Overview of Changes to the National Standards for Quality Online Programs: Third Edition (2025)

Considerable Broad Changes

This edition of the National Standards for Quality Online Programs has some significant changes in comparison to the 2019 Second Edition released in 2019.

1. The 2025 edition introduces a realignment of the 14 standards, now organized into the following clusters:
   - Mission, Governance, and Leadership
   - Planning, Resources, and Evaluation
   - Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
   - Access and Stakeholder Support

   This realignment aims to enhance the usability and coherence of the standards.

2. Consolidation of Indicators - Reflects the consolidation and clarification of indicators to be more succinct while still remaining comprehensive as a whole.

3. Rewording of Indicators – Reflects enhanced clarity of the indicator.

4. Enhanced Explanations and Examples – Provides additional context for the indicators and concrete.

Considerable Standard and Indicator Changes

1. Expanded Standard L: Equity and Access – Incorporates findings from recent literature and best practices to address equity in online learning.

2. Updates to Standard H: Program Evaluation – Reflects current trends and methodologies for evaluating online programs effectively.

Overall Comparison

	National Standards for Quality Online Programs (Second Edition: 2019)	National Standards for Quality Online Programs (Third Edition: 2025)
Number of standards	14	**14**
Number of "indicators"	72	**65**

Changes to the Standards and Indicators

The following charts provide a side-by-side comparison of the Second Edition (2019) to the updated Third Edition (2025). Both standard and indicator text has been updated to increase clarity. Notations are provided to guide you when the standard letter was updated due to the realignment of the standards into clusters. Also note that for some standards, indicators were merged to increase clarity or removed due to redundancy. We suggest referring to the accompanying explanations and examples in the full-document to assist applying the standards to your specific situation.

MISSION, GOVERNANCE, AND LEADERSHIP

STANDARD A: MISSION STATEMENT

National Standards for Quality Online Programs (Second Edition: 2019)	National Standards for Quality Online Programs (Third Edition: 2025)
Standard A: Mission Statement: A mission statement of a quality program clearly conveys its purpose and goals. It serves as the basis for the program's day-to-day operations, as well as a guide for its strategic plans for the future. Communication between— and buy-in from—stakeholders is a critical component of a mission statement.	**Standard A: Mission Statement:** A mission statement of a quality program clearly conveys its purpose and goals. It serves as the basis for the program's day-to-day operations, as well as a guide for its strategic plans for the future. Communication between, and buy-in from, stakeholders is a critical component of a mission statement.

Indicator A1 The mission statement gives the purpose of the program or organization, is clear and concise in articulating who the program or organization is, what it does, and whom it serves.	Indicator A1: The mission statement clearly and concisely conveys the program purpose and educational focus to the target audience.
Indicator A2 The mission statement indicates that learning is the focus of the program or organization. **A2 was incorporated in A1**	Indicator A2: The mission statement is made available to the public **A2 is the former A4**
Indicator A3 The mission statement demonstrates a commitment to measurable quality and accountability to stakeholders. **A3 was eliminated**	Indicator A3: The mission statement is reviewed annually. **A3 is the former A5**
Indicator A4 The mission statement is made available to the public.	
Indicator A5 The mission statement is reviewed periodically by program leadership.	

STANDARD B: GOVERNANCE

National Standards for Quality Online Programs (Second Edition: 2019)	**National Standards for Quality Online Programs (Third Edition: 2025)**
Standard B: Governance: A quality program will have a clear governance structure with transparent roles and responsibilities designed to ensure long-term success and sustainability.	**Standard B: Governance:** A quality program will have a clear governance structure with transparent roles and responsibilities designed to ensure long-term success and sustainability. Governance members will be knowledgeable about K-12 online learning and will have a collaborative relationship with program leaders.
Indicator B1: Governance members are knowledgeable about K-12 online learning.	Indicator B1: Governance members are well-informed about K-12 online learning.
Indicator B2: Governance members ensure the program or organization is adequately resourced through securing and/or	Indicator B2: Governance responsibilities include policy development or approval and budget allocation approval to ensure the program's vision, mission, and strategic plan are met.

