines, quality assurance criteria, standards and rubrics used in online education (Blackboard Inc., 2013; Chao, Saj, & Tessier, 2006; Shattuck, 2012; Shelton, Saltsman, Holstrom, & Pedersen, 2014).

Quality Assurance for Online Learning

Quality assurance of online courses and programs became increasingly more important as online learning expanded in both scope and importance (Chao et al., 2006; Rovai, 2003). One can see an increase in reports, publications, and subsequent guidelines in the late 1990s and early 2000s. For instance, The Western Cooperative for Educational

Telecommunications report *Principles of Good Practice for Electronically Offered Academic Degree and Certificate Programs* (WCET, 1997) and the follow up report *Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs* (WCET, 2001) are considered seminal publications. The 1997 report was designed to demonstrate how the quality standards already being used by accreditors could be applied to distance learning programs. It outlined best practices in the areas of institutional context and commitment, curriculum and instruction, faculty and student support, and evaluation and assessment. The follow-up report (WCET, 2001) is one of the most commonly cited reports related to quality indicators in online learning and key elements are still used by regional accreditors for institutional accreditation reviews (Shelton, 2010).

The National Educators Association and Blackboard commissioned the 2000 Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) report, *Quality on the Line: Benchmarks for Success in Internet-Based Distance Education* (Phipps & Merisotis, 2000). Working from a list of 45 attributes of quality online education previously identified in the literature, this report identified and categorized 24 quality benchmarks that were absolutely essential for quality online education. These 24 benchmarks are categorized into the areas of (a) institutional support, (b) course development, (c) teaching/learning, (d) course structure, (d) faculty support, (e) student support, and (f) evaluation and assessment.

Measures of Quality for Online Learning

The quality assurance and accreditation standards and processes for higher education are typically designed to assure that minimum quality standards are met; these minimum standards may not be good enough for online and distance learning (Jung et al.,

2012). Gaytan (2013) believes that in order to address those that challenge the quality of online learning, these courses should do more than simply demonstrate that they are "at least as effective as their face-to-face counterparts" and "should be required to advance the scholarship of teaching and learning" (p. 8). Jung et al. (2012) recommend rigorous self, peer and external reviews to address the higher standards demanded by stakeholders in a digital and global world.

<u>Inter-Institutional Quality Assurance</u>

Student evaluations of teaching effectiveness (SETS) are a widely used inter-institutional quality assurance measure (Alexander et al., 2009; Galbraith, Merrill, & Kline, 2012; Grandzol & Grandzol, 2006; Spooren, Brockx, & Mortelmans, 2013). However, while student evaluations provide useful information, their value has been contested in the literature (Galbraith et al., 2012; Spooren et al., 2013) and there are concerns regarding the use of a single indicator to judge teaching quality (Spooren et al., 2013). Evaluation strategies that go beyond the traditional end of course student satisfaction survey (SETS) and include both internal and external measures of quality are needed to assure quality in online courses and programs. Based on an international review of quality assurance processes, Latchem and Jung (2012) argue the following points related to inter-institutional quality assurance processes:

1. Focus on outcomes as the leading measure of quality,
2. Take a systemic approach to quality assurance,
3. See QA as a process of continuous improvement,
4. Move the institution from external controls to an internal culture of quality,
5. Poor quality has very high costs so investment in quality is worthwhile (p. 4).

External Quality Assurance Programs for Online Learning

A number of national and international bodies provide external standards and benchmarks for quality related to online learning in higher education. Benchmarking can be a means of self-regulation and self-improvement used to compare an institution's policies, programs or standards to the best practices of peer organizations. Quality assurance benchmarks are broad statements designed to measure progress (Phipps & Merisotis, 2000) while standards often represent specific criteria that must be achieved in order to earn accreditation or certification (AACSB, 2016d; Maryland Online, 2014b; Vlasceanu et al., 2007). Following are some of the organizations offering external quality assurance programs for online learning:

- UNESCO (2015)

- Australasian Council on Open Distance e-Learning (ACODE, 2014)

- Quality Assurance Framework of the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU, n.d.)

- Quality Matters (QM) (Maryland Online, 2014c)

- California State University (Chico, 2016)

- Quality Online Course Initiative (QOCI) (ION, 2015)

- Online Learning Consortium (OLC, 2016)

While no single source was found that compared quality standards for online learning among paradigms or organizations, Daniel & Uvalic-Trumbic (2013) found common themes among published benchmarks and standards related to online, distance and e-learning and Chao et al. (2006) noted that many of the paradigms used to evaluate

the quality of online learning addressed similar criteria. Table 2.1 compares the common themes and paradigms presented by these two authors.

Table 2.1   Common Themes and Paradigms in Online Quality Standards

Chao et al. (2006)	Daniel & Uvalic-Trumbic (2013)
Institutional support	Institutional support (vision, planning, & infrastructure)
Course development and instructional design	Course development
Teaching and learning	Teaching and learning (instruction)
Course structure and resources	Course structure
Student and faculty support	Student and faculty support
Evaluation and assessment	Evaluation Student assessment Examination security
e-learning products and services	

Although there are many common themes and paradigms in online quality standards, it is important to note that institutions are diverse and there is no one ideal quality assurance structure for all online learning programs (Belawati & Zuhairi, 2007; Daniel & Uvalic-Trumbic, 2013). Institutions will also have the standards of one or more accrediting bodies to address and will need to encompass quality assurance for online learning within other quality processes. No studies were found that addressed the prevalence of use of these benchmarks and standards in AACSB-accredited or other MBA programs.

This review will focus on two nationally recognized programs specifically designed for quality assurance in higher education, Quality Matters and the Online

Learning Consortium's Quality Framework (Maryland Online, 2014b; OLC, 2016), as a means of demonstrating the processes followed by such organizations. Quality Matters addresses online *course* quality while the OLC Quality Scorecard addresses online *program* quality. Quality Matters does not specifically address the quality of teaching in their rubric; the OLC quality scorecard does contain a section related to teaching and learning. The foundation of both programs is a process of continuous quality improvement; a concept also important in AACSB accreditation (AACSB, n.d.c). The process of quality assurance focuses on measuring compliance with standards while quality improvement addresses continually improving processes to meet standards (Joynes, 2013).

Quality Matters

Quality Matters (QM) is a subscription-based, faculty-centered peer review process originally developed by Maryland Online (2014b) under a Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE) grant through the U.S. Department of Education. Quality Matters is widely adopted with more than 900 current subscribers internationally (Maryland Online, 2016b). The QM program addresses both blended and online courses, is research-based and is continually revised based on new evidence (Maryland Online, 2014a; Shattuck, 2012; Shattuck, 2015). The foundation of Quality Matters is a rubric that is based on a set of quality standards structured into eight General Standards and 43 Specific Review Standards. The General Standards include: course overview, learner objectives, assessment and measurement, resources and materials, learner engagement, course technology, learner support, and accessibility (Maryland

Online, 2014c). Expanded annotations are available to support the rubric and explain the application of the Standards. The QM rubric and processes are focused on four concepts:

1. Continuous: Quality improvement processes are designed to ensure that all reviewed courses will eventually meet expectations.

2. Centered: On research related to best practices, the literature, and instructional design principles; on the promotion of student learning; and on quality with achievable goals.

3. Collegial: A QM review is a faculty-centered, peer-review process that is not evaluative or judgmental.

4. Collaborative: A QM review team consists of experienced online instructors that administer a flexible, non-prescriptive review through collaboratively identifying evidence in the course. (Maryland Online, 2016d).

The initial QM rubric was developed based on the literature as well as expert opinions and already existing standard sets for quality in online learning; a literature review informs each subsequent revision (Maryland Online, 2014a). Quality Matters emphasizes alignment across course learning objectives, learning activities and assessments. The QM rubric can be used as part of a formal course certification process or can be used internally to guide online course development and continuous quality improvement of courses through a process of peer-to-peer feedback. Official QM reviews are designed for fully developed mature online courses that have been previously taught. The QM course review process involves a pre-review, review period, and post-review (Maryland Online, n.d.a; Maryland Online, n.d.b). In the pre-review process a

subscribing institution completes a course review application. During the review period a three-person team of QM-Certified Peer Reviewers reviews the course and drafts a report of findings. Post-review the Course Representative from the subscribing institution has an opportunity to make any changes recommended by the Review Team within a set period of time; the Team Chair then reviews and approves the changes that now meet the standards. Once standards are met, the course is recognized and listed in the online QM registry (Maryland Online, 2016a). It is important to note that Quality Matters addresses the quality of course design only, not course delivery or an entire program of online learning.

Two important quality metrics in online learning, as well as traditional programs, are student learning outcomes and student satisfaction (Eom & Wen, 2006); both have been found to improve with the implementation of a QM program (Maryland Online, 2014a; Shattuck, 2015). However, while the Quality Matters website publishes a compilation of QM-related research supporting the QM Rubric and process as well as its use and impact (Maryland Online, 2016c), surprisingly little supporting research related to the impact of QM rubric on course outcomes is found in the literature. Legon (2015) addresses the challenges of measuring the impact of the QM rubric. He notes the difficulties of comparing the impact of courses that partially meet the standards to those that meet these standards at 85% or higher. In addition, most courses submitted for review have already been influenced by QM or other course design standards and many have undergone an informal QM review before being submitted for an official review. Due to these and other factors, controlled cross-institutional studies to isolate the impact of the Rubric are a "practical impossibility" (Legon, 2015, p. 168). However, Legon

anticipates that small-scale research projects will continue and suggests the need to find more meaningful measures of the Rubric's impact.

OLC Quality Scorecard (QSC)

The Sloan Consortium (Sloan-C), originally funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, has been a leader in advancing online learning since 1992. By 2014 the organization had evolved into a self-sustaining worldwide organization and had rebranded as the Online Learning Consortium (OLC) to better reflect a mission of providing access to high quality e-Education (OLC, 2015b). In 1997 Frank Mayadas, President of Sloan-C (now OLC), maintained that institutions demonstrate quality in five inter-related areas that have since become OLC's Five Pillars of Quality Online Education (OLC, 2015c). The five pillars that form the basis for a quality framework to help identify goals and measure progress towards them are summarized below:

1. Learning effectiveness: Ensuring that online students receive a high quality education that is at least equivalent to traditional students; online learning experiences should be designed to take advantage of the unique opportunities offered by an online environment rather than simply trying to duplicate the traditional classroom experience.

2. Scale: Capacity enrollment is achieved through cost-effectiveness and institutional commitment; key educational resources are leveraged to offer new online learning opportunities.

3. Access: Provide meaningful and effective access to courses, degrees and programs for all qualified, motivated students; includes academic, administrative, and technical support.

4. Faculty satisfaction: Faculty are provided with opportunities and support that make the online teaching experience rewarding and professionally beneficial; the institution demonstrates commitment to ongoing study and enhancement of the online faculty experience.

5. Student satisfaction: The goal is that all students express satisfaction with all aspects of the educational experience; course rigor and fairness, professor and peer interaction, and support services.

In 2010, Kaye Shelton was the winner of the 2010 Sloan-C Effective Practice Award for her development of a quality scorecard (QSC) for the administration of online learning programs (OLC, 2015a). The QSC has since been adopted by OLC for use by institutional members. The purpose of the scorecard is to provide an easy-to-use tool for identifying, measuring and quantifying elements of quality within online higher education programs. A number of other rubrics and standards such as Quality Matters already existed as a means of evaluating quality of individual online courses, but an industry agreed upon instrument for evaluating the quality of an entire online program was not previously available. An instrument such as the Online Learning Consortium's Quality Scorecard for Online Programs (QSC) can help serve as a benchmark while identifying strengths and weaknesses and providing valuable information for strategic planning and budgeting (OLC, 2015a).

The QSC was originally developed through the process of surveying a panel of 43 experienced administrators of online education programs from a variety of higher education institutions in a six round Delphi study (OLC, 2015a; Shelton, 2010). The starting point for the Delphi study was the 24 quality indicators originally developed in

the IHEP study, *Quality on the Line: Benchmarks for Success in Internet-Based Distance Education* (Phipps & Merisotis, 2000). Through the Delphi process, the expert panel ultimately agreed upon 70 quality indicators for online programs as well as a method for scoring these indicators. The resultant *Quality Scorecard for the Administration of Online Programs* addresses themes consistent with those identified by Daniel and Uvalic-Trumbic (2013) and Chao et al. (2006) with the addition of social and student engagement.

The scorecard was modified in 2014 with input from select original expert panelists, three years of feedback, and adaptation based on use in the field (Shelton et al., 2014). The updated version contains an additional five indicators within the original nine categories:

1. Institutional support
2. Technology support
3. Course development and instructional design
4. Course structure
5. Teaching and learning
6. Social and student engagement
7. Faculty support
8. Student support
9. Evaluation and assessment.

The QSC is presented in the format of a rubric. Each of the nine categories above are presented in this scorecard along with a variable number of indicators for each category. Each indicator is scored on a 4-point scale:

0 = Deficient

1 = Developing

2 = Accomplished

3 = Exemplary

The total score is tallied with a total of 225 points possible. A score of 90% is deemed exemplary; 80% acceptable, 70% marginal, 60% inadequate, and <59% unacceptable. This scorecard can be used to determine baselines and track progress towards goals. The scorecard is a new instrument and additional research has yet been published related to implementation of the scorecard (J. Mathes, personal communication, September 20, 2016). OLC has plans to conduct a benchmarking study on the QSC next year and is currently reworking their interactive scorecard to allow for that in the future (J. Mathes, personal communication, September 20, 2016).

Quality Assurance in MBA Programs

In addition to regional or national accreditation, business colleges can seek accreditation from three specialized accrediting agencies. These agencies include the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) (2016), the International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education (IACBE) (2016) and the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) (n.d.a). All three are recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA, 2015). AACSB-accreditation is promoted as having the highest standard of achievement for business schools with less than 5% of business programs worldwide earning this status (AACSB, 2016c). Inclusion criteria for the panelists in this study required affiliation with an AACSB-accredited MBA program.

<u>AACSB Accreditation</u>

The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) is an international accrediting agency devoted to the promotion and improvement of higher education in business administration and accounting (AACSB, 2015c). Globally, AACSB

has accredited 727 schools that grant business degrees with 47% (n=513) of these schools in the United States (AACSB, 2015b). Once a school has achieved AACSB accreditation status through an initial self-report and rigorous peer review process, the institution becomes subject to the continuous improvement review process which includes production of an annual report of data and a review of strategic progress on a 5-year cycle (AACSB, 2015c). The most recent version of the AACSB Accreditation Standards was adopted in 2013 and updated in 2015 (AACSB, 2015c) and again in 2016 (AACSB, 2016d). An important aspect of the AACSB accreditation process is a respect for the integral importance of an institution's mission related to application of the standards. A business college should only be involved in distance learning if this is consistent with the mission of the both the school and the institution (AACSB, 2007). It is important to assess and understand how a distance education program impacts other programs and other degrees in the college and if it will enhance the overall quality of the institution (AACSB, 2007). Focusing on the mission will aid in the implementation of a distance learning program and will guide the development of plans and policy statements for distance learning programs (AACSB, 2007).

AACSB and Online Learning

Although AACSB sets high standards for business education, the organization does not specifically or separately address quality of online or hybrid learning in the accreditation process. Rather, as presented in the 2015 AACSB Online and Blended Education Seminar (T. Means, personal correspondence, February 24, 2015), online learning is a part of the overall Assurance of Learning (AoL) standards. These standards evaluate if "the school uses well-documented, systematic processes for determining and

revising degree program learning goals; designing, delivering and improving degree

program curricula to achieve learning goals; and demonstrating degree program learning

goals have been met" (AACSB, 2015c, p. 29). While not specifically addressed, the

standards indirectly reference online learning in the following ways:

1. "different program delivery models" (AACSB, 2015c, p. 23),

2. "for any teaching and learning model employed" (AACSB, 2015c, p. 37),

3. "information technology infrastructure" (AACSB, 2015c, p. 11),

4. "structured to ensure consistent, high-quality education for the same degree

    programs regardless of differences and changes in technology and delivery

    modes" (AACSB, 2015c, p. 29).

In recognition of the pervasive and growing importance of online learning in

business education, the AACSB Board of Directors created a task force to provide insight

and guidance to schools developing distance learning programs as well as to the peer

reviewers evaluating those programs (AACSB, 2007). This report did not create new

accreditation standards for distance learning because the AACSB standards were

considered flexible enough to evaluate quality in distance learning. The 2007 report

recommends that distance learning programs "achieve a level of quality comparable to

other institutional offerings and consistent with standards of overall quality" (AACSB,

2007, p. 6). These guidelines are generally programmatic in nature and do not address

quality at the level of the individual online course. They do not "prescribe required

features for distance learning" nor are they a "how-to" manual (AACSB, 2007, p. 3). The

guidelines address the following related to online learning: (a) mission, (b) students, (c)

faculty, (d) curriculum and learning issues, (e) instructional resources, (f) intellectual

contributions, and, (g) business and institutional relationships. While the foreword states that one of the goals of the report is to "assist peer reviewers evaluating distance-learning programs" (AACSB, 2007, p. 2), it is unclear as to what degree these recommendations are actually utilized by accreditation reviewers as they are not an official part of the program standards document.

Quality assurance for online learning in AACSB-accredited MBA programs

Few studies were found that specifically looked at quality assurance measures in online MBA programs, the relationship of quality assurance measures to AACSB accreditation, or the views of specific groups of these stakeholders related to quality assurance. Gaytan (2013) used the AACSB's report *Quality Issues in Distance Learning* (AACSB, 2007) to develop a set of recommendations for the delivery of high quality online courses. Gaytan's recommendations are summarized below:

1. The mission of an online program must align with the mission of both the business college and the university,

2. Students understand that as an online student they have a responsibility to manage and control their own learning,

3. Early adopter faculty must be committed to online teaching and learning,

4. The faculty teaching online courses undergo training and subsequently make any curriculum or delivery mechanism selection decisions,

5. Students are trained how to effectively access and utilize online resources and technologies,

6. Intellectual property rights related to online content are clearly articulated,

7. Processes are in place to replicate on-campus student support services for

the online student (Gaytan, 2013, p. 7)

While AACSB accreditation does not evaluate online learning at the course level,

Gaytan (2013) states that "business schools must engage in appropriate planning,

designing, evaluating, and continually revising their online courses to ensure instructional

quality" (p. 7).

Quality Matters in MBA Programs

The foundational principle of 'continuous improvement' is shared by both the

AACSB assurance of learning standards and the Quality Matters program (AACSB,

2013; Maryland Online, 2014d). While both programs focus on measurable learning

goals and objectives and alignment of these with learning activities and assessments, the

AACSB standards are applied to each program while the Quality Matters standards are

applied to each learning module (Maryland Online, 2014d). No data were found

specifically related to the overall use of Quality Matters in AACSB-accredited business

colleges. However, the Quality Matters program had been used in its entirety or adapted

for quality control programs in multiple MBA programs including Cleveland State

University, Texas A&M University-Central Texas, National Louis University, (Cleveland

State University, 2016, Loafman & Altman, 2014; National Louis University, n.d.) and

the University of Florida (T. Means, personal correspondence, February 23, 2015).

OLC Quality Scorecard in MBA Programs

The OLC Quality Scorecard (QSC) (OLC, 2014) is a relatively new development

in quality assurance for online learning and may often be used for self-assessment and

unpublished internal reviews (Schaffhauser, 2014). Institutions with online business

programs such as the State University of New York (Open SUNY) and Texas State University are using the OLC Quality Scorecard, however, no specific data were found related to the use of the OLC scorecard in online AACSB-accredited MBA programs (Schaffhauser, 2014). The OLC organizational practice has been to allow institutional members to access the QSC and supplemental materials with a guarantee of confidentiality so they are currently unable to share information regarding utilization (J. Mathes, personal communication, December 30, 2015).

While AACSB accreditation is promoted as having the highest standards for business education, these standards do not thoroughly address online learning. Business colleges and MBA programs are also using external quality assurance measures such as the OLC Scorecard and QM Rubric but limited information regarding the prevalence or implementation of these programs in business colleges is available in the literature.

Quality Assurance and Select Stakeholders

Stakeholders play an important role in quality assurance for online learning (Auvinen & Mariasingam, 2012). In order to use stakeholders as a resource for quality work, they must first be identified; their positions and views mapped, assessed and diagnosed; and finally, these positions and views documented and summarized so that clear action can be taken (Auvinen & Mariasingam, 2012). No literature was found that compared the roles or views of the specific stakeholder groups involved in this research (faculty, administration, and instructional designers) related to quality assurance processes for online learning.

Academic Leaders

Allen and Seaman (2013) surveyed academic leaders regarding the abilities of their institutions to assess the quality of online learning and compared this data with a representative national survey of teaching faculty and academic technology administrators finding differing opinions among these groups (Allen et al., 2012). Approximately 2/3 of academic leaders agreed with the statement, "my institution has good tools in place to assess the quality of online instruction" with the exception of less than half of the leaders in institutions offering online courses only, rather than fully online programs, agreeing (Allen & Seaman, 2013, p. 26). Academic technology administrators are often tasked with providing the assessment tools for online learning. When asked a similar question, these administrators were less optimistic than chief academic officers with only half responding positively that their institution has good tools in place to assess the quality of online instruction (Allen et al., 2012).

Faculty

Allen et al. (2012) found that faculty are less optimistic about the tools used to assess the quality of online learning than either chief academic officers or academic technology administrators. Only 38% of faculty teaching online and 20% of faculty who did not teach online believed that their institutions had good online learning assessment tools in place. The negative faculty responses related to quality assessment in online learning found by Allen et al. (2012) are not unexpected. Online learning has often faced faculty resistance and greater scrutiny than traditional modes of delivery (Allen et al., 2012; Allen & Seaman, 2013; Edmundson, 2012; Jaschik & Lederman, 2014; Marklein, 2015). In the 2014 INSIDE HIGHER ED Gallup poll of faculty attitudes on technology,

only 9% of the faculty surveyed thought that student learning outcomes in online courses are equivalent to in-person courses (Jaschik & Lederman, 2014).

Instructional Designers

The instructional designer (ID) often serves as a collaborative partner with faculty in the design of online courses and programs (Ozdemir & Loose, 2014). However, instructional designers may operate under quality assurance constraints, limited to making suggestions with faculty opinions and views taking precedence over the views of the ID or quality standards (Information Resources Management Association, 2011). Further complicating the quality assurance landscape, designers may have a conflict of interest, often playing dual roles in course design as well as quality assurance, either as an administrator of an external program such as Quality Matters (Maryland Online, 2014d) or as the director of internal quality control processes for the courses and programs they design.

Delphi Methodology

Many societal decisions or judgments are based on the premise that two (or more) heads are better than one, as illustrated by the prevalence of committees, councils, juries, and panels (Dalkey, 1969). The Delphi methodology is based on this same premise and is used to systematically gather, refine, and collate collective opinions or group judgments from expert panelists who interact in the process of developing a shared interpretation of an emerging or controversial topic (Dalkey, 1969; Day & Bobeva, 2005). The purpose of a Delphi study can be to build, explore, test or evaluate (Day & Bobeva, 2005). According to Linstone and Turoff (2002), there are three critical components and four distinct phases involved in a Delphi study. The critical components are anonymity,

structured information flow, and controlled feedback that usually includes descriptive

statistics. The four phases involve:

1. Exploration of the subject to be researched,
2. Process of reaching an understanding of how the group views the issue
3. Exploration of any areas of disagreement and the underlying reasons, and
4. Final evaluation

The Delphi methodology creates a structured flow of information through the

delivery of a sequential series of carefully designed questionnaires each building on the

information obtained in the previous round (Shelton & Creghan, 2015). Prior to their

completion of each questionnaire in the series, panel experts are provided with a

summary of the data collected in the previous round. This summary allows them to

reflect on their own responses as well as those of their peers as they generate their

opinion without pressure to conform (Shelton & Creghan, 2015). Remotely gathering

these expert opinions through written responses rather than through face-to-face

interactions supports anonymity.

The term "Delphi" is related to the mythological Greek oracle who looked into

the future. In classical antiquity, an oracle was "a person or agency considered to provide

wise counsel of prophetic predictions or precognition of the future" (Oracle, 2015, p. 1).

The term as used for this research methodology reflects the original use of the Delphi,

which is forecasting technological developments (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson,

1975). While not nearly as ancient as the original Greek Delphi, this method has a long

history and was originally developed by the RAND Corporation in the 1950's for use as a

military forecasting tool for the U.S. Airforce (Dalkey & Helmer, 1963; Shelton &

Creghan, 2015). The original Delphi study was used to obtain a reliable consensus of

opinion among a group of seven experts in separate but related fields, without direct

interaction, through delivery of a series of questionnaires that focused on a central problem and were followed with controlled opinion feedback (Dalkey & Helmer, 1963). Other early uses included alerting participants to recent scientific developments, identifying problems and solutions, setting goals and priorities, and as a preconference planning tool to facilitate the resolution of differences related to select issues (Delbecq et al., 1975). The use of the Delphi methodology has expanded greatly since its inception (Shelton & Creghan, 2015). Delphi methodology is now used extensively in fields as diverse as education, health care and technology for the purposes of forecasting, policy-making, planning, consensus building, and as a means of building a framework for future studies using other research methods. (Boulkedid, Abdoul, Loustau, Sibony, & Alberti, 2011; New Media Consortium, 2015; Shelton & Creghan, 2015). The original Delphi studies relied on pen and paper questionnaires and communication through mail while later studies have used technology-supported communication such as email (Day & Bobeva, 2005)

The Delphi methodology supports an ultimate goal of informed decision making by a group of experts (Shelton, 2010). It is a low-cost, rapid, flexible and efficient way to gather the expert opinions of those who could not otherwise meet face-to-face (Dalkey, 1969; Delbecq et al., 1975; Shelton & Creghan, 2015). A Delphi study experience can be highly motivating for the participants and results may be subject to greater acceptance by the panel than are results that are arrived at through more direct confrontation and debate (Dalkey, 1969). The controlled interaction and feedback process support reflection and independent thought and allow a deeper level of participation by the expert panel (Dalkey & Helmer, 1963; Delbecq et al., 1975; Okoli & Pawlowski, 2004). An important feature

of a Delphi study is that it brings together an anonymous panel of experts (Dalkey &

Helmer, 1963; Dalkey, 1969; Delbecq et al., 1975; Franklin & Hart, 2007; Garson, 2014;

Ludwig, 1997; Shelton & Creghan, 2015; Twining, 1999). This anonymity helps to limit

several negative aspects of face-to-face group processes including competition and status

issues, impact of dominant personalities, and manipulation or coercion to conform to a

certain viewpoint and will also remove the pressure to maintain or defend earlier opinions

(Dalkey, 1969; Delbecq et al., 1975; Garson, 2014; Shelton & Creghan, 2015).

One of the most significant challenges in administering a Delphi study is the time

commitment required by, not only the investigator, but also the participants who must

commit to multiple iterations of the questionnaire (Cole, Donohoe, & Stellefson, 2013;

Linstone & Turoff, 2011). This method should not be used unless participants are

available who are skilled in written communications and are highly motivated to commit

to participation in multiple rounds over a period of time (Delbecq et al., 1975). The

length of time that can be required for the multiple survey iterations may cause

participants to lose interest, potentially resulting in low response rates and compromising

the quality of the data (Cole et al., 2013; Hsu & Sandford, 2007). Another challenge that

must be addressed is the potential for investigator bias as it may intentionally or

unintentionally direct the summary of the data that is fed back to Delphi respondents

between questionnaires (Shelton & Creghan, 2015). It is critical that this feedback be

accurate to avoid influencing and molding the opinions of the panelists (Hsu & Sandford,

2007).

Summary

This Review of the Literature starts with a discussion of the inconsistent use of terminology used to refer to delivery modes for learning environments and presents the definitions of online learning as used in this paper. The growth of online learning in business colleges, with more 228 institutions planning to offer online MBA programs in 2015-16 (Brooks & Morse, 2016), is addressed along with the impact of this growth on perceptions of quality. The concept of 'quality' as used in the context of higher education is a complex topic and stakeholders conceptualize quality in different ways that must be addressed when considering quality assurance (Allen & Seaman, 2013; Harvey & Green, 1993; Jung et al., 2011; Jung et al., 2012; Shelton, 2010; Vlasceanu et al., 2007). A review found no literature specifically comparing the views of the stakeholders involved in this research- faculty, administrators, and instructional designers- related to quality assurance in either online or business education.

Quality in higher education, online learning, and business education are addressed in a number of ways through a variety of processes and procedures and there are many perspectives related to how the quality of online learning should be evaluated. These perspectives lie on a continuum from using the exact same quality assurance processes across delivery models, to recommendations that separate and specific guidelines inform quality assurance in online learning (Jung et al., 2012). The literature illustrates the many different paradigms used to evaluate the quality of online education and the commonality among many of these approaches. As the prevalence of online learning grows, it is important that quality assurance measures keep pace.

Accreditation is one way in which U.S. educational institutions self-regulate quality with oversight from regional, national, and specialized accrediting bodies (CHEA, 2015). AACSB (2016c) accreditation is one form of specialized accreditation earned by the top tier of business programs worldwide. AACSB (2015c) only recently began to address online learning, on a limited basis, within their accreditation standards. Maintaining accreditation status is critical to the existence of institutes of higher education who wish to compete for students (CAAHEP, n.d.) and accreditation is required for students to receive federal financial aid funds (Eaton, 2007). Shortcomings have been noted in the U.S. accreditation system (Spellings, 2006) and the debate on the role of accreditation in higher education continues (Stratford, 2015).

