

Standards for Online Programs

The International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL) has established standards to help school leaders evaluate the quality of institutions that offer online learning. Below is a summary of some of these standards. You can read about them in more detail at

www.inacol.org/research/nationalstandards/NACOL%20Standards%20Quality%20Online%20Programs.pdf

Institutional Standards

- A *mission statement* clearly describes the institution's purpose and goals, identifies online learning as a focus, shows a commitment to quality, and is reviewed frequently by stakeholders.
- *Governance* is conducted by a board or group that is knowledgeable about online learning, supports the online initiative with adequate resources, and ensures compliance with relevant policies and regulations.
- *Leadership* reports to the governing board on progress toward meeting program goals, maintains a collaborative environment, and establishes processes and standards for ensuring quality of online offerings.
- *Planning* for short-term and long-range goals and strategies meet organizational goals and occur frequently to deal with resource requirements.
- *Staffing* is qualified, regularly evaluated, and sufficient to achieve the organization's goals.
- *Financial and material resources* are provided and managed in ways that support the institution's mission statement.
- *Equity and access* is determined by clear eligibility requirements and accommodations for students with special needs.

Teaching and Learning Standards

- The *curriculum and course design* of the online learning offerings have clear objectives and goals, use quality materials, require higher-order thinking, and address individual learning styles.
- *Instruction* is conducted by certified teachers and incorporates effective teaching strategies, encourages interaction among students and teacher, and deals constructively with student differences.
- *Assessment of student learning* is aligned with course goals, occurs in multiple ways, includes student self-assessment, and is used to adapt instruction to meet learning objectives.

Support Standards

- *Faculty* receives feedback on their performance, opportunities for professional development, and effective technical support.
- *Students* have access to information about being effective online learners, academic advice that meets their needs, timely assessment feedback, and technical support.
- *Parents and guardians* receive important information about the online program in general and about student progress.

Evaluation Standards

- *Program evaluation* includes the internal and external collection; analysis of data about faculty, student achievement, and the quality of courses to contribute to an improvement plan; and communicates findings to stakeholders.
- *Program improvement* is based on a conscientious effort to use resources such as evaluation reports and research on promising practices to improve student learning and improvement in all areas of the institution.