

Experimental Site: Educational Quality through Innovative Partnerships (EQUIP) Information Collection Request

Full Application Information

Please include in the application the following information about the educational program(s) of study that the institution intends to include in its participation in the experiment.

I. Program Focus and Description

A. Description of the program(s) of study

1. What certificate, degree, or recognized credential will the program award to graduates? If a certificate or other non-degree credential, will it count as credit toward a degree at the institution?

Through Study.com and Thomas Edison State University, students will earn college credit that they can apply toward four-year degree programs in business administration and liberal studies.

Students who successfully complete this program will have earned a bachelor's degree in business or liberal studies from Thomas Edison State University, with at least 50% of their remaining coursework completed by taking Study.com's college credit-recommended courses. This program will allow students to complete these degrees more quickly and at a reduced cost, while giving them the employment and career advantages that come with having a bachelor's degree.

2. What types of measurable student outcomes will the program strive to achieve (e.g., specific learning outcomes, academic transfer credit, job placement)?

The program will allow non-traditional students to earn a bachelor's degree at a reduced cost and accelerated timeline. Students with bachelor's degrees have much higher job placement rates in their field of choice than those without degrees.

This program strives to achieve the same learning outcomes as either the traditional BSBA (Bachelor of Science in Business Administration) or the Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies programs at Thomas Edison State University would. Namely, students will be able to do the following:

Bachelor of Science in Business Administration:

- *Apply key theories, models and applications within the global business context.*
- *Demonstrate critical thinking skills in business related situations.*

- *Employ empirical approaches to planning and decision-making using quantitative reporting mechanisms.*
- *Demonstrate written and oral skills appropriate for business communication.*
- *Analyze business and organizational situations using ethical approaches to decision making.*
- *Apply technology to enable business growth, development and sustainability.*

Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies:

The Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree program in Liberal Studies prepares adults for career change, advancement or graduate education, while providing personal enrichment. The Liberal Studies program is designed for students interested in combining course work in two or more disciplines within Liberal Arts subject areas to create a multidisciplinary degree.

Learning Outcomes

- *Define the major concepts and theoretical perspectives of at least two liberal arts subjects*
- *Explain the interrelationships between the conceptual frameworks that distinguish liberal arts subjects*
- *Discuss the historical development of at least two liberal arts subjects*

Due to the limited length of time involved in this program, it may not be possible to track employment outcomes for students who complete part or all of this program, but to the extent that it is possible, we will collect data on employment and other post-degree activities.

3. What is the program's academic structure?

- How will the curriculum be structured? For example: Will the program be offered in courses or in modules? Will the program start at the beginning of the term, monthly, or individualized by student?

The program will consist of Study.com courses that will constitute, or can be applied toward, a business or liberal studies degree at Thomas Edison State University. The program is individualized by student, so each student has the flexibility to complete the courses they need at the time and pace that works best for them. Students can go through courses sequentially or in parallel, and they can earn credit for as many as two courses every month.

- What will be the program's duration (e.g., semester(s), quarter(s), academic year(s), weeks)? Will the program track credit hours or clock hours, and how will it calculate those

hours? How will the federal satisfactory academic progress requirement be calculated and tracked?

The American Council on Education (ACE) has found the outcomes of the courses to be equivalent to college courses lasting 13 weeks, each equivalent to the work involved in completing a 3-credit course. Study.com offers enough courses to provide the entirety of the Business degree, and students can remain in the program for the length of time it takes them to complete the entire degree. (This length of time will differ for each student.)

All students who earn at least 50% of the remaining college credit needed for the TESU business or liberal studies degrees through Study.com are eligible participants.

Study.com maintains accurate records for each student as they progress through the courses. Individual student profiles allow students to view their progress and set goals for completing courses on time and ensure timely degree progress. All relevant academic data will be transferred to Thomas Edison State University for participating students.

Thomas Edison State University and Study.com can track progress throughout the program regularly and intervene if the student is unable to make satisfactory academic progress. We can also recommend and/or mandate alternate courses of action for the students in certain cases.

- What will be the instructional method and approach (e.g., face-to-face, online, or hybrid; competency based; self-paced)? Will it include experiential requirements such as internships or other components?

The instructional method will be entirely online, through self-paced video courses created by trained college-level instructors. Students will have the ability to ask questions of instructors and subject matter experts through their online dashboards, but this communication is always student-initiated. No experiential requirements are required.

- How will the components be integrated into a coherent and meaningful credential?

Successful completion of course materials, assessments, and proctored final exams for credit will assess student mastery of learning outcomes. All components of the program of study are equivalent to courses offered at Thomas Edison State University, and as such they add up to a meaningful credential the same way that the curriculum at an accredited institution would.

4. How will the program be designed to offer better value or outcomes than other programs that currently exist (e.g., lower cost, more flexibility/personalization, increased labor market value and/or transfer value)? Please provide quantifiable goals where applicable (e.g., how much of a lower cost or higher value?).

Completing courses through this program offers non-traditional students a lower cost and more flexibility than traditional courses. Self-paced online courses are a great fit for working students who cannot attend brick and mortar classes; they allow students to go through courses at a much faster pace, and the format allows students to study virtually anytime and anywhere. Students can complete a four-year bachelor's degree in as little as two years (though we anticipate three years as a more reasonable estimate). Additionally, the low cost of both Thomas Edison State University tuition and Study.com memberships can save students thousands if not tens of thousands of dollars.

