



UCCS faculty creating a culture of innovation in teaching

Imagine a classroom where:

- *The instructor welcomes you to class with clear instructions and a date for you to join the session*
- *Clear objectives are linked to the course activities and the course assessments*
- *The instructor is fully “present” and active in the space and engaged in the learning*

Faculty at Work

Questions, suggestions,
or comments about
Faculty at Work?

Would you like to nominate
someone to be featured?

Email frc@uccs.edu

Patricia “Patty” Witkowsky, PhD
Assistant Professor
SAHE Program Coordinator
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What’s the difference between teaching a face to face course and an online course? Dr. Witkowsky has been teaching at UCCS since 2011 but learned a few things while going through the [Quality Matters](#) certification process for her online course in 2016.



Six Questions for Dr. Patty Witkowsky
University of Colorado Colorado Springs
College of Education

1. Patty, what did achieving Quality Matters recognition mean for you personally?

Having been given the opportunity to teach online at UCCS starting in 2014 provided me with the opportunity to learn a new approach to teaching and learning. I wanted to be sure I had the tools to serve students well in this format and participating in both the Faculty Resource Center's (FRC) Teaching Online Certificate Program and Online Facilitation Certificate Program gave me the opportunity to learn new skills and apply them immediately in my courses. **Quality Matters challenged me** to ensure the course was as accessible and user-friendly as possible and I'm glad to have had the support through the FRC to complete it.

Thinking through the experience in the course from the students' perspective, and more specifically from the perspective of students with accessibility needs, required an open mind to understand how others not familiar with the course content or Blackboard navigation and organization would need to see the course. I would assume that since the information was in the syllabus that it was available to students. However, students seem to use Blackboard as their main guide as opposed to the syllabus. Through my experience teaching online and going through Quality Matters, I try to more intentionally view the course shell from the students' view as opposed to my own.

2. What was the most valuable part of the Quality Matters review process to you?

The most valuable part of the review process was knowing the external experts were going to ensure all criteria were met which encouraged me to pay attention to each and every detail in the course to ensure it met the high standards set by reviewers.

It was beneficial to know that the external experts had both content knowledge as well as expertise in Quality Matters. Having reviewers analyzing my course with the combination of expertise in these two areas heightened the importance of making sure each and every point in the Quality Matters rubric was met. I did not want to intentionally dismiss important components of the rubric and put trust in the process that the items on the rubric were important for student learning and access to the course.

3. What was the most challenging part of the process?

The most challenging part of the process was the same as the valuable part; there are **so many details** in a course when striving to meet Quality Matters standards. Ultimately, these details are beneficial to students and to me as the faculty member as the details decrease confusion and frustration from students. However if you are not a detailed person, it could be a challenge.

While it is easy to include video clips from YouTube or another online video source, that is an infringement of copyright law. In order to include clips, I needed to request the DVD's from the

Faculty Resource Center

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library's catalog, determine the exact timing of the clips needed for the course, and then bring them to the FRC to splice them and place them within the course shell.

Another detail that required assistance from the library involved ensuring the articles were linked from the UCCS database, as opposed to pdf's I had found elsewhere.

Oftentimes, the easiest way to post content is not in compliance with legal requirements, and going through the Quality Matters process helped me learn how to properly post content for all of my courses in Blackboard.

4. What was the one thing that surprised you about the Quality Matters review process?

I was surprised by the ease of coordination with the reviewers and the genuine care for the best course product for our students.

With everyone involved in the certification process being so busy with other aspects of their jobs, I felt the timeliness of responses from the FRC to provide continual feedback on the course through the development process, as well as the detailed communication from the expert reviewers from campuses across the country, helped me feel supported in the process. As this was my first QM course, I was not sure what to expect, but now I know that I would have support if I sought out QM certification of other courses in the future.

5. What is the one thing you would recommend to colleagues considering a Quality Matters review in the future?

I would recommend working closely with the FRC to assist with periodic reviews as they prepare their course. Outside eyes can help catch things that the faculty member may miss being so closely connected to the course.

I created a document in table format that connects the module learning objectives to the following: content delivery describing how the course prepares students for the assignment/activity, details of the assignment/activity, and finally the method of assessment. This was a useful exercise as I ensured alignment throughout the course and it served as a handy document for both the QM reviewers as well as the students in the course.

6. Now that you have achieved Quality Matters recognition for your course, what's next?

I hope to continue to apply the standards set through Quality Matters to all courses in our learning management system, not just online ones. The expectations for Quality Matters can be helpful in course shells for in-person courses as well.

Ensuring that copyright laws are followed, that each module has detailed learning outcomes and clear assignment due dates, and that I spend time at the beginning of the course through the shell for students to get to know me as their instructor are important concepts that I have been intentional about incorporating in all of my courses.