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Subject: Standards 5.2 and 5.3, My Responses  
Date: August 8, 2019 at 10:50 AM  
To: Calvin Scheidt cscheidt@tcc.edu



Hi Cal,

Below are my replies to the two Essential NOT MET standards, **Standard 5.2** and **Standard 5.3**. Usually, when someone asks me to describe how students interact in my course, I do this with the person at my side so that I can “show and tell.” This usually takes two to three hours. In this case with QM, I am attempting to describe student interaction with words, so it gets a little lengthy. But documenting student activity is a good exercise, especially when trying to document the process to establish a course’s quality.

I hope that you will see from my response that I have taken this Quality Matters endeavor very seriously. I have structured my reply so that it should be easy to read and view my extra supporting items.

I believe that you will find that my replies have adequately addressed these two. I look forward to your thoughts.

Sincerely,

Rick

## **5.2 Learning activities provide opportunities for interaction that support active learning. (1 out of 3 points, Essential)**

### **Relevant Guidelines From 5.2 Self-Review Guidelines:**

*Interactive learning activities promote active learning and engagement through three types of interaction: learner-content, learner-instructor, and learner-learner. **Meaningful** interactions that promote learners’ development of skills are designed as activities to **support the course objectives** or competencies and **may vary with the subject matter**, purpose, and level of the course. Look for the **purpose of the interactions** and **not just the number of opportunities** for interaction.*

*Active learning involves learners engaging by “doing” something, such as discovering, processing, or applying concepts and information. Active learning entails guiding learners to increasing levels of responsibility for their own learning.*

*Activities for learner-instructor interaction might include an assignment or project submitted for instructor feedback; learner-instructor discussion in a synchronous session or an asynchronous discussion board exchange; or a frequently-asked-questions (FAQ) discussion forum moderated by the instructor.*

*Look for opportunities for learner-instructor interaction, learner-content interaction, and, **if appropriate to the course**, learner-learner interaction.*

*Examples of interaction opportunities that promote active learning and engagement:*

1. *Learners are **asked to watch** examples of effective persuasive speech delivery and identify components of effective delivery, and then receive feedback from the instructor on that assignment.*

*Reviewers, review the types of interactions designed into the activities based on the **nature of the course** and **not on personal preferences**. **Determine if opportunities for learner-instructor and learner-content interaction are present in the course**. If learner-learner interaction is appropriate to the course, it is also included in the course. When reviewing opportunities for learner interaction, keep in mind that learning environments usually are broader than a single course and may include informal networks that are beyond the scope of a QM review.*

### **Reviewer Comments and My Responses**

One reviewer believed that my course had sufficient evidence of interaction to meet Standard 5.2; however, two reviewers did not.

The reviewers’ evidence comments suggestions focused on two major themes:

- 1) They could not see enough instructor-student interaction
- 2) They could not see enough student-to-student interaction.

I plan to address each of these concerns below and will provide evidence that there are **enormous** amounts of instructor-to-student interaction and an **appropriate** amount of student-to-student interaction. It appears that no reviewer questioned learner-to-content issues, but as I address the other two categories, learner-to-content will become more apparent.

### **Instructor-to-Student Interactions.**

I already may have addressed some concerns about the instructor-to-instructor interaction when I recently provided a [Course Alignment Matrix](#) (i.e., a Course Map,) which initially I saw as “not required” when I completed the QM Worksheet, but then realized how it would dramatically help the reviewers better understand my course and help satisfy Standards 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3, which it did.

This [Course Alignment Matrix](#) details each course objective, modules objectives, Resources and Materials used, **Learning**

**Engagement and Activities**, Course Technology, and Assessment and Measurement. At first glance, the number of topics covered may not look too surprising, but when you realize that these topics are delivered in ten weeks, one might ask, "How do you cover all these topics?" My colleagues who teach this course (10 faculty teach this same course) wrestle with topics. Our Business Analytics department's "[Common Required Course Topics](#)" document shows which topics must be present in the courses and Optional Course Topics. Some faculty only cover the "Required Topics" because they believe that there is not enough "time" to cover any more. I have chosen to cover more topics for the following reasons: 1) I want to be able to *tell the complete "Business Analytics" story*, 2) I am confident that with the careful design of resources and instruction, student will be able to master these topics, and 3) that by creatively providing instruction *outside of class meeting times*, that I can have students devote more time to my course without realizing it (and without complaining.) The key to my course success is centered on my instructional videos.

What the Course Alignment Matrix does not clearly show, nor is it evident by anyone looking at a course shell in Moodle, or even the syllabus, is the enormous amount of interaction between my students and me, via videos. Ulowa's Instructional Design department has said that my course contains more videos than what they build into an average online course, making my course is distinctly different from most. It is not until one looks closely at my course that they see the value of my videos. For example, it took me a while to convince my MBA Program administrators about how I design and use videos. Now that an Online MBA Program is soon to be offered, my administrators have come to appreciate my videos usage. My administrators hear how students love my videos, how students love my distribution techniques, how I make it easy for them to study "on the go," and how videos complement my Excel models and make it easy to solve problems. Students often want access to these videos after the course is over, and I encourage them to download them for future use.

