



# eLearning Newsletter

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## Results of the e-Learning Survey

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During the summer of 2019, faculty who have taught PNET and FNET courses (n=52) at QCC were asked to participate in a survey regarding their preparation and practices in the online courses. The majority of faculty teach PNET courses only (72%, n=34), but half are willing to attempt a conversion to an FNET (52%, n=22). Most of our e-learning faculty at QCC have been trained through our summer e-Learning institute (84%, n=38) and 60% (n=27) would appreciate additional training in online course development. The survey revealed that we could use some improvements in assessment and peer observation. 72% (n=31) of faculty have not had their online component of the course observed by faculty within their department and 65% (n=28) have not had their online components assessed.

## The Committee on eLearning's Bi-annual Newsletter

**Professional Development Lunch Seminar**  
eLearning Committee of the Academic Senate at QCC presents:

November 27<sup>th</sup>, 12pm L-313

### Generating Class Discussion with Polleverywhere

Presenter: Susan Lago

Encouraging students to participate in class discussions can be challenging. Using an online polling tool, however, can allow even the most reticent students to share their views. I will demonstrate how to use polleverywhere ([www.polleverywhere.com](http://www.polleverywhere.com)) to create graphs, word clouds, or lists of open-ended responses, using both smartphone texting technology and shared links.

### How to Create a Reproducible Online Book in 20 Minutes using Rmarkdown

Presenter: Fei Ye

Markdown is markup language normally written in plain text with some formatting syntax. R Markdown extends the markdown syntax with some features supported by the statistical programming language R. A markdown file can be converted to HTML and many other formats using Pandoc, a universal convertor, and/or other tools, for example, the R bookdown package. In this talk, I will demonstrate how to create an online book using the R bookdown package and then publish the book online freely. An example of how I use online books for teaching will be explained.

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## News from the Office of Educational Technology (OET)

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Blackboard upgrade is currently scheduled to begin on Thursday, December 28th at 12:30 am and to be completed by the close of business on Friday, December 29th. Blackboard will be taken offline and there will be no access to the environment during the upgrade. This upgrade will not introduce major new functionality into Blackboard, but there are some minor changes that will make Blackboard easier to use.

By default, all Blackboard Courses are unavailable to students when they are first created--as indicated by the text "(unavailable)" next to your course name. This allows you some time and privacy while building your course. Once you have finished building your course in Blackboard, you will need to **MAKE YOUR COURSE AVAILABLE** to students. Otherwise, please inform your students that you won't make it available.

## Hear from eLearning Instructors!

### Susan Lago, Lecturer, English Department

Susan has been a QCC faculty member for three years. She has participated in the training provided by the eLearning institute.

What were some of the benefits from your participation? I learned about new elearning technologies, such as Cantasia and Voice Thread. I also appreciated the opportunity to work with a mentor, which helped me structure my PNT course so that it aligned with my course objectives.

What course(s) do you offer online? Are they PNET or FNET? I've taught ENGL102, English Composition II: Introduction to Literature and BE112, Writing Workshop, as PNT courses.

Do you find that QCC students are typically prepared to take online courses? Many are not, but the eLearning Institute helps us to recognize the challenges students might face with PNT or FNT courses and provides tools to make our courses more easily navigable for students.

Do you find that QCC students enjoy taking online courses? I think that some of the older students with families or full-time jobs appreciate the flexibility. Some students, however, struggle with time management or access to technology when they are off campus.

What are the greatest difficulties in teaching an online course? Students don't manage their time well. They see the online portion as being homework, not as being a required and necessary part of the course.

What are the greatest advantages in teaching an online course? I like to use the online portion of my course to reinforce skills with interactive elearning tools, Blackboard quizzes, and discussion boards. This allows students to practice what they have learned in the face-to-face class.

What methods/strategies have you found to be useful in engaging students in PNET courses? I try to make my Blackboard course shell interesting by inserting pictures and embedding videos in my activities and assignments. I also make sure that Blackboard is organized in the same way my syllabus is organized so that students can easily find what they are looking for instead of having to hunt around.

What would you say to a faculty member who was considering developing an online course?

- Don't make it too complicated.
- Avoid making a lot of subfolders.
- Have an entry point (a menu option that has an FAQ section, contact information, etc.)
- Don't leave it to "run" by itself; check in frequently.
- Develop assignments/activities that lend themselves to an online environment.

Has online teaching and the e-learning institute helped you with your traditional face-to-face classes? I've always used a lot of elearning tools in my face-to-face classes, but where it's helped the most is when I realized that students are very willing to help and support each other in online spaces. This often translates to their interactions in the classroom as well.

Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience as an online instructor? Initially, setting up and then teaching in an online course was more work than I anticipated, but as I learned what worked and what didn't, I've been better able to manage my time.

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## Resources for eLearning Development

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### The e Learning Institute

The Office of Academic Affairs invites all QCC faculty to apply for the eLearning Institute. This institute is a three-semester commitment during which faculty develop and teach a quality online course. The Institute provides intensive, hands-on workshops to explore best practices for promoting online learning by developing courses that are *web-enhanced, hybrid or fully online* courses. Prior experience with online teaching not necessary.

### Kersha Smith, Assistant Professor, Social Sciences

Kersha has been with QCC for 6 years. Her discipline is psychology, particularly social psychology, and she has participated in the eLearning Institute training.

What were some of the benefits from your participation? I think the most significant benefit was the opportunity to have a forum where you were exposed to various strategies and enhancement for teaching online courses. The institute was loaded with resources. I also enjoyed the way the institute was structured. Dedicating two weeks in the summer was a great way to immerse myself in understanding how to build an engaging and sustainable course.

What course(s) do you offer online? Are they PNET or FNET? I teach a PNET Introduction to Psychology course (PSYC101)

Do you find that QCC students are typically prepared to take online courses? Most students are prepared. Every semester, there are one or two students who are a bit surprised by the level of engagement required to complete the course. I try to ensure that there is a lot of continuity between what we do in class and what is expected in the online work.

Do you find that QCC students enjoy taking online courses? I'm not sure that enjoy is the word that I would use! I think the level of engagement necessary to complete the course surprises many students. I believe there are some misconceptions about the ease and freedom of online courses. They obviously take a tremendous amount of discipline and focus, since much of the work requires students to manage and complete assignments on their own. When students have deficits in time management, they become glaring when they take online courses. However, there is a level of discipline and focus that students can eventually develop if they are successful in the course.

What are the greatest difficulties in teaching an online course? Teaching online is a new pedagogical modality for many students. They do not have the experience; so many times, along with content, you are teaching them organization, time-management, and engagement skills. While you may teach components of these same skills in a face-to-face class, the way you teach them in an online course is different because the modality is different. Teaching these skills can take a lot of time, and some students might not understand how important they are to their success in the class until it is too late. An online course moves fast, and assessment is ongoing and continuous. Impressing that upon students is necessary, but oftentimes difficult.

What are the greatest advantages in teaching an online course? In the same vein, when students take ownership of the new skills of time management and organization they learn in an online course, that is equally rewarding. There is a bit of satisfaction you gain in knowing that you are part of building new skills. Time management is essential to all of your academic and career endeavors. Also, teaching students how to respond and engage online content is important. Our increasingly digital society requires that students understand online etiquette and engagement. Knowing that you are contributing to this skill development in students is rewarding.

What methods/strategies have you found to be useful in engaging students in PNET courses? I am a big fan of discussion boards. I think they are a great way to keep the conversation going after you have left the classroom. I use discussion boards as a way for students to communicate with each other. Especially at the beginning of the semester when students are just starting to meet and get to know one another. I also use discussion boards to assess students' understanding of concepts and theories. I often employ critical thinking questions through the discussion board as a way to understand how much or how little a student understands an idea we discussed in class. The more that they can write and engage the concept through the critical thinking question, the more secure I feel in their comprehension of the subject.

What would you say to a faculty member who was considering developing an online course? I would tell them to go for it! The great thing about teaching a course at QCC is that there are resources for you to succeed and tons of examples that you can model your course after.

Has online teaching and the e-learning institute helped you with your traditional face-to-face classes? Some of what I learned about assessment from the Quality Matters rubric has been helpful in my face-to-face classes. When rebuilding syllabi for courses or implementing new assignments, I often look at the QM rubric to ensure that the syllabus and assignments support the learner and encourage interaction. The QM rubric has been great at ensuring that I build courses that scaffold students' learning.

Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience as an online instructor? It's been a very good experience thus far. I look forward to teaching more online courses.

## Faculty Technology Workshops

The Office of Educational Technology (OET) offers a variety of Blackboard workshops and trainings throughout the academic year. Fall workshop topics are listed below:

- "SoftChalk Cloude Create 11"
- "Enhancing Instructional Videos with PlayPosit"
- "Introduction to Excel"
- "Camtasia Micro-Lectures"
- "Creating Animated Videos and Presentations with PowToon"
- "Advance your Excel Skills"

*Instructional Technology Workshops are open to all faculty and staff!*

Click [here](#) to register



**Technology Update:**  
News and Announcements

*Check out the QCC's new [eLearning web page](#). This page has resources on eLearning including College's eLearning Guidelines and a Blackboard Sample Course that will help you learn about the functions available in the Blackboard Learn environment.*