AQUEDUTO

Guidance on using the Online Language Teacher Education (OLTE) Quality Framework

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About us

AQUEDUTO (**A**ssociation for **QU**ality **EDU**cation and **T**raining **O**nline) is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to researching, supporting and showcasing quality in online language teacher education programs. Through our free-to-all Online Language Teacher Education (OLTE) Quality Framework, our research publications and our Community Events, we continuously seek to further the field of online language teacher education.

Our convening members include the British Council, Norwich Institute for Language Education (NILE), Bridge Education Group, Macmillan Education, and The Consultants-E. They commit to operationalising the principles of the Quality Assurance Framework and, through their work with AQUEDUTO, they support other organisations and individuals involved in online language teacher education to deliver exceptional programmes.

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AQUEDUTO OLTE Quality Framework

The **AQUEDUTO OLTE Quality Framework Version 4.0** can guide course providers with measurable and achievable best practices in online language teacher education. It clearly and succinctly presents the key quality standards and practices for implementing and managing blended and online training provision in an institution.

The framework sets out 45 clear standards to help determine the effectiveness of course provision, covering the following domains:

1 The Institutional Domain

2 The Pedagogical Domain

3 The Technological Domain

This framework was jointly developed by experts from the convening members of AQUEDUTO.

Who can use the framework?

AQUEDUTO has made the Quality Framework available free of charge to all, as part of our mission to promote quality education and training online. The framework is designed for use by a wide range of stakeholders involved in the implementation, management, or evaluation of blended and online training provision. Although AQUEDUTO's initial focus is with organisations focused on delivering language teacher training online, the framework is designed to be applicable to other providers of online learning in related fields. This includes:

- **Teacher training and development providers**: Institutions providing training and development for language teachers (or related fields) can use this framework to guide the set-up, implementation or evaluation of their online or blended training provision.

- **Language schools and other institutions**: Language schools, and other educational institutions can use this framework to develop, implement, and manage their online and blended learning strategies.

- **Senior management**: Leaders and decision-makers can use this framework to guide their strategic planning and investment in online and blended learning.

- **Educators and tutors**: Individuals involved in delivering online or blended learning can use this framework to ensure they are providing effective and inclusive learning experiences.

- **External consultants and experts**: Those providing external consultancy or expertise in online and blended training provision can use this framework to guide their advice and support.

Overall, anyone involved in the design, delivery, support, management, or evaluation of online and blended training provision could benefit from using this framework to ensure quality and effectiveness in online and blended learning environments.

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Design of the framework

The balance in the framework is soundly in favour of people and pedagogy, whilst recognising that without other aspects of institutional and technological support and infrastructure, online and blended provision may never be truly successful in its aims. It describes standards in three domains: Institutional, Pedagogical, and Technological. Between these three domains, there are forty-five standards divided into sub-categories. It has the following standards distribution:

The Institutional Domain

- Institutional Strategy (7)
- Staff Training, Development and Performance Management (4)
- Supporting the Learner Experience (16)

The Pedagogical Domain

- Course Design (8)
- Tutor Competencies (6)

The Technological Domain

- Platform (4)

Examples of use

Below are some examples of how institutions and providers could use the framework:

- An institution looking to improve the learner experience in their online courses can use this framework to provide comprehensive information to participants before enrolling, guide them on successfully completing the course, and manage participant contributions effectively during the course.

- A teacher training institution planning to launch an online learning program can use this framework to guide their planning. They can use it to ensure that those responsible understand the standards for successful online training provision, invest in the necessary infrastructure, and put in place the recommended systems for robust quality standards.

- A language school looking to evaluate the quality of their established online or blended learning courses may use the framework as a 'checklist' against which they validate their courses for quality assurance purposes.

- An institution planning to train its tutors for online training can use this framework to ensure that all tutors are qualified in their subjects and receive training in supporting and facilitating online learning. The framework can also guide them in acknowledging online teaching as a key competence in performance reviews.

- A consultancy firm specialising in online and blended learning can use this framework to guide their advice to educational institutions. They can help institutions develop and review their online learning strategy, train their staff, and improve the learner experience.

These are just a few examples. The framework is versatile and can be adapted to a variety of scenarios involving online and blended learning.

Benefits of using the framework

The AQUEDUTO OLTE Quality Framework offers several benefits for institutions and providers using it:

- **Internal quality assurance**: By providing clear guidelines and standards, the framework helps institutions ensure the quality of their online and blended learning offerings.
- **Improved learner experience**: By providing guidelines for supporting the learner experience at all stages, from enrolment to course completion, it can help institutions provide a more supportive learning environment for students.
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** By providing a complete set of proven criteria – designed by international language teaching and teacher development experts – for evaluating blended and online training courses against a quality assurance framework.
- **Differentiates providers in a crowded marketplace:** By helping providers stand out in a crowded marketplace that is of variable quality, it can help learners identify such courses and enrol with confidence, and clients of these institutions can feel reassured that the courses are of a high standard, with excellent human support throughout.
- **Strategic alignment**: By helping ensure that online and blended learning initiatives align with the institution's overall strategy, it can lead to more effective implementation and better outcomes.
- **Staff development**: By emphasises the importance of training and ongoing professional development for staff, it can enhance their skills and competencies, leading to more effective teaching and learning.
- **Efficient resource utilisation**: By providing guidance on aspects such as infrastructure investment and course and platform design, the framework can help institutions make more efficient use of their resources.

Overall, using the AQUEDUTO OLTE Quality Framework can help institutions enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of their online and blended training provision, leading to better learning outcomes and a more positive learning experience for students.