Let me describe my videos since many people think "videos are videos." This is not the case. None of my course videos are from external resources, such as from the publisher, Open Resources, YouTube, or [Lynda.com](#). Nor are these lecture-captures, produced by our university's video-studio, made using a "glass board" or "whiteboard" methods, methods that produce less than optimal videos. I self-produce every one of my approximately 50 instructional videos (see this [Video Summary](#).) What I have learned is that if you get the "person" out of the video, focus on the instructional message, carefully (digitally) edit videos to remove wasted pauses, wasted words, and double to quadruple compress computer video-screen captures, that you can end up with a short, very clear, concise, and content-rich video. My voice, not my picture paces instruction. The result is that my videos become much shorter than in-person lecture time, with *equal content!* I refer to my technique as "Time Warp-Ed" education. This technique focuses on making the student a more productive learner. In 2013, I presented this "Time Warp-Ed" technique at an Online Learning Consortium conference and received a "Best-In-Track Award." I do have [this web page](#) that provides more detail about this technique, if you are interested. I have shown my video production technique to video "experts," and they very impressed. You can watch any of my course videos, but here is my [Ch02 Excel: Creating Graphs](#) video as an example. I selected this example because many people can follow it, if they choose, and even learn from it. When I developed this "Time Warp-Ed" technique nearly 15 years ago, I thought that it would catch on with other instructors. It hasn't! This is because it involves more time, and learning, than most instructors are willing to devote to video making. The rule of thumb is that it takes one hour to produce one final minute. For this course, I have around 900 minutes of final video.

Another factor that improves educational and interaction involves the length of my videos and how I distribute them. My target video length is 5-25 minutes. This length allows students to listen to these while on a coffee or lunch break. Because I make it easy for students to download my videos to their smartphones, students can listen to me while traveling, at an airport, in a car (as a passenger), on a plane (no Internet needed), or even in bed. As a side note, a student once told me that he listened to my videos, in bed, before going to sleep. His wife was often in bed with him. Eventually, his wife said, "I only want one man in my bed with me!" (Of course, her husband.) This kind of *convenient interaction* does not exist in many online courses.

Video, when done well, is the *most potent* educational media. An instructor can do things with digital video that cannot be done in real life. Students can always have the "instructor" at their side. And videos support asynchronous education, opening up a worldwide education market. Student can watch videos when their minds are ready to learn. They can easily re-watch videos for better understanding. They can easily forward or reverse to any point. Students have told me that they will watch my videos, especially my Excel instruction videos, three to five times.

My course, if I delivered it in the classroom without videos, would be the equivalent to a 5-hour course, about half the hours devoted to "lecture" and the other half to hands-on "computer lab" time. The labs would focus on learning my Excel models to solve business problems. Students **must** watch my Excel videos; my Excel models are not from the textbook, nor is there any user's manual for my Excel models, and my Excel models are very sophisticated. (Browse them in this one file, [Excel-10](#), which is what students have at the end of the course.) I have designed these Excel models on my own, over the last twelve years. They replace the need for specialized statistical software, such as SAS, Minitab, and SPSS. They put statistical equations and problem-solving logic into a more common and friendly Excel framework. Additionally, my Excel models do not use the more common Excel technique of relying on Excel's Data Analysis ToolPak, nor the publishers MegaStat add-in. The only way a student will succeed with my Excel models is by watching my Excel videos! Students interact with my Excel models and my videos in a somewhat "simulation" or "gaming" environment. Students try, learn, repeat, try again, learn better, repeat, learn, and finally master. This technique involves a lot of *student-to-content* activity, and also includes a good share of *student-to-instructor* at the same time.

I once had a meeting with one of our senior full professors, one recognized as an analytics expert, to show him some of my Excel models, in particular, my multiple regression model. He said, "You are going way too far. Students just need to know the concept of multiple regression and how to use the Data Analysis Toolpak." But I pointed out that the ToolPak is cumbersome to use, does not provide the full set of calculations, and cannot be extended into more sophisticated business models. He then thought a moment and said, "What you are doing is fine." The beauty of my approach is that I am using Excel as an interactive learning tool. Students can change one value and immediately see its effect on the final analysis. This strong interactivity with my Excel models is what helps students answer questions on their own, very quickly, and to explore. (Might my course being given a "time" penalty because my Excel models allow a student to solve a problem in one minute instead of the traditional five minutes?)