A number of organizations publish external standards and benchmarks that can be used to guide quality assurance in online higher education through an informal, internal process or through a formalized, external process leading to recognition (ACODE, 2014; Chico, 2016; ION, 2015; Maryland Online, 2014b; OLC, 2014). The OLC Quality Framework (OLC, 2016) and the Quality Matters program (Maryland Online, 2014b) are discussed in detail. While online MBA programs utilize these standards, no summary of the extent of adoption was found.

The Review of the Literature concludes with a discussion of the Delphi methodology including theoretical framework and the specific processes involved.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

The Delphi Method (Dalkey, 1969; Delbecq et al., 1975; Linstone & Turoff, 2002; Ludwig, 1997; Okoli & Pawlowski, 2004; Shelton & Pedersen, 2015; Shelton & Creghan, 2015) was used in this study to help gain a view into the future of quality assurance measures for online learning in AACSB-accredited MBA programs.

The study was designed to determine if three separate groups of experts-administrators, faculty, and instructional designers- in AACSB-accredited, fully online MBA programs have similar views related to the future of quality assurance of online programs. The following questions were used to guide the research:

Question 1: How should quality be assured for online MBA programs within the next 3-5 years?

Question 2: How does this future vision differ between various stakeholders (program administrators, faculty and instructional designers)?

Question 3: What are the implications of stakeholder views on implementation of quality assurance programs?

The Delphi Method was selected as the methodology for the current study as it is a widely used communication process used to gather data from a group of experts related to real-world, complex problems (Dalkey, 1969; Hsu & Sandford, 2007). "When viewed as communication processes, there are few areas of human endeavor which are not

candidates for application of Delphi" (Linstone & Turoff, 2002, p. 3). A number of

educational Delphi studies have addressed topics that are related to the current research

such as policy development and strategic planning (Shelton & Creghan, 2015). Similar to

the context of this study, Kennedy (2002) used Delphi methodology to examine both

consensus and divergent thinking between and among three types of experts- scholars,

educational administrators, and ICT professionals- related to the impact of ICT on the

North American Academy. A more recent development is the use of real-time Delphi

studies such as the Horizon project which utilizes an expert panel of educational futurists

to predict upcoming technology developments in education through the use of a wiki

(New Media Consortium, 2015). Based on the parameters outlined by Linstone & Turoff

(2002), the Delphi methodology is appropriate for the current study as,

1. The problem is broad and complex, cannot be precisely analyzed and will benefit
   from subjective judgments by a group.

2. Multiple group meetings are not feasible due to the number of participants, time,
   and cost of meeting, as well as a lack of history of adequate communication
   between participants with diverse backgrounds.

3. While disagreements between participants might not be severe, there are potential
   political ramifications related to accreditation, role, and other issues making
   anonymity important.

4. It will be important to minimize the "bandwagon effect" that could potentially
   occur through domination of a conversation by one or more strong individuals.

Study Design

      While four key features define a Delphi study including anonymity, iteration, controlled feedback, and the statistical aggregation of group response, there are a wide variety of ways in which these features may be applied (Rowe & Wright, 1999). This study varies from the original or classical Delphi in three ways (Dalkey & Helmer, 1963). First, data was collected and communications were delivered electronically via the Internet. Cole, Donohue, and Stellefson (2013) found the use of the Internet to be a "best-fit" for the needs of a Delphi study. The entire data collection process can now be completed and data analysis can be facilitated through the use of the Internet and a web-based survey tool such as Qualtrics (Shelton & Creghan, 2015). Electronic delivery is a cost-effective and efficient way to administer a study across geographical barriers resulting in a faster turnaround time for the iterative process and potentially decreasing attrition rates (Cole et al., 2013; Shelton & Creghan, 2015). Also in contrast to the classical Delphi, the purpose of this study was not to reach consensus among participants. Rather, it had multiple objectives consistent with those outlined by Delbecq et al. (1975):

1. To determine or develop a range of possible program alternatives;

2. To explore or expose underlying assumptions or information leading to different judgments;

3. To seek out information which may generate a consensus on the part of the respondent group;

4. To correlate informed judgments on a topic spanning a wide range of disciplines, and;

5. To educate the respondent group as to the diverse and interrelated aspects of the topic (p. 11).

And lastly, the opinions of three distinct groups of experts were sought with comparisons made both between and within groups to help determine where consensus existed and where it did not. Quality assurance for online learning requires coordination among all involved and efforts may be compromised if there is a lack of agreement on best practices.

<u>Participants</u>

Careful selection of the participants for the expert panel is a crucial part of a successful Delphi study and relates directly to the quality of the results that are obtained (Franklin & Hart, 2007; Hsu & Sandford, 2007). The experts selected should be highly experienced with a deep interest in the topic of interest and an ability to provide real-time and real-world knowledge (Delbecq et al., 1975; Hsu & Sandford, 2007). They should feel there is value in the information they will receive as participants and have enough time and motivation to complete all phases of the study (Delbecq et al., 1975). Since desired qualifications must be carefully considered, participant selection should be purposive rather than random (Ludwig, 1997). The term "expert" can be subjective, however, according to Garson (2014), an individual is an expert if they are considered qualified to make the judgments that are involved in the research, the experts are stakeholders in the subject being studied, and the audience that the research is designed for would consider them to be expert.

The recommended number of respondents for each group in a Delphi study varies with no set guidelines presented in the literature (Day & Bobeva, 2005; Delbecq et al.,

1975; Hsu & Sandford, 2007). In the area of opinion, average accuracy and reliability are improved with a greater number of respondents in the pool (Dalkey, 1969) so it is important that the groups are large enough to gather adequate information and guard against attrition, yet not so large that efficiency of the iterative process is compromised (Shelton & Creghan, 2015). Ludwig (1997) found that the majority of Delphi studies used between 15 and 20 respondents. When different reference groups are used the overall size of the group may need to be larger (Shelton & Creghan, 2015). The optimal number of Delphi participants is variable, cannot be a statistical decision, and never reaches a consensus in the literature (Hsu & Sandford, 2007; Ziglio, 1996). Twenty-two panelists met the inclusion criteria and completed Round One of this Delphi study and eighteen panelists completed all three rounds.

It is important that the criteria and processes used to select the expert panelists be determined prior to beginning the study and that they be systematically applied as described (Garson, 2014). In this study, a non-random, purposive sample of expert participants with at least 5 years of experience in online learning were recruited from AACSB-accredited business colleges with at least one fully online MBA program. Participants were placed in one of three groups based on their area of expertise, (a) MBA program administrators at the program director level or above, (b) faculty with at least five years of experience teaching online MBA courses, and (c) instructional designers with at least five years of experience designing online course content currently working in an online MBA program. In her Delphi study *A Quality Scorecard for the Administration of Online Education Programs*, Shelton (2010) also used five years of

experience as an online administrator in an online program in higher education as a determinant of expert status.

The expert panel participants for this study were identified through a combination of methods with final selection ultimately relying on the judgment of the primary investigator. Administrative and faculty experts were identified through nomination by administrators in a Midwestern college of business and AACSB administrative staff using the membership roster of the MBA Round Table (MBA Roundtable, 2012) and the AACSB membership listing (AACSB, 2015a). Each "nominator" was contacted personally by the investigator and asked to either suggest participants for the panel or to provide the names of those who could suggest others as expert participants (Delbecq et al., 1975). Additional faculty and administrative experts were identified through their presentations at online learning conferences or through related peer-reviewed publications. Expert instructional designers were identified through recommendation of administrators or faculty at a business college or through their publications or presentations at online learning conferences. All potential participants underwent a screening process that involved a review of the website of their college and personal communication as needed to confirm their involvement with a fully online AACSB-accredited MBA program. (AACSB, 2016c). Due to the specific inclusion criteria, the pool of potential expert participants for this study was relatively small. In 2015-2016, only 228 institutions reported offering an MBA program through internet-based distance education courses (Brooks & Morse, 2016). Additionally, less than 5% of business colleges attain AACSB accreditation (AACSB, 2016c). A number of potential panelists

did not meet the inclusion criteria as their AACSB-accredited institution had not delivered a fully online MBA program for more than 5 years.

Once potential experts were identified, they were contacted by email to confirm initial interest and availability to participate in a three-round Delphi study. Those experts providing confirmation received an email 'Invitation to Participate in a Delphi Study' (Figure B.1) that described the importance of their participation, outlined the objectives of the study, described the respondent panel, outlined the obligations involved with agreement to participate including time commitments, and described the benefits of participation (Delbecq et al., 1975; Okoli & Pawlowski, 2004).

Every effort was made to protect the anonymity of the participants. An electronic data collection process helped to ensure this anonymity and only de-identified data was shared with participants through the Delphi process. Approval for the research was obtained through the Boise State University Office of Research Compliance under Protocol Number 104-SB16-055 (Appendix A).

Instruments and Procedures

Data were collected electronically through the use of a Google Website created for the study, email communications, and Qualtrics^{TM}, an internet-based survey platform. Participants were directed to the study Website through email. At the site they accessed the investigator profile, instructions, research methodology, documents including the IRB approval and informed consent, links to each survey as it was made available, and the data as it was compiled (Cole et al., 2013). Additional communications to keep participants updated occurred as needed via email and postings to the Website.

<u>Data Collection</u>

The data collection process consisted of three rounds of questionnaires with controlled feedback delivered to participants between rounds through a summary of the previous results (Dalkey, 1969). Figure 3.1 outlines the study rounds.

PRELIMINARY TASKS
Statement of the problem
IRB & permissions
Creation of expert panel
Development of initial survey question
Creation of study Website
Pilot questionnaire

↓

ROUND ONE
Distributed round 1 survey
Data collection and analysis
Round 1 results posted to study Website
Round 2 survey created based on round 1 results

↓

ROUND TWO
Distributed round 2 survey
Data collection and analysis
Round 2 results posted to study Website
Round 3 survey created based on round 2 results

↓

ROUND THREE
Distributed round 3 survey
Data collection and analysis
Final results posted to study Website

Figure 3.1   Study Rounds

The concept of controlled feedback is an important aspect of Delphi research with the investigator determining how aggregated data is shared with participants (von der Gracht, 2012). In this study, data analysis for each round was performed by the

investigator immediately after each survey was closed so that aggregated results could be reported back to panelists within two weeks and in conjunction with delivery of the subsequent survey. The qualitative Round One responses were used to craft the quantitative surveys delivered in Round Two and Round Three. The Round Two and Round Three surveys were identical but in Round Three panelists were encouraged to review the Round Two group statistics and to use this data to inform their Round Three responses (von der Gracht, 2012). Descriptive statistics (mean, median, mode) and measures of dispersion (standard deviation, interquartile range) for each item statement in Round Two were shared via the study Website and were included following each item statement in the Round Three questionnaire.

Cole et al. (2013) present an example of the benefits involved in delivery of an e-Delphi using Qualtrics[TM]. An electronic survey instrument such as Qualtrics[TM] provides a simple interface for questionnaire design, easily allows for pilot testing, provides the administrator with the ability to monitor response rates and progress towards consensus, and real-time production of statistics. Qualtrics[TM] includes a large database for gathering and storing electronic data, monitors response rates and attrition, generates simple statistical reports, and allows for easy transfer of data into Excel or SPSS for analysis. Qualtrics[TM] was chosen for this research as the investigator has access to an institutional subscription and is able to provide access with little training and no cost to study participants. Each survey delivered through Qualtrics[TM] has a unique URL which was provided to participants for each round through the study Website.

Because of the multiple iterations involved when using the Delphi methodology, it is particularly important to present an electronic survey instrument that offers no

technical challenges and provides clear instructions to the participants (Day & Bobeva, 2005). Pilot testing is an important aspect of most studies involving administration of a survey instrument. However, in a Delphi study it is typically only possible to fully pilot the initial question due to the integral role that the study participants play in the development of the Round Two and Round Three questionnaires and the rapid turnaround required in each iteration, two weeks in this study. Pilot testing the initial question can help establish content validity (Creswell, 2013) and can help identify potential issues in the question structure, questionnaire instructions, visual design and question validity that can then be addressed before administration of the questionnaire to the expert panel (Shelton & Creghan, 2015). While it may not be feasible to fully pilot the questionnaires for all rounds in a Delphi study, it is still important to test the mechanics of the electronic survey instrument and the process used for all rounds on a variety of computer operating systems to help identify any potential issues with compatibility of hardware, browsers, or security software. In the current study, a pilot test of the Round One questionnaire was administered to a group of administrators, faculty, and instructional designers at the investigator's university and all subsequent iterations of the electronic survey instrument were tested on multiple systems and browsers with no technical or other issues found.

Study Timeline

Figure 3.2 outlines the study timeline. The round one email communication (see Appendix B) was sent on March 18, 2016 to those who initially agreed to participate in the study with additional emails sent as those who could not participate referred other experts. The Round One email included an introduction to the study, instructions for

participation and the link to the study Website which housed the description of the

process and the link to the Qualtrics™ survey instrument. Panelists were asked to visit

the study Website to access the link to the first round questionnaire and to complete this

questionnaire as soon as possible and no later than April 1, 2016. Reminder emails

(Appendix B) were sent one-week and one-day prior to the due date to participants who

had not yet responded. One final email offering a short extension to those who had not

yet completed the questionnaire was sent on April 2.

Round 1

| March 15, 2016 Round 1 email | → | April 1, 2016 Round 1 questionnaire due | → | April 15, 2016 Analysis of Round 1 results posted |

Round 2

| April 15, 2016 Round 2 email | → | April 29, 2016 Round 2 questionnaire due | → | May 9, 2016 Analysis of Round 2 results posted |

Round 3

| May 9, 2016 Round 3 email | → | May 23, 2016 Round 3 questionnaires due | → | Participants provided with final report upon conclusion of study |

Figure 3.2   Study Timeline

Round One. The traditional Delphi approach was used with a broad, open-ended

question presented in the first round to help establish the variables of interest for

subsequent rounds (Cole et al., 2013; Hsu & Sandford, 2007). In this first round, the

following question was asked of three separate groups of professionals (administrators,

faculty, instructional designers) working in the field of online MBA education in AACSB-accredited institutions:

1. How should quality be assured for online MBA programs within the next three to five years?

To answer this question, participants were directed to the study Website (https://sites.google.com/a/u.boisestate.edu/qualitydelphisite/home) where they accessed the link to the Round One electronic Qualtrics[TM] survey. While the process of delivering the initial open-ended question through an electronic medium such as Qualtrics[TM] appears to be simple enough, care must be taken in the presentation of this question. Dillman, Smyth, and Christian (2009) suggest that the answers that are provided to an open-response question can be influenced by the visual design of the answer box that is provided. Respondents look to the size of the answer box as a clue to how much information they should provide with the size of the box implying the amount of information that the investigator is seeking. It is important to include language in the instructions that will cue participants that they can invest as much time as they are willing to provide into their answers. In this study, participants were limited to five answer boxes for the Round One question in order to direct their responses. The size of each text box was moderately large, participants were informed that they did not have to provide five answers, and the boxes were expandable allowing unlimited space to present answers.

Round One data was qualitatively analyzed by the investigator and a peer debriefing process was used to improve the validity of the inferences made from the data and to add credibility to the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000). A peer debriefer questions methods and interpretations and through this process can help the primary investigator to

overcome biases, perspectives, and assumptions that may influence how the data is coded (Cohen & Crabtree, 2008; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The open-ended responses generated in the Round One Qualtrics survey were entered into an Excel spreadsheet for analysis. In the first stage of the analysis, the primary investigator divided the essay responses of participants into individual statements, grouped similar statements together, consolidated these statements when possible, and generated item statements that were then categorized into major themes. Next, this initial coding was reviewed by two peers in the business college with changes negotiated and incorporated into the coding. Finally, this data was cross checked and revised with the assistance of an experienced Delphi researcher to further reduce threats to internal validity. Participants meeting the inclusion criteria generated seventy-two text box responses. The statements entered into a text box addressed one or more concepts and in some cases included additional supporting verbiage. When generating the final item statements, the original words of the respondents were used to the degree possible. The following shows an example of how responses were combined and translated into one statement:

Response 1- "An online program should develop standards for online course delivery (online teaching)."

Response 2- "Establish quality standards that account not only for course design, but also for delivery."

Consolidated statement- "Establish quality standards for online course delivery (teaching)."

Following the coding and consolidation process, the final questionnaire included 46 item

statements categorized into seven major themes.

As part of the member checking process inherent in a Delphi study, a document

summarizing the aggregated Round One data was created for each major theme and

posted to the Website under the heading of Round One Data

(https://sites.google.com/a/u.boisestate.edu/qualitydelphisite/round-1-raw-data). Screen

captures of the documentation posted to the study Website are presented in Appendix D

(Figures D1 through D7). These summary documents include the individual item

statements as generated in the coding process along with the text responses that supported

each item statement. They clearly illustrate the interpretations of the investigator related

to creation of the final item statements. This member checking process gives the panelists

an opportunity to react to the data and provide additional open-ended comments that can

then be incorporated into the final narrative (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

In Round One, initial contact was made with fifty potential participants who had

been identified as experts. The email invitation to participate in the Delphi study was sent

to 40 of these experts who responded positively to this initial contact. Thirty-two experts

agreed to participate and accessed the Round One survey. Of these, twenty-two (69%)

met the inclusion criteria and completed the first round questionnaire. Round One

surveys were completed by nine administrators, five faculty members, and eight

instructional designers.

Round Two. The item statements and major themes that were generated from the

open-ended questions in Round One were used to create the Round Two questionnaire. In

this questionnaire, each major theme was presented on a page in the Qualtrics survey

with its associated item statements. An email invitation to respond to the Round Two

questionnaire was sent on April 15, 2016. Panelists were asked to rate the statements

presented under each theme for perceived importance using a 5-point Likert scale with

'1' indicating "not at all important" and 5 indicating "absolutely critical" importance

(Table 3.1) and were given the opportunity to provide additional comments, rationale, or

clarification if they desired.

Table 3.1   Likert Scale Ratings and Values

Rating	Not at all Important	Somewhat Important	Important	Very Important	Absolutely Critical
Value	1	2	3	4	5

Participants were also asked to rank each of the major themes in order of importance

from 1-7 with '1' indicating the most important theme. This Round Two process helped

to identify items requiring clarification or areas of consensus and disagreement and

helped to open a dialogue between participants (Delbecq et al., 1975; Ludwig, 1997).

Reminder emails were sent to any non-respondents one week prior to the April 29 due

date followed by reminders on May 1 offering an extension until May 2. A final reminder

was sent to two participants on May 3 offering an extension until end of the day on May

5, 2016 at which time the Round Two survey was closed. The second round of the survey

concluded with 19 respondents (7 administrators, 5 faculty, 7 instructional designers) for

an overall Round Two response rate of 86.4%.

Round Three. The Round Three process allowed the participants the opportunity

to better understand each other's position and offer more accurate judgements regarding

the issue under discussion (Delbecq et al., 1975). This final questionnaire is important as

it provides closure for the study, suggests areas where diversity exists while still allowing for aggregation of opinions, and guides future research and planning (Delbecq et al., 1975).

The Round Three questionnaire was identical to the Round Two questionnaire except for the addition of descriptive statistics and measures of dispersion that were added next to associated item statement (see Figure 3.3).

	Not at all important (1)	Somewhat important (2)	Important (3)	Very important (4)	Absolutely critical (5)
Online MBA programs should be accredited through AACSB. Mean: 4.30, Median: 5, Mode: 5, IQR: 1.00, SD: 0.86	○	○	○	○	○

Figure 3.3   **Presentation of Statistics in Round Three Qualtrics Survey**

The summary results of Round Two including analysis of statement ratings using descriptive statistics, rankings, and open-ended responses were also provided to panelists via the study Website (https://sites.google.com/a/u.boisestate.edu/qualitydelphisite/round-2-raw-data). Figure 3.4 demonstrates an example of the presentation of this Round Two aggregated data to study participants. The summary of the responses of their peers made panelists aware of the range of opinions and gave them an opportunity to reflect upon their own original responses (Delbecq et al., 1975; Franklin & Hart, 2007; Ludwig, 1997). Panelists were asked to review this information and were again given an opportunity to further clarify their own opinions and revise their own responses based on the new information they received regarding the opinions of their peers. Round Three processes were identical to those of Round Two. The initial Round Three email directing panelists to the survey link on the study Website was sent on May 9 with responses due

on May 23. Reminder emails were sent on May 16 and on May 23 with a final reminder

sent to several participants on May 24 offering an extension to the end of day on May 25.

Seven administrators, five faculty, and six instructional designers (n=18) completed the

Round Three questionnaire for an overall response rate of 81.8%.

Theme 1- Academic integrity & rigor					
Statements ranked on Likert scale of 1-5 with 5 indicating the highest importance	Mean	Median	Mode	IQR	SD
1-Deliver a highly demanding curriculum with rigorous grading standards.	4.50	5	5	1.00	0.83
1-Implement rigorous systems to ensure the academic integrity of quizzes, exams, and assignments.	4.25	5	5	2.00	1.02
1-Require students to sign a code of conduct.	3.30	3	3	1.25	1.03
1-Structure an admission process that focuses on quality of students.	3.95	4	5	2.00	1.05

Theme 1- Academic integrity and rigor.
Rate the item statements below on a Likert scale of 1-5 with 5 indicating the highest importance.

■ Not at all important (1)   ■ Somewhat important (2)   ■ Important (3)   ■ Very important (4)
■ Absolutely critical (5)

I think a code of conduct is a given. We do an online orientation for all our MBA students and they have to understand and agree to our CoC. I think online students should be the SAME caliber as on-campus students.					
Nothing else really matters until you can ensure academic integrity. People are kidding themselves if they allow students to take exams or quizzes outside a proctored environment. It's hard, expensive and a logistical challenge - but failure to do so means those summative assessments have almost no value.					
Change item #2 to read "Implement rigorous systems and PROCESSES to ensure..."					
Item 1 seems to have two questions in one statement. Isn't it possible to have a demanding curriculum with low grading standards or an easy curriculum with rigorous					
You should also ask about verifying student identity (or include in the second statement perhaps). Code of Conduct is important, but having students review the academic honesty code and attest to it at each exam or with each paper turned in can also be important.					
Deliver an appropriately demanding curriculum with rigorous grading standards. / / Implement rigorous processes and systems to ensure the academic integrity of quizzes, exams, and assignments.					
What constitutes "highly demanding"?					
To me, signing a code of conduct is one piece of the academic integrity process.					
I think there needs to be a bit more clarification as to what "rigorous grading standard" means for the first statement. Be default, a graduate degree in an online format is rigorous (by design); therefore, what does the grading standard really accomplish? / / The second statement is a bit tricky to understand. It is my experience that when rigorous quizzes/assignments are not scaffolded properly, it actually increases students need to cheat in order to get better grades. Perhaps looking at service learning or formative					

Figure 3.4   Example of Round Two Aggregated Data

Optimizing Response Rates

Optimizing response rates and minimizing attrition is a goal of any research

study but perhaps even more so in a Delphi where high non-response rates may occur as

multiple iterations require the participants to be engaged for a longer period of time (Shelton & Creghan, 2015). While anonymity is an important aspect of a Delphi study, the investigator must know the identity of respondents in order to pursue non-respondents and improve response rates (Hasson, Kenney, & McKenna, 2000). To support retention in this study, the primary investigator stayed in contact with panelists during all three rounds with frequent, ongoing email communication and planned data collection as much as possible around a higher education timeline that was congruent with the work and vacation schedules of most participants (Franklin & Hart, 2007). Most importantly, it was critical to complete all three rounds of the study before participants were lost with the end of the school year and summer vacation. Prior to participation, panelists were fully informed of the nature, scope, goals and requirements of the study and were made to feel like they were an important part of the group and process (Shelton & Creghan, 2015; Stitt-Gohdes & Crews, 2004). Of the thirty-two experts accessing the Round One survey, twenty-two met the inclusion criteria and completed the Round One questionnaire. Nineteen of the participants completing the Round One questionnaire completed Round Two (86%) and eighteen (82%) finished the entire three rounds of the study. This is above the 70% per round participation rate recommended to preserve rigor (Hasson, Kenny & McKenn, 2000; Sumsion, 1998).

Statistical Analysis

The purpose of the current Delphi study was to evaluate consensus as well as differences of opinion both within and between groups (administrators, faculty, instructional designers) using both quantitative and qualitative methodology. The initial open-ended question was qualitative in nature while subsequent iterations contribute both

quantitative and qualitative data through the items or statements that are scored or ranked and the related open-ended responses. Measures of central tendency and level of dispersion are the primary statistics used in Delphi studies as a means of presenting information about the collective judgments of respondents (Hsu & Sandford, 2007). The median is a particularly valuable measure when using a Likert-scale (Hsu & Sandford, 2007).

Qualitative Analysis

Analysis of the qualitative data is subjective in nature relying on the interpretation of the investigator and their use of proper techniques for summarizing and presenting the group response, and as such, may be prone to researcher bias (Franklin & Hart, 2007; Linstone & Turoff, 2002). Multiple processes were used to help ensure the validity of the qualitative data and minimize bias including peer debriefing, member checking, and bracketing. Peer debriefing involved using colleagues with research experience as external reviewers to review the data and coding process (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Member checking is inherent in the Delphi methodology as data are submitted along with the investigator's interpretations to the participants for their feedback after each round so that they can confirm that the information presented is realistic and accurate with their comments included in the final narrative report (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Franklin & Hart, 2007; Shelton & Creghan, 2015). Finally, bracketing was used to improve accuracy by limiting the impact of the investigators personal experience on the results (Creswell, 2013). This is particularly important in a Delphi study as the investigator determines what feedback is provided to the panelists in each iteration and any bias could have a significant impact on results (Linstone & Turoff, 2002).

Quantitative Analysis

Descriptive statistics including mean, median, mode as well as standard deviation and interquartile range were used to analyze the importance of the identified outcomes. The interquartile range is frequently used in Delphi studies and is "generally accepted as an objective and rigorous way of determining consensus" (von der Gracht, 2012, p. 1531). Mean ratings of individual statements between groups were analyzed using the Kruskal-Wallis H test (also called the "one-way Anova on ranks) with multiple comparisons made on all statements (Laerd Statistics, 2013).

The goal of this study was to determine not only where consensus exists but also to determine areas in which there is divergence of opinion between or among groups. Consensus can involve either agreement or disagreement with a statement. Consensus is one of the most controversial aspects of the Delphi methodology with many different methods used to determine levels of agreement among panelists; there is even a lack of consensus on the definition of the word itself (Shelton & Creghan, 2015; von der Gracht, 2012). von der Gracht (2012) summarized the literature and provided an overview of measures of consensus and corresponding criteria as defined in Delphi research. One simple method for determining consensus is to stipulate a certain level of agreement among responses (von der Gracht, 2012). The 'level of agreement' measure of consensus is particularly meaningful if nominal or Likert scales are used and the definition of the specific level is based on accepted standards such as political voting systems (von der Gracht, 2012). In a review of the literature, Shelton and Creghan (2015) noted that while no clear guidelines for level of consensus in a Delphi study were found, levels chosen to represent consensus commonly appear to be in the 60% to 80% range.

Summary

Chapter 3 describes the methodology of the study. A three-round Delphi process was used to gather the opinions of non-random, purposively-selected group of expert panelists related to quality assurance in AACSB-accredited fully online MBA programs. The key features of the Delphi methodology- anonymity, iteration, controlled feedback, and the statistical aggregation of group response- were applied to the research design.

The surveys for each round were electronically delivered using the Qualtrics platform. Communications occurred via email and through a Website created for the study. The responses to the initial open-ended Round One question were used to create the survey instrument used in Rounds Two and Three. These two questionnaires asked respondents to rate 46 item statements for importance based on a 5-point Likert scale and to rank seven themes for importance in relationship to the others. The first study email was sent to participants on March 15, 2016 and data collection closed on May 23, 2016. Eighteen panelists completed all three rounds of the study.

Data were analyzed by the investigator using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Descriptive statistics including mean, median, mode and measures of dispersion, interquartile range and standard deviation, were used in analysis. The Kruskal-Wallis H-test was used to evaluate differences between groups.

CHAPTER FOUR

Data Analysis and Findings

This chapter includes the data analysis and findings of a three-round Delphi study investigating the views of select stakeholders related to quality assurance in AACSB-accredited online MBA programs. Included are a profile of the expert panelists, a summary of response rates for each of the three survey round and an analysis of Round One, Two and Three results.

Profile of Expert Panelists

A non-random purposive sample of 22 expert panelists with at least five years of experience in online learning were selected from AACSB-accredited business colleges from across the United States with at least one fully online MBA program. The panelists were placed into one of three subgroups based on their primary role at their institution: (a) administrator, (b) faculty member, and (c) instructional designer. A summary of the primary role of the respondents completing the Round One questionnaire is presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1   Primary Role of Respondents

Primary Role	Sample	Percent
Administrator	9	40.9
Faculty	5	22.7
Instructional Designer	8	36.4
Total	22	100.0

Participants were drawn from thirteen states across the United States (see Table 4.2). The institutions and specific titles of the participants are not presented in order to help preserve anonymity.

