



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: April 10, 2015

DEAC Announces Approved Quality Curriculum (AQC)

The Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC) Innovations Lab is pleased to introduce **Approved Quality Curriculum (AQC)**, a new peer-review assessment service designed for providers of online courses delivered directly to learners. DEAC is launching AQC as policy makers, regulators, and the broader higher education community consider effective quality assurance protocols for innovative “non-institutional” providers.

“The AQC is an example of DEAC’s commitment to innovations that expand opportunities for online learning and respond to demands for affordability and accessibility,” said Dr. Leah Matthews, DEAC Executive Director. “The AQC process is an important step forward for quality assessment of new distance learning models that are transforming higher education.”

Sophia Learning and StraighterLine are the first to receive AQC status for their online courses.

The standards and procedures for AQC were vetted through an intensive nine-month study conducted by DEAC’s Innovation Lab. StraighterLine and Sophia Learning participated in the study and offered important feedback about the process. “Today’s learners need more engaging, flexible, and affordable options.” said Dr. Kashif Asdi, Chief Academic Officer at Sophia Learning. “Having the AQC status added to Sophia courses gives learners confidence in the quality of our courses as an alternative option to make significant progress toward degree completion.”

Burck Smith, CEO and founder of StraighterLine stated “DEAC is to be congratulated for taking a leadership role in reviewing curricula and courses from providers outside of traditional higher education. StraighterLine is honored to have had its courses validated and vetted by acknowledged leaders in quality online education provision.”

Peer reviewers who evaluated the submissions from Sophia Learning and StraighterLine recognize the quality of the courses and the AQC process. “I was personally impressed with the quality of the curriculum submissions by Sophia Learning and StraighterLine”, said Dr. Josette Katz, Professor, Atlantic Cape Community College. “Serving as the chair of a college-wide curriculum committee, I regularly review curriculum proposals from many disciplines. The curricula submitted for AQC were of extremely high quality. The AQC review process was comprehensive and I can say with utmost confidence that the AQC designation affirms the quality, reliability, and effectiveness of the curriculum.”

A hallmark of DEAC accreditation is its focus on how individual courses facilitate a mastery of learning objectives within the broader framework of a distance education program. “AQC is a natural outgrowth of DEAC’s extensive experience in reviewing distance education courses,” said Dr. Tim Mott, Director of Off-Campus Programs at Cincinnati State. “I was impressed with Sophia’s and StraighterLine’s responsiveness to AQC standards and their willingness to fully engage in suggestions for improvement.”

To learn more about AQC, please visit www.deac.org/AQC.

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