approving resource allocations in a manner that aligns with the mission, vision, and strategic goals of the program or organization.	
Indicator B3: Programmatic or organizational bylaws clearly define the unique roles of the governance and leadership teams. Each of these groups works within the established guidelines.	Indicator B3: The roles and responsibilities of the governance and leadership teams are clearly defined and comply with all state and national regulations.
Indicator B4: Governance members collaborate with the leadership team who implements the policies and procedures that are in compliance with state educational statutes and/or regional accrediting agencies.	Indicator B4: Governance members and program leaders collaborate to ensure successful implementation of vision, mission, strategic plan, and goals.
Indicator B5: The program bylaws articulate the organization to which it belongs, the roles and responsibilities of its board and leadership, and comply with all state and federal regulations. **B5 was incorporated in B3**	

STANDARD C: PROGRAM LEADERSHIP (Previously Leadership in Second Edition)

National Standards for Quality Online Programs (Second Edition: 2019)	National Standards for Quality Online Programs (Third Edition: 2025)
Standard C: Leadership - The leadership of a quality online program is accountable to the program's governance body and is responsible for setting and meeting the operational and strategic goals in support of the program's mission and vision statements	**Standard C: Program Leadership:** The leadership of a quality online program is accountable to the program's governance body and is responsible for setting and executing annual operational goals that align with the program's strategic plan and support of the program's vision and mission statements.
Indicator C1: The leadership team establishes annual program or organizational goals, implements action plans designed to meet or exceed goals, and monitors and communicates progress on goals to stakeholders.	Indicator C1: Program leaders establish annual goals that are aligned with the strategic plan, implement action plans designed to meet goals, and monitor and communicate progress on goals to stakeholders.
Indicator C2: The leadership team maintains a disciplined knowledge of trends in its educational and business environment in	Indicator C2: Program leaders promote a collaborative environment for learning and work. **C2 is the former C3**

order to inform budget projections. **Moved to Financial and Material Resources' Indicator G3**	
Indicator C3: The leadership team provides a productive collaborative environment for learning and work.	Indicator C3: Program leaders verify that measures are in place to ensure the quality, integrity, and validity of information used to evaluate the program and measure learner success. **C3 is the former C4**
Indicator C4: The leadership team verifies that measures are in place to ensure the quality, integrity, and validity of information.	Indicator C4: Policies and procedures are reviewed and updated annually. **C4 is the former C5**
Indicator C5: The leadership team develops and implements program or organizational policies and procedures that are reviewed and updated regularly.	

STANDARD D: TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY (Previously Standard H: Integrity and Accountability in Second Edition)

National Standards for Quality Online Programs (Second Edition: 2019)	National Standards for Quality Online Programs (Third Edition: 2025)
H: Integrity and Accountability: In a quality online program, leadership is transparent in its management of the program, providing regular and timely information on progress towards attainment of goals, alignment with policies and standards, and achievement of student learning outcomes to all stakeholders.	**Standard D: Transparency and Accountability:** Quality online programs provide potential learners and their parents/guardians with readily available information about program policies and outcomes. Program leaders provide regular and timely information on progress towards attainment of goals, alignment with policies and standards, and achievement of learner learning outcomes to all stakeholders.
Indicator H1 Accurate information is disclosed to prospective and current stakeholders.	Indicator D1: Accurate information regarding program policies and outcomes is made available to prospective and current stakeholders.
Indicator H2 The program meets or exceeds industry standards related to course rigor and diploma-completion requirements.	Indicator D2: Program leaders establish metrics for course quality, learner outcomes, and, if applicable, graduation requirements.

	Indicator D3: Program leaders complete an annual evaluation of metrics related to course quality, learner outcomes, and, if applicable, graduation rates.

PLANNING, RESOURCES, AND EVALUATION

STANDARD E: PLANNING (Previously Standard D: Planning in Second Edition)

National Standards for Quality Online Programs (Second Edition: 2019)	National Standards for Quality Online Programs (Third Edition: 2025)
Standard D: Planning: A quality program engages in regular strategic planning in order to reflect upon and improve organizational effectiveness.	**Standard E: Planning:** A quality program engages in regular strategic planning in order to reflect upon and improve program effectiveness.
Indicator D1: A strategic plan is developed and updated regularly to address long-term actions.	Indicator E1: A strategic plan is developed and updated regularly to address long-term actions.
Indicator D2: The strategic plan addresses the requirements for resources that effectively and efficiently serve their learners and faculty, including curriculum, technology, academic support, professional development, and fiscal viability.	Indicator E2: The strategic plan addresses the resources necessary to support program priorities and achieve desired outcomes.
Indicator D3: Organizational goals are aligned to the approved strategic plan and updated annually.	Indicator E3: Program goals are aligned to the strategic plan and updated annually.
Indicator D4: Organizational goals are shared and supported throughout the organization.	Indicator E4: Program goals are shared and supported throughout the organization.

