

## **DL Discussion 5**

Please read the document carefully- critically, then:

- Summarize the key purposes of design – design for flexibility, for example.
- How different are the course-design templates, explained in the document?
- Explain the implication for “course designers” and “course developers” sections, provided toward the end of the document.
- In all above, please bring your points of views respectfully.

### **Design for Flexibility**

Designing a course depends greatly on the target audience as well as the chosen pedagogical strategies. Designers should consider whether their material will be used collaboratively, individually, or both. They should also consider whether the material will either be complete and uniform, or open-ended for tailored learning experiences. e-Learning exists on a spectrum between face-to-face and distance education, and it is influenced by the age and motivation of students as well as the designer's own desires. Team-based or tutor-assisted e-learning programs should offer more features to support tutors. Self-driven e-learning should support self-study and revision. Blended learning (seen as the best approach for undergrad and postgraduate courses) should also support self-study and revision.

### **Design Holistically**

Components for designing a course usually has three primary sources: the learning environment, the people, and the content.

### **Learner Centered Design**

Approaches to learning differ from person to person based on preference, available time, subject, and motivation. Learners can also prefer to learn individually, cooperatively (individual learning and access to a community of fellow learners), or collaboratively (required participation in a learning community and little individual flexibility). The MACE process (analyzing Motivation, Acquisition, Contextualization, and Evaluation) helps discern where human or technological resources can aid in accommodating these preferences.

### **Design Around Learning Objectives**

All content developed to support a course should relate to one or more learning objective. Learning objectives provide structure and potential study paths, as well as a mechanism for providing feedback on student progress.

### **Design for Standards**

Computer networks are the method used to provide most online distance learning, the Internet itself being the primary vehicle. e-Learning content should adhere to some sort of standard (like XML, a flexible "smart" format, or HTML) for the benefit of networks, in order to make content easily recognizable and shareable. It is not advised to use PDFs or MS Word formats as they do not integrate well into online distance learning. Ideally, designers who are not technical specialists should work with a team of specialists who can take material and format it as needed. IMS and SCORM are ideal formats while in the development phase, but not for actually presenting content.

### **Design for Retention**

The average dropout rate in higher education according to the OECD is 30%. The UK's Open University say 25% new students and 22% experienced students drop out in 2000. Low retention rates translate to a loss of revenue, and are potentially damaging to an institution's reputation and are seen as a mark of poor performance. The reason students drop out is complex, but tutorial quality is a big reason. Good quality self-study materials for a course can help correct this.

Students themselves in the OU's polls from 2000 found that they dropped out mainly because they fell behind in coursework. 23% of students who completed courses found they spent much more time than they expected to studying, while almost two thirds said they were falling behind.

The student's perception of expected and actual workload must match as closely as possible.

Students will be highly stressed if there is a mismatch between stated hours and actual hours put into a course.

Such study plans are highly unrealistic.

### **Design for Interactivity**

Interactivity is only one way to learn and is not always essential. Some interactions are best achieved through reflection, annotating, and peer discussion. Interactivity is, however, helpful in communicating difficult concepts, rules, and principles.

### **Course Design Templates**

The design template for the Global Schools Programme online workshop starts with objectives, then e-learning topics, then progress checks, then provides a digital workbook, ending with a certificate of completion. Though other layers can still be added on, all workshops are designed to this layer of standardization.

The Edinburgh Business School template starts with learning objectives. Courses have between 5 and 12 of these which are directly relevant to the outcomes students are assessed against, and can be converted into a course map form for the students. From the learning objective core comes a core module text, then self-assessment questions, then provides case studies, essay articles, and finally ends with past papers. Additional layers (such as tutorials, simulations, forums and FAQs) may still be added on past that point, but every subject adopts common structure to the "past papers" layer.

The Napier University template starts with key learning objectives, then the course textbook, then a course workbook, then concept gateways, then case studies, then a self-assessment Q&A, then past papers. All courses are standardized to this layer. From there, other layers can be added. The "concept gateway" is different from the EBS and GSP templates in that they are online distance learning objects and tutorials that give students an alternate method to study and comprehend a subject. These concept gateways can be multimedia or simulation based formats.

The Coachesinfo CPD course design template begins with learning objectives, then learning materials, then a digital workbook, then topic quizzes, then comment papers and forums, then a support tutor, and finally assignments. All courses are standardized to this layer, but additional layers may be added. Each topic makes use of interactive media elements.

### **Implications for Course Designers and Developers**

For course designers, the implications are that courses for online distance learning are like the layers of an onion: there are multiple components that integrate with one another, with a core made from learning objectives. Each design is placed in a flexible learning spectrum, so that course designers can choose what is most appropriate for their targeted audience. Course designers face a challenge when it comes to pre-existing course material: use it as it is ("integrity approach"), remake it, or create something new.

For course developers, they should follow the CAPDM (Capture, Author, Publish, Deliver, Manage) model. They should apply one architecture and open standard for the distance learning materials produced, and operate one production solution for all media and its use. They should work with open standards and avoid proprietary vendors and technologies. They should create master sources and use a digital repository for storage and revision control, while avoiding unnecessary duplication of efforts. They should be highly efficient and productive, using batch processing tools to quickly update and re-release materials. They should not act as programmers and avoid unnecessary complications. A template-based, well-constructed production process should not require very much custom programming, if at all. Finally, they should offer help to authors, as course developers are the people who take distance learning materials and provide the interactivity and meaning for tutors and students. They know the limitations and opportunities of delivery technologies and should work with the author to best exploit their use.