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MEETING THE DISTANCE EDUCATION CHALLENGE: A GUIDE FOR DESIGNING ONLINE CLASSROOMS

Patrick Allen Bungard

MEETING THE DISTANCE EDUCATION CHALLENGE:

A GUDE FOR DESIGNING ONLINE CLASSROOMS

A Project

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

in

Communication Studies

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by

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ABSTRACT

The emphasis on education fluctuates with the economy. When education is encouraged, many individuals flock to colleges and universities to increase earning potential or achieve goals. Thanks to advancements in technology, distance education in the 21st century can be similar to face-to-face education. Students spend many hours sitting in front of a computer completing course work. Although still in infancy stages, online education has vastly improved. Perspectives like teaching adults (andragogy), transformative learning, and teacher immediacy all address teaching individuals from afar. In consultation with these three perspectives, several qualitative measures have been developed aid with online course design. This graduate project intends to assist faculty with setting up an online course using Andragogy, Transformative Learning Theory, and Teacher Immediacy as the backbone. In addition, the Quality Online Course Initiative, Quality Matters, and Quality Online Learning and Teaching tools are applied.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Bettering oneself through education is an admirable action. Unfortunately, due to the demands of life, economic fluctuations, proximity, cost, and dozens of other factors, many people shy away from earning a college education. Fortunately, because of its flexibility (Young, 2006), online education has emerged and is quickly becoming an acceptable alternative to traditional face-to-face classroom instruction (Crawford-Ferre & Wiest, 2012). Online education also provides access to college courses to traditionally underserved populations due to the lack of proximity to a school or economic disadvantages (Xu & Jaggars, 2014). Although the concept of distance education is not new, online courses are increasingly popular and suit the lifestyles of many students far better than face-to-face courses, because an online education provides students more control over their education (Britt, 2015). Donathan and Hanks (2009) point out that online education is a hot topic in higher education and the demand is continuously increasing.

Not only are students turning to distance learning programs, instructors are also seeking out online teaching positions for a variety of reasons (Carnevale, 2003). While the demand for these programs, and the desire to teach them, is great news for universities with online programs, there is a great responsibility for these programs to provide quality instruction. Due to the

increased interest and enrollment in distance education, online instructors should consider several items. These items include ongoing training, organized course format, remaining proactive, regular and timely communication, maintaining a presence in the classroom, effective discussion board facilitation, scaffolding, and professional development.

There are many reasons a student seeks learning online rather than face-to-face instruction. For example, learners with career aspirations that align positively with class materials are more likely to have positive perceptions of the class and will maintain motivation to finish out the course (Fritea, 2015). Despite growth in online learning, 50 percent of students in an online program do not finish the class, with students citing a lack of engagement being a critical factor (Lee, Pate & Cozart, 2015). To have successful results, faculty and students, must understand that online learning relies on face-to-face skill sets differently. For example, time management may be more difficult due to a course not having a weekly, in-class, meeting pattern.

Many teaching and communication strategies from a traditional teaching, face-to-face standpoint do not necessarily work in the online classroom. For example, faculty members are not able to see students' reactions, non-verbal cues that face-to-face faculty members benefit from. Many techniques need to be spelled out to avoid miscommunication or confusion as neither online students nor faculty experience the same level of nonverbal communication or hear tones in each other's voices as individuals in a face-to-face class. Therefore, when

teaching online, it is important to know the characteristics of an online environment and attend to appropriate ways of communicating, interacting, motivating, and supporting students.

This project will focus on creating a generic, andragogical manual for faculty teaching online. The multitude of online learning platforms begs for a generic manual to focus on best practices. The guide strives to make a virtual environment a safe place where students feel comfortable enough to actively engage in the material and communicate to each other and the instructor. It will cover setting up the classroom, announcements, lecture materials, discussions, grading, and supplemental materials. The manual will also address immediacy, student interactions, and instructionally related problems.

Many studies have documented how enhanced communication between instructors and their students serve to promote fruitful affective and cognitive gain in a variety of instructional environments (Bailie, 2012). Arbaugh (2010) found that informal instructor immediacy behaviors were positive predictors of student perceived learning and satisfaction. There are several factors involved with online student success. Negative predictors of perceived learning, per Arbaugh (2010), are when the instructor does not regularly log into the classroom or the average time spent per login is low. Collectively, the findings suggest the need for instructors to structure and organize their courses beforehand so they can focus on efficient engagement with their students while the class is in session (Arbaugh, 2010).