The outcomes of participating and completing this program are intended to be identical to the outcomes of a traditional bachelor's degree in business or liberal studies. To the extent that it is possible, both Study.com and TESU plan to track employment data for participants throughout the length of the program.

5. What is the market demand for this program (e.g., students or employers willing to pay full tuition and fees)? How was this market demand determined?

Over 31 million adults have earned some college credit but have not completed a degree (source: https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/NSC_Signature_Report_7.pdf). Those students represent the target market of Thomas Edison State University and this program. Study.com and Thomas Edison State University have formed a partnership with JetBlue Airways, who uses Study.com to provide college courses for their employees toward a degree from Thomas Edison State University. Over 18,000 students are currently enrolled in Thomas Edison State University for its flexibility and high-quality learning opportunities. This indicates a strong demand for flexible, cost-efficient educational opportunities for working adults.

6. Please provide information about the costs of the program:

· What is the total tuition and fee amount that will be charged per student for the entire program?

Since Study.com charges monthly for access to course content and exam proctoring, the total tuition and fees will be slightly different for every student depending on how much of their coursework is done through Study.com, how long it takes each student to complete the coursework, and the amount of college credit students have earned before starting the program.

A bachelor's degree from Thomas Edison State University is 120 credits. According to the university's transfer policy, a maximum of 90 credits can be transferred from any one source. The average Thomas Edison State University student enrolls with 60 college credits already earned. We've calculated the following estimate for a participant in the program with 30 credits

already earned prior to enrollment who is pursuing a bachelor's degree in business administration.

At a maximum of two Study.com courses per month, students can complete 30 courses (equivalent to 90 credits) toward the degree program in as little as 15 months. Given the busy schedules and other responsibilities of non-traditional students, a more reasonable estimate would be 30 months. With a College Accelerator membership price of \$199 per month, this would result in a cost of \$5,970 for the 90 credits of coursework required to complete a bachelor's degree.

Finally, the Thomas Edison State University application, grad audit, TECEP capstone, and transcript fees would add up to around \$552, resulting in an overall total of approximately \$6,522 for the entire program over the course of 30 months.

Please note that these calculations are estimates. The cost of the program will vary depending on individual students' unique needs.

- What is the expected net price for the student after grants and other gift aid are subtracted?

Federal aid is dependent on many factors such as income, marital status, state of residence, etc., all of which will differ for each student enrolled in the program. Depending on these factors as well as how students choose to complete the requirements of the program, the total out of pocket cost could be as low as \$0 after financial aid is subtracted.

7. Is the non-traditional provider in this partnership a for-profit entity?

Yes.

8. If an existing program will be adapted for the proposed program, provide answers to the following questions about the existing program:

- Is the existing program provided by the institution or by the non-traditional provider?

Thomas Edison State University provides degrees in both Business Administration and Liberal studies. Under the existing system, students are able to transfer credits needed toward these degrees at Thomas Edison State University from Study.com, but they are not obligated to do so. The current program in place consists of an articulation agreement between Study.com and TESU to allow for this seamless transfer of credit.

- Will that version of the program continue to be offered while an alternative version participating in the experiment is also offered?

Yes, students will still be able to earn college credit through Study.com's ACE-recommended courses and transfer them to Thomas Edison State University, as well as all other participating institutions. Likewise, Thomas Edison State University will continue to offer these degrees to non-participating students.

- Will the institution or the non-traditional provider also be offering a version of the program that is not Title-IV eligible while participating in the experiment?

Thomas Edison State University will not, but Study.com will. Since students can take courses through Study.com at any time and for any length of time, students participating in the unofficial program that will continue to exist outside of this experiment will not be Title-IV eligible.

- What is the total tuition and fee amount that is charged a student for the existing program?

Since the current program in place is unofficial, we can provide information about Study.com and Thomas Edison State University separately.

For Thomas Edison State University, this depends on the tuition plan that students choose. The estimated tuition for a four-year program at TESU is \$25,400 for New Jersey residents and \$37,408 for out-of-state students.

Study.com charges \$199 per month of usage for the College Accelerator membership. The program in place currently does not span any set length of time, so students are able to sign up, change their plans, cancel, and reactivate their memberships at any time.

- How many students were enrolled in the existing program in the most recent year?

Study.com has had over 450 students successfully complete ACE-recommended courses and earn college credit between May 2015 and August 2016, and that number is growing every month. Thomas Edison State University had a total of 1080 students enrolled in their liberal studies degree program and 667 students in the BSBA program in 2015; of those students, 9 had earned credit through Study.com.

- To the extent that information is available, provide the percentage of students who relied on private loans to cover all or some of the tuition and fees charged for the existing program.

Study.com does not have information about those students who took private loans to pay for the College Accelerator membership. 2.5% of Thomas Edison State University students currently make use of private loans.

· To the extent that this is applicable and there are publicly available documents that provide this information, what were the total profits generated by this program or service in the most recent year?

Thomas Edison State University is a non-profit. The current program in place with Study.com is a pilot program, and there is no available data at this time.

