

Assessing the Distance Learning (DL) Experience

Dr. Judith Hansen

Dr. Edward Mason

Dr. Darlington Ndubuike

Prairie View A&M University

Main Phases in Creating DL Courses

- Selecting a presentation venue – WebCT;
- Planning & developing the content;
- Obtaining approval from administration (Distance Learning Council based on *The Principles of Good Practice for Academic Degree and Certificate Programs and Credit Courses Offered Electronically* developed by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education and adopted by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board);
- Training to present online courses – WebCT instructor certification;
- Delivering the course;
- Conducting various assessments; and
- Reporting assessment results to students and others.

Assessing the DL Learning Experience

- Assessment of student performance on learning objectives;
- Assessment of course for other issues of importance for course designers/faculty/accreditation.

Areas for Assessment in DL

- **Content** – subject matter of the course
 - Does course present a rigorous, acceptable learning experience?
 - How are students performing on learning objectives- unacceptable, acceptable or target?
 - Is it equivalent to face-to-face (FTF) versions?
- **Interaction** – providing enough to give student confidence and prevent attrition due to isolation
- **Security** – identifying student & his/her submissions as original (links)
- **Assessment** – using course design & appropriate assessment methods to achieve useful results

Useful Types of Assessment for DL

- **Formative assessment** – user testing - awareness of user needs & preferences allows designers to measure how closely courses address them before courses are offered.
- **Summative assessment** – the most common type - to what extent did attempts to meet user needs as well as learning goals succeed?
- **Comparative assessment** – how do DL courses measure up against face-to-face courses (especially important in multiple sections of a course)?
- **Self assessment** – for students and instructors what problems/issues did users/designers encounter? Did new strategies work? This is critical info for building a successful DL program.
- **Demographic assessment** – was demographic data gathered useful in determining user needs/satisfaction?
- **Authentic/Performance assessment** – is done in a realistic and complex context rather than an abstract venue.
- **Functionality assessment** – ease-of-use data from users or preference data from users

Web-Enhanced Authentic Assessment

- Requires candidates to function in real-world situations;
- Evaluation is based on realistic and complex tasks;
- Example -candidates teach a lesson in a classroom, record it, then self-evaluate their performance;
- Allows for the novice candidate to compare his/her assessment with that of the instructor-expert

Strengths of Authentic Assessment

- Assignment is a self-analysis of student's own teaching performance;
- Rubric for assessing learning could be used in both online and FTF versions of the course;
- Three levels of evaluation possible
 - Candidate's own self-evaluation
 - Evaluations of other candidates
 - Instructor (expert) evaluation

Sample Assessment Methods & Rubric for Undergraduate Teacher Ed Course

NCATE SPA/State standard:

Applies knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaborative, and supportive interaction in the classroom.

Parallel Course Learning Objectives

The student will

- Communicate directions, explanations, and procedures clearly, accurately, and with an appropriate level of detail, both orally and in writing
- Use effective interpersonal skills (including both verbal and nonverbal skills) to reach students and communicate the teacher's commitment to students
- Use spoken and written language that is appropriate to students' ages, interests, and backgrounds
- Use effective communication techniques, including questioning and discussion techniques, to foster active student inquiry, higher-order thinking, problem solving, and productive, supportive interactions
- Use carefully framed questions to enable students to reflect on their understanding of content and to consider new possibilities
- Apply skills for leading discussions that engage all students in exploring important questions and that extend students' knowledge

Assignment Directions for Candidates

Assignment #2: Audio Tape Self-Analysis

- You will need an audiocassette tape recorder for this assignment.
- Your assignment is to design a 10-minute lesson (maximum) in your content area which you will teach to an elementary school class.
- Teach the lesson to a class.
- Then, using a copy of the self-evaluation form, analyze your instructional effectiveness.
- Finally, write a summary of your findings, noting strengths and weaknesses, addressing all the subsections of your analysis. What (if any) did you learn from this experience?
- [Self-Analysis Form](#)
- [Rubric](#)

Types of Rubrics

- Single assignment rubric
- Multiple assignment rubric

Reliability Concerns

- Clarifying the scoring rubric is likely to improve both interrater and intrarater reliability.
 - Are the scoring categories well defined?
 - Are the differences between the score categories clear?
 - Would two independent raters arrive at the same score for a given response based on the scoring rubric?
 - A single assessment with rubrics may not necessarily be a reliable indicator of performance
 - To address this , Dr. D. uses two types of assessment, video and audio.

Student Evaluation of DL Courses

- Survey given to online graduate course (CIIT 5733 Current Issues in Instructional Technology & CIIT 5813 Introduction to Distance Learning) students
- Results of Data gathered during fall 2007 semester