Table 4.2   **Location of Institutions of Respondents**

Role	Location	N
Administrator	Indiana	2
	Wisconsin	2
	Massachusetts	1
	North Carolina	1
	Florida	1
	Texas	1
	Arizona	1
Faculty	Louisiana	1
	Texas	1
	Wisconsin	2
	Florida	1
Instructional Designers	Florida	2
	Nebraska	1
	Alabama	1
	Maryland	1
	Wisconsin	1
	California	1
	Arizona	<u>1</u>
Total		22

Table 4.3 presents demographic data for the Round One respondents. While the inclusion criteria for the study required that panelists have 5 or more years of experience in online education, a majority (54.5%) had 11 or more years of experience. A small majority of participants overall were female (54.5%).

Table 4.3   Respondent Demographics

Profile Descriptor	Administrator		Faculty		Instructional Designer		All	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Years of Experience								
>20	1	11.1	0	0.0	1	12.5	2	9.1
16-20	1	11.1	3	60.0	1	12.5	5	22.7
11-15	2	22.2	2	40.0	1	12.5	5	22.7
5-10	5	55.6	0	0.0	5	62.5	10	45.5
Total	9	100.0	5	100.0	8	100.0	22	100.0
Gender								
Male	4	44.4	3	60.0	3	37.5	10	45.5
Female	5	55.6	2	40.0	5	62.5	12	54.5
Total	9	100.0	5	100.0	8	100.0	22	100.0

Summary of Response Rates

In order to conduct this study, experts involved in online MBA programs were initially identified as potential participants through a nomination process discussed in Chapter 3. As a result, 40 experts were identified and emailed, inviting them to participate in the study (see Appendix B). Of the 40 experts who were emailed, 25 expressed interest in participating in the study and accessed the Round One questionnaire. Three participants did not meet the inclusion criteria in the survey instrument. Twenty-two (55%) of the initial 40 identified experts met the inclusion criteria and completed the survey.

A Delphi study requires participants to take part in multiple rounds, which can be a challenging time commitment (Cole et al., 2013; Linstone & Turoff, 2011). These participants were informed of the time commitment required to take part in the study and were provided a detailed description of the process including the number of rounds and the tentative data collection schedule. While significant effort was made to minimize

attrition (e.g. multiple reminder emails sent for each round), it is not uncommon for

participants to drop off in a Delphi study (Cole et al., 2013; Linstone & Turoff, 2011).

Responses were included in the data only if the panelist participated in the preceding

round; for example, if they completed Round Three but did not complete Round Two,

their Round Three data was not included. One instructional designer completed Round

Two but did not complete Round One, one instructional designer completed Round Three

but did not complete Round Two, and one administrator completed Round Three but did

not complete Round Two.

Table 4.4   Summary of Expert Panel Participation for Each Round

Rounds	Questionnaires Sent	Questionnaires Completed	Percent Returned by Round
Round One			
Administrator	14	9	64.3
Faculty	13	5	38.5
Instructional Designer	13	8	61.5
Total	40	22	55.0
Round Two			
Administrator	9	7	77.8
Faculty	5	5	100.0
Instructional Designer	8	7	87.5
Total	22	19	86.4
Round Three			
Administrator	7	7	100.0
Faculty	5	5	100.0
Instructional Designer	7	6	85.7
Total	19	18	94.7

Results

<u>Round One</u>

In Round One, 22 expert panelists- classified in one of the three subgroups of

administrator (n=9), faculty (n=5), or instructional designer (n=8)- responded to the

question, "How should quality be assured for online MBA programs within the next 3-5

years?". There were a total of 72 essay responses. The 72 responses were collated, compressed and combined to generate 46 item statements that were then categorized into seven major themes or subscales. When possible, the original words of the respondents were used in the final item statements. The responses from Round One are listed by subgroup in Table D1.1, D1.2, and D1.3 in Appendix D. Table 4.5 presents the number of Round One consolidated statements organized alphabetically by theme: (a) academic integrity and rigor, (b) accreditation, (c) course content, design and delivery, (d) evaluation, (e) faculty qualifications, development and support, (f) learner support, and (g) quality frameworks. Faculty qualifications, development, and support (n=11) generated the greatest number of statements (n=11) followed by course content, design and delivery (n=8) and evaluation (n=8). Determining the specific number of original statements attributed to each theme presented challenges as participant responses in discrete questionnaire textboxes referenced multiple subjects or included supporting verbiage for a primary statement. To view the original responses and how they were associated with each item statement and theme see Figures D1, D2, D3, D4, D5, D6, and D7 in Appendix D. These figures represent the summary documents that were presented to the panelists via the study Website in conjunction with the Round Two questionnaire. The summaries are organized by major theme and include the consolidated statements related to each theme as well as the individual participant responses that formed the basis for each statement that was generated in the coding process.

Table 4.5   Number of Consolidated Round One Responses by Theme

Theme	Statements	Percentage of Total
Academic integrity and rigor	4	9%
Accreditation	5	11%
Course Content, Design and Delivery	8	17%
Evaluation	8	17%
Faculty qualifications, development and support	11	24%
Learner Support	4	9%
Quality Frameworks	6	13%
Total	46	100%

The most responses (n=11) emerged from the data in the theme of faculty

qualifications, development and support and the fewest responses were generated in the

areas of academic integrity and rigor (n=4) and learner support (n=4). However, more

participants provided individual statements related to academic integrity and rigor than

they did related to learner support but because they were similar in nature they were

consolidated into only 4 final statements. Learner support had the fewest overall

comments both in original and consolidated statements. While learner support is an

important consideration for an online program, in this study, other areas took priority.

Reliability of the Instrument

The individual item statements were categorized by theme and these themes were

then ranked for importance. In order for the importance of each theme to be accurately

evaluated, it is important that the item statements within each theme measure the same

concept. Cronbach's Alpha is the most widely used measure of reliability (Tavakol &

Dennick, 2011) and is commonly used to determine if the items within a subscale on a

questionnaire reliably measure the same thing (Laerd Statistics, 2015a). The Likert scale

values chosen by each panelist for each statement within each theme in the questionnaire

were entered into SPSS and a reliability analysis was run using Cronbach's Alpha. This

test was used to measure the internal consistency of the item statements presented within

each theme (subscale) for the Round One and Round Two questionnaires. The estimated

reliability coefficients for each theme for Round Two and Round Three are presented in

Table 4.6. Higher values of alpha suggest that items within a theme are correlated to each

other and lower values suggest there may be poor inter-relatedness between items

(Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). The closer the alpha values are to 1.0, the greater the

internal consistency of the items within the theme. Alpha values <.6 indicate questionable

internal consistency (Gliem & Gliem, 2003). The accreditation theme generated a low

reliability coefficient in Round Two (.30) suggesting that the statements within this

theme do not measure the same concept or characteristic. However, in Round Three the

alpha value for the group of items in this same theme was .73 suggesting that, based on

the responses of the panelists completing Round Three, they did measure the same

characteristic. The lowest Round Three alpha values were obtained for the themes

academic integrity and rigor (.55) and course content, design and delivery (.52).

Table 4.6   Estimated Reliability Coefficients by Major Theme for Round Two and Three

Major Theme	Number of Statements	Round 2	Round 3
		Alpha	
Academic Integrity and rigor	4	.53	.55
Accreditation	5	.30	.73
Content, Design and Delivery	8	.63	.52
Evaluation	8	.60	.64
Faculty Qualifications, Development and Support	11	.60	.73
Learner Support	4	.64	.67
Quality Frameworks	6	.78	.81

Comparison of Individual Items from Rounds Two and Three

One of the hallmarks of a Delphi study is the use of the same questionnaire for multiple rounds with the results of the last round, Round Three in this study, considered final. The Round Three data can be compared to Round Two to see if the process of providing participants access to the responses of other expert panelists results in convergence to a consensus of opinion between rounds (Jairath & Weinstein, 1994). From Round Two to Round Three in this study, the mean scores decreased for 28 of the 46 statements (61%), increased for 17 statements (37%) and stayed the same for one statement (2%) (see Table F1 in Appendix F).

The frequency distribution of standard deviation values of mean scores for all Round Two and Round Three questionnaire items can be found in Table 4.7. Standard deviation values decreased for 31 (67%) of the item statements, increased for 14 (30%)

and stayed the same for one statement from Round Two to Round Three (See Table F1 in

Appendix F).

Table 4.7   Frequency Distribution of Standard Deviation Values of Mean Scores for all Round Two and Round Three Questionnaire Items

Standard Deviation	Round 2		Round 3		Net Change
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	
>1.00	25	54.3	18	39.1	-7
.75 - .99	12	26.1	19	41.3	+7
.50 - .74	9	19.6	8	17.4	-1
< .50	0	0	1	2.2	+1
Total	46	100	46	100	0

In Delphi studies it is common to use the interquartile range (IQR) in addition to

the standard deviation to measure dispersion (von der Gracht, 2012) with IQR measuring

the dispersion of the median. The interquartile range (IQR) is a measure of variability

based on dividing a data set into quartiles (Stat Trek, 2016). It is the difference between

the upper (Q3) and lower (Q1) quartiles and represents the middle 50% of observations in

a data set (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013; von der Gracht, 2012). If the IQR is less

than 1, more than 50% of all opinions fall within one point on the scale (von der Gracht,

2012). von der Gracht (2012) reviewed the literature and found that an IQR of 1 or less

was used to indicate consensus. Raskin (1994) and Rayens and Hahn (2000) determined

that an IQR of 1 or less was a suitable consensus indicator for 4- or 5- unit scales such as

the 5-point Likert scale used in this study. Table G.1 in Appendix G compares the Round

Two and Round Three interquartile range values for each item statement in the

questionnaire. IQR values remained the same for 35% (n=16) of the items, decreased for 46% (n= 21) and increased for 20% (n=9) of the items between rounds. Twenty-nine of the forty-six items (63%) in the final Round Three questionnaire had an IQR value of 1.0 or less indicating consensus on these items.

Panelists placed high importance on many of the items in the questionnaire. Fourteen Round Three items had mean importance scores corresponding to the range of "very important" to "absolutely critical" ($\geq$4.25). Tables 4.8 and 4.9 demonstrate consistency in mean scores between rounds for both the highest- and lowest-rated items. When compared to the corresponding Round Two items, all fourteen items were rated as "very important" or higher (M$\geq$4.0) in both rounds and twelve items demonstrated a mean score $\geq$4.25 in both Round Two and Round Three. Scores for ten of the fourteen items increased or stayed the same from Round Two to Round Three and the standard deviation for eight of the items decreased suggesting convergence between rounds for these items. The fourteen highly rated items included responses from all seven major themes with four of the highest rated items from Course Content, Design, and Delivery and three representing Faculty Qualifications, Development, and Support.

Table 4.8   Comparison of Highest Rated Items (M $\geq$ 4.25) from Round Three and Corresponding Ratings from Round Two

Item	Statement	R3 Rank	R3 M	R3 SD	R2 Rank	R2 M	R2 SD
3-8	Provide resources and support for ongoing course design, development, delivery and technology.	1	4.72	0.46	5	4.53	0.70
3-3	Provide relevant and practical course content that can be applied directly to the workplace.	2	4.67	0.69	6	4.37	1.07
1-1	Deliver a highly demanding curriculum with rigorous grading standards.	3	4.61	0.61	2	4.63	0.60
6-4	Provide online student support services.	4	4.61	0.61	1	4.74	0.56
2-1	Online MBA programs should be accredited through AACSB.	5	4.56	0.78	10	4.26	0.87
4-3	Provide the same level of quality in both online and on campus classes.	6	4.56	0.70	4	4.56	1.04
3-6[a]	Use technology appropriately.	7	4.39	0.70	13	4.11	1.20
5-10	Provide learning management system (LMS) training and support.	8	4.39	0.85	7	4.37	0.68
4-7	Assess learning outcomes.	9	4.33	0.77	9	4.28	0.83
3-2	Design courses that promote student engagement and collaboration.	10	4.28	1.02	11	4.26	0.81
5-1	Establish standards for faculty qualifications and credentials.	11	4.28	0.75	12	4.26	0.65
5-3[a]	Assign faculty to teach online who are willing to do so and are comfortable with using technology.	12	4.28	0.57	14	4.05	0.78
7-1	Develop processes and systems that encourage and maintain quality.	13	4.28	0.67	8	4.32	0.82
7-3	Establish quality standards for online course delivery (teaching).	14	4.28	0.75	3	4.58	0.51

[a]Indicates an item with $\underline{M} \leq 4.25$ in Round Two

The experts considered all but two of the items on the questionnaire "important" or higher (M>3.0). The lowest rated responses were not focused in any one theme, rather, they were spread across all seven themes except for Course Content, Design, and Delivery. *Assess online MBA programs separately* (M=2.17) and *offer post-graduate opportunities* (M=2.50) were the lowest rated items in both rounds and the only items with a rating below "important". The nine Round Three items ranked from "somewhat important" to "important" (M=< 3.5) were compared to the corresponding Round Two items. Six of the nine items demonstrated a mean score $\leq$ 3.50 in both Round Two and Round Three and all mean scores were $\leq$ 3.75 in both rounds indicating consistency between rounds. Scores for six of the nine items decreased from Round Two to Round Three and the standard deviation for all nine items decreased between rounds suggesting convergence.

Table 4.9   Comparison of Lowest Rated Items (M ≤ 3.50) and Corresponding Ratings from Round Two

Item	Statement	R3 Rank	R3 M	R3 SD	R2 Rank	R2 M	R2 SD
4-4	Assess online MBA programs separately.	1	2.17	1.20	1	2.33	1.41
6-1	Offer post-graduate opportunities	2	2.50	1.04	2	3.00	1.37
7-5	Implement external reviews of online courses and programs.	3	3.17	1.04	6	3.47	1.39
5-8[a]	Provide a certification training program for faculty interested in teaching online at the graduate level.	4	3.22	1.31	9	3.68	1.34
2-5	Assurance of Learning should be the same in all modes of instruction.	5	3.39	1.14	3	3.16	1.30
4-5	Integrate student evaluations into the quality assurance process.	6	3.39	1.04	4	3.33	1.24
1-3	Require students to sign a code of conduct.	7	3.50	0.99	5	3.37	1.01
5-4[a]	Online faculty should be part of the existing university culture and should also teach in the face-to-face classroom.	8	3.50	1.20	8	3.58	1.35
7-6[a]	Institute peer review processes.	9	3.50	0.92	7	3.53	1.22

[a]Indicates an item with M ≥ 3.50 in Round Two

Comparison of the Rankings of Major Themes from Round Two and Round Three

In Part Two of the questionnaire panelists were asked to rank the importance of each theme related to the other six themes. Table 4.10 compares the Round Three rankings to the corresponding Round Two rankings. Faculty Qualifications, Development and Support was the only area showing consistency from Round Two to Round Three with a ranking of three. Academic Integrity and Rigor moved from a ranking of two in Round Two to the number one spot in Round Three while Course Content, Design and Delivery moved from number one to number two. Quality Frameworks (6 to 4) and Accreditation (7 to 5) moved up in rank from Round Two to Three while Learner Support (4 to 6) and Evaluation (5 to 7) each dropped two spots. Standard deviation values decreased in four areas and increased in three from Round Two to Round Three.

There are limitations in the interpretation of these rankings. Participants in this study rated many of the individual items within a theme quite high with all but two item statements in the entire questionnaire rated as "important" or higher. Participants may view some of the items that they ranked as equivalent, creating a false hierarchy, or may have a tendency to rank items presented first more highly (People Pulse, 2016).

Table 4.10   Rankings for Major Themes from Round Three and Corresponding Rankings from Round Two

Major Theme[a]	R3 Rank	R3 M	R3 SD	R2 Rank	R2 M	R2 SD
Academic Integrity and Rigor	1	2.12	1.05	2	2.17	1.25
Course Content, Design, and Delivery	2	2.24	1.20	1	2.11	1.02
Faculty Qualifications, Development and Support	3	3.00	1.32	3	3.22	1.48
Quality Frameworks	4	4.82	1.70	6	5.17	1.95
Accreditation	5	4.88	2.06	7	5.39	1.88
Learner Support	6	5.29	1.49	4	4.94	1.63
Evaluation	7	5.65	1.32	5	5.00	1.19

[a]Respondents were asked to rank each them in order of importance from 1=highest importance to 7=lowest importance.

Themes

The final rank and descriptive statistics for each item within a theme are presented in Tables 4.11 to 4.17. The tables are organized by theme and are presented in rank order of importance. This presentation allows easy visualization of the importance placed on each item by respondents. Panelists were also given the opportunity for open-ended comments related to each theme. The Round Three comments can be found in Appendix F.

Academic Integrity and Rigor

Although the theme Academic Integrity and Rigor received the highest ranking by panelists as a whole (see Table 4.10), only one associated statement was among those most highly rated overall and only two associated statements (of four) were rated as "very

important" or higher (see Table 4.11). *Delivering a highly demanding curriculum with rigorous grading standards* was ranked third overall (see Table 4.8) and *implementing rigorous systems to ensure the academic integrity of quizzes, exams and assignments* was rated as very important. One faculty comment summarized the importance of these two statements,

> "Nothing else really matters until you can ensure academic integrity. People are kidding themselves if they allow students to take exams or quizzes outside a proctored environment. It's hard, expensive and a logistical challenge - but failure to do so means those summative assessments have almost no value."

Several respondents wanted clarification regarding terminology. An instructional designer stated, "What constitutes 'highly demanding'[curriculum]?" and another instructional designer commented, "I think there needs to be a bit more clarification as to what 'rigorous grading standard' means."

Rated less highly were *structuring an admission process that focuses on quality of students* and *requiring students to sign a code of conduct*. One faculty respondent commented, "It should be noted here that faculty control of both admission standards and academic integrity may be hard to maintain when moving to an online program or online courses." Requiring students to sign a code of conduct had mixed responses with 10 panelists rating this as "very important" or higher and an equal number rating it as "important" or lower. The additional comments also reflected this diversity of opinion. An instructional designer commented, "a code of conduct is a given" and a faculty member stated, "Code of Conduct is important" and suggested that in addition, students should also verify their identity with each assessment. In contrast, another faculty

member felt a code of conduct was less important because "students who are inclined to

cheat are not motivated by signing a contract."

Table 4.11   Rank Order of Participant Responses in the Academic Integrity and Rigor Theme

Item #	Statement	M	SD	Rank
1-1	Deliver a highly demanding curriculum with rigorous grading standards.	4.61	0.61	1
1-2	Implement rigorous systems to ensure the academic integrity of quizzes, exams, and assignments.	4.17	0.92	2
1-4	Structure an admission process that focuses on quality of students.	3.83	0.92	3
1-3	Require students to sign a code of conduct.	3.50	0.99	4

<u>Course Content, Design and Delivery</u>

All 8 items within the theme of course content, design and delivery were rated as "important" to "very important" or higher (≥ 3.50) (see Table 4.12). This theme placed second in final rankings (first in Round Two) and had four associated statements among the most highly rated overall with a mean of 4.25 or higher (Table 4.8). Panelists indicated that resource allocation for online learning was the most important aspect of quality for online learning with *providing resources and support for ongoing course design, development, delivery and technology* the most highly rated item overall. Panelists also placed very high importance on *providing relevant and practical course content that can be applied directly to the workplace* and *providing quality content with the same learning objectives used in both online and face-to-face courses*. A faculty panelist commented, "the Assurance of Learning guidelines can make sure that the same class is taught in all different modalities." dditional responses recommended that online courses be innovative and use technology appropriately. However, multiple respondents questioned the meaning of the term "appropriately" in reference to technology use. Several suggestions were offered to address this terminology. An instructional designer suggested "use technology appropriately to support the concepts" and substitution of the term "effective" for appropriate was also suggested. Respondents supported best practices in online course design through their recommendations that courses promote student engagement and collaboration, utilize both formative and summative assessments, and be based on a common course template or structure that still allows adequate freedom for the instructor to teach as they wish.

Table 4.12   Rank Order of Participant Responses in the Course Content, Design and Delivery

Item #	Statement	M	SD	Rank
3-8	Provide resources and support for ongoing course design, development, delivery and technology.	4.72	0.46	1
3-3	Provide relevant and practical course content that can be applied directly to the workplace.	4.67	0.69	2
3-6	Use technology appropriately	4.39	0.70	3
3-2	Design courses that promote student engagement and collaboration.	4.28	1.02	4
3-4	Provide quality content with the same learning objectives in both online and face-to-face classes.	4.22	0.81	5
3-7	Establish a common course template, structure, or architecture that also provides adequate freedom for an instructor to teach as s/he wishes.	3.94	0.87	6
3-5	Utilize both formative and summative assessments in course design.	3.72	1.02	7
3-1	Use innovative approaches to curriculum design and delivery of instruction.	3.67	1.08	8

Faculty Qualifications, Development and Support

The greatest number of statements (n=11) were generated in the area of Faculty

Qualifications, Development and Support (Table 4.13) with three of these items among

the top rated items overall (Table 4.8). *Provide learning management system training and*

support was the highest rated item in this area. *Assigning willing faculty who are*

comfortable with technology to online courses was also considered very important.

Respondents thought it important that *only qualified faculty teach online* and that

standards and credentials be established with proficiency in a uniform set of skills

related to online teaching and learning demonstrated. However, one faculty panelist

commented,

> "Unfortunately, too often requiring training for or proficiency in online tools and
> "best practices" is used as a control technique by administrators who want to
> guide program rigor and participation using their own agenda. In my experience
> and in discussion with colleagues elsewhere there simply aren't enough resources
> controlled by faculty to allow them to train in online tools and techniques, so
> provision of faculty-led initiatives in adaptation would be welcomed. Limiting
> online teaching to those who demonstrate proficiency in a certain set of tools
> would end up having all the un-tenured assistant profs or clinicals doing the
> online teaching while the same folks who've taught the MBA for a couple of
> decades continue to teach the MBA courses and do AoL".

Responses also indicated support for the creation of a course design partnership between

faculty and instructional designers. Gauthier and Jack (2014) outline such a partnership at

Dartmouth University between a biology instructor and an instructional designer that

resulted in improved performance on exams and increased student satisfaction. Shearer

(2016) writes that partnerships between faculty and instructional design teams "crafts the

course into an enjoyable and challenging experience that can guide the students to a

successful end where they can demonstrate master of the learning objectives" (p. 2).

While a number of responses were generated related to supporting and requiring faculty

participation and growth in online learning through professional development programs, *provide a certification training program for faculty teaching online* was ranked the least important item in this theme. Perhaps because of potential challenges related to add such a program to already heavy faculty workloads.

Table 4.13   Rank Order of Participant Responses in the Faculty Qualifications, Development and Support Theme

Item #	Statement	M	SD	Rank
5-10	Provide learning management system (LMS) training and support.	4.39	0.85	1
5-1	Establish standards for faculty qualifications and credentials.	4.28	0.75	2
5-3	Assign faculty to teach online who are willing to do so and are comfortable with using technology.	4.28	0.57	2
5-5	Support faculty participation and growth in online learning.	4.22	0.88	3
5-11	Qualified academic faculty manage course content and requirements.	4.17	1.10	4
5-9	Create a course design partnership between faculty and instructional designers.	3.78	1.11	5
5-7	Faculty are required to attend training before teaching an online course.	3.72	1.07	6
5-2	Require MBA instructors to be proficient in a uniform set of skills related to online teaching and learning.	3.67	0.97	7
5-6	Faculty are required to participate in training/professional development for research-based, best practices of online course design and delivery.	3.61	1.09	8
5-4	Online faculty should be part of the existing university culture and should also teach in the face-to-face classroom.	3.50	1.20	9
5-8	Provide a certification training program for faculty interested in teaching online at the graduate level.	3.22	1.31	10

<u>Quality Frameworks</u>

Table 4.15 presents the 6 statements generated under the theme of Quality

Frameworks. *Develop processes and systems that encourage and maintain quality* and

establishing quality standards for online course delivery (teaching) were tied for the

highest rating in this area. *Implement a structured internal review process* was considered

of very high importance while external reviews and peer reviews, although rated as

important, scored much lower. Implementation of external reviews was ranked as the

least important item in this theme and had the third lowest score overall. One faculty

panelist commented,

> "reviews are important (adds a level of accountability), but sometimes reviewers
>
> are not as familiar with the course objectives as needed to be effective with their
>
> reviews."

Standardize and clearly defining online course design expectations based on consistent

and universal standards was also considered important. However, a faculty respondent

had concerns that establishing quality standards could lead to administrative control of

curriculum; the respondent suggests instead that the quality framework be developed and

maintained by program faculty. An instructional designer commented that all of the

statements in this area were important and they would like to see how they would be

ranked in order of importance by the panel.

Table 4.15   Rank Order of Participant Responses in the Quality Frameworks Theme

Item #	Statement	M	SD	Rank
7-1	Develop processes and systems that encourage and maintain quality.	4.28	0.67	1
7-3	Establish quality standards for online course delivery (teaching).	4.28	0.75	1
7-4	Implement a structured internal review process adhering to accepted quality standards for online courses and programs.	4.11	0.83	3
7-2	Standardize and clearly define online course design expectations based on consistent and universal standards.	3.83	1.10	4
7-6	Institute peer review processes.	3.50	0.92	5
7-5	Implement external reviews of online courses and programs.	3.17	1.04	6

Accreditation

Five statements emerged related to the theme of Accreditation (see Table 4.16). The highest rated statement for this theme was *online MBA programs should be accredited through AACSB* (M=4.56). *Online programs should be accredited like any residential, part-time, or executive MBA program* was also rated as very important (M=4.11). However, one faculty respondent noted, "online has some basic differences from on campus. Not identical in offering, so some variation in accreditation is o.k." Three statements in the accreditation theme addressed AACSB Assurance of Learning (AoL) with the highest rated statement indicating that *AoL should be properly assessed and measured across all college MBA programs* (M=4.22). Rated less highly but still important was the statement that *AoL be the same in all modes of instruction but tailored to the objectives of individual disciplines* (M=3.39) with a panelist commenting, "AoL

data collection varies by discipline, instructor and type of assessment". An instructional

designer commented on the difficulties of measuring AoL consistently,

> "It is difficult to measure assurance of learning across all campus and online
>
> MBA courses because the online courses don't necessarily mimic the exact
>
> structure of the campus courses. Many things work differently in the online
>
> environment in comparison to the face to face environment so the same activities
>
> or assessments aren't necessarily present in each version of the course. The
>
> college's process for assurance of learning needs to accommodate both
>
> campus/f2f and online, and if the process was developed for campus courses, it
>
> needs to be modified to include the online sections."

A faculty respondent suggested the following related to AoL,

> "It appears to work best that Assurance of Learning can be used to link the rigor
>
> across F2F versus online sections within the same program. Also, it's imperative,
>
> and AASCB and the regional accreditors make this very clear, that AoL is
>
> faculty- and discipline-driven. That stated objective has allowed concerned
>
> faculty to maintain standards over time.

Table 4.16   **Rank Order of Participant Responses in the Accreditation Theme**

Item #	Statement	M	SD	Rank
2-1	Online MBA programs should be accredited through AACSB.	4.56	0.78	1
2-3	Assurance of Learning should be properly assessed and measured across all college MBA courses.	4.22	0.94	2
2-2	Online programs should be accredited exactly like any residential, part-time, or executive MBA program.	4.11	1.02	3
2-4	Assurance of Learning must be tailored to the learning objectives of individual disciplines, and not from some top-down vision of how MBA programs can be remade to be more appealing to the masses.	3.67	1.24	4
2-5	Assurance of Learning should be the same in all modes of instruction.	3.39	1.14	5

Learner Support

The fewest responses were offered in the area of learner support (See Table 4.17). The highest rated of the four items within this theme, *provide online student support services* (M=4.61)*,* was among the most highly rated overall. Panelists also thought it important to provide outside classroom networks and support and to offer opportunity for electives. As summarized by one instructional designer,

> "online student support and job placement/coaching services are just as important for online students. Graduate programs should have the same support structure in place for these activities/services as on-ground students have."

Table 4.17   Rank Order of Participant Responses in the Learner Support Theme

Item #	Statement	M	SD	Rank
6-4	Provide online student support services.	4.61	0.61	1
6-3	Provide outside classroom networks and support.	3.72	0.83	2
6-2	Offer opportunity for electives	3.61	1.04	3
6-1	Offer post-graduate opportunities	2.50	2.014	4

Evaluation

Panelists wanted to *provide the same level of quality in both online and on campus classes* (M=4.56). This was the highest rated item of eight in the area of evaluation and also one of the highest rated overall. They thought it very important that *online MBA courses and programs be reviewed for quality in terms of design, content, student and instructor engagement in the course* (M=4.22) and that *online courses be reviewed on an ongoing basis* (M=4.11). Panelists also thought it very important that learning outcomes be assessed (M=4.33) and learning goals attained at the same level across programs (4.06). One administrator suggested evaluating learning effectiveness rather than the concept of quality across online and campus classes. While still important, *programs are responsive to student feedback* (M=3.56) *and integrate student evaluations into the quality assurance process* (M=3.39) were ranked lower with one participant commenting,

> "student evaluations response levels can be so low that they become complaint forums only. Responses should be reviewed and considered, not necessarily used for determining overall quality."

Panelists did not think it important that online MBA programs be assessed separately

(M=2.17) and this was the lowest rated item in the study. One instructional designer

wondered, "Assess online MBA programs separately from what?"

