







# Benchmarks for Online Course Quality and Continuous Improvement | CSU Online

This process illustrates the levels of course design, with the goal of fostering continuous improvement of online courses at Cleveland State University. **All online courses should meet at least level 3 prior to being taught.**

Benefits of this structured process are improved student outcomes, easier course management for instructors, reduced workload on course copies, improved evaluation of the course's effectiveness, and consistent student experience.

<p><i>Level 1: Initiating</i></p> 	<p>Course Template used and customized, using Folders or Learning Modules for Content</p> <p><i>To meet this level, the course uses the updated version of the CSU Course Template or approved partner developed template. Avoids content clutter on the Home Page.</i></p> <p><i>The course adheres to the template design while personalizing customizable sections. However, pending tasks include creating Course Level Objectives (CLOs), Module Level Objectives (MLOs), and a course map.</i></p>
<p><i>Level 2: Progressing</i></p> 	<p>Course Map created and/or Module Organizers present in each module stating MLOs and to-do list</p> <p><i>In addition to use of the course template, a course map and/or module organizers indicate Module Level Objectives (MLOs) and activities for each module.</i></p> <p><i>The course currently includes modules with MLOs, an organizer and to-do list, and content. The evaluation of content alignment with learning activities and assessments will be addressed in the next phase.</i></p>
<p><i>Level 3: Achieving</i></p> 	<p>Course Map complete and Alignment of objectives, learning activities, and assessments is evident</p> <p><i>Internally, CSU Online has reviewed the course and verified the presence of the course map and all the content modules. CSU Online has assessed Quality Matters (QM) standards, confirming that assignments, activities, assessments, and materials are appropriately aligned with the MLOs and CLOs.</i></p> <p><i>The course is well-aligned and is close to being ready for an official QM Review, pending the evaluation of text, video, and audio accessibility, most specifically, text accessibility.</i></p> <p><i>Accessibility concerns will be addressed at the subsequent level.</i></p>

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<p><i>Ongoing</i></p> 	<p>Continuous Improvement Cycle</p> <p><i>After the course has been taught, it should be revisited periodically for improvements. This Continuous Improvement Cycle is essential to improving and maintaining course quality.</i></p> <p><i>This could mean potential changes in the course design, such as revisions to assignments, activities or materials. Instructional strategies should also be reviewed to determine where student engagement, student feedback, and instructor presence can be reviewed. Consult the <a href="#">Continuous Improvement Evaluation Guide</a> to aid in this process.</i></p>
<p><i>Level 4: Mastering</i></p> 	<p>Ready for Official QM Review including meeting Accessibility Standards</p> <p><i>In addition to alignment, the course text meets QM standards for accessibility. Although video and audio are not essential standards, they are on the path to meeting that. The course is ready to be put through an official QM Review.</i></p> <p><i>If choosing not to pursue an official QM Review, the Continuous Improvement Cycle is the next step.</i></p>
<p><i>Level 5: Exceeding</i></p> 	<p>The course has been QM-certified or re-certified</p> <p><i>The course has gone through an official QM Review and is currently QM-certified. Certification lasts 5 years with an option for re-certification of 3 years.</i></p> <p><i>Even for QM-certified courses, continuous improvement is a core principle. QM's expectation is that courses are always in the Continuous Improvement Cycle.</i></p>