The Essential Employability Qualities Certification: A New Approach to Address Employer Needs and Assure Program Quality

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COLLEGE
Education On Your Terms

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THE QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMONS
for HIGHER *and* POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

CONGRATULATIONS!
Our budget is in really good shape this year, and you get to hire new staff member!

What are the top 3 - 4 abilities that will help this person be genuinely successful in their job and in your institution?

The Quality Assurance Commons for Higher & Postsecondary Education

MISSION:

To explore, develop, and test alternative approaches of quality assurance that respond to the changing landscape of higher and postsecondary education and will serve the needs of learners, employers, and the larger society.

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THE CORE QUESTION:

HOW CAN WE ADDRESS THE SERIOUS GAPS BETWEEN HIGHER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYERS?

3 DIMENSIONS OF THE GAP

1. "Skills Gap"

2. Documentation / Communication of Students' Abilities
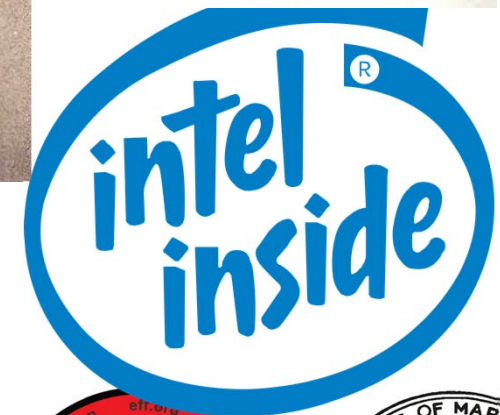
3. Identification of /Alignment with Employer Needs

THE EEQ CERTIFICATION

The Essential Employability Qualities Certification – or EEQ CERT – will certify programs that graduate individuals who have the essential qualities for 21st century employability.

What is Employability?

Employability is the ability to find, create and sustain work and learning across lengthening working lives and multiple work settings.

http://developingemployability.edu.au/about/

We are interested in graduates' employability (learning) – not just in their employment (measured by job placement and salary).
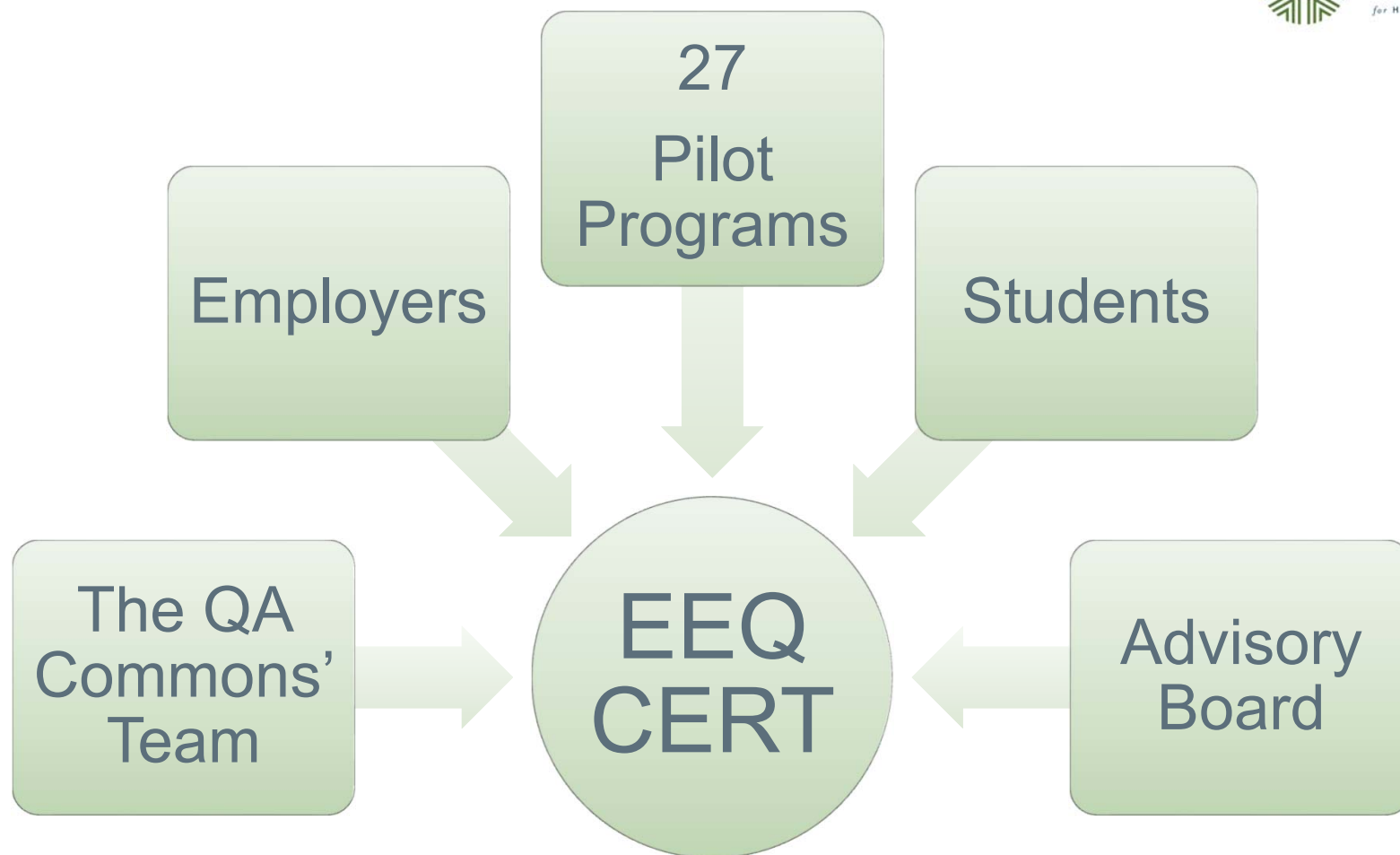
Graduates of the EEQ Certified Program are:

- Communicators
- Thinkers & Problem Solvers
- Inquirers
- Collaborators
- Adaptable
- Principled & Ethical
- Responsible & Professional
- Continuous Learners

THE EEQ CERT PILOT
September 2017 - June 2018

27 Pilot Programs

Employers

Students

The QA Commons' Team

EEQ CERT

Advisory Board

Pilot & Co-Design Process

Partnering with 27 programs from 14 institutions to co-design the review process and to determine how a new approach can be feasible and add value.

We will also collect and disseminate evidence-based good practices to support program development and improvement.

Partner Institutions include:

- Ashworth College
- University of Central Oklahoma
- Texas Lutheran University
- IUPUI
- University of Wisconsin - Whitewater
- Guttman Community College
- Warren Wilson College
- Antioch University
- Strayer University
- Brandman University

And others!

Draft Criteria for Certification (V2)

1 - Assuring Grads' Essential Employability Qualities

- Outcomes of *all* graduates' preparedness in regard to the EEQs.
  - "Exit proficiencies"

2 - Student Support for Employability

- Extent to which all students are supported throughout their program of study by the program and/or institutional services to aid in employability.
  - "Work-related" experiences (curricular / co-curricular / and beyond)
  - Integrated, equitable career services support
  - Student record of EEQs

Draft Criteria for Certification (V2 - cont.)

3 – Employer Engagement

- Extent to which employers are engaged in the design, development, and evaluation of the program to meet employer needs.

4 – Student & Graduate Engagement

- Extent to which students and grads are engaged in assuring program quality.

5 – Public Information

- Extent to which the program (or institution) provides information about the program and its outcomes to prospective and current students, employers, and the public.

Mission

**Empower students
to achieve their aspirations
through flexible, convenient,
affordable, and highly relevant
educational programs**

Vision

**Be the leading non-traditional
learning institution
educating people motivated
to improve their lives**

Effective Communication. Graduates will demonstrate competence in written communication skills that lead to the clear and purposeful expression of ideas, information, and logical reasoning.

