

# QEP Newsletter

*Transparent Instruction in General Education and Gateway Courses for Student Success*

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## 2019-20 Exemplary Transparent Instruction Recognition

Many faculty have stepped out of their comfort zone to modify assignments or create new assignments to reflect the Transparent Instruction pedagogy for our QEP. Faculty, staff, and students were encouraged to nominate faculty that they believe are doing outstanding work in this arena.

After the first year of implementation, we are happy to recognize the following faculty for their outstanding efforts using Transparent Instruction pedagogy:

<b>Faculty Awards</b>	<b>Faculty</b>	<b>Department</b>
<b>First Place - \$1,000</b>	Dr. Jeffrey Darrow	Mathematics
<b>Second Place - \$750</b>	Dr. Julie Hall	Biology
<b>Third Place - \$500</b>	Dr. Jason Fowler	Biology
<b>Honorable Mention - \$250</b>	Dr. William Hardy Dr. Whitney Kistler Dr. Barbara Shock	History Biology Biology

We thank all the students, faculty, and staff that nominated faculty for these awards. We also thank those that served on the committee to review the nominations.

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## Student & Faculty Focus Group Results

As part of our QEP Assessment Plan, we are conducting two focus groups each semester. Each semester will include a focus group of students and a second focus group of faculty. Each focus group participant responds to a series of questions regarding syllabi and the second half they respond to questions regarding experiences with transparent assignments. The target goal for our QEP is to have both the students and the faculty groups have “at least 80% of codes identified ... exhibit a perceived improvement in course assignment/instruction transparency” or “perceived improvement to course syllabi.”

The focus groups yielded the following results:

	Fall 2019 Student	Fall 2019 Faculty	Spring 2020 Student	Spring 2020 Faculty
Syllabi	87.72 %	93.92 %	91.22 %	92.24 %
Transparent Assignment	83.63 %	92.42 %	72.86 %	93.75 %

We successfully met our goal of 80% for the student focus groups for both fall 2019 areas and for the spring 2020 syllabi category. We fell just below the 80% threshold for the assignments category for spring 2020 with only 72.86%. While students didn't have a lot of negative comments, many did NOT remember seeing or receiving examples of a completed assignment. Providing annotated examples helps make the tasks and criteria more clear to students to truly understand the assignment expectations.

Faculty focus groups remained very positive for both syllabi and assignments for both semesters. Anecdotally from the comments below, you can see that several of them have said that this transparent instruction process has helped them to become better instructors – whether it was with grading, rubrics, or clearer instructions for their students.

Students and faculty alike made very positive comments. Here are some of the comments from students:

- “Everything was very easily laid out for me.”
- “You can tell he has been doing it for a really long time because he was very simplistic, very kind of cut and dry and say ‘hey here are the expectations, here’s how you can be successful in my class.’ I think that everything was very easy to be able to comprehend everything.”
- “The syllabus was really detailed on each assignment and what was expected from it, how many pages for our writing assignments, how he wants it done. I found all of it very detailed and worded very well.”
- “I love the syllabus. I think it is a very beneficial tool.”

Some comments shared among the faculty include the following:

- “I structured all my new courses based off the training that we had before so a lot of the same assignments that are even more applicable to other classes than general ed and it means a little bit more now.”
- “LMU’s assignments would almost universally compare favorably to those I currently teach for other institutions.”
- “Honestly, I have made all of my other classes I teach at other institutions transparent. It works very well for incoming freshmen.”
- “I think that what has gotten better are my rubrics and my approach to grading.”
- “I think I’ve improved my instruction a little bit.”
- “All discussion submissions and interactions in the course were of high quality and better in terms of content, timeliness, and quantity than previous semesters.”

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**PURPOSE ~ TASKS ~ CRITERIA**

## Faculty Training Results

Our QEP Assessment Plan outlines our goals for all internal and external measures for the five years of our QEP Plan. During the faculty training workshops, faculty complete a pre- and post-test to examine knowledge and understanding before and after the training workshops. The faculty training surveys fall under Goal #2, Measure #5, Target #5: “The target for success will be to show a statistical difference in mean survey scores between pre- and post-training surveys.” After running the faculty surveys through SPSS using the paired t-test, we are happy to report that we did have a significant difference for spring 2019, fall 2019, and spring 2020. Spring 2019 we reported  $p=.020$ , fall 2019  $p=.012$ , and spring  $p=.001$ . Since they are all less than  $p=.05$ , we have significant differences. These findings indicate that the training was useful in teaching about the transparent instruction pedagogy.

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## Syllabi & Instructional Assignment Review



A team of interdisciplinary faculty conducted peer-review of all the syllabi and transparent assignments for the general education and gateway classes for the 2019-20 academic year. Using 4-point rubrics from “Very Unclear/Vague (1)” to “Transparent (4)”, each syllabi and all transparent assignments (2 per class) were evaluated.