B. Anticipated student population

1. What is the estimated number of students in the program in its first year?

We estimate about 200 Title-IV eligible students within the first year, but the program is scalable if need be.

2. Describe the target student demographics (e.g., race/ethnicity, age range, prior academic credit or credentials, work experience, family income). Please specify the expected number and percent of Pell-eligible students.

While there are no specific goals in terms of demographics, this partnership was designed to serve non-traditional students, particularly those who are employed, have families, are from underserved communities or have otherwise not been well-served by a traditional academic environment. We expect a large percentage of this population to be Pell-eligible. We also plan to focus our recruiting efforts for this program on students with lower incomes.

3. What are the estimated proportion of students in the program who would receive title IV aid, estimated proportion of students in the program who would receive Veteran's educational benefits, and the estimated total proportion of students in the program receiving one or the other or both?

We anticipate that a substantial proportion of the students in the program would receive either title IV aid or Veteran's educational benefits, as the goal of this program is to provide the flexibility and affordability that these populations require. Currently, 21% of Thomas Edison State University students receive aid, and many others receive reimbursement from their employers for completing a degree program. Additionally, about 30% of TESU students are veterans, so we anticipate that a good number of the participants will also be veterans.

C. Will the program allow otherwise eligible students in the ex-site to receive 1) only Federal Pell Grant funds, or 2) Pell Grants as well as undergraduate Direct Subsidized Loan, undergraduate Direct Unsubsidized Loans, and aid from the Campus-Based Programs?

Pell Grants only.

D. What are the expected benefits to the students for completing the program (e.g., transfer credit, certifications earned, completion of licensure exams, externally validated skills and knowledge, employment, salary increase)? Please cite specific data or studies, where they exist, to demonstrate that the program leads to the expected benefits.

The expected benefits of this program are, first of all, college credits that can apply toward a bachelor's degree. For many individuals, earning a bachelor's degree results in increased earnings and lower unemployment (source: http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_chart_001.htm).

Additionally, though, students who earn enough credits could apply them toward one of the associate's degrees offered by TESU. If they have earned a minimum of 60 credits and have fulfilled the distribution requirements, TESU offers a kind of reverse transfer program that would make them eligible for an AA or an ASBA (if they are in the business program). Students could also take advantage of TESU's Credit Banking option, which would allow them to have the credits they have earned recorded on a Thomas Edison State University transcript for use in their efforts to obtain employment or anything else.

The current version of this program exists due to multiple corporations looking to provide their employees with educational opportunities so they can excel and move up within the company. Businesses utilize programs such as these to foster a more educated and skilled workforce, resulting in higher retention rates, higher-performing employees, and improved employee morale.

E. What will be the roles and responsibilities of the institution and the non-traditional provider(s)? For example, who will develop content; market the program; advise students; provide instruction; provide support services; develop and administer assessments for students; and collect and validate information on student outcomes?

Study.com, the non-traditional provider, will develop the content and assessments, provide instruction to students, and administer the exams. The program will be marketed by both Thomas Edison State University and Study.com, and both will provide students with support and advising. Both TESU and Study.com will collect data and work with Quality Matters, the QAE, to determine an effective approach to data collection and validation.

Advising and other forms of student support will be administered by Thomas Edison State University, as with any student enrolled in the institution.

F. If the institution will provide payment to the non-traditional provider, on what basis will the amount of the payment be determined?

N/A

G. What is the track record (e.g., measurable student outcomes such as academic or employment outcomes) of the non-traditional provider(s) with respect to serving low-income students? If the provider has not served low-income students in the past, please provide: 1) measurable student outcomes for all students served by the provider, and 2) a detailed description of how the program would be tailored to help low-income students succeed.

Study.com is dedicated to serving low income and nontraditional student populations by offering an efficient and affordable path to widely transferable college credit. More than 450 students have successfully earned college credit earned through Study.com, and they have transferred that credit to over 60 different colleges and universities nationwide. In addition to providing a cost effective credit alternative, Study.com provides annual scholarships to students at the associate, baccalaureate, and graduate levels.

H. What is the track record of the institution with respect to serving low-income students? In the response, please include the Pell completion rate that the institution is required to disclose to enrolled and prospective students per 34 C.F.R. § 668.45.

As reported in our most recent diversity report, in FY13 12% of enrolled students received a Pell grant. Thomas Edison does not generally admit full-time first-time undergraduate students. Therefore, there is no cohort to report on graduate information.

I. What support services does the institution already have in place for low-income students? Do these supports and services need to be adapted for this program?

Because of its historical focus on serving adult and non-traditional students, Thomas Edison State University does not offer many programs that are specifically targeted to low-income students. We do offer a number of scholarships for students based on financial need, and we participate in NJ state workforce development programs for retraining displaced workers and others without workforce skills. All students have access to academic supports and other student services when they are requested. Additionally, TESU makes generous allowances for students who need to “stop out” or change their enrollment status because of circumstances beyond their control, i.e., “life got in the way,” as TESU usually refers to it.

J. For institutions choosing to allow access to Pell Grants and other title IV aid (as listed above), how will the institution award Campus-Based aid in a way that will remain consistent with the experiment's focus on access for low-income students?

