

Project: UHMC Distance Learning Institute: Online Mentor & Teacher Training Course

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Report Title: Online Mentor & Teacher Training Course Evaluation

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Project Overview

During the 2014 Spring semester, the UHMC Distance Learning Committee concluded there is no formal distance learning professional development program at UHMC to help prepare faculty to effectively teach 'distance' courses, and how to most effectively facilitate and reach all of UHMC's students via online instruction delivery models. Since distance teaching requires specialized knowledge and skill sets, the UHMC Distance Learning Committee realized the need for additional professional training for faculty involved in UHMC's distant teaching programs.

On April 9th, 2014 the UHMC Distance Learning Committee proposed to create, implement, and maintain the UHMC Distance Learning Institute in direct response to this critical need at the center of their educational mission. The proposal was funded to create a distance teaching preparation and mentoring program that formally and thoroughly prepares UHMC distance instructors to successfully teach distant courses using online courseware.

Evaluation Report Summary

This Course Evaluation Report will assess and evaluate the online DL Mentor Training Course that was delivered to a group of faculty during a 6-week period. The course was delivered using the University of Hawaii's LMS platform Lulima, a derivative of the Sakai LMS platform and was an asynchronous course covering distance learning topics such as distance pedagogy, best practices, assessment, and accessibility.

The basis of this evaluation is derived from the Instructional System Design theories and processes of Robert Gagne, Bloom's Taxonomy, ADDIE model, and Dick's and Carey's Systematic Design of Instruction, and the method used for evaluation was a systematic design review process using both tables and rubric-based reporting tools.

Following the tables and rubric tools, a Findings and Recommendations section provides further comments on areas for consideration and improvement discovered during the evaluation.

Section 1: Course Overview & Introduction

Criteria	Achieved	Needs Improvement	Lacking
Instructions on how to get started and where to find various course components are clear and easy to find.		●	
The purpose of the course is clearly stated.	★		
The structure of the course is clearly explained.		●	
For blended courses, the relationship between the face-to-face and online components is clearly explained.	★		
The purpose of the different communication tools (online discussions, email, chat etc.) is stated clearly.	★		
The instructor has provided a personal introduction and/or bio.	★		
Students are asked to introduce themselves to the class.	★		
Prerequisite knowledge and skills are clearly stated.	★		
Minimum technical skills expected of the student are clearly stated.	★		
A clear timeline with topics and activities is posted.	★		
Resources required for the course are explicitly stated, and information is provided to students regarding how/where to get required resources	★		

Section 2: Learning Outcomes

Criteria	Achieved	Needs Improvement	Lacking
The course learning outcomes are described in terms of what the student will be able to do upon completion.	★		
The module/unit learning outcomes are consistent with the course-level outcomes.	★		
The learning outcomes are at levels appropriate for the course.	★		

Section 3: Assessment

Criteria	Achieved	Needs Improvement	Lacking
The learning activities and assessment are consistent with the learning outcomes.	★		
The course grading and assignment policy is stated clearly.		●	

Specific and descriptive criteria are provided for the evaluation of students' work and participation.	★		
Assessment and evaluation are conducted on an ongoing basis throughout the course.	★		
A structure exists to provide students with feedback throughout the course.	★		
Clear instructions are provided on how to submit assignments.	★		

Section 4: Course Materials			
Criteria	Achieved	Needs Improvement	Lacking
Course content is sequenced and structured in a way that enables students to achieve stated learning outcomes.	★		
The relationship between the instructional materials and the learning activities is clearly explained to the student.		●	
Course materials are presented in a consistent structure and layout.	★		
Media elements used within the course adopt formats and standards that are accessible to all students.	★		

Section 5: Learner Engagement			
Criteria	Achieved	Needs Improvement	Lacking
The learning activities promote the achievement of the stated learning outcomes.	★		
Learning activities foster appropriate levels and types of interaction (instructor-student, content-student, student-student).	★		
Clear standards are set for instructor responsiveness and availability (turn-around time for email, assignment marking, etc.).		●	
The requirements for student interaction <i>and progression through the course</i> are clearly articulated.	★		

Section 6: Educational Technology			
Criteria	Achieved	Needs Improvement	Lacking
The tools and media support the learning outcomes.	★		
Navigation throughout the online components of the course is logical, consistent, and efficient.	★		
Instructions on how to access resources at a distance are sufficient and easy to understand.			▲
The tools used in the course are readily available to students (eg. free plugins if any needed), <i>and there are instructions to get any additional required tools.</i>	★		
If synchronous activities are included, they are archived for students to review (e.g. Elluminate Live sessions, podcasts).			▲