### Syllabi

For the syllabi review, we are addressing Measure #1, Target #1 which states “The target for success will be at least 80% of all General Education and Gateway course syllabi score a 3 in each category of the rubric.” The syllabi rubric has 6 different scores within it representing Instructor and Course Information, Course Learning Objectives, Mission Statements, Assessments/Evaluation Methods, Assignment Policies, and Attendance Policy. After all syllabi have been reviewed for the 2019-20 year, we fell below our goal with only 60% with scores of 3 or higher in all categories.

### Assignments

For the assignment review, we are addressing Measure #3, Target #3 which states “Improvements in course assignments/instructional transparency will be measured by interdisciplinary faculty using a 4 point rubric.” According to our QEP Plan, our target goal is “the target for success will be at least 85 percent of all General Education and Gateway course assignments will score a minimum of 3 on each category.” The assignment rubric has 3 different scores within it representing Purpose, Tasks, and Criteria. After all assignments were reviewed for the 2019-20 year, we fell below our goal with only 73% with scores of 3 or higher in all categories.

These results were shared with deans and faculty, who have been reviewing their assignments this summer with an eye to detail to see if they are meeting the criteria for exemplary work for our documents. While we would

have loved to have met our goals during our first year, we recognize that we have come a long way in building a strong foundation. We believe this faculty peer review process will help strengthen our assignments to be more clear for our students. The edits we make to our documents this year should net improvements in our goals for next year. If you are interested in representing your school and would like to review documents next spring, please contact Dr. Duggan, the QEP Director.

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## Fall 2020 Syllabi Template – QEP Statement Added

Through the General Education Committee review of course syllabi as well as the QEP review, there seems to be a wide variety of ways that the QEP is explained in course syllabi. In some cases, there was an absence of any mention or explanation. The General Education Committee has asked the QEP Steering Committee to create a standardized statement to include in the Syllabi Template to improve consistency. After input from several faculty, the following is the new language that will be included in the Fall 2020 Syllabi Template:

### **TRANSPARENT INSTRUCTION**

The Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) for LMU, Transparent Instruction in General Education and Gateway Courses for Student Success, is committed to improving student success through targeted course assignments. LMU is focused on providing instructional assignments to students in a clear and concise manner that is inclusive of all learners.

Each qualifying course will have a minimum of two transparent assignments in which the Purpose, Tasks, and Criteria (PTC) will be explained. The Purpose will identify the learning objectives including the skills and knowledge to be gained – both for the class and beyond college. The Tasks will list the activities and steps that students will perform to complete the assignment. The Criteria will detail the grading rubrics and point structure. An annotated example may be provided to model exemplary work.

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## Survey Says . . .

Students complete a short 10-question QEP survey at the beginning and end of each semester in each class that is part of the QEP (General Education and/or Gateway). The final average for all survey questions collected at the beginning of the semester in Spring 2020 was a 4.277 on a five-point scale and at the end of the semester it was 4.095 which is decrease of 0.182. After all surveys have been tabulated, the highest and lowest responses are below. A considerable drop in responses is noted due to the move from in-person classes to online classes for the last half of the semester because of the Coronavirus pandemic. This is the fifth consecutive time that these two questions were rated the highest and lowest questions respectively.

### HIGHEST:

4.462 “Assignments were connected to course goals” – between “agree” & “strongly agree.”

### LOWEST:

3.683 “This class is incorporated my interests” – between “moderate” & “a lot.”