I have added an optional Tableau component (for the "honors" students.) This Tableau component is equivalent to another 1 hour of instruction. where students engage in yet another software product to visualize data. which supports analysis. Currently, this Tableau

component is optional. I am experimenting to see if Tableau might someday become a required component. My fear, right now, is that colleagues might think that I am diluting the primary course objectives. Of course, they don't have "time" in their classes for Tableau. However, data visualization is a major theme of business analytics, so adding a stronger data visualization component to this course would be helpful. Since my instruction manipulates "time," I believe that I can squeeze it in, without students complaining, and deliver a more complete business analytics course. As a side note, when I told my MBA administrators that I was going to be adding the optional Tableau instruction, they asked "Do you have time?" My response was "Students do not keep track of time in my course. They want to learn." My MBA administrators are eager to see my experimentation results.

The point is that I make it very convenient for students to learn from me, and because it is so convenient and in small chunks, and that the videos are high-quality, that students never complain, "This seems like a 5-hour course!" In my [video summary](#), the right-side column that shows equivalent classroom hours. I estimate 80 hours of equivalent classroom hours. Think about what it would be like if an instructor could sit next to every student and give them 80 hours of personal instruction.

***It is the power of my instruction videos and my Excel models that allows me to cover more topics, and cover them better, than what one can do in a physical classroom.*** Some students are starting to notice the power of quality online education, like this student who provided [this unsolicited feedback](#) at the end of this summer's course.

Okay, I have probably said more than enough to try to convince you how I am at every student's side with my videos and interacting with them. I will now describe how this all comes together in my course, from the student's perspective.

### Student-to-Content Interactions (Course Design Intent)

I will describe how the design intent for this course with the following example, which I believe is how an "average student" approaches this course. Some of my description below will include instructor-to-student elements.

1. I turn topics one week at a time and let students know by email that a new topic is available. I believe that education must be paced, so students do not see the entire course contents at the beginning. During our QM Pre-review Meeting, one reviewer said something like "Okay, we now see your course as students see it." I pointed out that *this is not* how students see my course, not until the course is over. A topic is turned on one week early, and I make assignments due one week after a topic is covered. This method provides students two weeks for each topic.
2. A student likely begins by reading the chapter in the textbook, watching my "concepts video", and doing the Concepts Self-Assessment in Moodle. If they don't get a perfect score on their concepts self-assessment, they probably use the textbook reading for review before reattempting the self-assessment. In this course, as shown on the [Course Alignment Matrix](#), there are 15 chapters, so 15 concepts self-assessments. From [this summer's course statistics](#), students did these concepts self-assessments an average of 3 times. Because I have a large question bank for these concepts, and because of Moodle's technique for randomly selecting questions, on the average, a student has answered  $(140 \times 3)$  over 400 unique concept-questions about the course topics. (*Supports instructor-to-student and student-to-content activity in Standard 5.2.*)
3. The student is now ready to solve problems. The student begins by watching my Excel video for this topic, to get an overview, and this step can be done almost at any time, probably from their smartphone. Then, the student finds a convenient time to study, and repeats this video, following my instruction and using my Excel model to solve the problems that I present in my video. Next, the student opens a "Problems Self-Assessment" and tries to use my Excel model to solve problems, on their own. If they are having success, even getting a perfect score, they will likely attempt this Problems Self-Assessment a few more times, just for practice, and especially since some problems require different approaches to solving a problem and different approach with my Excel models. "**Practice makes perfect!**" and good students know this! From the [Course Alignment Matrix](#), there are 13 Problems Self-Assessments. Doing "Problems" self-assessments take more time than "Concepts" self-assessments. From [this summer's course statistics](#), students did each Problems Self-Assessment 2.2 times. (*Supports instructor-to-student and student-to-content activity in Standard 5.2.*)
4. Each week, near the end of students' engagement into that week's topic, I release a Reinforcement video. (Here is the [Reinforcement video for Week6, Sampling Methods](#), as an example.) This video is designed to mirror **exactly** what I do in the physical classroom in three hours. In this video, I review some major points in that week's topics, and I solve more problems. As the title suggests, I do this to "reinforce" what students should have learned. But in these videos, I also tackle a few more-difficult problems. If you watch my example, you will notice that I pause at various points and suggest that the student try to solve this problem on their own before seeing how I solve this problem. This reinforcement video is designed to keep students engaged and active in course content and to reinforce the module objectives further. In my [Video Summary](#), you will see that I have given each of these reinforcement videos an equivalent 2.5 hours each because this is exactly what I do in the classroom. Yes, each video is not 2.5 hours long. But this is due to my Time Warp-Ed technique and validates my position that real-time instruction is slower than digital video instruction. I am confident that good students do a lot of pausing and repeating of these Reinforcement videos. (*Supports instructor-to-student and student-to-content activity in Standard 5.2.*)

This process continues for each chapter, each week, leading up to an exam. One reviewer noted that they could not see Exam1, which was true. I fixed this problem, which was due to the way that I use "groups" for this exam, and I forgot to turn this grouping off. I provide these PDF versions of [Exam1](#) and [Exam2](#) (for one student) for you to see.