N/A

II. Quality Assurance Process

A. Description of the quality assurance entity (QAE)

1. What entity will be the QAE and what experience, expertise, and skills will it bring to this role? What information gives the institution confidence that the QAE will meet all the requirements of this experiment, including the capacity to address the "Quality Assurance Questions" (listed below)?

TESU has engaged Quality Matters (<https://www.qualitymatters.org/>) as the QAE for the proposed educational program. Under a 2003-2006 grant from the Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE), Quality Matters (QM) was established to develop a replicable and scalable pathway for quality assurance in online program and course design. Today, QM continues as a self-supporting, non-profit online quality assurance provider, serving over 900 higher education institutions. QM has independently reviewed and certified approximately 6,000 online/blended courses and maintains a database of over 5,000 subject matter experts who have been trained and certified as QM Peer Reviewers. As the QAE, QM will use its 10+ years of experience in quality review and its network of trained reviewers to apply and adapt its research-centered, quality assurance frameworks in program and online learning success certification to address EQUIP's specific evaluation questions in learner success criteria and outcomes.

2. By what process has the QAE developed (or will develop) clear, specific, and measurable standards by which to review, approve, and monitor programs based on the "Quality Assurance Questions," establish consequences, and enforce the standards?

Development and Explanation of Process

QM has developed a Program Certification process - designed to review and certify the quality of online programs - that comprises clear, specific, and measurable criteria for the review and certification of online programs. This process was developed over a period of two years using the expertise of representatives from QM-subscribing institutions who had been highly involved in QM Course Reviews (a peer-review process that employs the use of more than 40 quality standards of course design in the areas of learning objectives [competencies], assessment and

measurement, instructional materials, course activities and learner interaction, course technology, learner support, and accessibility and usability).

The Program Review and Certification process mirrors QM's established Course Review and Certification process in that it uses a three-person Peer-Review Team that has itself been trained and certified and follows the underlying principles of the QM process. The Program Certification process was tested in a pilot program with several institutions' fully online programs and refined based on the results from, and experience with, the pilot.*

There are four distinct types of Program Reviews in QM's Program Certification process, one of which - Online Learner Success - is best suited for the TESU/Study.com partnership, though criteria from the three other certifications will be used as appropriate to the program being proposed (Online Program Design, Online Teaching Support, and Online Learner Support). The Online Learner Success criteria for a standard QM Program Certification can be found at <https://www.qualitymatters.org/program-reviews>.

**Credentials of QM's evaluation teams: Program Reviews are conducted by three-member teams consisting of at least one Master Reviewer, who chairs the review, a second Master Reviewer or Peer Reviewer, and a qualified specialist. QM has a database of over 5,000 trained and certified reviewers, organized by subject matter expertise using a layered taxonomy of disciplines from broad to specific. QM Peer and Master Reviewers for online courses have been consistently required to have recent online teaching experience and QM certification to be considered qualified. Certified Peer and Master Reviewers will continue to chair and form the majority of QM's Program Review Teams because of their experience with QM's underlying principles and peer review process. For the EQUIP project, Review Teams may include enrollment management, assessment, and institutional data specialists. All reviewers will undergo professional development to prepare them for their roles as Program Reviewers.*

Establishment of Consequences and Enforcement of Standards

The QM review process for programs involves the Review Team evaluating whether or not each of the criterion identified for program quality is met at a level of 85% or better. Whether or not a criterion is met, reviewers make specific recommendations for improvement. In the case of a criterion not being met, the program has the opportunity to follow up on the recommendations in order for that criterion to be reviewed again and, possibly, met. The reports being shared with the stakeholders in this process will facilitate the enforcement of standards by the appropriate party, whether it be Thomas Edison State University, the accreditor, or the Department of Education.

3. How will the QAE review programs based on the "Quality Assurance Questions"? Has it already reviewed the program based on those questions? If so, attach specific answers. If not,

when will it do so? (Please note: these questions will need to be answered by the QAE before the Program Participation Agreement for the participating institution is amended.

To assure the quality of this new program, QM would have a three-person Peer Review Team conduct a Benchmark Review to establish the program’s initial level of quality relative to all standards and follow up with Supplementary Reviews at the one-, two-, and three-year mark to ensure that key criteria continue to be met through the life of the program. Six months after each Supplementary Review, a review of progress will be done.

The benchmark review will be conducted once the partners are notified of acceptance into the third phase of the application process. In order to perform the Benchmark Review, the reviewers will independently evaluate the criteria; majority rule prevails in determining whether each specific criterion is met or not met. All criteria must be met at an 85% level for a Program to “Meet the Criteria” overall. The Benchmark Review will result in a Final Report, which will be provided to the Program Liaisons from both partners; each Supplementary Review will result in a Program Update Report. QM will inform the DoE of the outcomes of the Benchmark Review Final Report and the Program Update Reports but will not transmit the contents of either review directly to the accreditor. (It is assumed that the accreditor may request the full reports from the institution.) QM will be available to the accreditor as well as the Department of Education to explain report outcomes and will specifically reach out to the appropriate contacts, once established, for any areas of concern.

4. How will the institution, QAE, and/or accreditor monitor and report on the performance of the program, providers, and students? How will the QAE be linked with the institution’s and accreditor’s existing complaint processes? If the QAE identifies program quality concerns or determines that the program is at risk of or subject to any adverse action by any party, how will the QAE notify the institution and affiliated non-traditional providers?