STANDARD F: PROGRAM STAFF (Previously Standard E: Organizational Staff in Second Edition)

National Standards for Quality Online Programs (Second Edition: 2019)	National Standards for Quality Online Programs (Third Edition: 2025)
Standard E: Organizational Staff: A quality online program has appropriate levels of qualified, well-trained, and supported staff who have the resources needed to achieve personal and organizational goals.	**Standard F: Program Staff:** A quality online program has appropriate levels of qualified, well-trained, and supported staff who have the resources needed to achieve personal and program goals.
Indicator E1: Sufficient qualified professional, administrative, and support staff are provided to achieve the organization's mission and annual goals.	Indicator F1: Sufficient qualified professional, administrative, and support staff are available to achieve the program's mission and annual goals.
Indicator E2: Sufficient organizational staff are provided to oversee the instructional learning environment. **E2 was eliminated, as it can be measured in E1.**	Indicator F2: Ongoing training and support are provided to the staff to carry out the vision, mission, and goals of the program. **F2 is the former E3**
Indicator E3: Ongoing training and support are provided to the staff to carry out the mission, vision, and goals of the program.	Indicator F3: Clearly defined individual and team roles and responsibilities are evident. **F3 is the former E4**
Indicator E4: Clearly defined individual and team roles and responsibilities are evident to help create a collegial team that provides effective delivery of quality education.	Indicator F4: Evaluations of program staff occur on a regularly scheduled basis and use clear and consistent policies, measures, and procedures. **F4 is the former E5**
Indicator E5: Evaluations of staff and faculty occur on a regularly scheduled basis.	

STANDARD G: FINANCIAL AND MATERIAL RESOURCES (Previously Standard F in Second Edition)

National Standards for Quality Online Programs (Second Edition: 2019)	National Standards for Quality Online Programs (Third Edition: 2025)
Standard F: Financial and Materials Resources: A quality online program plans for expends financial and material resources using sound business practices to accomplish the program's vision and mission.	**Standard G: Financial and Material Resources:** A quality online program plans for expends financial and material resources using sound business practices to accomplish the program's vision and mission.
Indicator F1: Resources are managed in a responsible manner according to local, state, and/or federal budget regulations and accounting principles.	Indicator G1: Resources are managed according to local, state, and/or national budget regulations and accounting principles.
Indicator F2: Resources are adequate and allocated to help ensure sustainability over time, according to the organization's strategic plan, mission, and vision.	Indicator G2: Resources are adequate and allocated to help ensure sustainability over time, according to the program's vision, mission, and strategic plan.
	Indicator G3: Program budget and resource allocation are determined by program leaders using projections established from trends in the educational and business environments.

STANDARD H: PROGRAM EVALUATION (Previously Standard N: Program Evaluation in Second Edition)

National Standards for Quality Online Programs (Second Edition: 2019)	National Standards for Quality Online Programs (Third Edition: 2025)
Standard N: Program Evaluation: A quality online program recognizes the value of program evaluation. Program evaluation is both internal and external and informs all processes that affect	**Standard H: Program Evaluation:** A quality online program recognizes the importance of program evaluation and demonstrates a commitment to both internal and external evaluations. Internal