5. Students must take an exam. This happens twice, at mid-term and at the course end. These exams are designed as rigorous exams. They are timed, 2-hour long, can only be taken once, are randomized for each student, and only include "problems." If you look at the examples that I provide, you should notice that these are very difficult exams and would challenge many instructors. Students can only do well on these exams if they have been following my instructions, learn to use my Excel models, and take the self-assessments seriously. I stress this point to students from day one, that the self-assessments are learning tools, should be taken seriously, not simply guessing games, **or they will not have success on exams!** One reviewer commented "(students) are simply doing quizzes which they can redo until they make the grade desired." This statement could

be true for self-assessments, and I have had students who I believe have done this. But self-assessments are only half their course grade. Exams, which cannot be redone, are the other half. So, students could play a guessing game on self-assessment and get a perfect score for this component, but they will not do well in the course. Using the cumulative binomial analysis for exams, the probability of simply guessing at answers and getting a passing grade of 70 percent is 0.000000302. It is not until they know how to solve 69.7% of the problems that they can guess on the remaining 30.3% and pass this exam (with a "C", and a course grade of "C" puts them at risk to be expelled from the MBA Program.) (*Supports student-to-content activity in Standard 5.2.*)

Before each exam, I do "lock" student self-assessment grades and then turn on the self-assessments for practice. I know that student return to the self-assessments because when I forget to turn one on, students let me know (and want their bonus point for my error.) This technique, which is harder to do in other LMSs, is easy to do in Moodle. It encourages more student activity and interaction with my videos and with course resources.

5. Students can optionally take advantage of my Tableau instruction and activities. I treat this as a standard course component, meaning that students are allowed to ask for help with Tableau.
6. I have a few optional bonus activities where students are encouraged to do a little bit more beyond the required assignments. I provide feedback and grade these, and the bonus activities can at most add 2% to a student's course grade if they get a perfect score on all bonus activities.

The first five steps that I have outlined above form the majority of student activity and interaction. I hope that this can convince anyone that my course has what I describe as "an enormous amount of student activity and interaction."

It appeared that one reviewer questioned "variety" of interaction. Of course, each topic is naturally different from each other. However, the course doesn't contain merely a dozen different topics. The topics are integrated into a cohesive treatment of the course's theme, business analytics. Additionally, my Excel models are designed to not only solve problems but to illustrate different creative ways of using Excel. Each new Excel model contains additional new features. Students anticipate what each new Excel model add. Since Excel is a major theme within this course, my use of it provides variety. There are 10 modules in this course. Module 1 is distinctly different from the others because it includes a significant "graphing" exercise (a non-calculating exercise), yet also includes one calculating exercise involving basic statistics. Intentionally, I designed this first module as demanding. It covers four chapters and has the most self-assessments for any one week. It serves as a review of what students should have had in their undergraduate education. I also want to set the tone that "***This is not going to be an easy online course.***" Module 2 is different because it uses the TreePlan add-in to build decision trees. Module 10 is different because it shows how to use Excel for optimization and simulation, using a completely different approach to problem-solving and modeling with Excel. The remaining modules contain distinctly different yet integrated topics. Between the topic variety, Excel variety, variety in my videos, and the way I pace this course, I have never had any student comment, "This is a boring course!"

## Student-to-Student Interactions

In the QM Worksheet, I wasn't quite sure how to answer the question, "Is learner-to-learner interaction appropriate to this course?" I answered "yes" because I do use discussion forums for each topic where students can interact, and I do have a few more required discussions forums in this course. But perhaps I should have answered, "No" because a "Yes" seems to imply significant interaction. However, just as I would have had to explain myself in the QM Worksheet, I will take this opportunity to explain myself, now.

This is not a conceptualization course, an ideas course, a social interaction course, a management theory course, or a course that benefits from seeking group consensus or role-playing. Nor is it a course that is needs simulated business settings since most students are working for organizations. Students learn this topic to apply what they have learned in other MBA courses, and at work. This is a course about precision calculations, where students learn to calculate correct solutions to business problems. The words "calculate" and "compute" frequently appear in both course and module objectives. The path of learning statistics is pretty clear, students learn by solving problems, as taught by a competent instructor with well-designed methods, and with an instructor who is always there to help. Students would see it as a disservice if the instructor said, "Go to your group and see if someone can help you solve the problem.) The student would reply, "I thought you are the instructor!"