TESU will be monitoring the performance of the proposed program according to the outcomes criteria outlined in tables in the Quality Assurance section of this application. The program monitoring and reporting process is outlined in the table, below:

Party Reporting	Parties Receiving Report	Report
Study.com	TESU	Learning outcomes of completed courses for TESU credit award and/or achievement of a TESU A.A., ASBA, BSBA, or BALS degree
TESU	Quality Matters	Learning outcomes of completed courses for TESU

		credit award and/or achievement of a TESU A.A., ASBA, BSBA, or BALS degree
Quality Matters	TESU & Study.com	Benchmark Review Report and Supplementary Review Program Updates
Quality Matters	Accreditor* & Department of Education	Results of Benchmark Review Report and Supplementary Review Program Updates in addition to forms and documents required by the Accreditor and the DoE

**Contact person specified by the Accreditor*

5. What actions will the institution and/or QAE take, and under what circumstances, to hold the institution and the non-traditional providers accountable, and help them improve as necessary?

As QAE for the project, QM will be providing TESU and Study.com, through their designated QAE liaisons, with the criteria QM is holding this program to in order to ensure its quality and then evaluating the program as laid out in a Benchmark Review, followed by Supplementary Reviews to assure program quality over time. QM will be providing reports to TESU and Study.com after each review that will note where the program is meeting expectations, as well as where it may be falling short of expectations along with recommendations on actions that need to be taken to bring it up to expectations. TESU and Study.com will then use information from these reports to continue with what is working well and to make adjustments to the program in order to meet criteria. In addition, abbreviated status reports will be sent to the DoE as requested. A direct line of communication will be established between QM and the accrediting agency for any specific reporting requested by the accreditor. Otherwise, TESU will share this information with its accrediting agency through its own processes.

B. If the program is suspended, terminated, or otherwise limited in its participation in the experiment by the Department, the QAE, the accreditor, the institution, or the non-traditional provider(s), what academic options will be provided to students by the institution (e.g., full transfer of credits into another program at the institution, a title IV teach out plan, and/or other options)? For institutions allowing access to federal student loans as part of the experiment, what actions will the institution take, and under what conditions, to protect students from debt or other financial liabilities resulting from their enrollment in a program that is suspended, terminated, or otherwise limited (e.g., repayment of student loans, transfer of credit to another institution, free access to credit-bearing courses, etc.)?

It is unlikely that TESU would discontinue its BSBA and BALS programs anytime in the near future, so any students who were displaced as a result of the termination of this program would

be accommodated in our traditional BSBA and BALS programs at a reasonable cost in line with the costs of this program. TESU will develop a teach-out plan and teach-out agreement policies that will facilitate the transition of students from this program to other equivalent programs either at TESU or, if necessary, to other institutions. The teach-out plan and teach-out agreement policy will be reviewed by QM at the time of the initial review.

C. What policies and procedures will be in place to assure the independence and absence of conflicts of interest among the non-traditional providers, QAE, and the institution? Please address independence in terms of ownership, funding, and staffing.

QM is an independent, non-profit organization providing quality assurance services. QM reviewers are faculty and other educational professionals representing the broad community of QM institutional subscribers. They are independently contracted and not employees of QM. TESU is one of 960 higher education subscribers to QM's quality assurance resources. QM has no prior or existing relationship with Study.com beyond this project. Likewise, Study.com and TESU have no prior direct relationships, though TESU has accepted Study.com's courses toward its degree programs on a limited number of occasions in the recent past.

Each of these organizations is independently constituted and operated. Any potential conflicts of interest that develop will be reviewed and addressed in an appropriate manner, and will be reported to all parties as well as the DoE.

D. What due diligence has the institution done, or will it do, to determine if the QAE, non-traditional providers, and their employees are in good legal standing and have no past history of fraud, commission of a felony, disbarment or liability for negligence or misrepresentation?

TESU has reviewed the track records and standards of each of the other organizations, and has been aware of each both by reputation and by detailed reviews of their publications over the past several years. QM is a well-known and highly regarded organization devoted to quality assurance in online education, and Study.com, though relatively new in the development of credit-bearing courses and programs of study, has existed for a number of years as a provider of guidance and preparation to non-traditional students, and has been reviewed positively by the American Council on Education.

III. Information Related to Specific Title IV Provisions

1. Will the program use the minimum program length waiver?
2. Will the program use the satisfactory academic progress waiver?

3. If the program is a distance-education program, how will it address the "regular and substantive interaction" requirements, or qualify as a degree-granting correspondence program?

Study.com qualifies as a correspondence program by allowing students to earn college credit through a virtual learning system. While most of the course content is delivered through online videos, students have the ability to correspond with instructors and subject matter experts through their online dashboard.

IV. Provider and Accreditor Commitments

Please include letters from the non-traditional provider(s) and from the institution's institutional accreditor confirming the following:

1. Non-Traditional Provider(s): Commitment to offer content and instruction once required approvals are secured.
2. Accreditation Agency: Agreement to consider including the proposed program in the institution's accreditation. NOTE: A proposed program does not need to have been reviewed and included in accreditation at the time of this application; statement simply needs to express agency's willingness to undertake that review.