Critical Thinking. Graduates will demonstrate critical thinking skills to analyze problems, search for evidence to support conclusions, reflectively process information, and formulate solutions.

Job-Specific and Technical Skills. Graduates will demonstrate competence in program-specific technical skills and an understanding of the common body of knowledge associated with a specific program.

Professional and Life Skills. Graduates will demonstrate competent professional and life skills that include responsibility, self-motivation, and will make progress toward becoming engaged and self-reliant learners.

Qualifications for Advancement. Graduates will have the skills and credentials to apply for jobs, change careers, advance in their current workplace, or pursue advanced education.

ASHWORTH COLLEGE
Education On Your Terms

We deliver programs
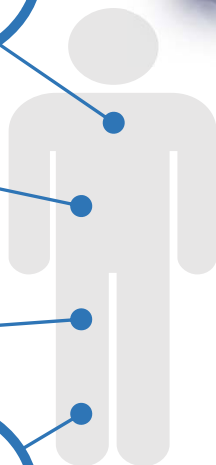that deliver outcomes

Highlights

- More than 60k students
- Over 115 programs spanning High School to Career to Degree
- DEAC and ADVANCED accredited; CCNE program accreditation; NCAA approved
- 100% private pay. No Title IV. **Students graduate debt-free**

Our Students

300K alumni
94%+ student satisfaction
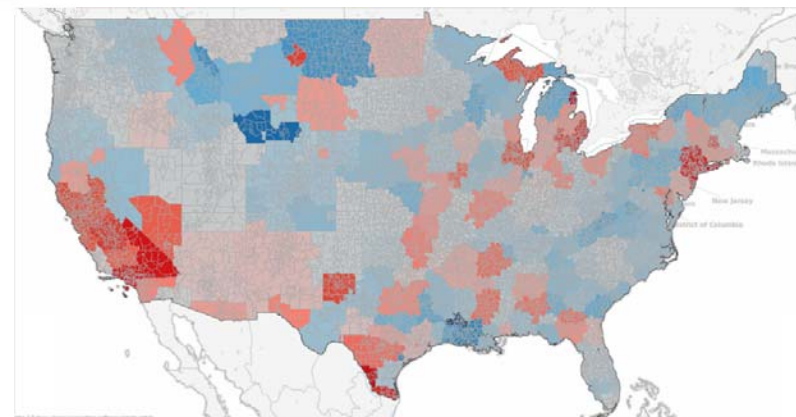
Ashworth's Experience in EEQ CERT Pilot

It's been a part of our journey of continuous improvement!

EEQ Pilot

Accreditors

Strategic Plan

Mission Statement and Students

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Exciting

Mission Statement

"Empower students to achieve their aspirations through flexible, convenient, affordable, and highly relevant educational programs."

Employability Skills

Inspiring

Even before our participation in the EEQ we had begun shifting our focus towards increasing authentic assessments in our curriculum.

Participating in the pilot, collaborating with other instructional leaders, and reviewing the EEQ criteria together has inspired us to continue with this initiative, and it's provided us with a great guide for designing and improving our authentic assessments.

Validating

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DEAC
DISTANCE EDUCATION ACCREDITING COMMISSION

Standard III:B Appropriate Program Outcomes: The program outcomes are measureable and reasonably attainable through distance education. Appropriate program outcomes clearly communicate the **knowledge, skills, and abilities** students will obtain upon completion of the educational offering.

Program outcomes reflect the level of student achievement expected that promotes

- **critical thinking**
- **ethical reasoning**
- **social responsibility**
- **global citizenship**
- **civic engagement**
- **lifelong learning**

as applicable to educational offerings.

Standard III:B 6 Degree Programs: Describe how the degree program outcomes communicate the expected skills, knowledge, attitudes, and insights students will achieve upon completion of the program.

Graduates of the EEQ Certified Program are:

Communicators
- Graduates express ideas and information coherently and appropriately in a variety of modes appropriate to work-based settings, including written, verbally, interpersonally, and presentationally.
- Graduates participate in discussions by listening actively and responding constructively.