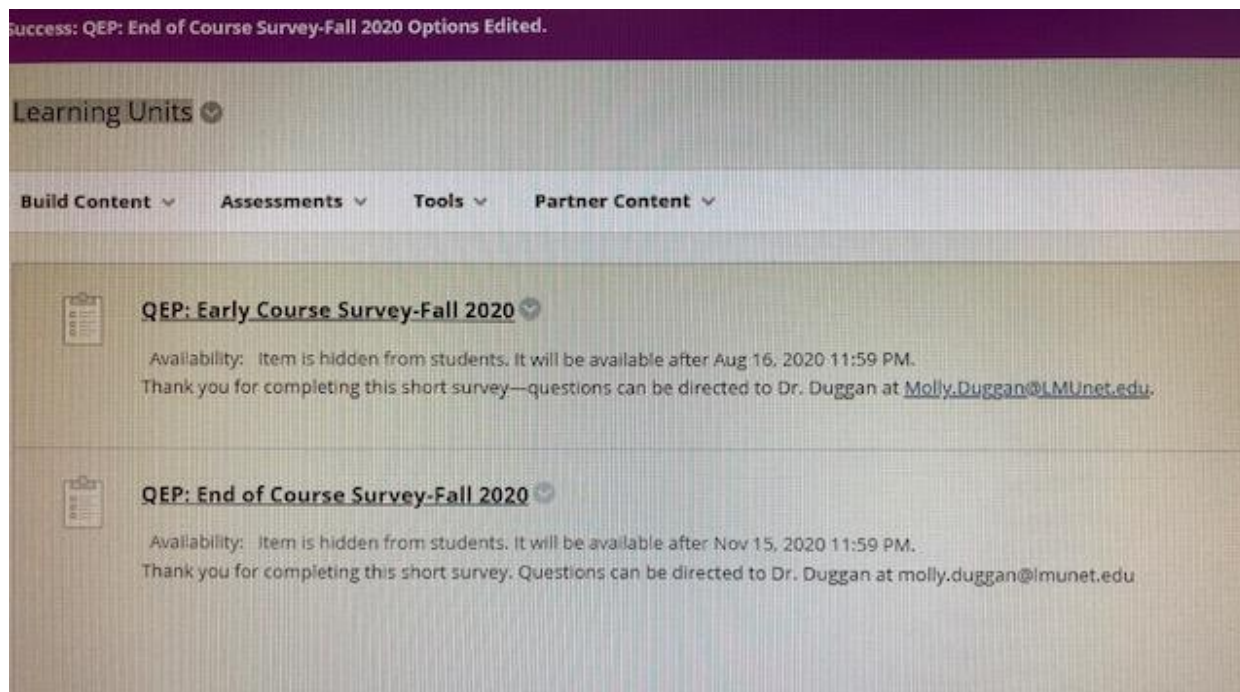
Our QEP Assessment Plan outlines our goals for various internal and external measures. The student surveys fall under Goal #1, Measure #3, Target #3: “The target for success will be to show a statistical difference in mean survey scores between pre- and post-QEP implementation evaluations.” A paired t-test was run to determine whether there was a statistically significant mean difference between the pre- and post-test surveys. For fall 2019, we found that we did not have a significant difference with  $p=.170$ . For the spring 2020 semester, however, we did have a significant difference with  $p<.001$ . Summer 2020 semester also did not show a significant difference with  $p=.694$ . A significant difference is shown when the paired t-test is less than 0.05 ( $p <.05$ ). We believe that the difference between the fall and spring semesters may be because faculty felt more confident the second semester with their transparent assignments and how to incorporate them into their classes. Summer semester results were based on a very small return of surveys from students in all online classes.

## Student Surveys Moved Online

In the interest of caution, all QEP student surveys were moved online for fall 2020. We ask that faculty check their Blackboard accounts for their general education and gateway classes to be sure that they see both “QEP: Early Course Survey-Fall 2020” and the “QEP: End of Course Survey-Fall 2020”. Below are the availability dates that should be posted based on the different lengths of courses. Please verify that the accurate dates are posted for your course based on your course length.

Fall Semester Course Lengths	Early Survey Availability	End of Course Survey
Full Semester Course	August 16, 2020 11:59 pm	November 15, 2020 11:59 pm
First Half Semester Course	August 16, 2020 11:59 pm	September 27, 2020 11:59 pm
Second Half Semester Course	October 11, 2020 11:59 pm	November 15, 2020 11:59 pm

If you are teaching a course that runs for the entire semester, it might look like this under the Learning Unit:



You can see if a student completed the survey through the Grade Center in Blackboard. A checkmark indicates the survey has been completed. A blue circle indicates that it is in progress, but not finished. The absence of an icon or dash indicates that the survey has not been taken by the student. The early surveys are only available for the first two weeks of the semester. Note that some students may be completing the QEP student survey for multiple classes – the responses should be specific to your course.

These surveys are vital to our assessment efforts and SACSCOC accreditation. Please remember to encourage your students to complete these surveys for your general education and gateway courses. If you don't see the surveys posted for your classes prior to the start of the semester, contact Dr. Duggan. We will get through these challenging times together with our Railsplitter Spirit!

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## Important 2020 Dates

August 5 – QEP Review & Improvement Planning Steering Committee Meeting

August 7 - New Faculty Transparent Instruction Training

August 13 – All Faculty Meeting – Recognizing Award Winners and Giving Updates

August 17 – First Day of Fall 2020 Classes, Student Survey is visible for students in online classes

August 17 – 29 – Student Surveys should be completed by students

August 31 – FA20 Syllabi and Transparent Assignment posting due date

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## By The Numbers . . .

1,610

Total end-of-semester QEP student surveys returned in spring 2020.

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1,179

Difference of how many more surveys were received in the beginning of the semester to the end of the semester. \*Due to the pandemic and all courses being moved online, all surveys were done online at the end of the semester.

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In-person end-of-semester QEP student surveys returned in spring 2020. These surveys were received at the end of classes that were only taught during the first half of the spring semester.

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4.095

Average end-of-semester QEP student survey score for spring 2020 on a 5-point scale.

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86 %

LMU's National Percentile score for ETS Proficiency Profile exam, FA 2019 – successfully exceeded goal of being above 60 %

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78 %

LMU's National Percentile score for ETS Proficiency Profile exam, SP 2020 - successfully exceeded goal of being above 60 %

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Number of assignments that should be modified in each general education and gateway course to reflect transparent instruction.

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*Thank you for reading our newsletter. The QEP Office is located in 118 Grant Lee. If there is something you would like added to future newsletters, please email [Molly.Duggan@LMU.net](mailto:Molly.Duggan@LMU.net).*