Aqueduto Online Language Teacher Education (OLTE) Quality Fragmenwork Version 4.0

The Institutional Domain

1. Institutional Strategy

1.1 Senior management can articulate the importance of blended / online learning to current and future Institutional strategy and this is reflected in a documented strategy

1.2 The institution invests in infrastructure for online learning, including technical and personnel capacity

1.3 All relevant local laws, specifically including Data Protection and Equality, Disability and Inclusion

1.4 rights, are adhered to
Roles and responsibilities for online learning are clear and explicit within organisational hierarchy

1.5 Design of platform and materials for online learning is consistent with institutional branding guidelines

1.6 Online/blended learning strategy is developed and reviewed through consultation with key internal stakeholders and external consultancy / expertise

1.7 Blended learning approach (i.e. nature of blend) is documented, and supported by course or project design and strategic implementation

2. Staff Training, Development and Performance Management

2.1 Tutors are qualified in the subject in which they are providing training

2.2 All staff (tutors, technical and support staff) receive training in supporting and facilitating online learning

2.3 All staff (tutors, technical and support staff) are encouraged to take part in ongoing professional development.

2.4 Supporting and facilitating online learning is acknowledged as a key competence in regular performance reviews

3. Supporting the Learner Experience

Before Enrolment

3.1 Information is provided to participants before enrolling to enable them to make an informed choice on the logistics and academic suitability of the course. This should include (but is not limited to)

- Aims and learning outcomes

- Cost

- Timeframe and time commitment required

- Entry requirements (e.g. prior qualifications and experience)

- Assessment approaches and procedures

- Policies on plagiarism and cheating

- Application and enrolment procedures

3.2 Information is provided to participants before enrolling to enable them to make an informed choice on the technical suitability of the course. This should include (but is not limited to)

- Technical requirements (hardware, software, connectivity)

- Additional costs for equipment and technology

3.3 In good time before the start of the course, participants are given information about

- Access to the platform (location, username, password, etc.)

- Guidelines on use, interaction and netiquette

Enrolment

3.4 Participants receive guidance on successfully completing the course, including

- Time management

- Autonomous learning

- Managing deadlines

3.5   Participants are asked about their expectations of the course, and their responses guide enrolment advice and or tutor planning

During the Course

3.6   Course participants should benefit from sessions with the following characteristics

- There is an encouraging ethos

- Participant contributions are managed effectively and inclusively.

- Sessions cater for the diversity of learner needs

- Feedback, praise and constructive criticism contribute to participants achieving learning outcomes

- Netiquette and group communication are managed effectively

3.7   Participant numbers per course are appropriate for interaction types, and the ratio of tutors to participants is appropriate.

3.8   The online learning platform is user-friendly and navigation is clear

3.9   A digital resource library is provided for participants, within the course or platform

3.10   A community space for participants is provided for each course

3.11   Participants questions are responded to in a timely manner (e.g. through group or individual text chat, or offline messaging)

3.12   Participants have access to technical support, online, via e-mail or telephone

3.13   There is a clear complaints procedure

3.14   Systems are in place for ongoing feedback and response during the course

Post Course

3.15 Assessment and certification procedures are transparent, directly related to stated learning outcomes, and completed within a stated timeframe

3.16 Feedback is gathered from participants and staff systematically after the course, and it is analysed and acted upon

The Pedagogical Domain

4. Course Design

4.1   Course learning outcomes are clearly defined

4.2   Content of material and blend proportion (where applicable) is suitable for learning outcomes and course aims

4.3   Where external tools and multimedia are chosen, their use is clearly linked to learning outcomes

4.3   Methods of interaction are appropriate and their use is structured and guided

4.4   Assessments test learning outcomes; formative and summative methods are clear; and a range of methods are used as appropriate.

4.5   The course timetable is designed to ensure each unit/module, and the overall course, is achievable

4.6   For wholly online courses, the combination of synchronous and asynchronous activities is clear and pedagogically appropriate

4.7   For blended courses, the combination of face to face and online elements is clear and pedagogically appropriate

4.8   The overall course design and content is regularly reviewed and updated

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5. Tutor Competencies

5.1 All tutors must be skilled in supporting, encouraging and evaluating independent and collaborative learning online

5.2 Tutors must be able to operate the platform (e.g. adding, editing, tracking, recording)

5.3 Tutors must be skilled in planning and preparing sessions, and evaluating the success of materials and activities to support participants' achievement of learning outcomes

5.4 Tutors should have the ability to establish their identity and presence in a course

5.5 Tutors differentiate according to participants' interests, competences and or prior experience

5.6 Tutors make use of communication channels provided and respond to participants within stated response times

The Technological Domain

6. Platform

6.1 A platform is used which:
• Is mobile responsive and, works across devices and operating systems
• Allows for integral participant grading, monitoring and feedback
• Has inbuilt accessibility features (e.g. sensory impairment; cognitive needs)

6.2 Higher level technical support for the platform is:
• Clear to internal stakeholders, with appropriate permissions for, e.g. superadmin, manager, tutor and participants.
• Clearly documented and communicated through policies and or procedures
• Periodically reviewed and changes documented

6.3 The platform is structured so it is clear when use of third-party web spaces (e.g. synchronous platforms, video-sharing platforms, websites) takes learners away from course platform

6.4 The platform is regularly upgraded to the latest version, or a clear rationale for not upgrading is provided

The **A**ssociation for **QU**ality **EDUC**ation and **T**raining **O**nline (AQUEDUTO)

https://aqueduto.com/