The QM Guidelines for this Standard make it clear about student-to-student interaction by stating, "***Look for the purpose of the interactions and not just the number of opportunities for interaction. Look for opportunities for learner-instructor interaction, learner-content interaction, and, if appropriate to the course, learner-learner interaction.***"

When one reviewer suggested adding "discussions, blogs, and or wikis were included to provide expanded variety to the achievement." Yes, Moodle supports these activity tools and many others. However, these tools are not appropriate to the course, and they do not serve to achieve the course objectives. Yes, if added, I would just be increasing variety, but not increasing learning. I am very knowledgeable about how to use discussion forums, have used them regularly since 2002, have used them in all four major LMSs, and use them regularly in my Operations Management and my Information Systems online courses. Forum discussions are very appropriate in these courses because they contain more "concepts" without exact answers. For this Business Analytics course, I have been very thoughtful and careful about using required discussion forums.

I will add these following perspectives.

**The course (business statistics and analytics):** A form of this course exists in many MBA program. They tend to have the same common goal of improving students' statistics and quantitative abilities. They common approach to teaching this topic is primarily through problem-solving. Few instructors resort to student-to-student activities as an instructional pedagogy. The key challenge is making the course interesting and keeping students focused on problem-solving.

**Textbook Publishers:** A publisher wants to sell their textbooks, so they seek ways to help faculty teach this course with publisher-provided resources and suggestions. My textbook is in its 17<sup>th</sup> edition, and dates back to 1967! It is McGraw-Hill flagship textbook. In it, what you find is that at the end of each chapter are many multiple-choice questions. Yes, there are some “case” questions, but they just provide more words about the scenario and end with a series of questions seeking a value. These case questions can be presented as multiple-choice questions for automatic grading and feedback. The publisher does not provide ideas for student-to-student activities because the publisher has found that this is not the best way to teach statistics.

**Our MBA Program:** Our MBA Program promotes the use of “group activities” in every MBA course. This course, however, is a fundamental core course with a goal of improving students’ computation ability, so it is given an exception to group activities. Students, in following courses, get plenty of group assignments. It is more important that in this course that students obtain quantitative skills.

In this course, I also have been given an exception to the MBA Grading Guidelines, which were created for classes that do not have an abundance of group assignment. I was discovered that too many instructors were giving students an “A” because group activities are difficult to objectively grade. This course has objective grading, so I am allowed to grade on an absolute scale as opposed to on a curve.

**Our Business Analytics Department:** This is a quantitative course. The department’s way of assuring that students have met the course objectives is with an end-of-semester “Assurance of Learning” quiz, which contains multiple-choice problems to solve.

**Students:** Students come to this course hoping that they learn statistics, with high expectations. They want to learn from the instructor, not from other students.

So, the use of student-to-student interaction activities, for this course, is not very appropriate. Their addition would probably have low overall value. Perhaps the reviewer who was satisfied with my course activities for this Standard 5.2 was the “content expert” reviewer who saw that my activities are appropriate for this business analytics course.

## Where Student-to-Student Interactions Are Used in This Course.

Having said all of the above, I do want to explain that *this course is not void of student -to-student interaction*. Below is where it exists.

**Introduce Yourself Forum Discussion:** This required graded forum discussion provides the students the opportunity to get to know each other. It also shows students, by my interaction in this forum, that I am an active instructor who reads what they write and responds, when appropriate. It also teaches students how to use Moodle’s discussion tool, so that later in the course, when they want to ask a question, they will know how to use Moodle’s discussion tool. Students can view these posts in the forum, and Moodle also emails them each student’s post. This assignment cannot be graded objectively, so students will get 1 point for practically anything that they say. I am not suggesting that students do not take this assignment seriously; they do. [Here are the discussions from this summer’s course](#), which shows students posts and also my posts.

**Course Feedback Forum Discussion:** This required graded forum discussion. At about 1/3 of the way into the semester, I ask students for feedback. This forum is meant to stimulate ideas and suggestion, and I purposely let every student see other student’s posts. Also, sometimes, I will jump in to clarify issues. This assignment cannot be graded objectively, so students will get their 2 points for practically anything that they say. [Here are the discussions from this summer’s course](#).

**WK01- Submit your Excel file, and Thoughts on Graphing Data with Excel:** This assignment is required and graded. Students first complete a graphing assignment and upload their Excel file, then they provide comments about their learning. This is a good example where it is very appropriate to have student-to-student interaction (which I read and grade) about an open-ended assignment, where it is also difficult to objectively grade. [Here are the discussions from this summer’s course](#).

**WK0x Any Questions, Comments, or Observations Forums:** I wish that my instructional techniques were perfect and that every student would get perfect scores, never ask questions, and master the objectives. But this is never the case. So, I include a forum at the end of every topic where students have the opportunity to post anything. It might be that they do not understand a “concept” question, a “problems,” or something about the course -- basically, anything. Moodle shows when there are new posts, and Moodle also emails these posts to every student.