Section 7: Course Resources

Criteria	Achieved	Needs Improvement	Lacking
Appropriate course resources are selected to support the learning outcomes.	★		
All course resources are clearly written and edited, and have a high production quality.	★		
All resources and materials used in the course are appropriately cited.	★		
Copyright© clearance has been obtained where necessary.	★		
Web links are relevant and functional.	★		

Section 8: Learner Support Resources

Criteria	Achieved	Needs Improvement	Lacking
The course instructions make it clear how students can access technical support.	★		
The course instructions make it clear how UHMC's academic support systems can be accessed (eg. Library services, peer tutoring).			▲
The course instructions make it clear how UHMC's student support services can be accessed (e.g.. Peer support services, Counseling).			▲
The course instructions answer basic questions related to online research, writing, technology, etc., or link to tutorials or other online resources that provide the information.			▲
The course provides guidelines on how to succeed as a student in the online environment.		●	

Section 9: Online Course Development Rubric

Criteria	Exceptional	Standard Met	Needs Improvement	Lacking
Prerequisites	Prerequisites are clearly listed in multiple areas and well explained.	Prerequisites are clearly listed.	Prerequisite are incomplete, hard to access, or poorly organized.	No prerequisites listed at this time.
Technology Requirements	Technology requirements are listed and well explained.	Requirements listed.	Requirements are incomplete.	No requirements are listed at this time.
Objectives and Outcomes	Objectives and outcomes are given and written in such a way that they are clear and measurable.	Listed but may not be clear and/or measurable.	Vague and are not consistent.	None exist at this time.

Section 9: Online Course Development Rubric

Criteria	Exceptional	Standard Met	Needs Improvement	Lacking
Activities support learning	All activities are related to student outcomes and objectives	Activities appear to support achievement.	Activities do not appear to be related to goals and/or outcomes.	No activities listed at this time.
Assessment	Assessment of student progress is given throughout the course measures progress towards objectives and outcomes.	Assessment measures student progress towards objectives and outcomes.	Assessment does not measure progress.	No assessment addressed at this time.
Tools Enhancing Interaction	Sustained interaction is facilitated by the use of communication tools.	Interaction is facilitated by the use of communication tools.	Little interaction is facilitated by the use of communication tools.	No interaction is defined at this time.
Course materials	Materials are easy to locate, accessible, understandable, meaningful, organized logically, and developed to enhance student achievement.	Most materials are easily located, accessible, understandable, meaningful, organized logically, and developed to enhance student achievement; however, some require improvement.	Materials are either difficult to locate, require too many technical steps.	No materials have been included at this time.
Student Support	Instructor uses communication tools to provide students with readily available and timely support that helps keep students on target.	Instructor uses communication tools to interact with students and provide support.	Instructor sometimes communicates with students directly.	Instructor does not communicate with students directly, meaningfully, and/or in a timely manner.
Frequent and timely feedback	Instructor provides frequent and timely feedback.	Instructor provides feedback.	Instructor sometimes provides feedback.	No feedback is provided
Appropriate pacing	All learning and activities are paced in a way that is meaningful and the Calendar tool is used.	Instructor paces most activities and the Calendar tool is used.	Some activities are paced.	No evidence of pacing exists at this time.
Expectations for student discussion/ chat participation	Expectations for student discussion/ chat participation are well developed, consistent, and communicated clearly to students.	Participation expectations are communicated to students.	Expectations are vague and/or unclear.	No expectations exist at this time.