teaching and learning. Internal evaluations often are more informal in nature and may provide immediate feedback on a targeted area of inquiry. External program evaluations typically look at the entire program from an objective perspective that will bring additional credibility to the results.	evaluations are completed on an ongoing basis, for the purpose of tracking learner progress and identifying strengths and areas in need of improvement. External evaluations provide an objective perspective that adds credibility and validates internal findings. This dual approach creates a comprehensive framework for continuous improvement and accountability.
Indicator N1: Ongoing internal evaluations are conducted to regularly collect and analyze data based on national, state, and/or program metrics.	Indicator H1: Metrics that guide internal evaluation are clearly defined by program leaders and use valid data sources that include measures of learner performance.
Indicator N2: Ongoing internal evaluations are conducted using valid and reliable measures to evaluate learner success and to drive instructional and management decision-making. **N2 was incorporated in H1.**	Indicator H2: Results of regular internal evaluations inform management decisions and continuous improvement plans.
Indicator N3: Ongoing internal evaluations are conducted to determine program success and plan for continuous improvement by measuring learner achievement and satisfaction based on valid and reliable assessment techniques. **N3 was reworked and incorporated in H2.**	Indicator H3: Course review protocols are aligned with the National Standards for Quality Online Courses. **H3 is the former N6**
Indicator N4: Regular internal evaluation of state or national standardized test results designed to measure achievement of all learners are conducted to inform the program's impact on student outcomes. **N4 was reworked and incorporated in H2.**	Indicator H4: Periodic external evaluations are completed by objective parties with experience in online learning. **H3 is the former N7**
Indicator N5: Faculty are evaluated on an ongoing basis to assure instructional quality, using clear, consistent policies, measures, and procedures. **N5 was incorporated in F4**	Indicator H5: Findings of external evaluations are used to develop annual goals and long-term improvement plans. **H5 is the former N8 and N9**
Indicator N6: A process for reviewing and evaluating courses is implemented to ensure quality, consistency with the curriculum, currency, and advancement of student learning outcomes.	Indicator H6: Evaluation results are communicated to program stakeholders. **H6 is the former N10**
Indicator N7: Periodic external evaluations are conducted by highly qualified parties with a demonstrated ability to deliver an	

objective and comprehensive evaluation of internal evaluation processes and results.	
Indicator N8: Periodic external evaluations are conducted by highly qualified parties with a demonstrated ability to deliver an objective and comprehensive evaluation of progress towards the program's goals, mission, and strategic plan. **N8 was reworked and incorporated in H5.**	
Indicator N9: Findings from external evaluations conducted by highly qualified parties with a demonstrated ability to deliver objective and comprehensive evaluations supported by current research are used to develop and implement an improvement plan. **N9 was reworked and incorporated in H5.**	
Indicator N10: Evaluation results are communicated to program stakeholders.	

CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, AND ASSESSMENT

STANDARD I: CURRICULUM AND COURSE DESIGN

A quality online program will adopt and implement instructional design methods that enable effective online instruction for both institutionally developed courses as well as licensed content from other sources.

National Standards for Quality Online Programs (Second Edition: 2019)	National Standards for Quality Online Programs (Third Edition: 2025)
Standard I: Curriculum and Course Design: A quality online program will adopt and implement instructional design methods that enable effective online instruction for both institutionally developed courses as well as licensed content from other sources.	**Standard I: Curriculum and Course Design:** A quality online program will adopt and implement instructional design methods that enable effective online instruction for both institutionally developed courses as well as licensed content from other sources.

Indicator I1: The program has clearly stated educational goals.	Indicator I1: Course offerings are presented in a clear, descriptive, and easy to navigate format that provides sufficient information for decision making including: course level, prerequisite requirements, cost of required materials, synchronous meeting requirements, and where a course is sourced. **I1 is the former I2**
Indicator I2: The program clearly organizes course offerings in a way that stakeholders can easily navigate.	Indicator I2: Course and lesson level learning objectives are presented in a clear, organized format. **I2 is the former I1**
Indicator I3: Courses included in the program integrate quality instructional materials to enable and enrich student learning.	Indicator I3: Course content aligns with grade level and/or subject level content standards. **I3 is the former I5**
Indicator I4: Courses offered through the program utilize regularly evaluated technology that supports the learning goals and enhances the learning experience.	Indicator I4: A clear definition of high quality instructional materials exists. Materials used in the program are consistent with the definition and enrich learning. **I4 is the former I3**
Indicator I5: Courses included in the program contain content that aligns with appropriate learning standards and includes provisions for both intervention and accelerated learning opportunities.	Indicator I5: Technology is evaluated on a regular basis, to ensure the technology supports program goals and enhances learning experiences. **I5 is the former I4**
Indicator I6: Courses included in the program provide opportunities for interaction that support active learning.	Indicator I6: Courses provide opportunities for interaction that support relationships amongst peers and with teachers.
Indicator I7: Courses included in the program provide a variety of activities that include options for in-depth learning through authentic problem-solving and experience.	Indicator I7: Courses contain a variety of activities that include options for in-depth learning.
Indicator I8: Courses offered through the program meet content copyright law and fair use guidelines.	Indicator I8: Course development process includes criteria for inclusion of asynchronous and synchronous learning opportunities. **I8 is the former I10**
Indicator I9: Courses offered through the program are designed using research-based design principles, such as Universal Design	Indicator I9: Courses meet copyright law and fair use guidelines. **I9 is the former I8**

