State and national standards describe what students should learn and be able to do upon course completion. If course content does not closely match standards, students will not gain the expected knowledge or skills. This will impact their performance, motivation, and engagement with the course. It may also affect students’ ability to succeed in subsequent courses.
HELPFUL HINTS AND RESOURCES for putting standard into practice

With planning and preparation, you can ensure standards are at the heart of course design decisions.

- Discuss the relevant standards with Subject Matter Experts (SMEs). While they may be experts in their subject areas, they may not be experts on the standards. Dedicating time to delving into the standards with the SME - including support and appendix materials not explicitly addressed in the standards - reinforces each standard’s importance. Include information on standards in your SME training.
- Is a standard unclear? Most providers issue additional information on interpreting standards including differentiated instruction guides, curriculum guides, learning object repositories, appendices, guides, or additional training. Take advantage of these resources
  - Ex.: Annotations from the Quality Matters Rubric for Course Design Specific Review Standards 2.1C, 2.2C, and 2.3C provide guidance on handling state or required content standards that are not measurable.
- State your alignment explicitly and repeatedly. You may believe your alignment is clear because you have provided a curriculum map showing how and where standards are met. This may not be enough. To ensure alignment is clear:
  - Denote relevant standards clearly in your lessons.
  - Use metadata to encode assessment questions with related standards.
  - Explain how learning activities relate to standards.
  - Provide links to the relevant standards in context throughout the course.
  - QM Annotations for 3.1C, 4.1C, and 5.1C describe how to demonstrate alignment through narratives, correlation documents or maps, numbering systems, or links.
- Verify your alignment. You have included clear indications of standards in a curriculum map, in lessons, and in all learning activities. The final step is to verify this alignment. A key component to aligning content to standards is verification of alignment.
  - During the development process, ask subject area reviewers to confirm alignment.
  - Ask teachers about alignment in your end-of-course survey.
  - Develop (and document) a realistic remediation process when content and standards do not align.
- When you have content concerns or decisions, start with, “How does this relate to the standard?” Many content issues stem from a departure from or misinterpretation of standards. If you are unsure how content, activities, or visuals relate to a lesson, ask how it relates to the standard.

Author/Organization Bio

Rachel Walker works with Course Design and Development for ACCESS Virtual Learning at the University of Alabama Support Center. She has over 20 years of experience with grade 6-12 online course development and is a QM-certified course reviewer. Nellie Christian is the Director for ACCESS Virtual Learning at the University of Alabama Support Center. Nellie has 24 years of experience in education in elementary, secondary, and post-secondary institutions serving in various capacities including a gifted specialist, middle and high school administrator, and in the area of student services at the post-secondary level. MJ Ballard is an educational specialist at the Alabama State Department of Education with ACCESS Virtual Learning. She has worked with ACCESS for over 15 years as a teacher and administrator. MJ is also a QM-certified course reviewer. Rachel, Nellie, and MJ are always happy to connect around K12 course development practices.

Check out the NSQ Professional Learning Portal and NSQ Website for more resources at www.NSQOL.org