Section 9: Online Course Development Rubric				
Criteria	Exceptional	Standard Met	Needs Improvement	Lacking
Grading	Grading is timely, accessible by students, and secure.	Grades are accessible to students and secure.	Grades are inconsistently made available to students and/or are not secure.	Grades not available to students.
Course content	Course content is clear, meaningful, plentiful, accessible, and supported by the instructor.	Course content is for the most part clear, meaningful, accessible, and supported by the instructor.	Course content is not always meaningful, clear, and/or accessible.	Course content is weak and lacking.
Multimedia	Multimedia used is appropriate, enhances learning, accessible, professionally created, linked to course content, available in an alternative text based format, and work.	Multimedia used is appropriate, enhances learning, professionally created, but may not be available in an alternative format and/or accessible.	Multimedia used may be unnecessary, not linked to content, difficult to access, and or problematic.	Multimedia is unprofessional, distracting, and/or burdensome.
Time Devoted	The instructor devotes the appropriate amount of time to the development of the course, timely support of student learning, and sustaining of learning. Online office hours are provided.	The instructor devotes the appropriate amount of time to the development of the course, support of student learning, and sustaining of learning.	The instructor must devote more time to this course.	Not enough time has been spent and/is allocated for this course.
Reusability	This course will be easy to reuse, simple to modify / improve, serve a large potential audience, and have longevity.	This course can be reused and modified easily.	This course will serve a limited audience, require tremendous modifications, be difficult to reuse or modify, and/or may not have longevity.	This course will be almost impossible to reuse.
Results	This course is fully endorsed and the instructor is commended for their hard work.	This course is approved with modifications.	This course requires major reworking.	This course is sub par.

Findings

The UHMC Distance Learning Committee did an excellent job of determining the state and needs of their learner population, defining the end goal of instruction in the under-served areas, and creating an "intervention" plan to assist in the closing of the instructional 'distance' gap that both their instructors and students are challenged to overcome.

The UHMC Distance Learning Institute did was also successful in the development of the DL Mentor/Teacher Training Course by creating an instructional experience which made the acquisition of Distant Learning knowledge and skill more efficient, effective, and appealing. The DL Mentor/Teacher Training Course

contains all of the ingredients needed to provide an engaging and rewarding learning experience to the participants of the DL Professional Development Program.

The DL Training Course's overall curriculum, content, design, and methodology was developed very well; providing the participants (instructors) with the opportunity to learn and understand distance learning theory and best practices that will strengthen their distance courses. The course was effective in aligning the course outcomes, below, with the instructional methodology of the course.

Upon completion of the Summer Online Workshop, participants will be able to:

- *Relate theories of education to creation of effective online learning experiences.*
- *Create a practical syllabus that integrates and synthesizes appropriate course flow and organization.*
- *Distinguish applicability of available tools, technologies, and techniques available for online teaching and learning.*
- *Implement an effective set of tools and techniques to manage an online classroom environment.*
- *Evaluate effectiveness of strategies, techniques, and methodologies employed in a course throughout the process before, during, and after the semester.*

Understanding that the DL Training Course is delivered using the University of Hawaii's LMS platform Lulima, this evaluation did not assess the course in the following areas: Display, Navigation, Functionality, and overall design of the course [site]. Much of the organizational structure is predetermined by the platform, so course developers and instructors are tasked with organizing their content, interaction, and the communication modalities within the existing ecosystem. In this case, the Distance Learning Institute did a good job at designing and leveraging the Lulima platform to deliver the course and align it's content with the intended learning outcomes.

Recommendations

Based on the overall findings of this report, the following areas are recommended for consideration in future development and releases of the DL Training Course:

- Is a sample course outline or agenda with timeframe provided? In other words:
 - a. Is there an overview of what the instructional sessions, or modules, will cover, and in what sequence?
 - b. Does the curriculum provide a clear and organized breakdown of what will be covered in each session?
 - c. If yes, does the outline provide an estimate of how much time to allow for each part of the session?
 - d. If yes, is the sequence logical and easy to understand?
- Are measurable learning objectives stated for each activity, lesson plan, or unit? If learning objectives are stated, do they include a combination of didactic, affective, and psychomotor domain objectives?
- Is the content presented in a way that sequences information from basic to specialized and from simple to complex?
- Does the curriculum include evaluation instruments to measure participant reaction, participant learning, and participant behavior?

There were a few areas that the evaluation scored the course in either “Needs Improvement”, or “Lacking” categories, and these areas were limited to the learner prerequisites, grading, student resources, and accessibility.

This evaluation took into account that the DL Training Course was developed as an internal professional development course amongst peers, so the development and design teams possibly omitted these elements because the participants were peers, and not actual students that required the elements of learner prerequisites, grading, student resources, and accessibility.

Yet, the missing components are important aspects of any online course as they provide the learner a path of engagement, assessment, and discovery of the learning environment. The ‘unfavorable’ ratings are not viewed as problem areas for the evaluation, but these ratings should serve as a reminder that the missing components should be addressed regardless of the learner population demographics.

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