

BACKGROUND



Air University's 2008 Quality Enhancement Plan "Cross-Culturally Competent Airmen"



What is a Quality Enhancement Plan or QEP?

A Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is a carefully designed course of action to address a university's particular educational needs. It entails a thorough institutional assessment, the selection of one topic that will improve student learning, then the establishment of measurable outcomes, building the university's capacity to meet these objectives and the involvement of broad constituencies to sustain it.

Why does a QEP matter?

A QEP is required for any post-secondary institution seeking re-affirmation of accreditation by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), the regional accrediting body for Air University (AU). Failure to develop or implement an acceptable QEP can result in loss of academic accreditation. More frequently, since a QEP is the only forward-looking component of re-accreditation, it transforms the process into an on-going activity that promotes educational improvement, intellectual innovation and institutional change.

What is the focus of Air University's QEP?

Air University's QEP will provide a scientifically sound and institutionally sustainable course of action to develop cross-culturally competent (3C) Airmen through the professional military education system. AU's QEP uses a 'culture-general' approach that defines 3C as: "***The ability to quickly and accurately comprehend, then appropriately and effectively act in a culturally complex environment to achieve the desired effect – without necessarily having prior exposure to a particular group, region or language.***"

AU's QEP distinguishes cultural from regional and foreign language learning, focusing primarily on the first, supported by the second. It aims to infuse cross-cultural knowledge (focusing on concepts, theories and methods), skills (particularly communication, negotiation and inter-personal relations), attitudes and learning approaches across the entire curriculum.

What is so special about Air University's QEP?

AU's QEP is pioneering: No institution of the Air Force's size has systematically built 3C across its entire workforce over the course of a generation. *AU's QEP is relevant:* Developing Airmen's cross-cultural competence will help them achieve mission success while reducing the potential consequences of operating in culturally complex environments. *AU's QEP is scientific and sustainable:* Planning and educational efforts will be grounded in rigorous empirical and conceptual research then integrated to core courses. *AU's QEP is broad reaching:* Education will be provided in residence and via distance learning for officers and enlisted personnel at all levels. *AU's QEP is part of an even larger effort:* This is the 'leading edge' of the newly established Air Force Culture and Language Center's efforts.

How will Air University's QEP be developed and implemented?

Work on AU's QEP is already underway, with efforts organized along five lines: 1. Establishing a common schema—a broadly applicable understanding of the concept and domains of culture. 2. Modifying existing curricula as possible and developing new elements as necessary. 3. Preparing faculty and staff to facilitate student learning. 4. Acquiring world-class educational resources. 5. Adapting reliable and valid assessment instruments to meet military requirements. AU will submit its QEP to SACS in January 2009, off- and on-site assessments will follow, with implementation commencing shortly thereafter.

Where can I learn more or contribute?

For more information about AU's QEP or other Air Force efforts to develop cross-cultural, regional and foreign language competence, visit our web site: www.au.af.mil/culture. If you want to collaborate in AU's QEP, contact the Director, Dr. Brian R. Selmeski: brian.selmeski@maxwell.af.mil.