I have found that if one student has a question, it is likely that other students have the same question. So, this technique becomes a convenient way to stimulate activity and interaction. I also post questions that students have emailed to me, when appropriate, to benefit everyone. The posting of questions is preferred over having students email me. On my original syllabus, I had mentioned that “email is preferred,” but I intended to say the I prefer email to phone calls. ***I have improved my syllabus with a better statement that posts are preferred.***

The most common thing that happens with these posts is that I see them and provide help. This is exactly what students want: help from the professor. However, other students do jump in to give suggestions. And sometimes we go back and forth with ideas amongst several students.

The QM Reviewers, in the course shell, did not see this interaction because the course shell was not supposed to include students. So, this interaction is hard to judge. I have made [this short video showing the variety of posts that students make](#) (pause the video to read any specific post.) As you should see, there are many.

It is my belief that this is the most appropriate form of student-to-student interaction, that it supports the course objectives, and it does provide some good weekly interaction. This is why I answered “Yes” on the QM Worksheet.

## Summary

By now, I hope that you understand my course and its design. The remaining question might be, "Does this all work?" I can provide the following:

**My Student Evaluations Are Excellent:** If students didn't like this course, they would let me, and my administration know. These are adult MBA students who are paying \$2,000 for this course. [My student evaluations are very high](#), above the university's averages for online courses.

**My MBA Program Love This Course:** My course is distinctly different from the online "standard" MBA course. Some would probably like me to convert. However, the MBA Program recognizes my course as being one of the best, so they have "grandfathered" me in. My course is recognized for its high student interaction, much more than average. And my high student ratings are also recognized. At one point, my MBA Administrator met with me and asked, "What are you doing to get these high review scores?"

**Student Exit Comments Are Supportive:** Here are some from this semester's course, with some students addressing videos and activities in this course and emphasizing some of the many points that I have made above. (Note: some of these address the student's lack of desire for webinars.)

[Student01](#), [Student02](#), [Student03](#), [Student04](#), [Student05](#), [Student06](#), [Student07](#), [Student08](#), [Student09](#), [Student10](#), [Student11](#), [Student12](#), [Student13](#), [Student14](#), [Student15](#), [Student16](#), [Student17](#), [Student18](#)

**Assurance of Learning Results:** Perhaps this is the most important and convincing form of evidence. I had mentioned that around ten different faculty teach this course. My department, Business Analytics, has this [Assurance of Learning](#) (AOL) tool that is used to make sure that all courses are achieving the course objectives. Students are encouraged to take this (optional) quiz. The last time that the results were compiled, students in my course had outperformed all other courses! Why do I think this is happening? My answer is rather simple; my videos, my Excel models, my assignments, my responsiveness to student questions, and that I have packed 5-hours of instruction into this 3-hour course. As [this student noted](#), the quality of online courses is starting to exceed in-class courses.

My course is not a traditional online course. Almost everything that I do does not align with university standard (normal) practices. For students to be successful in this course, students must be **active and engaged, doing meaningful assignments**; they must carefully watch and follow my instruction in my videos, they must practice their self-assessments, and they must ask questions when they do not understand.

A lot of work has gone into the design of this online course. Improving its design is part of my continuous improvement philosophy, so I am not trying to imply that this course's design is "frozen" and that I will not ever make changes. This is far from the case; I am always making improvements, and open to new ideas. I am always thinking about ways to increase the course quality, and help students learn.

I hope that my response has provided enough evidence that this course meets the "student activity" goals of Standard 5.2 and satisfies the two reviewers who had concerns.

### 5.3 The instructor's plan for interacting with learners during the course is clearly stated. (1 out of 3 points, Essential)

#### Relevant Guidelines From 5.3 Self-Review Guidelines:

*"A **clear plan** for instructor-learner interaction, including **when learners can expect the instructor's responses** to discussion posts and feedback on assignments, helps ensure substantive interaction between instructors and learners during the course.*

*Frequent feedback from the instructor increases learners' sense of engagement in a course. **Clear information is provided about when learners will receive instructor responses to emails and discussion postings, feedback on assignments, and grades.***

*For example, instructors might state that they will reply to emails within 24 hours, and feedback for assignments will be posted within a week after the due date. This information **typically** appears in the course syllabus or in a "Start Here" folder.*

*Additional examples that might be included in the instructor's plan for interaction:*

- 1. A statement that learners will receive regular (weekly, daily) announcements that include reminders and information pertinent to the course*
- 2. Clear information on any additional feedback or guidance that will be provided by the instructor for auto-graded items*

*Reviewers may find this information in the syllabus or **associated with particular assignments**. The purpose of the review is not to evaluate the instructor's plan but rather to **ensure the instructor has provided a plan.**"*

#### Reviewer Comments and My Responses

**Reviewer #3 was satisfied.** This reviewer had no concerns, saying, "*None, as the professor's plan for interacting with student-learners, is clearly stated in the syllabus.*"

I suspect that this reviewer saw several items in my syllabus, including my statement that I will send students a Welcome email before the class begins: my statement about my less than two day response to emails: that students get weekly emails from me describing

what I have turned on for the week; that late work is not accepted, that students have one-week to question their grade.