Table 4.18   Rank Order of Participant Responses in the Evaluation Theme

Item #	Statement	M	SD	Rank
4-3	Provide the same level of quality in both online and on campus classes.	4.56	.70	1
4-7	Assess learning outcomes.	4.33	0.77	2
4-1	Assess online MBA programs for quality in terms of design, content, and student and instructor engagement in the course.	4.22	0.94	3
4-2	Review online courses on an ongoing basis.	4.11	0.83	4
4-8	Attain learning goals at the same level across online MBA and other professional MBA courses (non-residential).	4.06	0.73	5
4-6	Programs are responsive to student feedback.	3.56	0.92	6
4-5	Integrate student evaluations into the quality assurance process.	3.39	1.04	7
4-4	Assess online MBA programs separately.	2.17	1.20	8

Ranking of Themes

In addition to rating the importance of individual item statements, panelists were

asked to rank the importance of each major theme in relationship to the others on a scale

of one (highest importance) to seven (lowest importance). Table 4.19 presents the means

and standard deviations for each theme by role. As noted in the subgroup analysis that

follows (Table 4.20), faculty (M=1.2) ranked academic integrity and rigor significantly

higher than did instructional designers (M=3.0). A number of others findings related to

ranking by subgroup are interesting but not statistically significantly different.

Surprisingly, faculty and instructional designers both ranked course content, design and delivery lower than administrators and with a greater level of agreement based on standard deviation. One might have expected faculty and instructional designers to rank this area higher as they are more closely involved with the courses than are administrators. Instructional designers are likely to have more experience with quality frameworks as they are applied to online learning which may have impacted their higher ranking of this area compared to faculty and administrators.

Table 4.19   Means and Standard Deviations for Themes by Role, in Rank Order

	Roles					
	Administrator		Faculty		Instructional Designer	
Themes	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Academic Integrity and Rigor	2.14	0.69	1.20	0.45	3.00	1.22
Course Content, Design and Delivery	1.71	1.50	2.60	0.89	2.60	0.89
Faculty Qualifications, Development and Support	3.43	1.27	3.20	1.30	2.20	1.30
Quality Frameworks	5.57	1.27	5.20	0.84	3.40	2.19
Accreditation	5.14	2.19	4.20	2.28	5.20	1.92
Learner Support	4.71	1.60	5.20	1.30	6.20	1.30
Evaluation	5.29	1.38	6.40	0.89	5.40	1.52

Subgroup Analysis

One purpose of the study was to determine if there were differences in how three groups of stakeholders- administrators, faculty, and instructional designers- involved in the delivery of online MBA programs viewed quality assurance. Between group analysis

was done using the Kruskal-Wallis H test, a non-parametric equivalent to ANOVA that is

used to analyze ordinal data when comparing three or more groups. The Kruskal-Wallis

H test can be used to compare groups of small, unequal size when there are at least three

comparison groups with at least five observations in each group (Boston University,

2016; Math Cracker, 2016; TexaSoft, 2008). Kruskall-Wallis is more appropriate than

ANOVA for questionnaires as it does not make assumptions about distribution of data

(Laerd Statistics, 2015b). This data met the assumptions required for obtaining a valid

result with the Kruskal-Wallis H test (Laerd, 2013):

1. The dependent variable was measured at the ordinal level (Likert scale).
2. The independent variable consisted of two or more categorical independent groups (three groups).
3. There was independence of observations.
4. Distributions of scores were not similar for all groups as assessed by visual inspection of boxplots, therefore, Kruskall-Wallis H test was used to compare mean ranks.

     Kruskal-Wallis was run on all 46 statements in the final Round Three

questionnaire to determine if there were significant differences in the importance scores

assigned to questionnaire items between the participants in three groups:

"administrators", "faculty", and "instructional designers". Results showed statistically

significant different distributions of scores between subgroups for items 1-4 and 6-2 as

well as significantly different distributions of ranks between groups for Theme 1 (Table

4.20).

Table 4.20   **Round Three Kruskal-Wallis H Test**

Item/Theme	Statement	H-statistic	df	Significance
Item 1-4	Structure an admission process that focuses on quality of students.	7.530	2	.023
Item 6-2	Offer opportunity for electives	8.087	2	.018
Theme 1	Academic integrity and rigor	7.125	2	.028

Post hoc analysis was completed using Dunn's 1964 procedure with a Bonferroni adjustment (Laerd Statistics, 2013). Adjusted *p*-values are presented and values are mean ranks unless otherwise stated. Items were rated in importance on a Likert scale of "1" to "5" with 5 indicating absolutely critical importance. Post hoc analysis (Table 4.21) revealed statistically significantly differences in item 1-4 scores between the instructional designers (4.92) and faculty (12.60) ($p = .038$) with faculty scoring "structure an admission process that focuses on quality of students" higher in importance (Figure 4.1). Item 6-2 "offer opportunity for electives" was also scored significantly higher in importance by faculty (13.50) than it was by instructional designers (4.92)($p = .018$). These findings are not surprising as instructional designers typically have less direct involvement in the offering of electives or in the admission process. Seven themes were ranked in order of importance from "1" to "7" with 1 indicating the most important theme compared to the others. Theme 1 "academic integrity and rigor" was ranked statistically significantly higher by faculty (4.60) than it was by instructional designers (12.70) ($p = .024$). This suggests that while instructional designers are involved in creating online courses that support academic integrity and rigor, there are likely other aspects of their role that they feel more directly impact quality. No statistically significant differences

were found in any other group combinations for ratings of item importance or ranking of themes. Figures 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 depict the statistically significant pairwise comparisons.

Table 4.21   Post-hoc Analysis Pair-wise Comparison of Roles

Item/Theme	Role	Test Statistic	Adj. Sig.
1-4	Designer-Faculty	6.683	.038
6-2	Designer-Faculty	8.583	.018
Theme 1	Faculty-Designer	-8.100	.024

Summary

This chapter presents the data analysis and findings from the Delphi study with a panel comprised of expert administrators, faculty and instructional designers drawn from AACSB-accredited business colleges across the United States. While the inclusion criteria required a minimum of 5 years of experience in online learning, the majority of these participants (54.5%) had 11 years or more of experience. The goal of the study was to gain insight into how these experts thought quality should be assured for fully online AACSB-accredited MBA programs.

The Round One essay responses were used to generate 46 item statements categorized into the seven major themes of (a) academic integrity and rigor; (b) accreditation; (c) course content, design and delivery; (d) evaluation; (e) faculty qualifications, development and support; (f) learner support and, (g) quality frameworks. The top ranked themes in Round Three were academic integrity and rigor followed by course content, design and delivery. The individual item statement assigned the highest importance was *provide resources and support for ongoing course design, development, delivery and technology*. Subgroup analysis found statistically significantly different responses between groups in item statements related to admissions and electives as well

as in the theme of academic integrity and rigor which was ranked higher by faculty than it was by instructional designers.

Chapter V further discusses the implications of these results.

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary, Conclusions and Implications

The typical student pursuing an MBA degree is often a working adult increasingly looking to online educational options to meet the needs of a busy schedule (Cao et al., 2010). AACSB-accredited business colleges have increased their online offerings to meet the demands of this demographic (BMD staff, 2016). According to Fortune Magazine, the online MBA has come of age as top schools move into the market and the quality of students deciding to earn online MBA degrees is increasing (Byrne, 2013). In order to address any challenges to the quality of the online MBA degree, it is important that programs not only meet, but exceed, the quality standards of their brick and mortar counterparts and advance the scholarship of teaching and learning (Gaytan, 2013).

The purpose of this study was to investigate stakeholder perceptions of the future of quality assurance in fully online AACSB-accredited MBA programs. The field of education has undergone significant change, including the adoption of online learning as a delivery model, since the AACSB was founded as the Association of Collegiate Schools of Business (ACSB) in 1916. The AACSB first addressed quality issues in distance learning in their 1999 report (AACSB, 2007). Reference to online learning, to a limited degree, first appeared in the standards in 2015 (AACSB, 2015c), making this study timely and relevant.

This study used the Delphi methodology to survey expert administrators, faculty, and instructional designers to determine their views on how quality should be assured in fully online AACSB-accredited MBA programs. The study began in Round One with 22 panelists generating 72 essay responses in response to the initial open-ended question, "How should quality be assured for online MBA programs within the next 3-5 years?" These responses were coded and used to create 46 item statements that were then categorized into one of seven major themes. These Round One statements and themes were used to create the questionnaire that panelists completed in Rounds Two and Three. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. In Part I of the questionnaire, panelists were asked to rate the importance of each of the 46 item statements on a scale of 1-5; in Part II of the questionnaire panelists were asked to rank the importance of each theme compared to the others. The following themes were created based on the responses of the panel through the Delphi process and summarize their views related to quality assurance in AACSB-accredited online MBA programs.

1. *Academic Integrity and Rigor*- Deliver a highly demanding curriculum with rigorous grading standards and implement rigorous systems to ensure the academic integrity of assessments.

2. *Course Content, Design and Delivery*- Allocate adequate resources and utilize technology appropriately so that relevant, practical, and innovative course content based on consistent learning objectives can be delivered online.

3. *Faculty Qualifications, Development and Support*- Provide faculty with training and support, establish faculty proficiency in online teaching, and staff online courses with qualified, willing faculty.

4. *Quality Frameworks*- Establish quality standards for online course delivery and develop processes and systems, including a structured internal review process, that encourage and maintain quality.

5. A*ccreditation*- Accredit online programs through AACSB and measure Assurance of Learning (AoL) the same across all modes of instruction within MBA programs.

6. *Learner Support*- Provide online student support services.

7. *Evaluation*- Provide the same level of quality in both online and on-campus courses including assessment of learning goals and outcomes.

Summary of Major Themes

Academic Integrity and Rigor

Despite the growth of online learning, faculty across the U.S. remain skeptical of this mode of delivery (Allen & Seaman, 2013; Jaschik & Lederman, 2014). One reason for this skepticism is concerns over academic integrity and rigor associated with online learning (Khuder, 2011; King, 2009; Weimer, 2015). Therefore, it was not surprising that panelists ranked the maintenance of academic integrity and rigor as the most important aspect of quality in online MBA programs. In fact, the panelists support a highly demanding online curriculum, rigorous grading standards, and the implementation of rigorous systems to support academic integrity.

The AACSB accreditation standards require business schools to set policies and procedures that support ethical behavior and for institutions to have mechanisms in place to address breaches in ethical behavior. But the standards do not set specific requirements defining academic integrity or rigor for either online or face-to-face programs (AACSB,

2016d). Instead, academic rigor requirements are phrased more broadly as determining the level of student performance that "triggers curricular interventions to address deficiencies" with challenging but attainable goals set as internal benchmarks (AACSB, 2013, p. 13). Other accrediting bodies, though, do specifically address academic integrity and rigor in online learning. For example, the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (CRAC) (2011) requires institutional policies on academic integrity that specifically reference online learning, student orientation addresses this subject, and that online faculty be trained to address academic integrity (CRAC, 2011; Keil & Brown, 2014). The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) (2012) standards suggest that program rigor and quality be ensured by having faculty assume primary responsibility for distance education.

The results of this study showed that faculty and instructional designers disagree on the emphasis of academic integrity and rigor in terms of program quality. While faculty ranked academic integrity and rigor higher than instructional designers, this does not mean that academic integrity and rigor are unimportant to instructional designers. Rather, these results may suggest that faculty are more directly involved with assuring quality in this area.

Subgroup analysis also found that faculty considered *structuring an admission process that focuses on the quality of students* significantly more important than did instructional designers. Again, this is likely not due to instructional designers feeling that admissions processes or the quality of students are unimportant, but rather, that they have little direct involvement with these areas. It is important to note that this item was considered less important by the panelists overall. This perhaps indicates that the

panelists institutions already have rigorous admissions requirements even though the AACSB does not set specific guidelines. CRAC (2011) does not specifically address quality of students but does require that the admissions programs supporting online learning appropriately target students that fit the admission requirements.

<u>Course Content, Design and Delivery</u>

Panelists ranked the area of course content, design and delivery second in overall importance. They considered all 8 items within this theme to be important or very important. Of the 8 items, panelists rated *provide resources and support for ongoing course design, development, delivery and technology* as the most important statement, not only in this theme, but within the entire questionnaire.

Other quality assurance organizations and accrediting bodies agree with the importance of resource allocation for online learning. The OLC Quality Scorecard (2014) requires that institutions have a process in place for planning and allocating resources for online learning; AACSB (2016d) requires schools to have adequate financial resources to support the infrastructure to fits its activities (e.g. distance learning) and to provide technology support for students and faculty appropriate to its programs (e.g. online learning); and CRAC (2011) requires the provision of adequate resources to support (and expand if appropriate) online offerings. In a competitive educational market, administrators are looking to online learning as a means to increase enrollment and decrease costs (Gaytan, 2013; University of Illinois, 2015). Institutions may be challenged by the high costs of providing the infrastructure needed to support a quality online program.

The results show that the panelists also think that providing high quality, relevant and practical course content and using the same learning objectives in both online and face-to-face courses are important components of a quality program. While the AACSB standards (2016d).do not specifically address using the same learning objectives in online and face-to-face courses, they do state that programs should be structured to "ensure consistent, high-quality education for the same degree programs regardless of differences and changes in technology and delivery modes" (p. 29). Consistency is important and it may be possible to have the same learning objectives across delivery platforms. However, a successful face-to-face curriculum will need to be carefully developed to translate successfully to an online environment; quality may be compromised if the curriculum has not been adapted to meet the needs of the online medium (University of Illinois, 2015).

The panelists also reported that student interaction, engagement, and collaboration are important parts of a quality online MBA program. This is consistent with the online learning literature and accreditation standards (AACSB, 2016d; Chico, 2016; CRAC, 2011; Dixson, 2010; Maryland Online, 2014c; OLC, 2014; Sebastianelli, Swift, & Tamimi, 2015). For instance, the panelists focused on the importance of formative and summative assessments, which is emphasized by current literature on online learning (Gikandi, Morrow, & Davis, 2011; Sewell, Frith, & Colvin, 2010). Gikandi, Morrow, and Davis (2011) specifically found support for the use of formative assessments in online learning to evaluate not only the products of learning, but also the learning processes. These formative assessments can be accomplished through the use of online tools such as self-quizzes, discussion forums, and e-portofolios and can support student-centered learning and engagement in the learning community.

The panel thought it important that online courses be based on a common course template that allowed adequate freedom for the instructor to teach as they wish. A scan of business school websites finds that course templates for online learning are commonly offered through the Centers for Teaching and Learning in many institutions. Newberry and Logofatu (2008) outline a course template development process for online degree programs. They found that portability, flexibility, instructor autonomy, and consideration for the different types of interactions were important consideration in development of such a template. The Blended Learning Toolkit expands beyond provision of a course template and provides an open source repository of best practices; directions and suggestions for applying the provided course templates to other courses; faculty development materials; assessment and data collection protocols; and research related to blended learning (UCF & AASCU, n.d.). While designed to support blended learning, this model could also be used for fully online programs.

Panelists agreed that appropriate technology use was important in online learning but there was discussion around exactly what this means. Accrediting bodies have referred to the appropriate use of technology as related to the nature and objectives of the program and in the context of supporting assessment strategies (CRAC, 2011; Keil & Brown, 2014; SACSCOC, 2012). Popular quality assurance programs for online learning address appropriate technology use through inclusion of a technology section in their rubrics (Chico, 2016; Maryland Online, 2014c; OLC, 2014). Technology alone does not positively impact student learning, rather, it is how the technology is used to support teachers as they provide context and foster reflection and discussion that is important

(Wilcox, Sarma, & Lippel, 2016). The OLC scorecard specifically notes that superfluous use of technology is to be minimized (OLC, 2014).

Evaluation

Of the seven themes, evaluation was ranked as the least important. This is an interesting result as evaluation is typically considered an integral part of quality assurance processes. Contradictory to the low ranking, five of the eight items classified within the evaluation theme had a mean score > 4.0 (very important) indicating that panelists did place high importance on select evaluation processes. Two items within the evaluation theme, (a) *assess online MBA programs separately* and, (2) *integrate student evaluations into the quality assurance process* were among the lowest rated items overall and may have influenced the low ranking for this theme.

Provide the same level of quality in both online and on campus classes was one of the most highly rated items overall (M=4.56). This is also an important area for accrediting agencies who expect the same academic standards to be applied to both online and face-to-face offerings and online curricula to be benchmarked against face-to-face counterparts (CRAC, 2011; Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2011; Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, 2012; SACSCOC, 2012). AACSB began to address online learning in the 2015 standards but did not develop separate standards specific to online delivery of programs. Panelists appear to agree with this approach as separate assessment of online MBA programs was the lowest rated item in the study.

Gaytan (2013) examined the quality issues recognized by the AACSB distance learning task force (AACSB, 2007) and developed a high-quality framework to support

online course design, evaluation, and continuous revision. Continuous quality improvement is a concept addressed throughout accreditation and quality assurance programs (HLC, 2016; Maryland Online, 2016d; Moore, 2011) and the continuous improvement review is a cornerstone of the AACSB accreditation process (AACSB, n.d.c). Quality improvement has been defined as,

> The disciplined use of evidence-based quantitative and qualitative methods to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, equity, timeliness or safety of service delivery processes and systems (inclusive of the human resources within that system) toward the pursuit of better services or outcomes for 'users' or customers of the system (Park et al., 2013).

Panelists also considered it important that evaluation of courses and programs occur on an ongoing basis.

Historically, business programs have used indirect measures such as student evaluations, employer perceptions, objective tests, student exit interviews, teacher-student ratio, library resources, faculty qualifications, and the curriculum to evaluate programs (AACSB, 2013; Edwards & Brannen, 1990; Kretovics & McCambridge, 2002). This began to change with the adoption of the 2003 AACSB standards which emphasized directly measuring student outcomes through selection, course-embedded measures, and stand-alone testing (AACSB, 2013; Kretovics, 1999). Since the revision of the standards in 2013, not only direct approaches, but also indirect measures such as student and employer surveys are allowed as a part of the portfolio of evidence (AACSB, 2013). Panelists assigned the most importance to faculty qualifications and the curriculum as measures of quality in online MBA programs and considered student evaluations to be of

less importance. Student evaluations are commonly used evaluation tool in business

colleges (Alexander et al., 2009; Grandzol & Grandzol, 2006) and accrediting agencies

may require evidence of student satisfaction with the quality of online instruction

(CRAC, 2011). However, Galbraith, Merrill & Kline (2012) found little or no support for

the validity of student evaluations as a general indicator of teaching effectiveness or

student learning.

 Faculty Qualifications, Development and Support

  Research suggests that faculty, even those who have been successful teaching

face-to-face, may have difficulty transitioning to the online environment without

adequate training and support (University of Illinois, 2015). Panelists generated the most

comments- and three of the most highly rated statements overall- related to faculty

qualifications, development and support. This emphasis highlights the need to train and

support faculty as they move from a face-to-face to an online delivery mode. Panelists

thought it important for faculty participation and growth in online learning to be

supported. The AACSB suggests that it is essential for faculty members to be equipped

with the skills necessary to facilitate student learning across hybrid, distance and online

platforms (AACSB, 2016b). They also thought that uniform standards need to be

established for faculty qualifications and credentials. Faculty support was one of the

seven areas for excellence in online learning identified in an early report produced by the

Institute for Higher Education Policy (Phipps & Merisotis, 2000) that subsequently

informed later quality assurance programs such as the OLC Quality Scorecard for Online

Learning. The Online Learning Consortium (formerly Sloan-C) includes faculty

satisfaction as one of the Five Pillars of Quality Online Education (OLC, 2016). This

framework suggests that faculty satisfaction is improved when institutions provide

training in online instructional skills and ongoing assistance to support online learning.

The OLC Quality Scorecard for Online Learning includes 18 points related to faculty

support, addressing not only technical and technological assistance, but also ongoing

professional development, training, assistance and support for course development and

teaching online (OLC, 2014). The CRAC (2011) guidelines require that faculty teaching

online are selected carefully, trained appropriately and evaluated frequently. Panelists

suggest that the faculty who teach online courses should be willing to do so and should be

comfortable with technology. This is supported in research. Gaytan (2013) recommends

assigning early-entry technology-driven instructors to online courses.

Providing training and support specific to the LMS was the highest rated item

under the Faculty Qualifications, Development and Support theme. While ninety-nine

percent of institutions offer training and support for faculty related to the learning

management system (Dahlstrom, Brooks, & Bichsel, 2014), a 2014 Educause study of

17,451 faculty from 151 institutions found that a majority of faculty (57%) indicated they

could be more effective instructors if they were more skilled at using the LMS and one in

four indicated they were dissatisfied with their initial LMS training (26%) and ongoing

training support (25%) (Dahlstrom et al., 2014). CRAC (2011) guidelines require

institutions to ensure competency with the software products used by the institution; the

LMS could be considered one of these software products.

While the AACSB standards do not delineate additional qualifications or criteria

for faculty teaching online, they do set requirements for the qualifications faculty must

maintain and require that experience and development activities be consistent with

teaching responsibilities (AACSB, 2009). Institutions are required to demonstrate that all

faculty have current and relevant qualifications regardless of their contractual status as

full-time, part-time, tenured or non-tenured employees (AACSB, 2009). Developing a

pool of faculty with the skills necessary for teaching online while simultaneously meeting

the AACSB faculty qualifications for academic preparation, intellectual contribution,

professional experience, intellectual capital maintenance, and teaching preparation may

be challenging given the current trend toward hiring fewer full-time faculty and more

part-time faculty at many institutions (AAUP, 2016; Magness, 2016).

Quality Frameworks

Instructional designers rated the theme of Quality Frameworks higher (M=3.40)

than did faculty (M=5.20) or administrators (M=5.57). While this difference was not

statistically significant, it does show that panelists thought it important that consistent and

universal quality standards be established for online course design and systems put in

place to encourage and maintain quality of online learning. However, they placed less

importance on using external or peer reviews to aid in this process. In contrast,

implementation of a structured internal review process was considered to be of very high

importance. As described in the review of literature, a number of national and

international bodies provide external standards and benchmarks for quality related to

online learning. The AACSB does not specify how quality is to be defined or maintained

in online course design but does indicate that programs are to be "structured to ensure

consistent, high-quality education for the same degree programs regardless of differences

and changes in technology and delivery modes" (AACSB, 2016d, p. 29). Programs such

as the OLC Quality Scorecard (2014) and the Quality Matters Rubric (Maryland Online,

2014c) can be utilized in either formal external review processes leading to certification or can be used to guide a more informal internal review that supports continuous quality improvement. Quality Matters addresses course design only while the purpose of the OLC Quality Scorecard is to identify, measure and quantify elements of quality within an entire online program. Both programs also integrate peer review into the overall process.

Accreditation

Panelists support AACSB accreditation of online MBA programs and assessment of AoL standards across all MBA programs regardless of delivery method. The current AACSB accreditation standards address select aspects of online learning but embed these within the overall standards and do not differentiate between online and face-to-face delivery models (AACSB, 2016d). Panelists support tailoring AoL to the objectives of individual disciplines which is also supported by the AACSB standards,

> "For assurance of learning purposes, AACSB accreditation is concerned with broad, program-level focused learning goals for each degree program, rather than detailed learning goals by course or topic, which must be the responsibility of individual faculty members".

No statements or comments were generated related to accreditation by other higher education agencies.

Learner Support

Learner support is one of the common themes included in published standards for online learning (Chico, 2016; CRAC, 2011; OLC, 2014). While effective student support services are essential for student success, there are often gaps in the online services offered (Keil & Brown, 2014). Panelists ranked the overall category of learner support

only sixth in importance, however, they did consider the individual statement, *providing online student support services,* to be of very high importance (M=4.61). Gaytan (2013) agrees that providing online student support is critical but also details a number of additional factors related to ensuring quality through addressing the online student experience. He believes that business schools need to clearly articulate and communicate the demands and expectations of online courses to students and must be prepared to support their acquisition of necessary technology skills.

<u>Implications</u>

The 2014 Higher Education Edition of the Horizon Report predicted greater integration of online, hybrid and collaborative learning as a means of making content more dynamic, flexible and accessible to larger numbers of students (Johnson, Becker, Estrada, & Freeman, 2014). This change is important as universities strive to attract students who may be unable to participate in a classroom model of instruction due to work, geographic restrictions, military service, or other constraints (Bacow et al., 2012). MBA programs need to keep up with these changes, including online delivery, if they are to continue to participate in a competitive educational market. AACSB has recognized the need for change and is encouraging innovation in MBA programs (Ponzillo, 2015).

Experts rated AACSB accreditation of online programs "very important" to "absolutely critical" (M=4.56) and responses indicate that panelists felt it important programs be accredited the same regardless of delivery method. Assessing online programs separately was the lowest rated item in the questionnaire (M=2.17); one expert questioned exactly what "separately" meant and this is an important point. It is unclear through these results if panelists would consider the use of a supplemental quality

assurance program a separate assessment as they also thought it very important to implement a structured internal review process adhering to accepted quality standards for online courses and programs (M=4.11). As the current AACSB standards do not have separate or distinct provisions for online learning, reliance on these standards alone makes it difficult to fully address the items that these experts consider important for quality assurance. The utilization of programs such as the Quality Matters Rubric or the OLC quality scorecard could be used to support internal review processes for online learning and address items not specifically addressed in accreditation standards.

Administrators, faculty and instructional designers have separate and distinct roles and responsibilities related to the delivery of a quality online MBA program. One goal of this study was to determine if these stakeholders had different views related to the implementation of quality assurance programs and the future direction of AACSB standards. Subgroup analysis of the Round Three responses found significant differences between groups in only one of seven themes and in two of the forty-six statements; in all three of these cases, differences were between faculty and instructional designers. The two statements with significant differences were related to admissions processes and elective offerings, areas in which instructional designers typically have little involvement. More importantly, faculty assigned significantly more importance to the theme of academic integrity and rigor than did instructional designers. This may be explained by the fact that while instructional designers are involved in the creation of courses that support academic integrity and rigor, they have little direct interaction with students once the courses are created, perhaps influencing their impressions of the importance of this area. As the current AACSB standards do not have separate or distinct provisions for

online learning, reliance on these standards alone may make it difficult to fully address the items that these experts consider important for quality assurance.

Recommendations

The results of this study are of value as they provide insight into what aspects of quality assurance are most important for AACSB-accredited online MBA programs from the perspective of three groups of stakeholders who are integral to the delivery of such programs—administrators, faculty and instructional designers. The following recommendations are supported by the literature and by the findings from this study.

- Identify and implement systems and processes to ensure the academic integrity of online courses and programs. Train faculty and instructional designers to address academic integrity in the online environment, in the context of both course design and delivery.

- Structure courses and programs to have equivalent quality standards, admission requirements, learning objectives, course content and academic rigor regardless of delivery modality while carefully considering how to successfully translate the face-to-face curriculum for online delivery.

- Allocate adequate and ongoing resources for online course design, delivery and maintenance.

- Develop a common online course template specific to the program that can be customized by the individual faculty member.

- Implement academic technologies that support the objectives and assessment strategies of the program and minimize superfluous use of technology.

- Implement a continuous quality improvement program with ongoing evaluation of online courses and programs. Such a program can be developed and administered through internal, external, and/or peer review processes in a manner that is best supported by the culture of the institution.

- Provide faculty development, training and support related to technology, the learning management system, and online course development and teaching for both full-time and adjunct faculty members.

- Establish uniform standards for faculty qualifications and credentials for online teaching and assign faculty who are comfortable with technology and willing to teach online to these courses.

- Explore expansion of the AACSB standards to more completely encompass online learning.

- Provide comprehensive online student support services and clearly communicate the demands and expectations of online learning.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations are recognized in the methodology of this study with several inherent to the Delphi methodology itself. Unlike the classical Delphi, the purpose of this study was to obtain information and not to build consensus. Panelists were not tasked with reaching consensus related to standards for online learning in AACSB-accredited programs. However, measures of consensus are still an important reflection of the consistency of the views of the expert panel and these views may have been influenced by how the qualitative data was coded, categorized and interpreted by the investigator. In

a Delphi study there is also a tendency for convergence of opinions between rounds (Ludwig, 1997) and data may suggest more agreement than exists.

The study looks at small group of stake holders in a relatively small sampling of fully online MBA programs in AACSB-accredited institutions in the United States. Results cannot be generalized to any other population including other online programs. A number of factors negatively impacted the sample size of the study resulting in only 18 participants completing the final round. AACSB-accreditation is held by less than 5% of business colleges. Within this category, not all colleges have fully online programs and the number of faculty, administrators, and instructional designers with at least five years of experiences in online learning are limited. In addition, potential respondents were time constrained professionals with busy schedules. However, the size of a Delphi panel can vary widely and there is no consensus in the literature regarding the optimal number of participants (Culley, 2011; Day & Bobeva, 2005; Delbecq et al., 1975; Hsu & Sandford, 2007). An additional limitation relates to role assignments of the participants, as individuals may have overlapping responsibilities serving in more than one capacity at their institution. While purposeful sampling was used, it is difficult to determine the true expert status of the panel as a measure of expertise was not used. Linstone and Turoff (2002) address the potential use of self-rating of experts as a means of identifying expertise in a Delphi study and this could be of value in future studies. Translating the raw qualitative data gathered in Round One into the themes and item statements presented in the Round Two and Three questionnaires was another limitation. The survey was structured to guide the responses into a select number of text boxes. However, there

was no limit to the amount of text that could be entered. Many responses were not succinct, discrete statements that could easily be categorized.

Recommendations for Further Study

This study is an initial attempt to identify how quality assurance is viewed by a group of stakeholders directly involved in the administration and delivery of online AACSB-accredited fully online MBA programs. The scope was deliberately narrow and should be broadened for future research efforts. While these results cannot be generalized to non-AACSB accredited business programs or to programs that are not fully online, they do provide information that can help inform the quality assurance processes of institutions that lie beyond the scope of the current study and the current methodology could be expanded into a broader group of institutions.