Quality Assurance Questions

As part of this experiment, the Department is interested in understanding how a QAE will determine the quality of a program of study through a set of largely outcome-based questions, rigorous and timely monitoring, and accountability processes. Participating institutions must ensure that the QAE has established a thorough quality assurance process that defines and monitors outcome-based standards for each of the numbered questions below.

QAE Process Overview

The goal of the proposed program is for students to successfully complete courses transferrable to the TESU Business Administration and Liberal Studies degree programs through Study.com in order to successfully complete those degree programs. To evaluate this claim, Quality Matters will:

- 1) *Evaluate how the courses are determined to be worthy of academic credit and whether the student competencies identified with successful course completion align with the student outcomes identified for obtaining course credit in the TESU Business Administration and Liberal Studies degree programs.*
- 2) *Evaluate the learning environment (e.g., course) to determine if it is aligned with identified competencies and if mastery can be appropriately supported and determined. This evaluation*

includes specific criteria for the assessment of student learning to ensure review of direct measurement of student learning.

3) Evaluate evidence of student performance/learning as evidenced in assessments, grades, and/or demonstration of competencies.

4) Evaluate the success of the program in achieving student outcomes – course completion, program completion, and student satisfaction with outcomes.

A. Claims for learning

1. What measurable claims is the institution making about the learning outcomes of students enrolled in the program?

The institution makes the claim that students enrolled in this program will earn credit through TESU’s Credit Banking option, be eligible for the TESU A.A. or ASBA awards after fulfilling the TESU credit and distribution requirements, and ultimately obtain either a BSBA or BALS degree through taking 50% or more of their remaining courses through Study.com in a shortened time frame and at a cost lower than would be the case for obtaining that same degree through TESU courses or other courses transferred to TESU from traditional education providers .

For example: What is the evidence that the learning claims are commensurate with postsecondary- or post-baccalaureate-level work?

- Do the institution’s statements about student outcomes capture requisite knowledge and skills? How?

The following table states the criteria and evidence that will be used to evaluate whether or not the claims TESU is making about the learning outcomes are commensurate with post-secondary- or post-baccalaureate-level work:

Criteria	Evidence to Submit	Evaluation
<p>The organization must present a definition of learner success for the claimed outcomes that: reflects requisite skills of value to external stakeholders and is consistent with post-secondary-level work appropriate to both partners’ philosophy, history, mission, and goals, and mindful of its resources and the characteristics of its</p>	<p>1. A document that describes TESU’s credit evaluation process and how the learning outcomes were developed and applied it to the course and program learning outcomes.</p>	<p>Reviewers will evaluate the evidence submitted about the learning claims for fit with the expertise of the partners and the level and scope of post-secondary work.</p>

<p>learner population.</p> <p>The learning claims and associated outcomes of the program to be evaluated are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students will earn a Bachelor’s Degree (BSBA or BALS) from TESU in a comparatively shorter time and at a lower cost through successful completion of Study.com courses. ● Students can use the successful completion of Study.com courses to earn an AA or ASBA from TESU with a minimum of 60 credits and meeting TESU distribution requirements. ● Students can use the successful completion of Study.com courses to earn transcribed TESU credit for transfer or employment purposes. 	<p>2. A reasoned essay drawing on the factors listed in the criteria, the connection between the learning outcomes and these criteria, and how they are directly connected to the articulated definition of learner success.</p>	<p>The team’s subject matter expert will advise the team about the requisite knowledge and skills for the student outcomes identified by the partnership.</p>
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2. How are the value and relevance of those claims established? For example, what external stakeholders have been consulted to verify the value and relevance of the claims?

The following table states the criteria and evidence that will be used to evaluate whether or not the claims TESU is making about the value of obtaining a TESU degree via 50% or more of the remaining courses towards the degree being taken through Study.com:

Criteria	Evidence to Submit	Evaluation
<p>The partnership must present an explanation, with supporting data, about the value and relevance of obtaining a bachelor’s degree from TESU through a minimum of 50% of the</p>	<p>Data on the value of the degree accompanied by cost and time-to-degree comparisons of students who obtain the degree traditionally vs. students who obtain the degree through 50% or more of their remaining</p>	<p>Reviewers will review the submitted evidence for relevance and sufficiency and will request additional evidence until convinced of the value</p>

remaining courses being taken through Study.com.	courses completed with Study.com.	of the claims made.
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1. How will the claims be measured?

The following table states the criteria and evidence that will be used to evaluate whether or not TESU's claims for learner success are being met:

Criteria	Evidence to Submit	Evaluation
<p>1. Number and percentage of students enrolled in this program who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Earn a Bachelor's Degree (BSBA or BALS) from TESU and the average time to completion and cost compared to national and TESU-established benchmarks. ● Earn an AA or ASBA from TESU ● Earn transcribed TESU credit for transfer or employment purposes <p>2. Student satisfaction with the outcomes.</p>	<p>1. Identify each indicator and</p> <p>2. The source of data to measure the extent of learner success, based on that indicator.</p> <p>3. Explain how each of the measures is related to the definition of learner success,</p> <p>4. Present data as appropriate for each QAE review period; and</p> <p>5. Explain how the data are being interpreted (e.g., what percentage of learners are expected to meet each measure and to what extent), and how they relate to established benchmarks (e.g., national data and research findings).</p>	<p>The Review Team will review each indicator to determine if all data available at the time of review is being presented and evaluate the evidence submitted about the claims.</p>

4. How will institutions be held accountable for meeting those claims?

As mentioned in Section II Quality Assurance Process, #3, QM will perform a Benchmark Review of the program to be followed by Supplementary Reviews, with progress reports occurring mid-way through the Supplementary Reviews. The QM Review Team review team will evaluate the provided evidence against the criteria, evaluate each criterion for 85% or better compliance, and identify what is or is not met, provide recommendations for improvement, require those changes to be made along with a resubmission of evidence, and report back to stakeholders on the final outcomes.