Thinkers & Problem Solvers
- Graduates exercise initiative in applying critical and creative thinking skills to identify and address complex work-related problems.
- Graduates accurately apply quantitative, financial, data, and technical fluency to work-based situations.
- Graduates are system thinkers and demonstrate an ability to understand concepts across multiple disciplines and different cultures.

Inquirers
- Graduates conduct inquiry and research by reviewing, evaluating, citing, and applying multiple sources of information to help address work-based problems or to perform tasks.
- Graduates generate new ideas through independent or collaborative inquiry.

Collaborators
- Graduates engage in teams and groups and work effectively and willingly in collaboration with others both in person and virtually.
- Graduates seek a range of points of view, are willing to modify their perspectives, and they help resolve conflicts where appropriate.
- Graduates work effectively with diverse colleagues individually or in groups. They exhibit cross-cultural competence in working with others.
- Graduates take initiative in leading work-based groups, and/or follow direction from others as appropriate.

Adaptable
- Graduates approach new or unfamiliar work-based situations and uncertainty with courage and forethought.
- Graduates explore, learn, and apply new roles, ideas, approaches, tools, technologies, and strategies to support their effective work-place contributions.

Principled and Ethical
- Graduates make reasoned, ethical decisions about work-based situations or problems.
- Graduates act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness and respect for individuals, groups, and communities.

Responsible and Professional
- Graduates establish priorities and manage their time to meet the obligations of work-related assignments with a minimum of external supervision or direction.
- Graduates carry out their responsibilities consistently, persistently, reliably, and with integrity, and maintain appropriate confidentiality.

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Challenging

Compare all of our own programs to see how well we

- Meet the EEQs

- Gather student feedback

- Gather employer input and feedback

- Gather alumni feedback

- Assess student learning

Challenging

- Institutional Learning Outcomes
- Program Learning Outcomes
- Courses Objectives
- Lesson Objectives
- Assignments / Experiences

EEQ Certified Graduate Qualities

EEQ Descriptors

Work Context

EEQs

Challenging

You have to know your students!

Traditional Students

- 18 – 26 years old
- Single
- Financial support from parents
- Primary responsibility is themselves
- Flexible Schedule
- Extremely fluent with technology
- Confidence – maybe too much ☺

Non-Traditional Students

- 26 and over many in 30's & 40's
- Married/ children
- No financial support from parents, and may be financially responsible for others.
- Primary responsibility is family/ children
- Rigid schedule. Little extra time between work, possible second job, family, and now school.

Challenging

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Externships

WHAT'S IN YOUR WAY?

Challenging

Work Context

Topic of Interest for Program Liaisons

Experiences

Work Context

Assignments

Evaluations

Challenging

EXTERNSHIPS
REAL-WORLD EXPERIENCE

Learn and Lead

Case Studies

Simulations

Student Portfolio

STLR
STUDENT TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING RECORD
www.uco.edu/stlr

SCENARIO BASED LEARNING
- Build a story
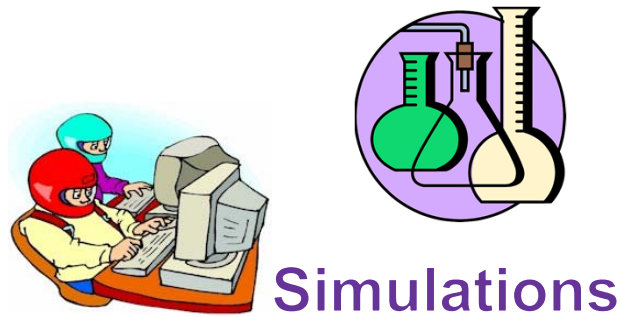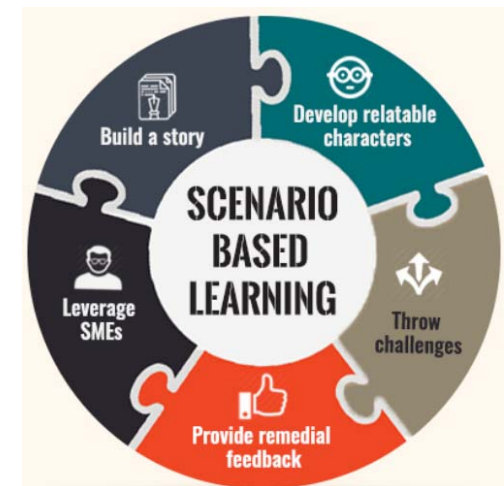- Develop relatable characters
- Throw challenges
- Provide remedial feedback
- Leverage SMEs