The Delphi methodology allows the views of a geographically diverse group of experts to be gathered and analyzed. Future investigations could utilize a modified Delphi technique with pre-selected items drawn from sources such as the AACSB standards and presented to panelists for their input, similar to the approach used by Shelton (2010) in the development the OLC Online Learning Scorecard. An expert panel could be presented with the current AACSB standards and asked how these should/could be adapted for online and blended learning.

The information obtained here was limited related to the use and impact of quality assurance programs such as the Quality Matters rubric, the Online Learning Consortium five pillars of quality framework and scorecard, and the California State University Chico Rubric for Online Instruction (Chico, 2016; Maryland Online, 2014c; OLC, 2015a). Further examination may better reveal the extent to which external programs, scorecards

and rubrics are used to guide quality assurance in online business schools. While such online program quality evaluation tools have been important in the development of online learning, the future may also involve the use of learning analytics to address gaps in assessment related to new instructional strategy focal points and a focus on student-driven metrics (Nash, 2015). As past history indicates, bodies such as the AACSB may have a delayed response in making changes to accreditation standards and may not be able to keep up with rapid educational advances such as those occurring in online education. Institutions will need to implement their own quality assurance measures rather than relying on the mandates of accreditors. Additional research will help determine how to best approach the need for quality assurance that is responsive to a rapidly changing educational product.

REFERENCES

AACSB. (n.d.). Continuous improvement review. Retrieved from
http://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/business/continuous-improvement-review

AACSB. (2007). *Quality issues in distance learning*. Retrieved from
http://www.aacsb.edu/~/media/AACSB/Publications/white-papers/wp-quality-
issues-in-distance-edu.ashx

AACSB. (2009). AQ/PQ status: Establishing criteria for attainment and maintenance of
faculty qualification, an interpretation of AACSB accreditation standards.
Retrieved from http://www.aacsb.edu/publications/whitepapers

AACSB. (2013). *AACSB assurance of learning standards: An interpretation.* Retrieved
from http://www.aacsb.edu/publications/whitepapers

AACSB. (2015a). *Accredited institutions*. Retrieved from
http://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/accredited-members

AACSB. (2015b). *Business school data guide*. Retrieved from
http://www.aacsb.edu/publications/datareports/data-guide

AACSB. (2015c). *Eligibility procedures and accreditation standards for business
accreditation*. Retrieved from http://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/standards/2013-
business

AACSB. (2016b). *AACSB online seminars.* Retrieved from
http://www.aacsb.edu/events/elearning/online-seminars

AACSB. (2016c). Confirming excellence in management education: Sixty-four global
business schools extend their AACSB accreditation in business or accounting.
Retrieved from http://www.aacsb.edu/newsroom/2016/2/sixty-four-global-
business-schools-extend-aacsb-accreditation

AACSB. (2016d). Eligibility procedures and accreditation standards for business accreditation. Retrieved from http://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/standards

AACSB. (n.d.a). *AACSB accreditation*. Retrieved from http://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/

AACSB. (n.d.b). *Accreditation process*. Retrieved from http://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/process/

AACSB. (n.d.c). *Continuous improvement review.* Retrieved from http://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/business/continuous-improvement-review

AACSB. (n.d.d*). Emerging opportunities for business schools.* Retrieved from http://www.aacsb.edu/vision/themes/opportunities-for-business-schools/technology-leading-to-new-pedagogies

AAOU. (n.d.). *Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU) quality assurance framework*. Retrieved from http://aaou.ouhk.edu.hk/files/documents/AAOU%20Quality%20Assurance%20Framework.pdf

AAUP. (2016). *Higher education at a crossroads: The annual report on the economic status of the profession, 2015-2016.* Retrieved from https://www.aaup.org/report/higher-education-crossroads-annual-report-economic-status-profession-2015-16

AAUP & CHEA. (2012). *Accreditation and academic freedom.* Retrieved from http://www.chea.org/pdf/AAUP-CHEA%20-%20FINAL.pdf

ACBSP. (2016). Welcome to the accreditation council for business schools and programs. Retrieved from http://www.acbsp.org/

ACODE. (2014). *Benchmarks for technology enhanced learning*. Retrieved from http://www.acode.edu.au/pluginfile.php/579/mod_resource/content/3/TEL_Benchmarks.pdf

Alexander, M. W., Perreault, H., Zhao, J. J., & Waldman, L. (2009). Comparing AACSB faculty and student online learning experiences: Changes between 2000 and 2006. *Journal of Educators Online, 6*(1), 1-20.

Allen, I. E., & Seaman, J. (2013). *Changing course: Ten years of tracking online education in the United States.* San Francisco, CA: Babson Survey Research Group and Quahog Research Group.

Allen, I. E., & Seaman, J. (2014). *Grade change: Tracking online education in the United States*. San Francisco, CA: Babson Survey Research Group and Quahog Research Group.

Allen, I. E., Seaman, J., Lederman, D., & Jaschik, S. (2012). *Conflicted: Faculty and online education 2012*. San Francisco, CA: Babson Survey Research Group and Quahog Research Group.

Allen, I. E., Seaman, J., Poulin, R., & Strout, T. T. (2016). *Online report card: Tracking*

Antol, N. (2015, June 8). Regionally accredited vs. nationally accredited: What's the difference? Retrieved from http://www.aiuniv.edu/blog/june-2015/regionally-accredited-vs-nationally-accredited

AQC. (2016). *Approved quality curriculum*. Retrieved from http://www.deac.org/AQC/index.aspx

Ashland University.

Associated Press. (2007). *College loan investigation: Capella arrives at accord with attorney generals.* Retrieved from http://www.twincities.com/2007/05/15/college-loan-investigation-capella-arrives-at-accord-with-attorneys-general/

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2013). Statistical language: Measures of spread. Retrieved from http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/a3121120.nsf/home/statistical+language+-+measures+of+spread

Auvinen, A., & Mariasingam, M. A. (2012, August). *The role of stakeholders in quality assurance in ODL*. Paper presented at the 28th Annual Conference on Distance

Teaching and Learning, Madison, WI. Retrieved from http://www.uwex.edu/disted/conference/resource_library/proceedings/63219_2012.pdf

Bacow, L. S., Bowen, W. G., Guthrie, K. M., Lack, K. A., & Long, M. P. (2012). *Barriers to adoption of online learning systems in U.S. higher education*. Retrieved from http://www.sr.ithaka.org/publications/barriers-to-adoption-of-online-learning-systems-in-u-s-higher-education/

Baron, E. (2014, October 4). *Hybrid MBA's to cause major disruption* [Web log post]. Retrieved from http://poetsandquants.com/2014/10/04/hybrid-mbas-to-cause-major-disruption-haas-dean/

Bates, A. W. (2000). Managing technological change: Strategies for college and university leaders. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Bates, T. (2015, February 23). *What do we mean by quality when teaching in a digital age?* [Web log post]. Retrieved from http://www.tonybates.ca/2015/02/23/what-do-we-mean-by-quality-when-teaching-in-a-digital-age/

Belawati, T., & Zuhairi, A. (2007). The practice of a quality assurance system in open and distance learning: A case study at Universitas Terbuka Indonesia (the Indonesia open university). *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning, 8*(1).

Blackboard Inc. (2013). *Supporting the seven principles with Blackboard Learn [video file]*. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yb4XDzjPS_4

BMD staff. (2016). *Top 10 most affordable AACSB online MBA programs 2016*. Retrieved from http://www.bestmastersdegrees.com/top/affordable-aacsb-online-mba-programs

Boston University (2016). *Nonparametric tests*. Retrieved from http://sphweb.bumc.bu.edu/otlt/MPH-Modules/BS/BS704_Nonparametric/BS704_Nonparametric7.html

Boulkedid, R., Abdoul, H., Loustau, M., Sibony, O., & Alberti, C. (2011). Using and reporting the Delphi method for selecting healthcare quality indicators: A systematic review. *PLoS ONE, 6*(6), 1-9.

Boyd, R. L. (2012, June 18). *Customer service in higher education: Finding a middle ground.* [Web log post]. Retrieved from https://dus.psu.edu/mentor/2012/06/customer-service-in-higher-education/

Bremer, C. (2012). Enhancing e-learning quality through the application of the AKUE procedure model. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning, 28*, 15-26.

Brooks, E., & Morse, R. (2015). *Methodology: Best online MBA programs ranking.* Retrieved from http://www.usnews.com/education/online-education/articles/mba-methodology

Brooks, E., & Morse, R. (2016). *Methodology: Best online MBA program rankings.* Retrieved from http://www.usnews.com/education/online-education/articles/mba-methodology

Byrne, J. A. (2013, May 29). *The online MBA comes of age.* Retrieved from http://fortune.com/2013/05/29/the-online-mba-comes-of-age/

CAAHEP. (n.d.). *Is accreditation voluntary?* Retrieved from http://youraccreditationmentor.caahep.org/yam-topics/voluntary/

Camera, L. (2016, July 12). House passes series of higher education bills. *U.S. News & World Report.* Retrieved from http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2016-07-12/house-passes-series-of-higher-education-bills

Cao, Y., Park, J. S., & Honda, H. (2010). *Two worlds of adult MBA education: Online v. traditional courses in student background and performance.* Paper presented at Adult Higher Education Alliance Conference- the Future of Adult Higher Education: Principles, Context and Practice. Saratoga Springs, NY. Paper retrieved from http://ahea.org/files/pro2010cao.pdf.

Chaney, B. H., Eddy, J. M., Dorman, S. M., Glessner, L. L., Green, B. L., & Lara-Alecio, R. (2009). A primer on quality indicators of distance education. *Health Promotion Practice, 10*(2), 222-231.

Chao, T., Saj, T., & Tessier, F. (2006, January 1). Establishing a quality review for online courses. *Educause Review*. Retrieved from http://er.educause.edu/articles/2006/1/establishing-a-quality-review-for-online-courses

CHEA. (2015). *CHEA at a glance*. Retrieved from http://www.chea.org/pdf/chea-at-a-glance_2015.pdf

CHEA. (2002). *Accreditation and assuring quality in distance learning*. Washington, DC: Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

Chickering, A., & Gamson, Z. F. (1987). Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education. *American Association for Higher Education*, *39*(7), 3-7.

Chico. (2016). *Exemplary online instruction.* Retrieved from http://www.csuchico.edu/eoi/

Cleveland State University. (2016). What is Quality Matters? Retrieved from http://www.csuohio.edu/center-for-elearning/quality-matters

Clinefelter, D. L., & Aslanian, C. B. (2014). *Online college students 2014: Comprehensive data on demands and preferences*. Louisville, KY: The Learning House.

Cohen, D., & Crabtree, B. (2008). *Peer debriefing.* Retrieved from http://www.qualres.org/HomePeer-3693.html

Cole, Z., Donohoe, H., & Stellefson, M. (2013). Internet-based Delphi research: Case based discussion. *Environmental Management, 51*(3), 511-523. doi:10.1007/s00267-012-0005-5

CRAC. (2011). Distance education programs: Interregional guidelines for the evaluation of distance education programs (online learning). Philadelphia, PA: Middle State Commission on Higher Education.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into Practice, 39*(3), 124-130. doi:10.1207/s15430421tip3903_2

Culley, J. M. (2011). Use of a computer-mediated Delphi process to validate a mass casualty conceptual model. *Computers Informatics Nursing, 29*(5), 272-279.

Currie-Knight, K., & Horwitz, S. (2016, February 15). Yes, students are customers, but....[Web log post]. Retrieved from https://fee.org/articles/yes-students-are-customers-but/

Dahlstrom, E., Brooks, D. C., & Bichsel, J. (2014). The current ecosystem of learning management systems in higher education: Student, faculty, and IT perspectives. Louisville, CO: Educause.

Dalkey, N., & Helmer, O. (1963). An experimental application of the Delphi method to the use of experts. *Management Science, 9*(3), 458-467.

Dalkey, N. (1969). *The Delphi method: An experimental study of group opinion*. Santa Monica, CA: Clearinghouse for Federal Scientific and Technical Information.

Daniel, J., & Uvalic-Trumbic, S. (2013). *A guide to quality in online learning*. Retrieved from http://aaou.ouhk.edu.hk/files/others/A%20Guide%20to%20Quality%20in%20Online%20Learning.pdf

Day, J., & Bobeva, M. (2005). A generic toolkit for the successful management of Delphi studies. *Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods, 3*(2), 103-116.

DEAC. (2016). *Welcome to DEAC.* Retrieved from http://www.deac.org/

Delbecq, A. L., Van de Ven, A. H., & Gustafson, D. H. (1975). *Group techniques for program planning: A guide to nominal group and Delphi processes*. Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman.

Dixson, M. (2010). Creating effective student engagement in online courses: What do students find engaging? *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, 10*(2), 1-13.

Eaton, J. (2007). Institutions, accreditors, and the federal government, redefining their "appropriate relationship". *Change, 39*(5), 16-23.

Eaton, J. S. (2012). The future of accreditation. *Planning for Higher Education, 40*(3), 8-15.

Edmundson, M. (2012, July 20). The trouble with online education. *The New York Times*, pp. A23.

Edwards, D. E., & Brannen, D. E. (1990). Current status of outcomes assessment at the MBA level. *Journal of Education for Business, 65*, 206-212.

Eom, S. B. & Wen, H. J. (2006). The determinants of students' perceived learning outcomes and satisfaction in university online education: An emperical investigation. *Decision Sciences Journal of Innovative Education, 4*(2), 215-235.

European Commission. (2016). *Quality and relevance in higher education.* Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/higher-education/quality-relevance_en.htm

Federal Student Aid. (2011). *Fraud in postsecondary distance education.* Retrieved from http://www.ifap.ed.gov/dpcletters/GEN1117.html

Franklin, K. K., & Hart, J. K. (2007). Idea generation and exploration: Benefits and limitations of the policy Delphi research method. *Innovative Higher Education, 31*(4), 237-246. doi:10.1007/s10755-006-9022-8

Frydenberg, J. (2002). Quality standards in e-learning: A matrix of analysis. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning, 3*(2), 1-15.

Galbraith, C. S., Merrill, G. B., & Kline, D. M. (2012). Are student evaluations of teaching effectiveness valid for for measuring student learning outcomes in business related courses? A neural network and bayesian analyses. *Research in Higher Education, 53*(3), 353-374.

Garson, G. D. (2014). *The Delphi method in quantitative research*. Asheboro, NC: Statistical Associates.

Gauthier, A. J., & Jack, T. (2014). The professor and the instructional designer: A course design journey. Retrieved from http://www.academiccommons.org/2014/07/24/the-professor-and-the-instructional-designer-a-course-design-journey/

Gaytan, J. (2013). Ensuring quality in online courses: Applying the AACSB International's distance learning quality issues. *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration, 16*(4). Retrieved from http://www.westga.edu/%7Edistance/ojdla/winter164/gaytan164.html

Gikandi, J. W., Morrow, D., & Davis, N. E. (2011). Online formative assessment in higher education: A review of the literature. *Computers and Education, 57*, 2333-2351.

Gliem, J. A., & Gliem, R. R. (2003). Calculating, interpreting and reporting Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for likert-type scales. *Midwest Research-to-Practice Conference in Adulty, Community, and Continuing Education,* Columbus, OH. 82-88.

Grandzol, C. J., & Grandzol, J. R. (2006). Best practices for online business education. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning, 7*(1), 1-18.

Great Schools Partnership. (2014). *Stakeholder*. Retrieved from http://edglossary.org/stakeholder/

Harroff, P., & Valentine, T. (2006). Dimensions of program quality in web-based adult education. *American Journal of Distance Education, 20*(1), 7-22. doi:10.1207/s15389286ajde2001_2

Harvey, L., & Green, D. (1993). Defining quality. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 18*(1), 9-34.

Hasson, F., Kenney, S., & McKenna, H. (2000). Research guidelines for the Delphi survey technique. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 32*(4), 1008-1015.

Heischmidt, K. A., & Damoiseau, Y. (2012). Dimensions of quality in online business course offerings: Content, format and feedback. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice, 12*(2), 84-97.

HLC. (2015). *Maintaining accreditation*. Retrieved from
https://www.hlcommission.org/Accreditation-Processes/accreditation.html

HLC. (2016). *AQIP pathway overview.* Retrieved from
https://www.hlcommission.org/Pathways/aqip-overview.html

Hsu, C., & Sandford, B. A. (2007). The Delphi technique: Making sense of consensus. *Practical Assessment, Research and Evaluation, 12*(10), 1-8.

IACBE. (2016). About the IACBE. Retrieved from http://iacbe.org/

Information Resources Management Association. (2011). *Instructional design: Concepts, methodologies, tools and applications*. Hersey, PA: IGI Global.

ION. (2015). *Quality online course initiative*. Retrieved from
http://www.ion.uillinois.edu/initiatives/qoci/index.asp

Jairath, N., & Weinstein, J. (1994). The Delphi methodology: A useful administrative approach. *Canadian Journal of Nursing Administration, 7*, 29-42.

Jaschik, S., & Lederman, D. (2014). *The 2014 Inside Higher Ed survey of faculty attitudes on technology*. Washington, DC: Inside Higher Ed.

Johnson, L., Becker, S., Estrada, V., & Freeman, A. (2014). *New Media Consortium horizon report 2014: Higher education edition*. The New Media Consortium: Austin, TX.

Joynes, A. (2013). Implementing a department wide survey process: Getting client feedback to improve your community's health and well-being. Retrieved from http://www.mcrh.msu.edu/documents/conferences/16th_Annual_Conference/Presentations/ImplementingaDepartmentWideSurveyProcess.pdf

Jung, I., Latchem, C. R., & Herrington, J. (2012). Quality assurance and accreditation in distance education and e-learning: Models, policies and research. New York, NY: Routledge.

Jung, I., Wong, T. M., Li, C., Baigaltugs, S., & Belawati, T. (2011). Quality assurance in Asian distance education: Diverse approaches and common culture. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning, 12*(6), 63-83.

Juran, J. M., & DeoFeo, F. J. A. (2010). *Juran's quality handbook: The complete guide to performance excellence* (6th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

Keil, S., & Brown, A. (2014). Distance education policy standards: A review of current regional and national accrediting organizations in the United States. *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration, 17*(3), 1-15.

Kennedy, K. A. (2002). *The academy in 2005-2015 a web-based Delphi study*. Available from ProQuest. (305227508).

Khan, B. (2001). A framework for web-based learning. In B. Khan (Ed.), *Web-based training* (pp. 75-98). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Educational Technology.

Khuder, S. (2011, October 26). *Faculty concerned with cheating in online courses.* [Web log post]. Retrieved from http://independentcollegian.com/2011/10/26/archives/faculty-concerned-with-cheating-in-online-classes/

Kidd Stewart, J. (2012, May 18). More schools connect with students via web: A look whether online MBA programs are as presetigious as traditional ones. *Chicago Tribune,* p. 1. Retrieved from http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2012-05-18/features/ct-mba-0520-online-20120521_1_online-mba-mba-programs-kelley-school

King, C. G. (2009). Online exams and cheating: An empirical analysis of business students' views. *Journal of Educators Online, 6*(1), 1-11.

Kretovics, M. (1999). Assessing the MBA: What do our students learn? *The Journal of Management Development, 18*(2), 125-136.

Kretovics, M., & McCambridge, J. (2002). The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning, 3(2), 1-18.

Laerd Statistics. (2013). Kruskal-Wallis H test using SPSS statistics. Retrieved from
https://statistics.laerd.com/premium/spss/kwht/kruskal-wallis-test-in-spss-9.php

Laerd Statistics. (2015a). Cronbach's alpha using SPSS statistics. *Statistical tutorials and software guides*. Retrieved from
https://statistics.laerd.com/premium/spss/ca/cronbachs-alpha-in-spss-9.php

Laerd Statistics. (2015b). Kruskal-Wallis H test using SPSS statistics. *Statistical tutorials and software guides*. Retrieved from
https://statistics.laerd.com/premium/spss/kwht/kruskal-wallis-test-in-spss-19.php

Latchem, C., & Jung, I. (2012). Quality assurance and accreditation in open and distance learning. In C. Latchem, & I. Jung (Eds.), *Quality assurance and accreditation in distance education and e-learning- models, policies and research.* (pp. 13-21). New York, NY: Routledge.

Lee, J., & Dziuban, C. (2002). Using quality assurance strategies for online programs. *Educational Technology Review, 20*(2), 69-78.

Legon, R. (2015). Measuring the impact of the Quality Matters rubric: A discussion of possibilities. *American Journal of Distance Education, 29*(3), 166-173.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Linstone, H. A., & Turoff, M. (2002). *The Delphi method techniques and applications*. Retrieved from http://is.njit.edu/pubs/delphibook/

Linstone, H. A., & Turoff, M. (2011). Delphi: A brief look backward and forward. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change, 78*(9), 1712-1719. doi:http://dx.doi.org.libproxy.boisestate.edu/10.1016/j.techfore.2010.09.011

Loafman, L., & Altman, B.W. (2014). Going online: Building your business law course using the Quality Matters rubric. *Journal of Legal Studies Education, 31*(1), 21-54.

Lockhart, M., & Lacy, K. (2002). As assessment model and methods for evaluating distance education programs. *Perspectives, 6*(4), 98-104.

Ludwig, B. (1997). Predicting the future: Have you considered using the Delphi methodology? *The Journal of Extension, 35*(5), 1-3.

Magness, P. W. (2016). For-profit universities and the root of adjunctification in US higher education. *Association of American Colleges and Universities, 102*(2). Retrieved from https://www.aacu.org/liberaleducation/2016/spring/magness

Mariasingam, M. A., & Inglis, A. (2012). Quality assessment and quality assurance in online learning. Paper presented at the *28th Annual Conference on Distance Teaching and Learning,* Madison, WI. Paper retrieved from http://www.uwex.edu/disted/conference/resource_library/proceedings/62559_201 2.pdf

Marklein, M. B. (2015). *Changing world 'needs new kind of quality assurance'*. Retrieved from http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20150131130245569

Martin, F., Parker, M. A., & Ndoye, A. (2011). Student satisfaction and learning outcomes in e-learning. In W. B. Eom & J. B. Arbaugh (Eds.), *Student satisfaction and outcomes in e-learning: An introduction to empirical research* (pp. 249-266). Hershey, PA: IGI Global.

Maryland Online. (2014a). *QM research.* Retrieved from https://www.qualitymatters.org/research

Maryland Online. (2014b). *Quality matters a national benchmark for online course design*. Retrieved from https://www.qualitymatters.org/

Maryland Online. (2014c). *Rubric*. Retrieved from https://www.qualitymatters.org/rubric

Maryland Online. (2014d). The Quality Matters instructional designers association: A brief history - September 2011 to March 2014. Retrieved from https://ida.qualitymatters.org/site-page/about-us

Maryland Online. (2016a). *2016 QM-recognized courses - higher education.* Retrieved from https://www.qmprogram.org/qmresources/courses/index.cfm?program=2

Maryland Online. (2016b). *HE subscriptions*. Retrieved from

    https://www.qualitymatters.org/subscriptions

Maryland Online. (2016c). *QM research resources.* Retrieved from

    https://www.qualitymatters.org/QM-Research-Resources

Maryland Online. (2016d). *Underlying principles of Quality Matters.* Retrieved from

    https://www.qualitymatters.org/qm-membership/faqs/underlying-principles

Maryland Online. (n.d.a). *Course reviews.* Retrieved from

    https://www.qualitymatters.org/reviews

Maryland Online. (n.d.b). *Preparing for a Quality Matters course review.* Retrieved from

    https://www.qualitymatters.org/reviews/preparing

Math Cracker. (2016). Kruskal-Wallis Test Calculator. Retrieved from

    http://www.mathcracker.com/kruskal-wallis.php

Mathes, J. (2015, December 30). Personal communication.

Mathes, J. (2016, September 20). Personal communication.

Mayadas, F., Miller, G. E., & Sener, J. (2015). *Updated e-learning definitions.* [Web log

    comment]. Retrieved from http://onlinelearningconsortium.org/updated-e-

    learning-definitions-2/

MBA Roundtable. (2012). *Membership*. Retrieved from

    http://mbaroundtable.org/membership

Means, T. (2015, February 24). Personal communication.

Middle States Commission on Higher Education. (2011). *Characteristics of excellence in

    higher education.* Philadelphia, PA: Middle States Commission on Higher

    Education.

Moore, J. I., Dickson-Deane, C., & Galyen, K. (2011). E-learning, online learning and

    distance learning environments: Are they the same? *The Internet and Higher

    Education, 14*, 129-135.

Moore, M. G., & Kearsley, G. (2005). *Distance education: A systems view*. Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth.

Moore, J. C. (2011). A synthesis of Sloan-C effective practices. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks, 16*(1), 91-115.

Morse, R., Brooks, E., & Mason, M. (2015). *How U.S. news calculated the 2016 best colleges ranking*. Retrieved from http://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/how-us-news-calculated-the-rankings

Nash, S. (2015, September 9). *Better learning analytics for e-learning.* Retrieved from https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/new-quality-guidelines-career-focused-competency-online-susan-nash?redirectFromSplash=true

National Center for Education Statistics. (2015). Fast facts. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=80

Nelson, C. (2013, January 24). *Growth in accessibility of AACSB-accredited online degrees*. Retrieved from http://aacsbblogs.typepad.com/dataandresearch/2013/01/growth-in-accessibility-of-aacsb-accredited-online-degrees.html

New Media Consortium. (2015). *2016 higher education wiki: Methodology*. Retrieved from http://horizon.wiki.nmc.org/Methodology

Newberry, B., & Logofatu, C. (2008). An online degree program course template development process. *Journal of Online Learning and Teaching, 4*(4), 583-595.

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. (2012). *Distance education policy.* Redmond, WA: Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

Okoli, C., & Pawlowski, S. D. (2004). The Delphi method as a research tool: An example, design considerations and applications. *Information & Management, 42*(1), 15-29. doi:http://dx.doi.org.libproxy.boisestate.edu/10.1016/j.im.2003.11.002

OLC. (2014). *OLC Quality Scorecard 2014*. Retrieved from http://onlinelearningconsortium.org/consult/quality-scorecard/

OLC. (2015a). *A quality scorecard for the administration of online learning programs*. Retrieved from http://olc.onlinelearningconsortium.org/effective_practices/quality-scorecard-administration-online-education-programs

OLC. (2015b). *Our history*. Retrieved from http://onlinelearningconsortium.org/about/history/

OLC. (2015c). *Quality framework*. Retrieved from http://onlinelearningconsortium.org/about/quality-framework-five-pillars/

OLC. (2016). *Our quality framework.* Retrieved from http://onlinelearningconsortium.org/about/quality-framework-five-pillars/

Online Learning Insights. (2015, May 26). How 'good' is your online course? Five steps to assess course quality [Web log post]. Retrieved from https://onlinelearninginsights.wordpress.com/tag/quality-standards-for-online-courses/

Online MBA Today. (2015). *The growth of online MBA programs*. Retrieved from http://www.onlinembatoday.com/growth-of-online-mba-programs/

OnlineCollege.org. (2011, June 22). Considering online programs: Do you know quality when you see it? Retrieved from http://www.onlinecollege.org/2011/06/22/considering-online-programs-do-you-know-quality-when-you-see-it/

OnlineCollege.org. (2016). *What do I need to know about online college accreditation?* Retrieved from http://www.onlinecollege.org/online-college-accreditation/

Oracle. (2015). *Oracle in wikipedia*. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oracle

Osika, E. R. (2004). *The concentric support model: A model for the planning and evaluation of distance learning programs* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (305151207).

Ossiannilsson, E., Williams, K., Camilleri, A. F., & Brown, M. (2015). *Quality models in online and open education around the globe: State of the art and*

recommendations. Oslo, Norway: International Council for Open and Distance Education. Retrieved from http://icde.typepad.com/quality_models/

Ozdemir, D., & Loose, R. (2014). Implementation of a quality assurance review system for the scalable development of online courses. *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration, 27*(1), 1-7.

Panova, O., & Erkovich, R. (2005). Defining quality in online education: Definitions and factors from the US and Ukraine. *Journal of Business Inquiry, 4*(1), 26-31.

Park, S., Hironaka, S., Carver, P., & Nordstrum, L. (2013). *Continuous improvement in education*. Stanford, CA: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

People Pulse. (2016). *Survey question design: Ranking vs rating questions*. Retrieved from http://www.peoplepulse.com/survey-question-design-ranking-vs-rating-questions/

Phillips, S. A. (2015). *Report to the U.S. secretary of education higher education act reauthorization 2015 accreditation policy recommendations*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity.

Phipps, R. A., & Merisotis, J. P. (2000). *Quality on the line: Benchmarks for success in internet-based distance education*. Washington, DC: Institute for Higher Education Policy.

Pina, A. A. (2010). Online diploma mills: Implications for legitimate distance education. *Distance Education, 31*(1), 121-126.

Ponzillo, A. (2015, October 15). *AACSB invites business schools to submit their 'innovations that inspire'*. Retrieved from http://www.aacsb.edu/blog/2015/october/aacsb-invites-business-schools-to-submit-their-innovations-that-inspire

QAA. (n.d.). *Glossary: QAA terms explained*. Retrieved from http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Pages/GlossaryEN.aspx?Category=Q#182

QS Blogger. (2013, August 13). *Online MBA facts.* [Web log post]. Retrieved from http://www.topmba.com/blog/online-mba-facts-mba-facts

Raskin, M. S. (1994). The Delphi study in field instruction revisited: Expert consensus on issues and research priorities. *Journal of Social Work Education, 30*(1), 75-89.