5. How do all the claims for learning come together into a meaningful and coherent set of overall program outcomes and goals?

The following table states the criteria and evidence that will be used to evaluate whether or not the claims for learning make up a set of coherent program outcomes and goals:

Criteria	Evidence to Submit	Evaluation
The learning objectives, outcomes, or competencies of the individual courses are consistent with the program objectives, outcomes, or competencies.	Provide an alignment map or table showing how course-level objectives, outcomes, or competencies map back to the program-level objectives and the overall claims for the BSBA and BALS degrees. Access to a number of representative courses must be provided to reviewers to confirm the relationship between course and program objectives.	The review team will access the representative sample of courses to verify that course and program objectives, outcomes, or competencies are appropriately related.

B. Assessments and Student Work

1. How does the institution assess whether students enrolled in the program can meet the claims outlined in Section A? For example:

How are assessments aligned with the specific tasks, expectations, and contexts for which programs claim to be preparing students?

Beyond one-time assessments, is student work reviewed as part of the assessment of student learning and program outcomes? Do external stakeholders review students' work? How are examples of student work made available to outside parties (with appropriate privacy and other protections)?

The following table states the criteria and evidence to evaluate whether or not the assessments being used in the program are appropriate and support the claims:

Criteria	Evidence to Submit	Evaluation
Course assessments align with the learning objectives or competencies for the courses.	Narrative description of the course learning objectives or competencies and the assessments, accompanied by a map, table, or written	The Review Team will access a sample of the courses to evaluate the alignment of the assessments with the

	explanation aligning the two.	learning objectives or competencies.
If the assessment plan includes external evaluation of student work, such evaluations are clearly aligned with the learning objectives or competencies.	Explanation of the plan for assessments for learners and the program, overall. If the plan includes external evaluation of student work, the standards for that evaluation should be included in the submitted documentation.	The Review Team will evaluate the plan to ensure consistency and alignment exists between all assessments and evaluations and the course/program objectives.

2. How has the reliability of these assessments been established?

The following table states the criteria and evidence to evaluate whether or not the reliability of the assessments is established:

Criteria	Evidence to Submit	Evaluation
Assessments used in the program are reliable.	An explanation of the way in which the assessments were designed and determined to be reliable along with the data analysis to demonstrate it.	The Review Team will review the submission for sufficient evidence of reliability.

3. How has the validity of these assessments been established, for example in terms of the following?

- Face validity: Does the assessment appear to measure what it says it measures?
- Content validity: Does the assessment accurately measure the knowledge and skills covered by the program?
- Predictive validity: Does the assessment accurately predict the student's ability to demonstrate a given competency in the future?
- Concurrent validity: Does the assessment correlate with other measures of the desired performance meant to be assessed?

The following table states the criteria to evaluate whether or not the assessments being used in the program are appropriate:

Criteria	Evidence to Submit	Evaluation
<p>As part of the evaluation of the student learning environment, the partnership must demonstrate how the assessment of learning reflects the research and best practice literature for effective assessment practices. Assessment must be valid, evaluated and/or created by professionals with appropriate credentials, and must meet the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The assessments measure the stated learning objectives or competencies · The course grading policy is stated clearly · Specific and descriptive criteria are provided for the evaluation of learners' work and are tied to the course grading policy · As appropriate to the course, the assessment instruments selected are sequenced, varied, and suited to the learner work being assessed - As appropriate to the course, the course provides learners with multiple opportunities to track their learning progress. 	<p>Provide a narrative explaining the assessment plan, including the identity and credentials of assessors and how the reliability and validity of the assessments are established. Include an alignment map or table showing how assessments are tied to the learning objectives and outcomes. Access to a number of representative courses must be provided to reviewers to confirm the relationship between assessments and course and program objectives.</p>	<p>The Review Team will evaluate the partnership's process for student assessment.</p>

4. How and how often does the QAE review these assessments?

QM will review the assessments as part of the Benchmark Review that includes the entire program and its learning outcomes. The Benchmark Review will be followed up by Supplementary Reviews at the one-, two-, and three-year mark. Progress reports will be expected six months into each of the first, second, and third years.

C. Outputs, which, where applicable, must be disaggregated to show outcomes specifically for low-income students.

Note: At the time of application for this experiment, the application should include a description of how the QAE will track these outcomes (specific measures and process) and what level would meet the quality standard for each outcome. If the non-traditional provider(s) have gathered this data for an existing version of the program to be implemented, the application should also include those data. For all measures that reflect existing data, appropriate privacy protections should be applied.

The following table shows how outcomes data will be reported.