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A Part of Our Continuous Improvement
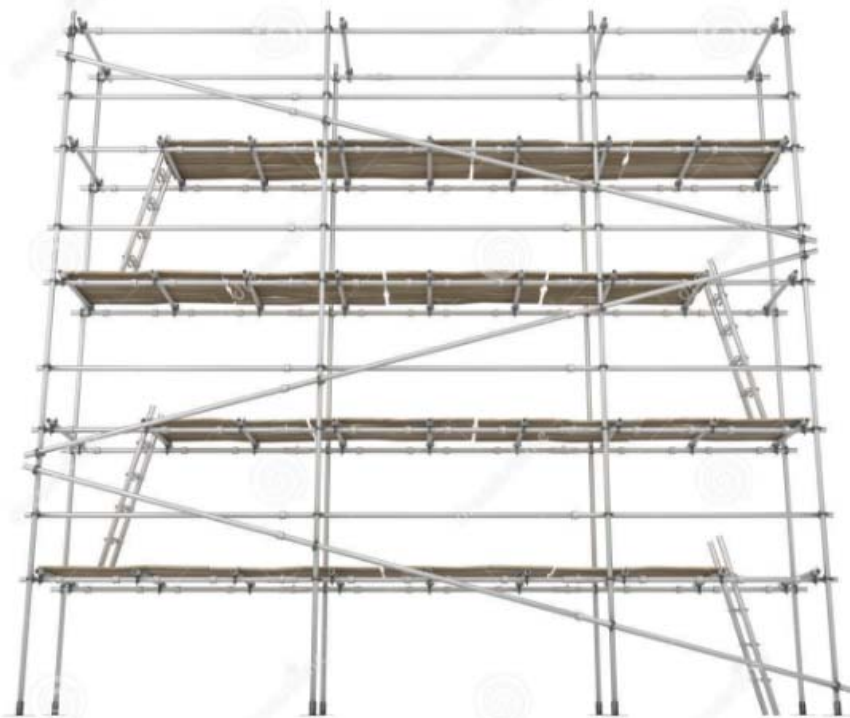
Provide scaffolding for students.

Don't just redesign assignments to now include skills in a work context, but demonstrate and teach those skills.

For example, we turned a writing assignment into a power point presentation, so we provided detailed power point how-to's.

For a portfolio assignment, I created a portfolio to photograph.

A Part of Our Continuous Improvement

Great Resource for DEAC Schools

Allen and Seaman (2017) report that there are now more than six million students engaged in online education.

That includes Ashworth and your institution.

Together we can work to make sure that although one size doesn't fit all, employability skills do!

Allen, I., & Seaman, J. (2017). *Digital learning compass: Distance education enrollment report 2017* (Research Report). Retrieved from Online Learning Consortium Website. http://onlinelearningsurvey.com/reports/digtiallearningcompassenrollment2017.pdf

Some Questions for Discussion

- How might you see the EEQ CERT supporting the work that programs at your institution are doing regarding preparing students for the complex world of work in the 21st century?

- How might the EEQ CERT complement or supplement your DEAC accreditation and/or accreditation from specialized accreditors?

- What opportunities might the EEQ initiative provide programs or your institution?

- What challenges might you see in pursuing the EEQ CERT?

- What suggestions do you have for The QA Commons as we continue to develop the EEQ CERT?

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