for Learning (UDL), that improve access to learning for all participants. **Moved to Equity and Access Indicator L6**	
Indicator I10: Courses offered through the program include opportunities for both asynchronous and synchronous learning.	

STANDARD J: INSTRUCTION

A quality online program takes a comprehensive and integrated approach to ensuring excellent teaching for its learners.

National Standards for Quality Online Programs (Second Edition: 2019)	National Standards for Quality Online Programs (Third Edition: 2025)
Standard J: Instruction: A quality online program takes a comprehensive and integrated approach to ensuring excellent teaching for its students.	**Standard J: Instruction:** A quality online program takes a comprehensive and integrated approach to ensuring excellent teaching for its learners.
Indicator J1: The program adopts clear expectations for curriculum design and teaching practices that align with its stated vision, mission, principles, or values.	Indicator J1: The program establishes clear expectations for teaching practices that are guided by evidence-based practices and aligned with the program's mission and educational goals.
Indicator J2: Instruction is guided by evidence-based practices. **Include in Indicator J1**	Indicator J2: Instructional leaders evaluate multiple sources of data to ensure teacher expectations support the program mission and educational goals.
Indicator J3: Teachers incorporate a process of continual self-assessment, using learning analytics to inform changes in pedagogy and instructional practices.	Indicator J3: Teachers reflect on learner performance and personal instructional practice, setting goals for continuous improvement.
Indicator J4: Instruction is inherently inclusive for all learners.	Indicator J4: Instruction is inclusive and supports all learners.
Indicator J5: The program implements strategies to ensure the academic integrity of course assignments and assessments in	Indicator J5: Teaching standards include expectations for providing timely, effective feedback to learners.

order to increase student accountability. **Moved to Assessment and Learner Performance Indicator K4**	

STANDARD K: ASSESSMENT AND LEARNER PERFORMANCE

National Standards for Quality Online Programs (Second Edition: 2019)	National Standards for Quality Online Programs (Third Edition: 2025)
Standard K: Assessment and Learner Performance: A quality online learning program values positive learner outcomes and takes a comprehensive, integrated approach to measuring and monitoring progress toward defined learning objectives.	**Standard K: Assessment and Learner Performance:** A quality online learning program values positive learner outcomes and takes a comprehensive, integrated approach to measuring and monitoring progress toward defined learning objectives.
Indicator K1: The program uses multiple methods to assess the degree to which stated learning goals are met.	Indicator K1: Multiple methods of assessment are used to determine learner progress.
Indicator K2: Formative assessments are included that provide data for targeted remediation or intervention when needed.	Indicator K2: Formative assessments provide ongoing feedback to improve learning and inform teaching strategies.
Indicator K3: Assessments are aligned to learning objectives.	Indicator K3: Assessments and other activities that measure learner performance are aligned to learning objectives.
Indicator K4: The program provides standards for timely, effective feedback as an integral role of assessment. **Moved to Instruction Indicator J5**	Indicator K4: The program utilizes strategies to ensure the integrity of course assessments and validity of learner work.