Outcome	Overall Program	Pell-grant Eligible Students
Number and percent of enrolled students who earn a Bachelor’s Degree (BSBA or BALS) from TESU and the average time to completion and cost compared to national and TESU-established benchmarks.		
Number and percent of enrolled students who earn an AA or ASBA from TESU		
Number and percent of enrolled students who earn transcripted TESU credit for transfer or employment purposes		
Number and percent of enrolled students who report satisfaction with the program		

1. How are students performing on program assessments?

See table, above.

2. How are students progressing through the program?

QM will be tracking, via TESU’s reporting for Benchmark and Supplementary Reviews, numbers and percentages of students who are successfully completing the program as well as withdrawal and retention rates.

3. What are the actual program outcomes for students (e.g., entry into subsequent phase of study, career, etc.)? For example:

- Employment outcomes, for all programs that have a stated mission focused on employment (include method for how these outcomes are measured):
 - Job placement rates in field of study?

- Average length of time between completion of program and employment in field of study?
- Job retention rates?
- Median starting salaries?
- Transfer rates to other academic or vocational programs, where applicable
- Certifications and licensure exam passage rates, where applicable

The expected benefits of this program are credit that can apply toward a bachelor's degree. For many individuals, earning a bachelor's degree results in increased earnings and lower unemployment (source: http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_chart_001.htm).

The current version of this program exists due to multiple corporations looking to provide their employees with educational opportunities so they can excel and move up within the company. Businesses utilize programs such as these to foster a more educated and skilled workforce, resulting in higher retention rates, higher-performing employees, and improved employee morale.

4. What are the following ratios for the program, where relevant?

- Published tuition and fees versus earnings
- Average net price versus earnings
- Median student debt versus earnings

This information will be reported when it becomes available.

5. How does the program rate on measures of student satisfaction? For example, how does the program rate in the following:

- Comments from students about what made them successful or unsuccessful in the program?
- A rigorous and transparent methodology for gathering and synthesizing customer satisfaction measures?

QM will review the results of surveys given, as well as the scope and sufficiency of those surveys, that measure student satisfaction in the Study.com courses and with the degree programs.

D. Management

1. How has the stability of the non-traditional provider(s) been evaluated (e.g., longevity and past outcomes, leadership/board, etc.)?

2. How are privacy, security, and student authentication managed?

3. Are activities related to student recruitment appropriate and transparent?

This information will be reviewed and reported.

Quality Matters will be provided with access to all marketing and outreach plans and materials and will have the opportunity to review the same by a sample of the following:

- *Marketing copy, including web and supplementary materials*
- *Published cost/fee schedules*
- *Published course descriptions*
- *Published delivery modes*
- *Published program advising material/information*

4. How is pricing made transparent?

Quality Matters will look at this as part of the Benchmark Review as explained in question 3, above.

2. Are all materials accessible to learners with disabilities?

In addition to TESU's accessibility processes and review, the QAE will review the student learning environment, through a sampling process, to apply its existing accessibility standards from the Quality Matters Higher Education Rubric.

6. What is the process for continuous improvement of all aspects of the learning experience (content, platform, student support, faculty engagement, etc.)?

QM will request and review:

- 1) A description of data collection, distribution, and feedback mechanisms to improve the learning experience for students;*
- 2) Representative survey data addressing learner satisfaction with the aspects of the learning experience over each collection period; and*
- 3) Documentation of any changes in policy, organization, and resources that have been influenced by learner feedback.*

PRA Burden Statement

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 1845-0140. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 80 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The obligation to respond to this collection is required to obtain or retain a benefit (Section 487A(b) of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended). If you have comments or concerns regarding the status of your individual submission of this information, please contact Experimental Sites at experimentalsites@ed.gov directly.

To Whom It May Concern:

In response to the Department of Education's Educational Quality through Innovative Partnerships (EQUIP) Experiment, Thomas Edison State University and Study.com have proposed a program allowing participants to earn college credit through Study.com and transfer it to Thomas Edison State University to apply toward a bachelor's degree in business or liberal arts.

Study.com courses are recommended for college credit by the American Council on Education (ACE), and the credits for these courses can be then transferred and applied toward a degree at Thomas Edison State University. As the non-traditional provider, Study.com will commit to offering these ACE-recommended online courses required for the program.

Sincerely,



Jessica Bayliss
Senior Director of Content
Study.com



Middle States Commission on Higher Education

3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104-2680. Tel: 267-284-5000. Fax: 215-662-5501
www.msche.org

April 15, 2016

Dr. George A. Pruitt, President
Thomas Edison State University
111 West State Street
Trenton, NJ 08608

Dear President Pruitt,

This will document agreement by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education to consider including, within the scope of accreditation for Thomas Edison State University, your institution's proposed work with the non-traditional provider(s) and quality assurance agencies listed below. This work, which is being developed as part of the U. S. Department of Education Experimental Sites Initiative, Educational Quality through Innovative Partnerships (EQUIP), will require Commission review and approval through the process of complex substantive change.

Name of Non-Traditional Provider(s)

[Redacted]

Study.com

Quality Assurance Entity(ies)

[Redacted]

Quality Matters

We wish you every success with these projects.

Sincerely,

[Redacted Signature]

Debra G. Klinman, Ph.D.
Vice President

c: Ms. Kathleen Melilli

DGK/deb