Rayens, M. K., & Hahn, E. J. (2000). Building consensus using the policy Delphi method. *Policy, Politics & Nursing Practice, 1*(4), 308-315.

Rovai, A. F. (2003). A practical framework for evaluating online distance education programs. *The Internet and Higher Education, 6*(2), 109-124.

Rowe, G., & Wright, G. (1999). The Delphi technique as a forecasting tool: Issues and analysis. *International Journal of Forecasting, 15*(4), 353-375. doi:http://dx.doi.org.libproxy.boisestate.edu/10.1016/S0169-2070(99)00018-7

SACSCOC. (2012). *Distance and correspondence education policy statement*. Decatur, GA: Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.

SACSCOC. (2016). *Accreditation*. Retrieved from http://www.sacscoc.org/FAQsanswers.asp

Schaffhauser, D. (2014, September 24). *New scorecard evaluates online programs in 75 areas*. [Web log post]. Retrieved from https://campustechnology.com/articles/2014/09/24/new-scorecard-evaluates-online-programs-in-75-areas.aspx

Sebastianelli, R., Swift, C., & Tamimi, N. (2015). Factors affecting perceived learning, satisfaction, and quality in the online MBA: A structural equation modeling approach. *Journal of Education for Business, 90*(6), 296-305.

Selingo, J. J. (2016, July 8). Will employers gain influence in rating the quality of a college degree? *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2016/07/08/will-employers-gain-influence-in-rating-the-quality-of-a-college-degree/

Shattuck, K. (2012). *What we're learning from Quality Matters-focused research: Research, practice, continuous improvement*. Retrieved from

http://wnmu.edu/facdev/files/Learning%20from%20QM%20Focused%20Researc
  h%20Paper_0.pdf

Shattuck, K. (2015). Research inputs and outputs of Quality Matters: Update to 2012 and
  2014 versions of what we're learning from QM-focused research. Annapolis, MD:
  Quality Matters.

Shearer, R. (2016). The value proposition for instructional designers in online education.
  Retrieved from
  http://learningdesign.psu.edu/assets/uploads/pdf/Value_Proposition_for_Instructio
  nal_Designers_-_Rick_Shearer.pdf

Shelton, K. (2010). *A quality scorecard for the administration of online education
  programs: A Delphi study* (Ph.D.). Available from ProQuest Dissertations &
  Theses Global. (759782268). Retrieved from
  http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.boisestate.edu/docview/759782268?accountid
  =9649

Shelton, K. (2011). A review of paradigms for evaluating the quality of online distance
  education programs. *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration, 4*(11),
  1-10.

Shelton, K., & Creghan, K. A. (2015). Demystifying the Delphi method. In V. C. X.
  Wang (Ed.), *Handbook of research on scholarly publishing and research methods*
  (pp. 375-395). Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference.

Shelton, K., & Pedersen, K. (2015). Benchmarking quality in online learning programs in
  higher education. Paper presented at the *Global Learn 2015,* Berlin, Germany.
  Paper retrieved from https://www.editlib.org/p/150872/

Shelton, K., Saltsman, G., Holstrom, L., & Pedersen, K. (2014). *Quality scorecard 2014
  handbook: Criteria for excellence in the administration of online programs*.
  Newbury Port, MA: Online Learning Consortium.

Spellings, M. (2006). *A test of leadership: Charting the future of U.S. higher education*.
  Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Spooren, P., Brockx, B., & Mortelmans, D. (2013). On the validity of student evaluation of teaching: The state of the art. *Review of Educational Research, 83*(4), 598-642.

Stat Trek. (2016). Statistics and probability dictionary. Retrieved from http://stattrek.com/statistics/dictionary.aspx?definition=Interquartile%20range

Stitt-Gohdes, W. L., & Crews, T. B. (2004). The Delphi technique: A research strategy for career and technical education. *Journal of Career and Technical Education, 20*(2), 53-65.

Stratford, M. (2015, October 20). *Upping the pressure on accreditors*. Retrieved from https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/10/20/obama-administration-plans-executive-action-higher-education-accreditation

Sumsion, T. (1998). The Delphi technique: An adaptive research tool. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy, 61*(4), 153-156.

Tavakol, M., & Dennick, R. (2011). Making sense of Cronbach's alpha. *International Journal of Medical Education, 2*, 53-55.

TexaSoft. (2008). *Kruskal-Wallis Test*. Retrieved from http://www.texasoft.com/winkkrus.html

TG. (2016). Higher education act. Retrieved from http://www.tgslc.org/policy/hea.cfm

Top MBA. (2015, July 17). Work-life balance tips for EMBA students [Web log post]. Retrieved from http://www.topmba.com/mba-programs/executive/work-life-balance-tips-emba-students

Twining, J. (1999). *A naturalistic journey into the collaboratory: In search of understanding for prospective participants* (Ph.D.). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (304582476). Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.boisestate.edu/docview/304582476?accountid=9649

U.S. Department of Education. (2008). *Accreditation and quality assurance*. Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ous/international/usnei/us/edlite-accreditation.html

U.S. Department of Education. (2016). *Accreditation in the United States.* Retrieved from
    http://www2.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/index.html

U.S. News & World Report. (2016). *Best business schools.* Retrieved from http://grad-
    schools.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-business-
    schools/mba-rankings

UCF, & AASCU. (n.d.). *Generic template structure.* Retrieved from
    https://blended.online.ucf.edu/model-courses/generic-template-structure/

UNESCO. (2015). *Quality assurance*. Retrieved from
    http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/strengthening-education-
    systems/higher-education/quality-assurance/

University of Illinois. (2015). *Weaknesses of online learning.* Retrieved from
    http://www.ion.uillinois.edu/resources/tutorials/overview/weaknesses.asp

Urahn, S. K., & Conroy, T. P. (2015). *Federal and state funding of higher education: A
    changing landscape*. Philadelphia, PA: The PEW Charitable Trusts.

Vlasceanu, L., Grunberg, L., & Parlea, D. (2007). Quality assurance and accreditation: A
    glossary of basic terms and definitions. Bucharest: UNESCO.

von der Gracht, H. A. (2012). Consensus measurement in Delphi studies: Review and
    implications for future quality assurance. *Technological Forecasting and Social
    Change, 79*(8), 1525-1536.
    doi:http://dx.doi.org.libproxy.boisestate.edu/10.1016/j.techfore.2012.04.013

WCET. (1997). Principles of good practice for academic degree and certificate programs
    offered electronically. Boulder, CO: Western Interstate Commission for Higher
    Education.

WCET. (2001). *Best practices for electronically offered degree and certificate programs.*
    Boulder, CO: Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications.

Weimer, M. (2015, November 6). *Do online students cheat more on tests?* [Web log
    comment] Retrieved from http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/online-
    education/do-online-students-cheat-more-on-tests/

Wilcox, K. E., Sarma, S., & Lippel, P. E. (2016). *Online education: A catalyst for higher education reforms.* Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Wilson, B. G. (2004). Foundations for instructional design: Reclaiming the conversation. In J.M. Spector, C. Ohrazda, A. Van Schaak, & D. Wiley (Eds.), *Innovations in instructional technology: Essays in honor of M. David Merrill* (pp. 237-252). Mahwah, NJ: Erbaum.

Ziglio, E. (1996). The Delphi method and its contribution to decision-making. In M. Adler, & E. Ziglio (Eds.), *Gazing into the oracle* (pp. 3-33). London, U.K.: Jessica Kingsley.

APPENDIX A

IRB Approval Forms

DIVISION OF RESEARCH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
Office of Research Compliance |Institutional Review Board
(phone) 208.426.5401 | (fax) 208.426.2055
humansubjects@boisestate.edu | MS 1138

BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY

EXEMPT PROTOCOL APPLICATION

SCREENING QUESTIONS: Does Exempt Review Apply?

	YES	NO
Will the research expose participants to discomfort or distress beyond levels encountered in daily life (i.e., does research involve minimal risk)?	☐	☒
Will the collected data include identifiers **and** be potentially damaging to a participant's financial standing, employability or reputation?	☐	☒
Will your research participants include pregnant women (where the research would put the pregnancy or fetus at risk), prisoners, cognitively, economically, or educationally impaired participants?	☐	☒
Does the research involve focus groups?	☐	☒
Does the research include any video recording or photographing?	☐	☒
Does any part of the research require deception or incomplete disclosure of information to your participants?	☐	☒

	YES	NO	NA
For research proposed under category 1, will the research be conducted outside of commonly accepted educational settings or deviate from normal educational practices?	☐	☐	☒
For research proposed under category 2, will the research involve surveys or interview procedures with children (minors under the age of 18)?	☐	☒	☐
For research proposed under category 2, will the research involve observations of the public behavior of children (minors under the age of 18), during which an investigator will participate in the activities being observed?	☐	☒	☐
For research proposed under category 2, will your research participants include your own **current** students (i.e. you are currently in charge of their grade) or current employees who report to you (e.g. supervisor, manager, etc.)?	☐	☒	☐
For research proposed under category 4, will any of the information obtained from private sources of data, documents, records, or biological specimens be recorded by the investigator in such a manner that participants could be identified directly or through identifiers linked to the participants? (For example, will you create a link list for follow-up purposes or to compare data from multiple sources?)	☐	☐	☒

- *If you answered **YES** to **any** of these questions, your application does **NOT** qualify for exempt review. STOP COMPLETING THIS FORM and complete the "Expedited or Full Board Protocol Application" for IRB review.*

- *Only the IRB/IRB representative can certify that the research meets the exemption criteria requirements. The researcher cannot make the final determination of exemption.*

Figure A.1 IRB Exempt Protocol Application

INSTRUCTIONS

- The application must be typed. **Handwritten applications will not be accepted.**
- Spellcheck will not work on this application. Proofread before submitting.
- **SUBMIT COMPLETED APPLICATION AND ALL SUPPORTING APPENDICES TO:**
  HUMANSUBJECTS@BOISESTATE.EDU
- Section C must be signed by all applicable investigators and must be submitted to the Office of Research Compliance via:
  - ➢ Email—humansubjects@boisestate.edu (as a scanned PDF);
  - ➢ Campus Mail—Mail Stop 1138;
  - ➢ Mail—*Office of Research Compliance, 1910 University Drive, Riverfront Hall 311, Boise, ID 83725-1138; or*
  - ➢ Fax—208.426.2055

SECTION A: General Information

1. Project Title: VISIONS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN ONLINE MBA PROGRAMS

2. Anticipated Start Date: 3/7/16   Anticipated End Date: 12/1/16

3. **PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (PI)** (Refer to the IRB PI Eligibility requirements. IRB staff will confirm your eligibility. Graduate thesis or dissertation students MUST list an eligible PI as their co-investigator)

   Name: **Glori Hinck**

   Title: ☐ Full Professor   ☐ Associate Professor   ☐ Assistant Professor

   ↓ *If you fall into any of the titles in the grey box below, you must have an eligible PI listed as your Co-I.*

☐ Adjunct Faculty	☐ Visiting Faculty
☐ Instructor/Lecturer	☐ Staff
☐ Graduate Student—Thesis	☒ Graduate Student—Dissertation

   Department: **Educational Technology**   Phone: **612-670-0527**

   E-mail: **glorihinck@u.boisestate.edu**

   Roles and responsibilities in this study:

   Will be assuming all roles and responsibilities as doctoral student.

   CITI Training Completed: ☒ Social & Behavioral Researchers   ☐ Biomedical Researchers

4. **CO-INVESTIGATOR** (IRB staff will confirm your title with the directory.)

   Name: **Kerry Rice**

☐ Full Professor	☒ Associate Professor	☐ Assistant Professor
☐ Adjunct Faculty	☐ Instructor	☐ Staff
☐ Graduate Student	☐ Undergraduate Student	
☐ Other:		

   Department: **Educational Technology**   Phone: **208-426-2050**

   E-mail: **krice@boisestate.edu**

   Roles and responsibilities in this study:

   Dissertation Advisor

   CITI Training Completed: ☒ Social & Behavioral Researchers   ☐ Biomedical Researchers

5. Do you have additional research personnel (Co-Investigators, key personnel, student research assistants, etc.)?

   ☐ NO
   ☒ YES

   To list additional investigators and/or key personnel, complete and attach an ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL form.

Figure A.1 (continued) IRB Exempt Protocol Application

6. Is this research supported in whole or in part by a grant or contract?

☒ NO
☐ YES:

    Sponsor Name: _____

    PI on Grant: _____

    Grant Title/Contract: _____

    Project Period: From: _____ To: _____ _____

    ☐ Grant Project Summary Attached

    OSP Proposal Number (if known): _____

7. Has this protocol previously been considered by Boise State University's IRB?

☒ NO
☐ YES: IRB Number: _____   Date Approved: _____ _____

SECTION B: Financial Conflict of Interest Disclosure

Conflicts of interest must be disclosed in accordance with the Boise State Conflict of Interest and Commitment Policy #1110.

1. Do any investigators (PI, Co-Investigator) or research team members (key personnel) have any relationship or equity interest with any institutions or sponsors related to this research that might present or appear to present a conflict of interest (COI) with regard to the outcome of the research?

☒ NO POTENTIAL CONFLICTS EXIST
☐ YES:

2. Name of the person(s) with the potential COI: _____ _____

    ☐ This potential conflict has been disclosed to the Boise State Conflict of Interest Office via the electronic disclosure form: https://web.boisestate.edu/conflictofinterest/app.html.

    ☐ This conflict has not been disclosed to the Boise State COI Office.

Note: If a significant conflict of interest exists, you must also attach the Boise State COI Committee approved management plan. If you have questions about conflicts of interest, contact the Boise State Conflict of Interest Officer at (208) 426-1252.

Figure A.1 (continued) IRB Exempt Protocol Application

Project Title: **VISIONS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN ONLINE MBA PROGRAMS**

SECTION C: Principal Investigator Assurance and Acknowledgement

I certify that the information provided in this application is complete and accurate. As the principal investigator, I have ultimate responsibility for the conduct of this study, the ethical performance of the project, the protection of the rights and welfare of human participants, and strict adherence to any stipulations designated by the IRB. I accept and will conform to all federal, state, and institutional provisions concerning the protection of human participants in research. I will ensure all personnel involved in the research will be appropriately trained for all procedures used in this project.

I agree to conduct the research involving human participants as presented in this protocol application as approved by the Boise State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) and certify that I am qualified to perform the procedures described herein. I will submit any proposed changes/modifications for review and approval before they are implemented. I agree to notify the IRB and Office of Research Compliance of any adverse events that may occur during the study. I also assure that I will follow through with the storage and destruction of data as outlined in the protocol.

I understand that Boise State University owns the research data. If I choose to transfer to another institution, I will need departmental approval to take the data with me. If the research is funded and I choose to transfer to another institution, I will notify the Office of Sponsored Programs and the funding agency as well the IRB to update my file and transfer data and IRB approvals appropriately.

If I am a graduate student investigator on this research application, I further agree to meet with my faculty adviser/Co-PI on a regular basis to discuss the progress of the study and solve protocol issues as they arise.

I understand that data collection (including recruitment) is not permitted until this application has been reviewed and determined exempt by the IRB.

Glori Hinck		**2/21/16**
Principal Investigator (PRINT)	**Signature**	**Date**

SECTION C: Co-PI/Faculty Adviser Assurance and Acknowledgement
If the principal investigator is a graduate student, instructor, adjunct faculty, or staff, the co-principal investigator's signature must be received before the protocol application will move forward to the IRB for review. Otherwise, Co-PI signature is not required.

I certify I have read this protocol application and that the information is complete and accurate. I ensure that the principal investigator is qualified to perform the procedures described. I understand that I will be included in all email correspondence related to the protocol application including questions from the IRB committee, CITI Training status, and approval notifications.

I further agree to meet with the principal investigator on a regular basis to monitor the progress of the study. I agree to be available and to personally supervise the principal investigator in solving problems as they arise. I will arrange for an alternate Co-PI to assume my responsibilities if I become unavailable, as when on sabbatical leave or vacation, and will notify the IRB of this change. I assure that the principal investigator will follow through with the storage and destruction of data as outlined in the protocol.

I also agree to assume full responsibility for the human subjects research should the PI leave the University.

Kerry Rice		
Co-PI (PRINT)	**Signature**	**Date**

Figure A.1 (continued) IRB Exempt Protocol Application

SECTION D: Exempt Research Category
Indicate the applicable exempt category 1-6:

	1.	Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as:
	i.	research on regular and special education instructional strategies; or
	ii..	research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.

*This applies only to normal educational research in regular educational settings. Surveying or interviewing **may** apply under this category **IF** the surveying or interviewing participants about education instructional strategies, techniques, curriculum or classroom management methods.*

☒	2.	Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior, UNLESS
	i.	information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; **AND**
	ii.	any disclosure of the human subjects' response outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

This exemption does not apply to prisoners or if you are surveying or interviewing minors.

	3.	Research, involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, or observation of public behavior that is not exempt under category 2 above if:
	i.	the human subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office; or
	ii.	federal statutes(s) require(s) without exception that the confidentiality of the personally identifiable information will be maintained throughout the research thereafter.

	4.	Research, involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that participants cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the participants.

All data must exist when the application is submitted (if data will be used that is collected or will be collected for research purposes, complete the IRB review form).

	5.	Research and demonstration projects which are conducted by or participant to the approval of department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine:
	i.	public benefit or service programs;
	ii.	procedures for obtaining benefits or services under those programs;
	iii.	possible changes in or alternatives to those programs or procedures; or
	iv.	possible changes in methods or levels of payment for benefits or services under those programs.

This exemption is reserved for Federal Government Research and is not available for local IRB review. It is rarely applied to research at Boise State. See OHRP Guidance on Exempt Category 5.

	6.	Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies, if:
	i.	wholesome foods without additives are consumed; or
	ii.	if a food is consumed that contains a food ingredient at or below the level and for a use found to be safe, or agricultural chemical or environmental contaminant at or below the level found to be safe, by the Food and Drug Administration or approved by the Environmental Protection Agency or the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the USDA.

Figure A.1 (continued) IRB Exempt Protocol Application

SECTION E: Research Details

OVERVIEW

1. Provide a summary of the purpose of your project. Include information about the background and rationale for the study and goal(s) of the proposed study. Use language understood by a person unfamiliar with this area of research. Specific jargon should be avoided or explicitly explained.

MBA programs are undergoing rapid change in delivery models with increasing numbers of programs offering online learning options, often in an attempt to generate new revenue streams. However, quality assurance measures may not keep up with these rapid changes. Business colleges often place their primary quality assurance focus on the requirements of specialized accrediting bodies such as the AACSB or regional accrediting agencies such as the Higher Learning Commission and do not adequately address the unique quality assurance needs of online learning, both at the course and program levels.

The purpose of this study is to examine how three specific groups of stakeholders (program administrators, faculty, and instructional designers) in AACSB-accredited institutions view the future of quality assurance for online learning in AACSB-accredited MBA programs over the next three to five years.

This research as the potential to impact the quality assurance processes used to guide and improve online learning in online MBA programs. While quality issues in online learning have been acknowledged by the AACSB accrediting body, they have not been specifically addressed in accreditation standards. Gathering and sharing the opinions of key stakeholders in online MBA education may help to inform accrediting bodies and processes related to online business education.

2. What is your research question? State your hypothesis.
   1. How should quality be assured for online MBA programs within the next 3-5 years?
   2. Does the quality assurance vision differ between various stakeholder groups including program administrators, faculty, and instructional designers?
   3. What are the potential implications of stakeholder views on implementation of quality assurance programs and future direction of AACSB standards?

3. What will you do with the results of your study (e.g. contributing to generalizable knowledge, publishing, sharing at conference, etc.)? If this project is only for internal evaluation or to complete a class assignment, IRB may not be required. Please contact the ORC for additional information.

The results of this study will be published as a doctoral dissertation and will also be shared in other academic publications and conferences.

PARTICIPANT POPULATION

4. Provide a description of the participant population. Describe the characteristics applicable to your research, such as gender, age ranges, ethnic background and health status.

Administrators, faculty, and instructional designers, with at least 5 years of experience related to online learning, working in AACSB-accredited business colleges across the country.

5. Approximately how many participants are needed to complete your study?

30-40

RECRUITMENT

6. Describe the recruitment **process**. Include how, where, when and who will contact potential research participants.

Participants will be identified from various sources including:

MBA Round Table membership list

AACSB membership list

Conference presentations

Publications

University websites

Personal referral

An email will be sent by the PI to potential participants inviting them to participate in the Delphi study. If they wish to participate, they will access the Study Website to obtain the link to a Qualtrics survey which asks for

ORC USE ONLY	DATE RECEIVED:	PROTOCOL #:	Page 6 of 9

Figure A.1 (continued) IRB Exempt Protocol Application

demographic information as well as the Round 1 question. These recruitment emails will sent upon IRB approval of the research.

7. Attach all applicable recruitment materials:
    - ☐ Recruitment Scripts
    - ☐ Flyers
    - ☒ Recruitment Emails
    - ☐ Letter/Cover Letter
    - ☐ Advertisements
    - ☐ Other:

8. Are you are directly emailing or mailing participants?
    - ☐ NO
    - ☒ YES

    If yes, how are you obtaining emails and/or mailing addresses?
    Personal referral, AACSB membership list, MBA Roundtable membership list, Conference presentation contact lists, University websites

RECRUITING BOISE STATE STUDENTS

Recruiting Boise State students may require additional internal and departmental permissions, in addition to IRB approval. It is the PIs responsibility to obtain these permissions before moving forward with recruitment. The Boise State Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA) provides guidelines for sending mass emails to students. It is the PI's responsibility to be familiar with these guidelines and any additional departmental, college or unit processes.

9. Are you recruiting Boise State students?
    - ☒ NO, skip to #10
    - ☐ YES:

    Indicate which students you are targeting:

    ☐ Approval(s) obtained and attached, if applicable.

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

10. Attach copies of all data collection tools to be used. Check all that apply.
    - ☒ Questionnaire/Survey
    - ☐ Observations
    - ☐ Other:
    - ☐ Interviews *(attach questions, interview script)*
    - ☐ Existing data

11. Provide a description of the research methods for data collection that will be employed. For example, what are participants going to do? Provide a step-by-step description of each procedure, including the frequency and duration of each procedure. If analyzing existing data, describe steps taken to obtain and analyze data. **This question is mandatory and may not be skipped. Applications missing this section will not be accepted for review and will the returned to the Principal Investigator.**

    Participation in this Delphi study will involve an approximate 3-month time commitment. The data collection process will consist of three rounds of questionnaires, each building on the previous iteration, with controlled feedback delivered to participants between rounds through a summary of the previous results. Descriptive statistics will be used to analyze the responses of the participants in each round. Round 1 results will be used to craft the subsequent Round 2 questionnaire. The Round 3 questionnaire will be the same as the Round 2 questionnaire but in this round participants will be given the opportunity to consider the Round 2 data as they formulate their responses. Data from each round will be summarized and made available to participants via the study Website. All data will be reported as aggregate data and will remain anonymous. No identifying information, including individual names, will be shared. Participants will be allowed and encouraged to view the data from each of the three groups. Participants will be given approximately 2 weeks to complete the questionnaire for each round. The PI will analyze each round and share results within 2 weeks of the proposed submission deadline for each round.

    Both qualitative and quantitative data from all 3 rounds will be shared with participants via the Study Website found at https://sites.google.com/a/u.boisestate.edu/qualitydelphisite/home

    The Round 1 data will include the major themes that were generated from the initial open-ended question as well as the associated item statements gathered from all participants. In Round 2 and Round 3, participants will be asked to rate each state on level of perceived importance using a 5-point Likert-scale and will be asked to rank each identified theme in order of importance.

Figure A.1 (continued) IRB Exempt Protocol Application

Data analysis and reporting inherent in the Delphi methodology require that participant responses be included. Participants are made aware of this in the initial invitation and description of the study.

Data will be collected and shared electronically through the use of a private Study Website, email communication, and Qualtrics, a secure internet-based survey platform. Participants will be directed to the Website through email communications. Here they will access the investigator profile, instructions and research methodology, documents including the IRB approval and informed consent, links to surveys, and the data as it is compiled.

The responses to the questionnaires will be stored in a database separate from the demographic information. Questionnaire responses will not be analyzed related to nor associated with name or other demographic information.

The Round 1 questionnaire is attached, the Round 2 questionnaire will be created from the item statements generated in Round 1. The Round 3 questionnaire will be identical to the Round 2 questionnaire except for the addition of statistical data on the group's Round 2 ratings of themes in quality assurance for online MBA programs.

Data will be downloaded from Qualtrics into Excel and/or SPSS for analysis. Descriptive statistics (mean, median, mode, interquartile ranges, and standard deviation) for each of the item statement ratings and overall categorical rankings will be generated.

Participants will visit the Study Website found at https://sites.google.com/a/u.boisestate.edu/qualitydelphisite/home

12. Where will the study take place? (i.e., explain where you are distributing surveys, conducting interviews, etc.)
The study will take place online via email and the Study Website.

13. Does your study include plans to recruit participants from or collect data at an external site? (i.e., off Boise State campus. For example, an elementary school, hospital, etc.)
☐YES ☒NO
If YES, indicate the external site(s) and you must attach an acknowledgement (letter or email) indicating you have permission to use their facility and personnel.

INFORMED CONSENT

14. Describe the consent **process**. Do not answer, "see attached consent form," as this does not describe the **process** of obtaining informed consent. Describe how, when and where the informed consent process will take place and who will obtain informed consent.
The informed consent document will be available on the Study Website and will be referred to in the initial email correspondence as well as attached to this email. Participants will give consent to participate in the study by accessing the Study Website and completing the Qualtrics survey. The PI will oversee these processes.

15. The consent document must contain all required elements of consent. Please see examples of informed consent documents online.
Which of the following will you use to present the consent process? Please attach the following:
☒Informed Consent Form   ☐Cover Letter
☒Web-based Cover Letter   ☐Verbal Consent Script
☐Other:

16. Into what languages will these documents be translated? *(Note: A copy of the English and translated consent documents must be submitted for IRB review.)*
N/A

PRIVACY

Privacy refers to *persons during data collection*. It is the control over the extent, timing, and circumstances of sharing oneself (physically, behaviorally, or intellectually) with others (e.g., surveys are completed in the privacy of their own home; interviews will be done in a location of their choosing where it is unlikely they will be overheard).

17. Describe the provisions to protect the **privacy of the participants during the data collection** procedures.
Participants will complete surveys in the location of their choosing.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Figure A.1 (continued) IRB Exempt Protocol Application

BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY
RESEARCH AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Date: March 07, 2016

To: Glori Hinck   cc: Kerry Rice

From: Office of Research Compliance (ORC)

Subject: SB-IRB Notification of Exemption - 104-SB16-055
           VISIONS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN ONLINE MBA PROGRAMS

The Boise State University ORC has reviewed your protocol application and has determined that your research is exempt from further IRB review and supervision under 45 CFR 46.101(b).

Protocol Number: 104-SB16-055
    Approved: 3/4/2016   Application Received: 2/29/2016
     Review: Exempt
    Category: 2

This exemption covers any research and data collected under your protocol as of the date of approval indicated above, unless terminated in writing by you, the Principal Investigator, or the Boise State University IRB. All amendments or changes (including personnel changes) to your approved protocol **must** be brought to the attention of the Office of Research Compliance for review and approval before they occur, as these modifications may change your exempt status. Complete and submit a Modification Form indicating any changes to your project.

Annual renewals are not required for exempt protocols. When the research project is completed, please notify our office by submitting a Final Report. The exempt status expires when the research project is completed (closed) or when the review category changes as described above.

All forms are available on the ORC website at http://goo.gl/D2FYTV

Please direct any questions or concerns to ORC at 426-5401 or humansubjects@boisestate.edu.

Thank you and good luck with your research.

Office of Research Compliance

1910 University Drive Boise, Idaho 83725-1139
Phone (208) 426-5401   orc@boisestate.edu
This letter is an electronic communication from Boise State University

Figure A.2 IRB Notification of Approval

APPENDIX B

Email Communications for Rounds One, Two and Three

[Name and Title]
[Organization]

Dear [   ],

My name is Glori Hinck and I am conducting a Delphi study on quality assurance in online MBA programs for my dissertation at Boise State University. I am contacting you because you have been identified as an expert [administrator, faculty member, instructional designer] with at least 5 years of experience in online learning currently working in an AACSB accredited online MBA program. I hope you will consider my invitation to participate as a panelist in this **Visions of Quality Assurance in Online MBA Programs Delphi Study.** Those who participate will receive a copy of the results of the study and an award plaque recognizing their service as an expert in the field of online MBA education. This research will be used to obtain opinions from experts such as yourself about how quality should be assured for online learning in AACSB-accredited MBA programs in the next three to five years.

The Delphi Methodology is an efficient way to gather the opinions of a group of experts located across a diverse geographical area and is used to evaluate consensus as well as differences of opinion among and between groups. This three-round iterative Delphi process will allow experts to generate their own opinions about important areas in quality assurance for online MBA education, prioritize the areas of focus that are identified, and then finalize their views based upon consideration of the entire group's opinion. A description of the study and the Delphi process can be found at https://sites.google.com/a/u.boisestate.edu/qualitydelphisite/home

This Delphi study will involve three rounds of data collection taking place over approximately two months. Every effort will be made to make this an efficient, user-friendly process that takes a minimum of your time. Data collection will be done via the Delphi study website and using Qualtrics survey software. Upon completion of the study, you will receive a report of the findings and an award plaque for your participation as an expert in the field of online MBA education.