Or perhaps this reviewer understood that the LMS system immediately provides scores, meaning feedback, to self-assessments.

Or maybe this reviewer heard me state my intentions for interacting with students in my Course Introduction video (described in detail, below.)

Or perhaps it was clear to this reviewer that I am highly interactive with students from my approximately 50 videos that I use for student interaction.

Whatever it was, **I had satisfied this Reviewer's expectations.**

**Reviewer #2 was not satisfied.** This second reviewer commented 1) "*The instructor has provided a plan for response time to emails in the syllabus but not for assignments*" and 2) "*The instructor can add a timeline for providing feedback and posting grades for the participation and attendance activities in the course.*"

This reviewer is correct that *in my syllabus*, I did not provide my plans or a timeline for my responses for assignments and feedback. However, I do provide this information in at least four other places before the course begins. The Self-Review guidelines does say "*typically in the syllabus*" but this implies that this information can occur elsewhere. Three other places where I do provide information are all part of my [Pre-Course assignments](#), and the fourth place is in my Welcome email.

- 1) In my [Overview of Moodle](#) video, I describe how I plan to grade the three activities, quizzes, uploaded assignments, and forum posts. I have the following statements (from the [captioned SRT file](#) that can be viewed with any text editor):
  - (at 13:39 minutes, for **quizzes**) "Just about every type of quiz that I provide will be immediately graded for you when you finish your attempt. This grade will immediately show in your gradebook. The only quizzes that are not graded immediately is when I have open-ended questions. This is why the student information survey was not graded immediately. When a quiz provides multiple attempts, your highest grade is what ends up in your gradebook."
  - (at 15:15 minutes, for **assignments**) "I will usually not grade any uploaded assignments until the due date has expired. Until this date, you can always resubmit your assignment. After I grade the assignment, Moodle will email you a notice, and your assignment grade will show in your gradebook."
  - (at 17:41 minutes, for **forum discussions**) "I do read every post that every student makes. When I read your post, I provide a grade for it. With this approach, you might find a little delay between you making your post and me grading it, but I do grade posts regularly."  
(at 18:00 minutes, for **any topic questions**) "I always provide one special forum at the bottom of every topic where you can ask any general questions about that particular topic. I am always encouraging students to ask questions in this forum. This is my method of sharing my answers with everyone in the class. Anything posted in this forum is not graded."  
(at 18:14 minutes, **the grade book**) "You will find that your grade seldom lags by more than a couple days at most. The gradebook shows you all the assignments by category, your current grade, and percent for each assignment. Each category grade is properly weighted according to the syllabus. And your current course grade is shown at the bottom. Items that you have not yet started do not get factored into your overall grade, however assignments not completed on time become a zero." "I recommend that you visit your gradebook frequently."
  - (at 19:32 minutes, the **Calendar**) "The Moodle calendar shows you important dates and when assignments are due. I really like this calendar feature. I post every assignment and its due date in this calendar."

These statements in the Moodle Overview video, by themselves, provide the evidence for both a plan and a timeline, as 5.3 Self-Review Guidelines requires.

- 2) Although I provide my plans for interaction, grading, and feedback in this Moodle Overview video, some students still forget. Therefore, in the first week, once students are into the course and seeing my system unfold, I provide [this clear forum post](#) about exactly how I plan to interact and grade the three activities. This post, which is in the course's "[Any General Course Questions, Comments, or Observations](#)" [discussion forum](#), was not seen by reviewers because QM requests a course shell, without students in it. This post, along with many others, gets added after the course begins.

This post provides the evidence for both a plan and a timeline, as 5.3 Self-Review Guidelines requires. This is in addition to what the Moodle Overview video provides.

- 3) In my [Welcome Email](#), I have the following paragraphs:

"I plan to make each week's materials available about one week before class, typically on about Tuesdays, so Week1 resources will be available soon. Assignments will be due one week after we cover a topic, typically on Tuesday evenings. With this method, you will have nearly two weeks to do every assignment."

"For this course, you will be seeing that I provide you with my own lecture videos that cover every topic when I release a topic. I encourage you to watch the videos and review the textbook readings each week, and typically before attempting assignments. The week following a topic, I will provide you a "Reinforcement" video where I spend some time on more difficult and interesting problems and use Microsoft Excel to do calculations more efficiently. This "Reinforcement" mirrors what I do for "in-class" sections. In my "Course Introduction" video I share more information about the course structure. Incidentally, my lecture videos are often less than 25 minutes in length, and they are designed to be compatible with most mobile devices. Students seem to

are often less than 25 minutes in length, and they are designed to be compatible with most mobile devices. Students seem to enjoy these videos and find them helpful, which is why I continue providing them.”

This Welcome email is another way that I communicate some of my plans for interaction and timelines.

