FAQs – NMSU’s Quality Initiative

Q: What is NMSU’s “Quality Initiative”?
A: The Quality Initiative (QI) is an effort by the NMSU Las Cruces and Grants campuses to improve student writing – generally, and in the disciplines.

Q: Why take on such a comprehensive project, and why focus on writing?
A: For many years NMSU faculty have expressed dissatisfaction with student writing. National research shows that employers of college graduates are likewise dissatisfied and cite communicate skills – including written communication skills – as essential to career success. However, efforts at NMSU to improve writing have been isolated and sporadic. By taking a comprehensive and coordinated approach to investigating writing and factors that impact writing, we create a community that learns about, supports and sustains efforts that improve writing. Ultimately, a comprehensive approach increases our ability to positively and effectively impact student writing.

Q: Why is it called a “Quality Initiative”?
A: NMSU’s effort to improve student writing meets a requirement by our regional accreditor (the Higher Learning Commission [HLC]) to engage in a project of significant scope that improves student learning or the student experience. The HLC refers to the identified project as a “Quality Initiative”. NMSU’s project to improve student writing is our Quality Initiative project, or our “QI”.

Q: What are the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) requirements for a Quality Initiative (QI) project?
A: The HLC requires a written proposal from institutions for a QI project. The project may span 2-5 years, must be of significant scope, and must entail some risk-taking by the institution. The proposal is reviewed by a panel of peers who either approve, returned for clarification/adjustments, or reject the proposal. NMSU’s QI proposal was approved on its first submission.

Q: What role does the Quality Initiative (QI) play in NMSU’s accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission (HLC)?
A: A QI is required for re-affirmation of accreditation. However, the HLC is not looking for, nor desires a ‘sure thing’ when it comes to the QI; instead, they want the institution to take some risks. To support increased risk-taking the actual outcome of the project neither assures nor jeopardizes the institution’s accreditation. Not doing a QI, or a perceived lack of commitment or sincere effort by the institution to carry out a QI will result in the loss of accreditation.

Q: Why is the NMSU-Grants campus a part of our Quality Initiative (QI)?
A: NMSU-Grants is accredited with the Las Cruces campus. Our other community colleges (DACC, NMSU-Carlsbad and NMSU-Alamogordo) all undergo independent accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) and must carry out their own Quality Initiative projects.

Q: What is expected of me/my department/college regarding the Quality Initiative (QI)?
A: As a leader in your department/college, you are expected to support the initiative broadly – as an institutional effort; and specifically – as an effort to improve disciplinary writing. Pay attention to communication about the QI; request and expect appointed departmental Assessment Liaisons to update faculty in your/their department(s) about QI related data, activities and initiatives; explore and engage in opportunities that help you better understand and implement practices that improve student writing.

Q: Where do I get more information about the QI and/or student writing?
A: Go to http://assessment.nmsu.edu/quality-initiatives.