Please review the attached Informed Consent document. By accessing the Study Website and completing the Qualtrics survey you are consenting to participate in this study. To participate, please go to https://sites.google.com/a/u.boisestate.edu/qualitydelphisite/home as soon as possible and complete the Round 1 questionnaire. If you feel that another [administrator, faculty member, instructional designer] would be a better candidate for this study, please extend this invitation to him/her. If you choose not to participate and do not wish to extend the invitation to another person within your department, I do understand but please take a moment to respond to this email with "I cannot participate". I will then contact another expert in the field to participate.

Figure B.1 Round One: Invitation to Participate in a Delphi Study

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you for your consideration of this study.

Glori Hinck, Doctoral Candidate
Department of Educational Technology- Boise State University
Instructional Designer- Opus College of Business/University of St. Thomas
612-670-0527 (cell)
glorihinck@u.boisestate.edu

Figure B.1 (continued) Round One: Invitation to Participate in a Delphi

Study

Hi [   ],

Thank you for agreeing to participate as an expert [administrator, faculty member, instructional designer] panelist in the **Visions of Quality Assurance in Online MBA Programs Delphi Study.** Your participation is greatly appreciated. This email is a reminder that the deadline for completing Round One is Friday, April 1, 2016. Experts who participate will receive a copy of the results of the study as well as an award plaque recognizing their service as an expert in the field. Please go to https://sites.google.com/a/u.boisestate.edu/qualitydelphisite/home at your earliest convenience for study details and to complete the Round One questionnaire. Thanks for your support!

Glori

Figure B.2 Round One: Reminder to Non-respondents

Hi [   ],

Thank you for agreeing to participate as an expert [administrator, faculty, instructional designer] panelist in the Visions of Quality Assurance in Online MBA Programs Delphi Study. Your participation is greatly appreciated. This email is a reminder that the deadline for completing Round One is tomorrow, April 1. Experts who participate will receive a copy of the results of the study as well as an award plaque recognizing their service as an expert in the field.

I hope that your busy schedule will allow you to participate. Please go to the study website at your earliest convenience to complete the Round One questionnaire. If you cannot participate, I ask that you respond to this email with "I cannot participate."

Thanks for your support- Glori.

Figure B.3 Round One: Follow-up Email to Non-respondents

Dear [ ],

Recently you received an invitation to participate in a Delphi study examining Quality Assurance in Online MBA Programs from the multiple perspectives of administrators, faculty, and instructional designers. This study is being conducted as part of my dissertation research. I am contacting you again to ask that you consider participating. I have had great success in enlisting the help of faculty and instructional designers but I have not yet had an adequate number of respondents who are administrators. An important part of my study is a comparison of the views of these three groups, your viewpoint as an expert administrator in an online MBA program is very important to me.

A full description of the study can be found at the study website. If you are willing to participate, please go to this site and complete the Round 1 questionnaire at your earliest convenience. If you are unable to participate, please consider extending this invitation to another expert in your department. If you do not wish to participate and are unable to extend the invitation to another participant, please respond to this email with "I cannot participate".

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Glori Hinck, Doctoral Candidate
Department of Educational Technology
Boise State University
Instructional Designer
Opus College of Business/University of St. Thomas
612-780-0527 (cell)
glorihincnk@u.boisestate.edu

Figure B.4 Round One: Request for Additional Administrator Panelists

Dear [ ],

Thank you for completing Round 1 of the Quality Assurance in Online MBA Programs Delphi study. Your participation is greatly appreciated. The second round questionnaire for the Quality Assurance in Online MBA Programs Delphi study is now available at: https://sites.google.com/a/u.boisestate.edu/qualitydelphisite/home.

In Round 2, the statements provided in Round 1 have been coded and grouped into major themes. Your task in this round is to indicate the importance of each of the statements within each of these major themes related to quality assurance in online MBA programs based on the Likert scale provided. The Round 2 questionnaire is estimated to take 20-30 minutes to complete.

Please respond to this questionnaire as soon as possible; completed questionnaires are needed no later than April 29, 2016 in order to allow time for tabulation of results and further progression of the study.

Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Glori Hinck, Doctoral Candidate
Department of Educational Technology
Boise State University
Instructional Designer
Opus College of Business/University of St. Thomas
612-780-0527 (cell)
glorihinck@u.boisestate.edu

Figure B.5 Round Two: Invitation

Dear [ ],

This email is a reminder that the deadline for completing Round 2 of the Quality Assurance in Online MBA Programs Delphi study is this Friday, April 29.

Please go to https://sites.google.com/a/u.boisestate.edu/qualitydelphisite/home as soon as possible to complete Round 2.

Thanks- Glori

Below is the original Round 2 message for your convenience:

Thank you for completing Round 1 of the Quality Assurance in Online MBA Programs Delphi study. Your participation is greatly appreciated. The second round questionnaire for the Quality Assurance in Online MBA Programs Delphi study is now available at: https://sites.google.com/a/u.boisestate.edu/qualitydelphisite/home.

In Round 2, the statements provided in Round 1 have been coded and grouped into major themes. Your task in this round is to indicate the importance of each of the statements within each of these major themes related to quality assurance in online MBA programs based on the Likert scale provided. The Round 2 questionnaire is estimated to take 20-30 minutes to complete.

Please respond to this questionnaire as soon as possible; completed questionnaires are needed no later than April 29, 2016 in order to allow time for tabulation of results and further progression of the study.

Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Glori Hinck, Doctoral Candidate
Department of Educational Technology
Boise State University
Instructional Designer
Opus College of Business/University of St. Thomas
612-780-0527 (cell)
glorihinck@u.boisestate.edu

Figure B.6 Round Two: Reminder to Non-respondents

Hi [ ]

Thank you so much for participating in Round 1 of the Quality Assurance in Online MBA Programs Delphi study. Your continued participation in Rounds 2 and 3 are important to the validity of the study. I know that you are extremely busy but hope that you can find a few minutes to complete the Round 2 survey by end of the day on Thursday, May 5. You can access the survey link at https://sites.google.com/a/u.boisestate.edu/qualitydelphisite/home

Should you be unable to complete the survey, please let me know by responding to this email so that I can move forward with data analysis.

Thanks again for your support of my dissertation research,

Glori

Figure B.7 Round Two: Follow-up Email to Non-respondents

Hi [ ],

Thanks so much for completing Round 2 of the Delphi study in a timely manner. Your commitment is greatly appreciated! The final Round 3 questionnaire is now available at https://sites.google.com/a/u.boisestate.edu/qualitydelphisite/home.

The Round 3 questionnaire is identical to the Round 2 survey except for the addition of statistical data on the group's Round 2 ratings of priorities in Quality Assurance for Online MBA Programs. In this round you will review the group responses for each item and will rate the importance of each item using the Likert scale. You may respond the same as you did in Round 2 or you may revise your response. Specific directions are indicated on the questionnaire.

Please complete the Round 3 questionnaire at your earliest convenience and no later than Monday, May 23.

I really appreciate your participation and valuable contributions throughout the duration of this study. I will be sending an engraved plaque and copy of the results to all who complete the three rounds of the Delphi study in recognition of your expert contributions to this research project.

Once again, please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Glori
glorihinck@u.boisestate.edu

Figure B.8 Round Three: Invitation

Dear [ ],

This email is a reminder that the deadline for completing Round 3 of the Quality Assurance in Online MBA Programs Delphi study is Monday, May 23.

Please go to https://sites.google.com/a/u.boisestate.edu/qualitydelphisite/home as soon as possible to complete Round 3. Thanks- Glori

Below is the original Round 3 message for your convenience:

Thanks so much for completing Round 2 of the Delphi study in a timely manner. Your commitment is greatly appreciated! The final Round 3 questionnaire is now available at https://sites.google.com/a/u.boisestate.edu/qualitydelphisite/home.

The Round 3 questionnaire is identical to the Round 2 survey except for the addition of statistical data on the group's Round 2 ratings of priorities in Quality Assurance for Online MBA Programs. In this round you will review the group responses for each item and will rate the importance of each item using the Likert scale. You may respond the same as you did in Round 2 or you may revise your response. Specific directions are indicated on the questionnaire.

Please complete the Round 3 questionnaire at your earliest convenience and no later than Monday, May 23.

I really appreciate your participation and valuable contributions throughout the duration of this study. I will be sending an engraved plaque and copy of the results to all who complete the three rounds of the Delphi study in recognition of your expert contributions to this research project.

Once again, please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Glori
glorihinck@u.boisestate.edu

Figure B.9 Round Three: Reminder to Non-respondents

Dear [ ],

This email is a reminder that the deadline for completing Round 3 of the Quality Assurance in Online MBA Programs Delphi study is today. Your participation in this final round is important and valued.

Please go to https://sites.google.com/a/u.boisestate.edu/qualitydelphisite/home as soon as possible to complete Round 3. Thanks! Glori

Below is the original Round 3 message for your convenience:

Thanks so much for completing Round 2 of the Delphi study in a timely manner. Your commitment is greatly appreciated! The final Round 3 questionnaire is now available at https://sites.google.com/a/u.boisestate.edu/qualitydelphisite/home

The Round 3 questionnaire is identical to the Round 2 survey except for the addition of statistical data on the group's Round 2 ratings of priorities in Quality Assurance for Online MBA Programs. In this round you will review the group responses for each item and will rate the importance of each item using the Likert scale. You may respond the same as you did in Round 2 or you may revise your response. Specific directions are indicated on the questionnaire.

Please complete the Round 3 questionnaire at your earliest convenience and no later than May 23.

I really appreciate your participation and valuable contributions throughout the duration of this study. I will be sending an engraved plaque and copy of the results to all who complete the three rounds of the Delphi study in recognition of your expert contributions to this research project.

Once again, please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Glori
glorihinck@u.boisestate.edu

Figure B.10 Round Three: Follow-up Email to Non-respondents

APPENDIX C

Description, Instructions, and Questionnaires for Rounds One, Two, and Three

The descriptions, detailed instructions and links to the questionnaires were delivered via the Internet and can be accessed at the study Google site:

https://sites.google.com/a/u.boisestate.edu/qualitydelphisite/home

APPENDIX D

Responses to Round One

Table D1.1   Administrator Subgroup: Round One Responses

ADMINISTRATOR (n=30)

They should be accredited exactly like any residential, part-time, or executive MBA program. The question implies extraordinary doubt about the quality of online MBA programs. I do not share such a view.

Establish qualification standards of faculty/instructors in regard to their contributions to their discipline/field of research.

Require training/professional development of faculty in the areas of online teaching and online course design.

Require a partnership with master's level qualified instructional designers to ensure that established quality standards for online course design and delivery are met.

Establish quality standards that account not only for course design, but also for delivery.

Establish program-level policies for ensuring quality around issues such as accessibility, copyright/fair use, technology requirements, academic integrity of assessments, and user authentication.

Courses should be developed and maintained by academic faculty who are experts in the subject area. High quality courses need a champion. If the online MBA degree is to be considered equal to an on-ground MBA degree, then the academic rigor must be maintained. This means course content and requirements must be managed by qualified academic faculty. It cannot be delegated to developers or administrators.

Developers and faculty should be encouraged to maintain a common course architecture. This does not mean individual courses can not be innovative but it means students should feel confident finding their way around any course within the curriculum. It is easy for both faculty and developers to lose this focus as courses are iteratively redesigned or transferred to new individuals.

Concerns with size and breadth of curriculum. The number of credit hours needed to complete an MBA program varies widely and has fallen significantly in the past decade. The advent of online MBA programs, emphasizing convenience, has accelerated this trend. There is a threshold where a program no longer provides the breadth of intellectual experience to assure a quality experience for students. I'm not sure what that threshold is, but expect we are approaching it.

(table continues)

Table D1.1 (continued)   **Administrator Subgroup: Round One Responses**

Responsiveness to student feedback: All online courses should conclude with a genuine effort to collect student feedback. This can be a traditional student evaluation form or some other approach. Such feedback is critical to quality assurance on the course level. Faculty should be expected to respond to feedback with course modifications as appropriate.

Assessment of outcomes: At the program level, it is critical to assess learning effectiveness. Are students getting it? This is frequently done by testing or interviewing students in the ending phase of their program. This evaluation must become input for the curricular revision cycle.

Applicants need to be assured their classmates are truly vetted via a quality admission reviewed process, including evaluation of undergraduate and/or graduate academic success.

Applicants need to be assured their online faculty are the same faculty hired to teach all the traditional quality programs offered by the school.

Applicants need to be assured their classmates were vetted through an interview process considering Emotional Intelligence and Cultural Intelligence not just academic and work history.

Curriculum innovation

Increase peer to peer interaction

Exam proctoring

Faculty participation and growth

The key to quality assurance in an online program is a holistic vantage point to the program that takes into consideration all touch points that can help students progress through the curriculum and program. Incentives that clearly involve faculty and include investment in the thoughtful design of the course, faculty preparedness and support throughout the teaching of the course, student performance and progression, and the community network that exists for students and faculty are critical to a successful online program.

I believe online MBA programs should be assessed separately from on ground programs. Ideally, there will be a set of required courses that all accredited programs should subscribe to. There should be evaluative points given for the credentials of the creators of courses and for those who teach in the program.

Table D1.1 (continued)   **Administrator Subgroup: Round One Responses**

The same quality should be provided as with on campus classes. Group discussion should be encouraged, if not required. Learning objectives should match the on-campus equivalents.

For the most part just as it is done on campus - particularly with regard to curricular issues. Of interest and impacting this is the Quality of students Credentials of faculty Faculty on line training and expertise Opportunity for electives Cost to student/credit Number of credits Type and amount of technologies involved Assistance with technology Administration support Is this 100% online or does it require some campus visits Assignment interactivity

Online MBA program quality should start with the commitment from the College to assign faculty to teach online who are willing to do so. The willing instructor is one who adheres to current online pedagogical strategies and works with a team to ensure students are supported in their learning.

Technology and design should not be a reason why a student cannot learn online. Online MBA programs should ensure that there is relative consistency across all courses in the program.

Online faculty should also be face-to-face/classroom faculty as well, so they are rooted in their departments', College's, and University's culture.

AACSB Assurance of Learning Goals should be properly assessed and measured across all College MBA courses. The learning goals should be attained at the same level across Online MBA and other professional MBA courses (non-residential).

Student outcomes and learning as determined by the faculty member.

Student evaluations of the classes and program.

Review of the content and delivery techniques as evaluated by the Instructional Design team.

Review of the content and delivery as conducted through peer and department chair review.

Table D1.2   Faculty Subgroup: Round One Responses

FACULTY (n= 20)

Accreditation of online MBA programs through AACSB

Qualified faculty teaching in the program (the same as in the regular MBA program)

External accreditation bodies (such as Sloan) focusing upon the differences between accredited versus non-accredited programs

Ensuring that academic standards and integrity is withheld by specific standards unique to the online programs

First, academic integrity is the most important consideration. The reputation of our profession, accreditation, and the MBA degree is at stake. Whether programs choose to use some type of proctoring with technology, or comprehensive exams, or other methods, it is absolutely essential that we be able to identify students and make sure that they are completing assignments on their own when asked to do so. That means using proctoring methods (online and on-site) as well as using tools to check for plagiarism (SafeAssign and/or TurnItIn) and designing assessments that can be varied and updated regularly. So many employers and alums express dismay at our move to online course offerings because they doubt that we can be effective in controlling academic integrity and student outcomes.

Assurance of Learning (AoL) must be tailored to the learning objectives of individual disciplines, and not from some top-down vision of how MBA programs can be remade to be more appealing to the masses. In the minds of many employers and potential students, "online" means "less rigorous" when it should mean "exactly the same as a traditional, on-campus program." After-hours programs aren't any less rigorous than full-time programs, but they have managed to give the same level of education with different experiences in some cases. In order to keep the connection between traditional programs (even "executive" or "professional" programs) it is essential that the assurance of learning be nearly identical across all modes of instruction at every institution. This is very difficult given the expectations of various constituencies, many of whom want "online" to mean "less rigorous". Failure to sever that erroneous impression now will lead to a greater decline in the reputation of the MBA as a useful degree over time.

Table D1.2   Faculty Subgroup: Round One Responses

Programs need to maintain the connection between traditional programs and their online offerings in as many ways possible. For example, many MBA programs advertise the fact that the "same faculty" teach both in F2F programs and in the online offerings (much as "executive" or "professional" programs have advertised for years). One example: Class sizes. Online courses should ideally have fewer students than face-to-face classes because of the difficulty of communicating. As we see more programs move to higher class sizes for online offerings, it becomes clear what administrators and finance officers find attractive about "online learning."

Programs need to be supported by production dollars. As a content expert, I should have someone I can count on who can work on my content on a regular basis. As it is, and this seems to be common at small schools, any adaptation of course content or evaluation/assessment over time is discounted in favor of putting more and more courses online. The maintenance and continuous improvement, and the use of new technology, are forgotten about.

Programs need to continue to morph their ancillary services toward dealing with online students (or potential online students). Having advisors be available for online chat or extended phone hours, for example. Having online open houses rather than on-campus meet-and-greets is another example.

Faculty qualifications will always play a central role

Student success in completing the program in a reasonable length of time

Impact on student careers - do they get a better job or more pay once their degree is completed

Vetting applicants by previous academic and work accomplishments (not just GMAT and GPA)

Ensuring that top-tier faculty are involved both on-line and on campus. Avoid assigning only junior faculty to teach on-line. You want highly qualified faculty mixed in to keep your reputation high and expectations high.

Would they get into graduate school?

Making course content relevant and practical, not just academic and theoretical. MBAs are generalists and are looking for knowledge they can apply directly to their workplace.

Standardizing expectations and clearly defining those expectations so that all programs are judged on consistent and universal standards.

Table D1.2 (continued)   Faculty Subgroup: Round One Responses

Some sort of external review by entities such as accrediting agencies or some body of accomplished online learning instructors/scholars

Amount and quality of scholarly activity pertaining to online instruction

Some aggregating system like Kayak

Table D1.3   Instructional Designer Subgroup: Round One Responses

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGNER (n= 22)

Quality assurance for an online MBA program begins with the program administrators' dedication to establish quality and maintain it. A first important step for program administrators is hiring instructors that are comfortable with using technology and have a strong willingness to teach in an online environment. Program administrators of high quality online programs establish an expectancy that all new instructors upon entering the program will receive training on how to use the course management system tools in order to properly design and deliver an online course, as well as learn best practices of online instruction. Program administrators will thus plan for and provide support personnel to carry out training and provide on-going pedagogical and technical assistance before the course begins, during the course, and after the course ends (e.g., in my program, training and support are provided primarily by the program's instructional designer).

A high quality online MBA program needs some level of standardization. Program administrators, working with faculty and support staff, should establish common expectations and define the characteristics of a quality course and good instruction. Program course consistency can be accomplished by establishing a common course template (so the course environment is familiar in all program courses) and training instructors to use research-based, best practices of online instruction - examples include: ensuring instructor presence (e.g., responding quickly to student e-mails, holding live online chat sessions with students), designing assignments that encourage active student engagement and collaboration and application of what is being taught (e.g., allowing student conversations in online discussion forums, grouping students to accomplish a team project), and having frequent assessments (i.e., provide ways to measure if students are learning).

Establishing (and maintaining) a quality online MBA program needs on-going assessment. Thus, students should be allowed to complete a course evaluation after completing each course. Program administrators, instructors, and instructional designers need to examine course evaluation results to determine instructor/course performance and then to take action where adjustments are needed.

A high quality online MBA program provides student support services. Helpful online resources and easy-to-contact support personnel are provided for the online students which thus increases the students' chances for academic success in the program.

I do not know that quality can truly be assured. We can put in place systems and processes that help to encourage quality, but it is too big of a world and it is too hard to discern true quality.

(table continues)

Table D1.3 (continued)   Instructional Designer Subgroup: Round One Responses

One way to encourage quality is to showcase good examples of quality. While many people have a "sense" of what quality means, it is hard for them to quantify or know how to apply it to their situations.

Another way is to provide opportunities to learn about how to create and maintain quality. Faculty development, workshops and conferences, frameworks and rubrics all can help with this

The short answer is that learning outcomes reported from inside the learning system should provide evidence that the required learning has occurred. Further, this measurement of learning outcomes should be measured for discrete key concepts that are required of MBAs and - ideally, these statistics would be pulled to accreditation and continuous process improvement.

Quality can be assured by requiring MBA instructors to be proficient in online course development and online instruction. A uniform set of skills should be required, and specialized training should be provided for faculty interested in teaching online at the graduate level. I envision a certification training program of some sort with "continuing professional education" that will provide additional skills as new technology is introduced in the online learning environment.

A uniform rubric would be a good idea, and if there were an accreditation body mandating quality guidelines in several aspects of online course development and delivery that would be wonderful.

There is much one can do within a quality online course structure to provide adequate "freedom" for an instructor to teach as s/he wishes. However some sort of template - or requirement of structure might be a good idea.

An online program should follow course design standards such as Quality Matters or Cal State - Chico, and/or develop their own course design standards using the current research in online teaching and learning and other commonly used accepted rubrics such as QM.

An online program should develop standards for online course delivery (online teaching). QM does not address this aspect.

An online program should have a peer review process in which instructors or a panel of instructors and designers periodically review courses using the course design and delivery standards.

(table continues)

Table D1. 3 (continued)   Instructional Designer Subgroup: Round One Responses

The online program should have a rigorous process for ensuring the academic integrity of quizzes and exams. This includes randomizing questions, randomizing answer choices, being careful about using publisher exam banks, editing questions from publisher exam banks if used, checking to see if questions can be found online, encouraging instructors to write their own individual assessment material, cycling assessment material in and out frequently, selecting available options within the LMS/quiz to deter cheating (such as quiz setting and dividing students into groups), having students sign a Code of Conduct...if all else fails consider proctoring services.

The online program should provide professional development opportunities to online instructors, especially to new online instructors. Having an online teaching course is critical for new instructors. Keeping all online instructors up to date on the latest features of the LMS is critical. In addition, giving instructors ideas for how they can use the tools of the LMS to develop different kinds of assignments and interactions.

This is my first response, so I will be brief and hopefully to the point. I can (and will) expand later.
> Quality should be assured in the following ways:
> a. Qualified faculty
> b. Highly demanding curriculum
> c. Innovative ways of delivering instruction
> d. Quality of content
> e. Formative and Summative assessments
> f. Outside classroom networks and support
> G. Post-graduate opportunities

In general, we could organize my response in three areas:
- Administrative
- Academic
- Community

Online MBA programs should be assessed for quality in terms of design, content, and student and instructor engagement in the course. Design can be assessed using a rubric such as Quality Matters or the scorecard from the Online Learning Consortium. They can also review internal (to that school) usage of the rubrics in the development of evaluation of the course design. The course content and/or student outcomes should be assessed to determine if the objectives set forth by the school and AACSB are being met. Student engagement is more difficult to measure, but they could review how involved online students are in extracurricular activities, review interactivity within the courses, and speak with instructors and students about the interactivity/engagement of both the students and the instructors in the courses.

(table continues)

Table D1. 3 (continued)   Instructional Designer Subgroup: Round One Responses

The quality experience of the usability for the student should be assured by including a development requirement of professional instructional design and instructional technology support and by having a structured review process adhering to accepted quality standards. The use of consistent practices supports the primary instructional design criteria of the delivery method providing the easiest access to the content. The method of subject matter expert and delivery expert working in collaboration is necessary to communicate the most valuable aspects of the content in a clear and prioritized way. The media is simply a delivery tool with the focus being on the content and the assessment of learning.

From an institutional perspective, the academic alignment of the program courses should be consistent with the university, college, and program goals and objectives. The courses should be mapped to the overall curriculum and provide the same knowledge foundation. The faculty and instructors should be the same, and the online and face to face courses should be consistent.

The faculty should attend online course development and facilitation training before teaching an online course. All online courses should be reviewed on an annual basis for accuracy, currency, and to provide different versions of assessment to support maintaining the course academic integrity. The time to train and the cost of ongoing review of courses should be compensated by the institution. The training and review of the courses should be part of an overall online course quality initiative for the program.

Theme- Academic integrity and rigor

Deliver a highly demanding curriculum with rigorous grading standards. Number of credits. Highly demanding curriculum. Expecting quality performance from students and grading those rigorously. I once had an adjunct faculty tell me that the students "were all A students, or else how would they get into graduate school?" In the minds of many employers and potential students, "online" means "less rigorous" when it should mean "exactly the same as a traditional, on-campus program." Failure to sever that erroneous impression now will lead to a greater decline in the reputation of the MBA as a useful degree over time.

Implement rigorous systems to ensure the academic integrity of quizzes, exams, and assignments. Have a rigorous process for ensuring the academic integrity of quizzes and exams includes randomizing questions, randomizing answer choices, being careful about using publisher exam banks, editing questions from publisher exam banks if used, checking to see if questions can be found online, encouraging instructors to write their own individual assessment material, cycling assessment material in and out frequently, selecting available options within the LMS/quiz to deter cheating (such as quiz setting and dividing students into groups). Use proctoring methods (online or on-site) for exams. First, academic integrity is the most important consideration. The reputation of our profession, accreditation, and the MBA degree is at stake. Whether programs choose to use some type of proctoring with technology, or comprehensive exams, or other methods. Exam proctoring. If all else fails consider proctoring services. First, academic integrity is the most important consideration. The reputation of our profession, accreditation, and the MBA degree is at stake. Whether programs choose to use some type of proctoring with technology, or comprehensive exams, or other methods, it is absolutely essential that we be able to identify students and make sure that they are completing assignments on their own when asked to do so. That means using proctoring methods (online and on-site) as well as using tools to check for plagiarism (SafeAssign and/or TurnItIn) and designing assessments that can be varied and updated regularly. So many employers and alums express dismay at our move to online course offerings because they doubt that we can be effective in controlling academic integrity and student outcomes.

Require students to sign a code of conduct. Having students sign a Code of Conduct.

Structure an admission process that focuses on quality of students. Vetting applicants by previous academic and work accomplishments (not just GMAT and GPA). Applicants need to be assured their classmates were vetted through an interview process considering Emotional Intelligence and Cultural Intelligence not just academic and work history. Applicants need to be assured their classmates are truly vetted via a quality admission reviewed process, including evaluation of undergraduate and/or graduate academic success. Of interest and impacting this is the Quality of students

Figure D.1 Coded Responses: Academic Integrity and Rigor

Theme- Accreditation

Online MBA programs should be accredited through AACSB.

Online programs should be accredited exactly like any residential, part-time, or executive MBA program. The question implies extraordinary doubt about the quality of online MBA programs. I do not share such a view. For the most part just as it is done on campus - particularly with regard to curricular issues
Assurance of Learning should be properly assessed and measured across all college MBA courses.
Assurance of Learning must be tailored to the learning objectives of individual disciplines, and not from some top-down vision of how MBA programs can be remade to be more appealing to the masses. In the minds of many employers and potential students, "online" means "less rigorous" when it should mean "exactly the same as a traditional, on-campus program." After-hours programs aren't any less rigorous than full-time programs, but they have managed to give the same level of education with different experiences in some cases.
Assurance of Learning should be the same in all modes of instruction. In order to keep the connection between traditional programs (even "executive" or "professional" programs), it is essential that the assurance of learning be nearly identical across all modes of instruction at every institution. This is very difficult given the expectations of various constituencies, many of whom want "online" to mean "less rigorous". Failure to sever that erroneous impression now will lead to a greater decline in the reputation of the MBA as a useful degree over time.

Figure D.2 Coded Responses: Accreditation

Theme- Course Content, Design and Delivery

Use innovative approaches to curriculum design and delivery of instruction. Curriculum innovation. Innovative ways of delivering instruction.

Design courses that promote student engagement and collaboration. Design courses that promote student engagement and collaboration. Increase peer to peer interaction. Group discussion should be encouraged, if not required. Assignment interactivity. Designing assignments that encourage active student engagement and collaboration and application of what is being taught (e.g., allowing student conversations in online discussion forums, grouping students to accomplish a team project).

Provide relevant and practical course content that can be applied directly to the workplace. Making course content relevant and practical, not just academic and theoretical. MBAs are generalists and are looking for knowledge they can apply directly to their workplace. Courses that promote application of what is being taught.

Provide quality content with the same learning objectives in both online and face-to-face classes. The same quality should be provided as with on campus classes. Learning objectives should match the on-campus equivalents.

Utilize both formative and summative assessments in course design. Having frequent assessments (i.e., provide ways to measure if students are learning). Formative and Summative assessments

Use technology appropriately. Type and amount of technologies involved. The media is simply a delivery tool with the focus being on the content and the assessment of learning. Technology and design should not be a reason why a student cannot learn online.

Establish a common course template, structure, or architecture that also provides adequate freedom for an instructor to teach as s/he wishes. Program course consistency can be accomplished by establishing a common course template (so the course environment is familiar in all program courses). There is much one can do within a quality online course structure to provide adequate "freedom" for an instructor to teach as s/he wishes. However some sort of template - or requirement of structure might be a good idea. Developers and faculty should be encouraged to maintain a common course architecture. This does not mean individual courses can not be innovative but it means students should feel confident finding their way around any course within the curriculum. It is easy for both faculty and developers to lose this focus as courses are iteratively redesigned or transferred to new individuals.