- 4) In my [Course Introduction](#) video, I provide a lot of information about my plans for interaction. You can watch this video (regular or captioned) in its entirety, but below are specific statements that I can highlight (from this [captioned SRT file](#) that can be viewed with any text editor):

- (at 3:20 minutes) “I will be pacing the course weekly just like the in-class version.”
- (at 3:40 minutes) I describe how I interact with emails and phone.
- (at 7:05 minutes) “It is important that you check the websites frequently for announcements, assignments, et cetera. Please let me know if you have any trouble accessing the systems.”
- (at 7:20 minutes) “I plan to turn on each week’s materials about a week prior to the evening when a topic will be discussed. Within this material, I will include my lecture videos.”
- (at 8:04 minutes) “A typical class will consist of activities such as reviewing lecture concepts and problem-solving techniques, professor-led exercises in Excel, and discussions of relevant current events.”
- (at 8:15 minutes) “I consider class time as a time to reinforce concepts from the videos and a time to explore a few topics a little deeper. In the online version of the course, ***I will provide this reinforcement electronically each week.***”
- (at 8:58 minutes) “I think that you will see that I’m a very dedicated professor and care about your learning and success in this course.”
- (at 9:05 minutes) I describe how my videos will be used for interaction throughout the course.
- (at 15:01 minutes) “I encourage you to begin assignments early. Also, I try my hardest to help everyone who seeks my help prior to the due dates, but the probability of getting my help goes down dramatically as the due date approaches. Meaning, if you ask me a question two hours before an assignment is due, I may not be able to respond. ***I welcome your emails or posted questions and usually address questions in less than two days.***”
- (at 18:09 minutes) “During the semester, I will post all scores on Moodle for you to view. After you get your homework or exam grade, you have one week to complain about your score.”
- (at 19:26 minutes) “Let me take a moment to tell you some of my ideas about how I teach business analytics...”
- (at 20:16 minutes) “I hope to focus our attention on how to recognize different data scenarios, how to analyze them, and how to make good business decisions.”
- (at 21:33 minutes) “Most quizzes in Moodle will be automatically graded. This one (*the student survey*), however, contains open-ended questions so I must grade each question before you see your grade in Moodle.
- (at 21:58 minutes) ***“Let me remind you that this is not a correspondence course. You do have access to me, your professor. If you have a question about the course or a specific topic, it is always best to post your question in the I Need Help With forum at the end of every topic in Moodle. You will see me answer your question pretty quickly. I like to use this method the most because it gives other students in the course a chance to see the kinds of questions that other students have. If you have a student that you feel is more personal in nature, then just pop me off an email. I typically respond to email questions in less than a day.” ... “If you think we do need to talk, you can always give me a call on my phone number. Remember that my phone is voicemail only. Leave me a message and suggest some times that would be good for me to call you back. If necessary, we can also Skype or Zoom each other.”... “My role is to help you understand course materials and make sure that you have success.***

**Reviewer #1 was not satisfied.** Reviewer #1 mentioned similar concerns to the second and third reviewers, concerns that I believe I have addressed above. However, this reviewer expressed some concerns about instructor driven interaction, which seemed more specific to “activity” versus Standard 5.2’s “plan.” I believe that I have addressed this reviewer’s concern in my response to Standard 5.2.

From the evidence provided from the Moodle Overview video, the follow-up post in “General Discussion” during the first week of class about my plan for feedback and timing, from what I convey in my Welcome email, and my comments in my Course Introduction video, I believe that this is sufficient evidence to satisfy Standard 5.2. Perhaps in many online courses, there are not as many multimedia resources used before a course begins, so the syllabus becomes the focal point. But the QM guidelines do allow this information to be in other places. It is always challenging to decide what to put where, but I am satisfied with where I communicate course activity plans and timing.

However, there is always room for continuous improvement, and I like the reviewer’s suggestions for **syllabus improvement**. I have improved my [syllabus](#) as follows:

- I have improved the section titled Communications, Posts, and Email, in the Course Policy section of the syllabus, to improve my statement about general communication, posting preference, and email.

- I have adjusted the section Timing for Assignments by adding “*and usually in less than two days.*”
- I have modified the Self-Assessments section to improve my plan for interaction and feedback and emphasizing the importance of self-assessments to solving business problems.
- I added a section starting with “**Uploaded Assignments**” stating “*There will be some topics where you will be expected to upload a file. I plan to grade these assignments and provide feedback within two days after their due dates.*” [Here is my administrative Excel grading file](#), as an example, showing how I have provided feedback to the “**WK01 (Ch02) Submit your Excel M&M data and graph (file)**” for this summer’s course (student names hidden.)

### **Standard 5.3 Summary**

From the **evidence** that I have provided and **improvements** to my syllabus, I believe that I have adequately addressed all reviewers’ concerns and suggestions about Standard 5.3.