ACCESS AND STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT

STANDARD L: EQUITY AND ACCESS (Previously Standard G in Second Edition)

National Standards for Quality Online Programs (Second Edition: 2019)	National Standards for Quality Online Programs (Third Edition: 2025)
Standard G: Equity and Access: A quality online program's policies and practices support students' ability to access the program. Accommodations are available to meet a variety of student needs.	**Standard L: Equity and Access:** A quality online program's policies and practices support learners' ability to access the program. Accommodations are available to meet a variety of learner needs.
Indicator G1: Policies clearly state learner eligibility requirements for the program and are communicated to stakeholders.	Indicator L1: Policies clearly state learner eligibility criteria for the program and are communicated to stakeholders.
Indicator G2: Program faculty and staff work with students and families to personalize programs and adhere to accommodations as dictated by local policies and laws.	Indicator L2: Program staff collaborate with learners and other invested stakeholders to personalize programs in alignment with local policies and laws.
Indicator G3: All learners are ensured equitable access to the program.	Indicator L3: All learners have access to program resources, technologies, and support systems.
	Indicator L4: Curriculum and instructional practices reflect a variety of cultural perspectives and experiences.
	Indicator L5: Systematic processes and procedures are used to identify and remove barriers to participation in the program.
	Indicator L6: Course design uses research-based design principles that meet the needs of all learners.

STANDARD M: INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF SUPPORT (Previously Standard L: Faculty and Staff Support in Second Edition)

National Standards for Quality Online Programs (Second Edition: 2019)	National Standards for Quality Online Programs (Third Edition: 2025)
Standard L: Faculty and Staff Support: A quality online program supports faculty and staff by providing mentoring, technical assistance, and timely professional development.	**Standard M: Instructional Staff Support:** A quality online program supports instructional staff (instructional leaders, teachers, coaches, guidance and career counselors, and support staff) by providing mentoring, technical assistance, and timely professional development.
Indicator L1: The program provides and encourages participation in induction and mentoring programs.	Indicator M1: The program provides and requires that all new teachers participate in induction and mentoring programs.
Indicator L2: Teachers are provided regular feedback regarding their performance and student achievement/progress.	Indicator M2: Teachers are provided regular feedback regarding their performance and learner achievement/progress.
Indicator L3: The program provides a wide variety of professional development opportunities to faculty and staff, which are aligned to the National Standards for Quality Online Teaching.	Indicator M3: Professional development opportunities aligned to the National Standards for Quality Online Teaching are provided to teachers, academic coaches, and instructional leaders.
Indicator L4: The program provides professional development opportunities to guidance staff focused on student needs unique to online learning and the network of services available to support online learning.	Indicator M4: Professional development opportunities that are focused on how to support learners in an online learning environment are provided to career coaches, academic mentors, school counselors, and support staff.
Indicator L5: The program provides teachers and staff with timely and effective technical support.	Indicator M5: Timely and effective technical support is provided to all users.

STANDARD N: LEARNER AND PARENT/GUARDIAN SUPPORT (Previously Standard M in Second Edition)

National Standards for Quality Online Programs (Second Edition: 2019)	National Standards for Quality Online Programs (Third Edition: 2025)
Standard M: Learner and Parent/Guardian Support: A quality online program provides learner and parent/guardian support	**Standard N: Learner and Parent/Guardian Support:** A quality online program provides support services to address the various

services to address the various needs of learners at different levels within the organization. The levels of support are appropriate and adequate for learner success.	needs of learners at different levels within the organization. The levels of support are appropriate and adequate for learner success.
Indicator M1: Learners are provided with an orientation to online learning technologies and successful online learning practices.	Indicator N1: Onboarding experiences, including technology support and strategies to increase success in the online environment, are provided to learners and parents/guardians.
Indicator M2: The program provides academic services and academic advising to address learners' academic and developmental needs.	Indicator N2: Academic services and advising that addresses academic and developmental needs are made available to learners.
Indicator M3: The program provides accessibility support services that comply with special education policies and procedures.	Indicator N3: Accessibility support services comply with special education policies and procedures.
Indicator M4: The program provides access to the learning management system(s), as well as all appropriate learning and assessment content.	Indicator N4: A learning management system serves as an access point for all learning and assessment content.
Indicator M5: The program establishes standards for teacher communications with learners and parents/guardians.	Indicator N5: Clear standards outline program expectations for teacher communication.
Indicator M6: The program establishes standards for timely, effective technical support for learners. **M6 was incorporated in N1 and M5**	
Indicator M7: The program has guidance services and academic advising to support learners and parents/guardians to ensure the success of the online program from the decision-making process. through the renewal process or graduation for all educational goals to be met. **M7 was incorporated in N2**	