Provide resources and support for ongoing course design, development, delivery and technology. Programs need to be supported by production dollars. As a content expert, I should have someone I can count on who can work on my content on a regular basis. As it is, and this seems to be common at small schools, any adaptation of course content or evaluation/assessment over time is discounted in favor of putting more and more courses online. The maintenance and continuous improvement, and the use of new technology, are forgotten about. Program administrators will thus plan for and provide support personnel to carry out training and provide on-going pedagogical and technical assistance

Figure D.3 Coded Responses: Course Content, Design and Delivery

Theme- Evaluation

Assess online MBA programs for quality in terms of design, content, and student and instructor engagement in the course. Measure engagement by reviewing how involved online students are in extracurricular activities, interactivity within the courses, and speaking with instructors and students about the interactivity/engagement in the courses.

Review online courses on an ongoing basis. All online courses should be reviewed on an annual basis for accuracy, currency, and to provide different versions of assessment to support maintaining the course academic integrity. Establishing (and maintaining) a quality online MBA program needs on-going assessment. The online courses themselves will continue to be evaluated periodically to assure quality.

Provide the same level of quality in both online and on campus classes. The same quality should be provided as with on campus classes.

Assess online MBA programs separately. Online MBA programs should be assessed separately from on ground programs with evaluative points given for the credentials of the creators of courses and for those who teach in the program.

Integrate student evaluations into the quality assurance process. All online courses should conclude with a genuine effort to collect student feedback. This can be a traditional student evaluation form or some other approach. Such feedback is critical to quality assurance on the course level. Program level assessment of outcomes and learning effectiveness done by testing or interviewing students in the ending phase of their program with this evaluation becoming input for the curricular revision cycle. Student evaluations of the classes and program. Students should be allowed to complete a course evaluation after completing each course. Students' evaluation of the program based on their experience during the program.

Programs are responsive to student feedback. Program administrators, instructors, and instructional designers need to examine course evaluation results to determine instructor/course performance and then to take action where adjustments are needed. Responsiveness to student feedback: Faculty should be expected to respond to feedback with course modifications as appropriate.

Assess learning outcomes. Learning outcomes reported from inside the learning system should provide evidence that the required learning has occurred and this measurement of learning outcomes should be measured for discrete key concepts that are required of MBAs with these statistics used for accreditation and continuous process improvement. Student outcomes and learning as determined by the faculty member. The course content and/or student outcomes should be assessed to determine if the objectives set forth by the school and AACSB are being met.

Attain learning goals at the same level across online MBA and other professional MBA courses (non-residential).

Figure D.4 Coded Responses: Evaluation

Theme- Faculty qualifications, development and support

Establish standards for faculty qualifications and credentials. Establish qualification standards of faculty/instructors in regard to their contributions to their discipline/field of research. Credentials of faculty. Faculty qualifications will always play a central role. Qualified faculty. You want highly qualified faculty mixed in to keep your reputation high and expectations high. Qualified faculty teaching in the program.

Require MBA instructors to be proficient in a uniform set of skills related to online teaching and learning. A uniform set of skills should be required, and specialized training should be provided for faculty interested in teaching online at the graduate level. Require MBA instructors to be proficient with expertise and training in online course development and online instruction

Assign faculty to teach online who are willing to do so and are comfortable with using technology. The willing instructor is one who adheres to current online pedagogical strategies and works with a team to ensure students are supported in their learning. A first important step for program administrators is hiring instructors that are comfortable with using technology and have a strong willingness to teach in an online environment.

Online faculty should be part of the existing university culture and should also teach in the face-to-face classroom. Online programs should hire the same faculty as those in the traditional MBA programs so they are rooted in their departments', College's and University's culture and to ensure that top-tier faculty are involved both on-line and on campus. Avoid assigning only junior faculty to teach on-line. You want highly qualified faculty mixed in to keep your reputation high and expectations high. Applicants need to be assured their online faculty are the same faculty hired to teach all the traditional quality programs offered by the school. The faculty and instructors should be the same

Qualified academic faculty manage course content and requirements. Courses should be developed and maintained by academic faculty who are experts in the subject area. High quality courses need a champion. If the online MBA degree is to be considered equal to an on-ground MBA degree, then the academic rigor must be maintained. It can not be delegated to developers or administrators.

Support faculty participation and growth in online learning. Provide professional development opportunities for online instructors (especially new instructors) to learn about how to create and maintain quality through faculty development, workshops and conferences, frameworks and rubrics. Faculty participation and growth. The online program should provide professional development opportunities to online instructors, especially to new online instructors. Another way is to provide opportunities to learn about how to create and maintain quality.

Faculty are required to participate in training/professional development for research-based, best practices of online course design and delivery. The quality experience of the usability for the student should be assured by including a development requirement of professional instructional design and instructional technology support. Program administrators of high quality online programs establish an expectancy that all new instructors upon entering the program will receive training on how to use the course management system tools in order to properly design and deliver an online course, as well as learn best practices of online instruction. Training instructors to use research-based, best practices of online instruction. Learn best practices of online instruction.

Figure D.5 Coded Responses: Faculty Qualifications, Development, and Support

Faculty are required to attend training before teaching an online course. The faculty should attend online course development and facilitation training before teaching an online course. Program administrators of high quality online programs establish an expectancy that all new instructors upon entering the program will receive training on how to use the course management system tools in order to properly design and deliver an online course, as well as learn best practices of online instruction.

Provide a certification training program for faculty interested in teaching online at the graduate level. I envision a certification training program of some sort with "continuing professional education" that will provide additional skills as new technology is introduced in the online learning environment. **Create a course design partnership between faculty and instructional designers.** Require a partnership with master's level qualified instructional designers to ensure that established quality standards for online course design and delivery are met. The method of subject matter expert and delivery expert working in collaboration is necessary to communicate the most valuable aspects of the content in a clear and prioritized way.

Provide learning management system (LMS) training and support. Establish an expectation that all new instructors entering the program receive training on how to use the LMS tools in order to properly design and deliver an online course. Keeping all online instructors up to date on the latest features of the LMS and how these can be used to develop course content is critical.

Figure D.5 (continued) Coded Responses: Faculty Qualifications, Development, and Support

Theme-Learner support

Provide outside classroom networks and support.
Offer post-graduate opportunities.
Offer opportunity for electives.
Provide support services for online students. A high quality online MBA program provides student support services. Programs need to continue to morph their ancillary services toward dealing with online students (or potential online students). Having advisors be available for online chat or extended phone hours, for example. Having online open houses rather than on-campus meet-and-greets is

Figure D.6 Coded Responses: Learner Support

Theme- Quality Frameworks

Develop processes and systems that encourage and maintain quality. I do not know that quality can truly be assured. We can put in place systems and processes that help to encourage quality, but it is too big of a world and it is too hard to discern true quality. Quality assurance for an online MBA program begins with the program administrators' dedication to establish quality and maintain it.

Standardize and clearly define online course design expectations based on consistent and universal standards. The use of consistent practices supports the primary instructional design criteria of the delivery method providing the easiest access to the content. The quality experience of the usability for the student should be assured by having a structured review process adhering to accepted quality standards. The use of consistent practices supports the primary instructional design criteria of the delivery method providing the easiest access to the content. A high quality online MBA program needs some level of standardization and consistency across all courses in the program. Online MBA programs should ensure that there is relative consistency across all courses in the program. Program administrators, working with faculty and support staff, should establish common expectations and define the characteristics of a quality course and good instruction. Ensuring that academic standards and integrity is withheld by specific standards unique to the online programs

Establish quality standards for online course delivery (teaching). An online program should develop standards for online course delivery (online teaching). QM does not address this aspect. Establish quality standards that account not only for course design, but also for delivery.

Implement a structured internal review process adhering to accepted quality standards for online courses and programs. Follow online course design standards such as Quality Matters, the Online Learning Consortium or Cal State - Chico, and/or develop institutional course design standards using the current research in online teaching and learning. Evaluate online course design by conducting internal reviews based on rubrics such as Quality Matters or the scorecard from the Online Learning Consortium. Design can be assessed using a rubric such as Quality Matters or the scorecard from the Online Learning Consortium. They can also review internal (to that school) usage of the rubrics in the development of evaluation of the course design.

Implement external reviews of online courses and programs. Some sort of external review by entities such as accrediting agencies or some body of accomplished online learning instructors/scholars. External accreditation bodies (such as Sloan) focusing upon the differences between accredited versus non-accredited programs

Institute peer review processes. An online program should have a peer review process in which instructors or a panel of instructors and designers periodically review courses using the course design and delivery standards.

Figure D.7 Coded Responses: Quality Frameworks

APPENDIX E

Round Two and Round 3 Statistical Tables

Table E.1   Importance Ratings from Round Three and Corresponding Ratings from Round Two, Listed in Order Presented in Questionnaire

Theme -Item	Statement	R3 M	R3 SD	R2 M	R2 SD	Change M	Change SD
Theme 1: Academic Integrity and Rigor							
1-1	Deliver a highly demanding curriculum with rigorous grading standards.	4.61	0.61	4.63	.60	-0.02	0.01
1-2	Implement rigorous systems to ensure the academic integrity of quizzes, exams, and assignments.	4.17	0.92	4.37	.90	-0.20	0.02
1-3	Require students to sign a code of conduct.	3.50	0.99	3.37	1.01	0.13	-0.02
1-4	Structure an admission process that focuses on quality of students.	3.83	0.92	4.00	1.05	-0.17	-0.13
Theme 2: Accreditation							
2-1	Online MBA programs should be accredited through AACSB.	4.56	0.78	4.26	0.87	0.30	-0.09
2-2	Online programs should be accredited exactly like any residential, part-time, or executive MBA program.	4.11	1.02	4.32	0.67	-0.21	0.35
2-3	Assurance of Learning should be properly assessed and measured across all college MBA courses.	4.22	0.94	4.21	0.92	0.01	0.02

(table continues)

Table E.1 (continued)   Importance Ratings from Round Three and Corresponding Ratings from Round Two, Listed in Order Presented in Questionnaire

Theme -Item	Statement	R3 M	R3 SD	R2 M	R2 SD	Change M	Change SD
2-4	Assurance of Learning must be tailored to the learning objectives of individual disciplines, and not from some top-down vision of how MBA programs can be remade to be more appealing to the masses.	3.67	1.24	3.42	1.39	0.25	-0.15
2-5	Assurance of Learning should be the same in all modes of instruction.	3.39	1.14	3.16	1.30	0.23	-0.16
Theme 3: Course Content, Design and Delivery							
3-1	Use innovative approaches to curriculum design and delivery of instruction.	3.67	1.08	3.84	1.12	-0.17	-0.04
3-2	Design courses that promote student engagement and collaboration.	4.28	1.02	4.26	0.81	0.02	0.21
3-3	Provide relevant and practical course content that can be applied directly to the workplace.	4.67	0.69	4.37	0.96	0.30	-0.27
3-4	Provide quality content with the same learning objectives in both online and face-to-face classes.	4.22	0.81	4.37	1.07	-0.15	-0.26
3-5	Utilize both formative and summative assessments in course design.	3.72	1.02	3.63	1.30	0.09	-0.28

Table E.1 (continued) **Importance Ratings from Round Three and Corresponding Ratings from Round Two, Listed in Order Presented in Questionnaire**

Theme -Item	Statement	R3 M	R3 SD	R2 M	R2 SD	Change M	Change SD
3-6	Use technology appropriately.	4.39	0.70	4.11	1.20	0.28	-0.5
3-7	Establish a common course template, structure, or architecture that also provides adequate freedom for an instructor to teach as s/he wishes.	3.94	0.87	3.89	1.24	0.05	-0.37
3-8	Provide resources and support for ongoing course design, development, delivery and technology.	4.72	0.46	4.53	0.70	0.19	-0.24
Theme 4: Evaluation							
4-1	Assess online MBA programs for quality in terms of design, content, and student and instructor engagement in the course.	4.22	0.94	4.17	0.99	0.05	-0.05
4-2	Review online courses on an ongoing basis.	4.11	0.83	4.39	0.70	-0.28	0.13
4-3	Provide the same level of quality in both online and on campus classes.	4.56	0.70	4.56	1.04	0.00	-0.34
4-4	Assess online MBA programs separately.	2.17	1.20	2.33	1.41	-0.16	-0.21
4-5	Integrate student evaluations into the quality assurance process.	3.39	1.04	3.33	1.24	0.06	-0.20

(table continues)

Table E.1 (continued)   Importance Ratings from Round Three and Corresponding Ratings from Round Two, Listed in Order Presented in Questionnaire

Theme -Item	Statement	R3 M	R3 SD	R2 M	R2 SD	Change M	Change SD
4-6	Programs are responsive to student feedback.	3.56	0.92	3.89	1.02	-0.33	-0.10
4-7	Assess learning outcomes.	4.33	0.77	4.28	0.83	0.05	-0.06
4-8	Attain learning goals at the same level across online MBA and other professional MBA courses (non-residential).	4.06	0.73	4.11	1.02	-0.05	-0.29
Theme 5: Faculty Qualification, Development and Support							
5-1	Establish standards for faculty qualifications and credentials.	4.28	0.75	4.26	0.65	0.02	0.10
5-2	Require MBA instructors to be proficient in a uniform set of skills related to online teaching and learning.	3.67	0.97	4.11	0.88	-0.44	0.09
5-3	Assign faculty to teach online who are willing to do so and are comfortable with using technology.	4.28	0.57	4.05	0.78	0.23	-0.21
5-4	Online faculty should be part of the existing university culture and should also teach in the face-to-face classroom.	3.50	1.20	3.58	1.35	-0.08	-0.15
5-5	Support faculty participation and growth in online learning.	4.22	0.88	4.37	0.68	-0.15	0.20

(table continues)

Table E.1 (continued)   Importance Ratings from Round Three and Corresponding Ratings from Round Two, Listed in Order Presented in Questionnaire

Theme -Item	Statement	R3 $\underline{M}$	R3 SD	R2 M	R2 SD	Change M	Change SD
5-6	Faculty are required to participate in training/professional development for research-based, best practices of online course design and delivery.	3.61	1.09	4.05	1.13	-0.44	-0.04
5-7	Faculty are required to attend training before teaching an online course.	3.72	1.07	4.32	1.06	-0.60	0.01
5-8	Provide a certification training program for faculty interested in teaching online at the graduate level.	3.22	1.31	3.68	1.34	-0.46	-0.03
5-9	Create a course design partnership between faculty and instructional designers.	3.78	1.11	3.89	1.33	-0.11	-0.22
5-10	Provide learning management system (LMS) training and support.	4.39	0.85	4.37	0.68	0.02	0.17
5-11	Qualified academic faculty manage course content and requirements.	4.17	1.10	4.33	0.84	-0.16	0.26
Theme 6: Learner Support							
6-1	Offer post-graduate opportunities	2.50	1.04	3.00	1.37	-0.5	-0.33
6-2	Offer opportunity for electives	3.61	1.04	3.74	1.15	-0.13	-0.11

(table continues)

Table E.1 (continued)   Importance Ratings from Round Three and Corresponding Ratings from Round Two, Listed in Order Presented in Questionnaire

Theme -Item	Statement	R3 M	R3 SD	R2 M	R2 SD	Change M	Change SD
6-3	Provide outside classroom networks and support	3.72	0.83	3.53	1.22	-.19	-0.39
6-4	Provide online student support services.	4.61	0.61	4.74	0.56	-0.13	0.05
Theme 7: Quality Frameworks							
7-1	Develop processes and systems that encourage and maintain quality.	4.28	0.67	4.32	0.82	-0.04	-0.15
7-2	Standardize and clearly define online course design expectations based on consistent and universal standards.	3.83	1.10	4.05	1.13	-0.22	-0.03
7-3	Establish quality standards for online course delivery (teaching).	4.28	0.75	4.58	0.51	-0.30	0.24
7-4	Implement a structured internal review process adhering to accepted quality standards for online courses and programs.	4.11	0.83	4.16	0.83	-0.05	0.00
7-5	Implement external reviews of online courses and programs.	3.17	1.04	3.47	1.39	-0.30	-0.35
7-6	Institute peer review processes.	3.50	0.92	3.53	1.22	-0.03	-0.30

APPENDIX F

Round Two and Three Comments

Table F.1   Additional Comments from Round Two and Three, Listed Alphabetically by Theme

Theme	Role	Round	Comments
Academic Integrity and Rigor			
	Instructional Designer	2	I think a code of conduct is a given. We do an online orientation for all our MBA students and they have to understand and agree to our CoC. I think online students should be the SAME caliber as on-campus students.
	Faculty	2	Nothing else really matters until you can ensure academic integrity. People are kidding themselves if they allow students to take exams or quizzes outside a proctored environment. It's hard, expensive and a logistical challenge - but failure to do so means those summative assessments have almost no value.
	Administrator	2	Change item #2 to read "Implement rigorous systems and PROCESSES to ensure..."
	Faculty	2	Item 1 seems to have two questions in one statement. Isn't it possible to have a demanding curriculum with low grading standards or an easy curriculum with rigorous grading?
	Faculty	2	You should also ask about verifying student identity (or include in the second statement perhaps). Code of Conduct is important, but having students review the academic honesty code and attest to it at each exam or with each paper can also be important.

(table continues)

Table F.1 (continued)   Additional Comments from Round Two and Three, Listed Alphabetically by Theme

Theme	Role	Round	Comments
Academic Integrity and Rigor			
	Instructional Designer	2	What constitutes "highly demanding"?
	Administrator	2	To me, signing a code of conduct is one piece of the academic integrity process.
	Instructional Designer	2	I think there needs to be a bit more clarification as to what "rigorous grading standard" means for the first statement. Be default, a graduate degree in an online format is rigorous (by design); therefore, what does the grading standard really accomplish? / / The second statement is a bit tricky to understand. It is my experience that when rigorous quizzes/assignments are not scaffolded properly, it actually increases students need to cheat in order to get better grades. Perhaps looking at service learning or formative assessments would make better sense.
	Faculty	3	Students who are inclined to cheat are not motivated by signing a contract.

(table continues)

Table F.1 (continued)   Additional Comments from Round Two and Three, Listed Alphabetically by Theme

Theme	Role	Round	Comments
Accreditation			
	Instructional Designer	2	AOL data collection varies by discipline, instructor, and type of assessment. I want all our online/hybrid instructors to collect supporting data from inside our learning management system.
	Instructional Designer	2	Assurance of Learning should be the same in all modes of instruction. - This requires revision of existing assessments which may compromise the continued evaluation of existing data. Is an overall revision what is being suggested?
	Instructional Designer	2	Online programs should be accredited in a similar manner as any residential, part-time, or executive MBA program. / / Assurance of Learning should be implemented similarly in all modes of instruction.
	Administrator	2	#4 is a loaded statement. Assurance of Learning can be effectively accomplished in a bottom-up or top-down approach.
	Instructional Designer	2	The second statement states that online programs should be equally accredited as traditional programs. If an online program is design accordingly, it should surpass the quality of traditional programs, which by default should have more specific accreditation standards.

(table continues)

Table F.1 (continued) Additional Comments from Round Two and Three, Listed Alphabetically by Theme

Theme	Role	Round	Comments
Accreditation			
	Faculty	3	Online has some basic differences from on campus. Not identical in offering, so some variation in accreditation is o.k.
	Instructional Designer	3	It is difficult to measure assurance of learning across all campus and online MBA courses because the online courses don't necessarily mimick the exact structure of the campus courses. Many things work differently in the online environment in comparison to the face to face environment so the same activities or assessments aren't necessarily present in each version of the course. The college's process for assurance of learning needs to accomodate both campus/f2f and online, and if the process was developed for campus courses, it needs to be modified to include the online sections.
	Faculty	3	It appears to work best that Assurance of Learning can be used to link the rigor across F2F versus online sections within the same program. Also, it's imperative, and AASCB and the regional accreditors make this very clear, that AoL is faculty- and discipline-driven. That stated objective has allowed concerned faculty to maintain standards over time.

(table continues)

Table F.1 (continued)   Additional Comments from Round Two and Three, Listed Alphabetically by Theme

Theme	Role	Round	Comments
Course Content, Design and Delivery			
	Instructional Designer	2	Use technology appropriately. - Use technology appropriately to support the concepts. / Provide resources and support for ongoing course design, development, delivery and technology. - Provide resources and support for ongoing course design, development, delivery, technology and regular refinement.
	Administrator	2	For item #4, it depends on what level of objectives we're dealing with. Course-level objectives can be the same F2F and online more easily than unit level objectives.
	Faculty	2	Not sure what item 6 means. Can you be more specific regarding what you mean by "appropriately?"
	Instructional Designer	2	What is "appropriately"?
	Administrator	2	I have no idea what #5 means.
	Instructional Designer	2	There should be differentiation between effective use of technology, and effective technology use. One refers to how technology is used to support learning, whereas the second infers how effectively technology worked. This does not even include faculty and students' proficiency with the technology implemented.

(table continues)

Table F.1 (continued)   Additional Comments from Round Two and Three, Listed Alphabetically by Theme

Theme	Role	Round	Comments
Course Content, Design and Delivery			
	Faculty	3	Item 2 may well be two different questions, the answer to which may depend on the subject matter.
	Faculty	3	Using Assurance of Learning as a common framework has proven to be very effective over time. The trouble with online programs and courses is that they are very dependent upon reputation, which is why so many schools advertise that "the same faculty" teaches online and in the classroom. The curriculum choices cannot be different beyond a few things that vary by instructor - the AoL guidelines can make sure that the same class is taught in all different modalities.
Evaluation			
	Instructional Designer	2	I believe that we can assess learning outcomes better and in clear terms through online testing. Traditional courses tend to be more subjective and instructor-dependent. I would like to see a world where online courses are a higher standard then traditional classroom instruction because we know what they learned in class rather than what someone says they learned.
	Instructional Designer	2	Assess learning outcomes. - Assess learning outcomes successfully demonstrated.

(table continues)

Table F.1 (continued)   Additional Comments from Round Two and Three, Listed Alphabetically by Theme

Theme	Role	Round	Comments
Evaluation			
	Instructional Designer	2	Assess online MBA programs separately from what?
	Administrator	2	#3 Use the same approach to evaluate learning effectiveness of online and on campus classes. / / (It's unclear what the word "quality" means here.)
	Instructional Designer	3	Student evaluations response levels can be so low that they become complaint forums only. Responses should be reviewed and considered, not necessarily used for determining overall quality.
	Faculty	3	There may be some differences for "professional MBA" or "executive MBA" curricula, but generally all MBAs offered by an institution should be the same. If online MBAs are different, we'll find that nobody needs them.
Faculty Qualifications, Development and Support			
	Faculty	2	Item 4 is two questions. It's not out of the realm of possibility that a faculty member could be part of the university culture without being in a classroom.
	Faculty	2	The last one is the most important.
	Instructional Designer	2	Manage course content and requirements - requirements for what?

(table continues)

Table F.1 (continued)   Additional Comments from Round Two and Three, Listed Alphabetically by Theme

Theme	Role	Round	Comments
Faculty Qualifications, Development and Support			
	Faculty	3	Teaching face-to-face helps keep course content fresh and responsive to students. Online students don't interact with the material in a transparent fashion.
	Faculty	3	Unfortunately, too often requiring training for or proficiency in online tools and "best practices" is used as a control technique by administrators who want to guide program rigor and participation using their own agenda. In my experience and in discussion with colleagues elsewhere there simply aren't enough resources controlled by faculty to allow them to train in online tools and techniques, so provision of faculty-led initiatives in adaptation would be welcomed. Limiting online teaching to those who demonstrate proficiency in a certain set of tools would end up having all the un-tenured assistant profs or clinicals doing the online teaching while the same folks who've taught the MBA for a couple of decades continue to teach the MBA courses and do AoL.

(table continues)

Table F.1 (continued)   Additional Comments from Round Two and Three, Listed Alphabetically by Theme

Theme	Role	Round	Comments
Learner Support			
	Faculty	2	Do these items pertain to learners, faculty, or both?
	Instructional Designer	3	Online student support and job placement/coaching services are just as important for online students. Graduate programs should have the same support structure in place for these activities/services as on-ground students have.
Quality Frameworks			
	Instructional Designer	2	All of these - in fact all the items are important. I would love to see what you would do given some constraints. Or maybe rank items in order of importance.
	Faculty	3	Reviews are important (adds a level of accountability), but sometimes reviewers are not as familiar with the course objectives as needed to be effective with their reviews. The reviews can come across as too superficial.
	Faculty	3	Unfortunately, establishing quality standards for delivery and/or standardizing design expectations beyond a bare minimum can very easily lead to administrative control of curriculum and evaluation. I have seen at my school and others where this has ended up being a pervasive characteristic of the online program. As long as the quality framework is developed and maintained by program faculty then this will be helpful.

APPENDIX G

Interquartile Range

Table G.1   Comparison of Interquartile Range Values

Item	Statement	Interquartile Range		
		Round 2	Round 3	Change +/-
1-1	Deliver a highly demanding curriculum with rigorous grading standards.	1.00	1.00	0.00
1-2	Implement rigorous systems to ensure the academic integrity of quizzes, exams, and assignments.	2.00	1.00	-1.00
1-3	Require students to sign a code of conduct.	1.25	1.00	-0.25
1-4	Structure an admission process that focuses on quality of students.	2.00	2.00	0.00
2-1	Online MBA programs should be accredited through AACSB.	1.00	1.00	0.00
2-2	Online programs should be accredited exactly like any residential, part-time, or executive MBA program.	1.00	1.00	0.00
2-3	Assurance of Learning should be properly assessed and measured across all college MBA courses.	1.00	1.00	0.00
2-4	Assurance of Learning must be tailored to the learning objectives of individual disciplines, and not from some top-down vision of how MBA programs can be remade to be more appealing to the masses.	1.25	2.00	+0.75
2-5	Assurance of Learning should be the same in all modes of instruction.	2.00	1.25	-0.75
3-1	Use innovative approaches to curriculum design and delivery of instruction.	2.00	1.25	-0.75
3-2	Design courses that promote student engagement and collaboration.	1.00	1.00	0.00
3-3	Provide relevant and practical course content that can be applied directly to the workplace.	1.00	0.00	-1.00
3-4	Provide quality content with the same learning objectives in both online and face-to-face classes.	1.00	1.00	0.00
3-5	Utilize both formative and summative assessments in course design.	2.00	1.25	-0.75
3-6	Use technology appropriately.	2.00	1.00	-1.00
3-7	Establish a common course template, structure, or architecture that also provides adequate freedom for an instructor to teach as s/he wishes.	2.00	1.25	-0.75
3-8	Provide resources and support for ongoing course design, development, delivery and technology.	1.00	0.25	-0.75

Table G.1 (continued)   Comparison of Interquartile Range Values

		Interquartile Range		
Item	Statement	Round 2	Item	Statement
4-1	Assess online MBA programs for quality in terms of design, content, and student and instructor engagement in the course.	1.50	1.00	-0.50
4-2	Review online courses on an ongoing basis.	1.00	2.00	+1.00
4-3	Provide the same level of quality in both online and on campus classes.	0.00	1.00	+1.00
4-4	Assess online MBA programs separately.	2.50	2.25	-0.25
4-5	Integrate student evaluations into the quality assurance process.	1.00	1.00	0.00
4-6	Programs are responsive to student feedback.	1.00	1.00	0.00
4-7	Assess learning outcomes.	1.00	1.00	0.00
4-8	Attain learning goals at the same level across online MBA and other professional MBA courses (non-residential).	1.00	1.25	+0.25
5-1	Establish standards for faculty qualifications and credentials.	1.00	1.00	0.00
5-2	Require MBA instructors to be proficient in a uniform set of skills related to online teaching and learning.	1.25	1.00	-0.25
5-3	Assign faculty to teach online who are willing to do so and are comfortable with using technology.	2.00	1.00	-1.00
5-4	Online faculty should be part of the existing university culture and should also teach in the face-to-face classroom.	2.25	2.00	-0.25
5-5	Support faculty participation and growth in online learning.	1.00	1.25	+0.25
5-6	Faculty are required to participate in training/professional development for research-based, best practices of online course design and delivery.	1.25	2.00	+0.75
5-7	Faculty are required to attend training before teaching an online course.	1.00	2.00	+1.00
5-8	Provide a certification training program for faculty interested in teaching online at the graduate level.	2.25	1.25	-1.00
5-9	Create a course design partnership between faculty and instructional designers.	1.25	2.00	+0.75
5-10	Provide learning management system (LMS) training and support.	1.00	1.00	0.00
5-11	Qualified academic faculty manage course content and requirements.	1.00	1.00	0.00
6-1	Offer post-graduate opportunities	2.00	1.00	-1.00

Table G.1 (continued)   Comparison of Interquartile Range Values

Item	Statement	Interquartile Range		
		Round 2	Item	Statement
6-2	Offer opportunity for electives	1.25	1.00	-0.25
6-3	Provide outside classroom networks and support	2.00	1.00	-1.00
6-4	Provide online student support services.	0.25	1.00	+0.75
7-1	Develop processes and systems that encourage and maintain quality.	1.00	1.00	0.00
7-2	Standardize and clearly define online course design expectations based on consistent and universal standards.	2.00	1.25	-0.75
7-3	Establish quality standards for online course delivery (teaching).	1.00	1.00	0.00
7-4	Implement a structured internal review process adhering to accepted quality standards for online courses and programs.	1.00	1.00	0.00
7-5	Implement external reviews of online courses and programs.	2.25	1.25	-1.25
7-6	Institute peer review processes.	2.25	1.00	-1.25