Despite a lot of growth in the popularity of online education, little research exists on the experiences of students (Barbour & Siko, 2012; Milheim, 2011). In the study by Barbour and Siko (2012), data revealed online students were typically good at prioritizing and understanding what was needed to do to succeed in an online environment; however, they either did not make the effort to succeed or did the bare minimum to succeed. The study validates that some online learners face similar problems as traditional classroom learners: not being engaged.

Technical problems also lend a hand to students' failures (Michael, 2012). Lack of proper technology at home poses a threat to online students who cannot access the course or complete assignments properly. Ill-equipped computers, outdated software, and sketchy Internet connections are some of the problems that online students face and must overcome to be successful in an online classroom.

Other factors that influence student learning are learning style and comfort level—with both technology and the course topic. A poor fit in learning style or a low comfort level can lead to student dissatisfaction and attrition (Harrington & Loffredo, 2010).

Fortunately, as online education expands, institutions are organizing support for faculty members to improve the experience for both teacher and student. For example, California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB) has a department called Academic Technologies & Innovation (ATI). One aspect that

ATI specializes in is aligning faculty with online course creation using evidenced properties by MarylandOnline's Quality Matters (QM) and California State University's (CSU) Quality Online Learning and Teaching (QOLT) strategies (CSUSB, 2017). CSUSB is one example of an institution addressing the need to adequately support and train faculty to develop effective online instruction and formulate strategies for successful generation of virtual classrooms (Crawford-Ferre & Wiest, 2012).

This document intends to address the conceptual perspectives regarding teaching adults and potentially non-traditional students. Specifically, andragogy, transformative learning theory, and teacher immediacy will be discussed with the rationale of creating an online college-level course. In addition to the three concepts, quality control mechanisms are discussed, which have been put into practice by major institutions. This document uses QM, QOLT and the University of Illinois' Quality Online Core Initiative (QOCI) to explain the needs for quality control in online education (Quality Matters, 2014; ION, 2015, Quality Assurance, 2016).

CHAPTER TWO

ACADEMIC PERSPECTIVES

Higher education is full of research, with the intention of improving the teaching profession. For example, numerous studies exist that confirm or reject teaching techniques for the spectrum of learning styles (Rogowsky, Calhoun, & Tallal, 2015). Within the teaching realm of academic research, there are thousands of articles dedicated to teaching. A subset of teaching, with its own library of articles and books, is distance learning, which, in the current digital age, is called online learning. Behind most research is a guiding principle to explain a certain phenomenon. Through research for this manual, certain theories and concepts emerged which proved relevant to the purpose of the project, namely, to create quality learning environments. While always remembering the audience, the online students, these three perspectives: andragogy, transformative learning theory, and teacher immediacy, lend themselves to support strategies developed for online learning. These perspectives will be the guiding principles behind the manual. Andragogy is used because the manual is geared towards college virtual classrooms which teach adults rather than children (Belcher, 2009). Transformative learning theory explains how adults combine new knowledge with existing knowledge (Anderson, 1979). Lastly Teacher Immediacy will explain how to bridge the perceived distance between the instructor and the student when learning online (Campbell, 2014).

Andragogy

The underlying principle of this project revolves around the idea of andragogy. Before going into andragogy, it is important to discuss the differences between andragogy and pedagogy. Norwegian professor Svein Loeng (2013) explains the differences between pedagogy and andragogy. Pedagogy traditionally has lent itself to the idea that a teacher has total control over a child's learning. It is an authoritarian focused, top down approach to learning. The main concept in pedagogy is identifying the best way of transferring knowledge or information that does not necessarily require critical thinking; it is more memorization and recollection. Grades are used to document a student's progress in the knowledge transmission.

Conversely, andragogy focuses on the learning experience of adults and which methods work best in adult education (Belcher, 2009). For classification purposes, I am defining an adult as an individual over the age of 18. The concept is more self-directed because adults typically set their own schedules for learning and have other motivations to commit to study or practice. Adult education is also often cooperative, in that adults tend to work together and review each other's work and understanding of a subject. In many adult education courses learning is somewhat informal and more emphasis is placed on critical interpretation and analysis (Kaufman, 2003).

Per Regino (2009) andragogy was developed several years after pedagogy. The word pedagogy first appeared in the 1500s and has roots in Latin

and Greek. Literal translation is to guide or teach a child. Fast-forward 500 years and the meaning broadened to simply refer to the art of teaching.

On the other hand, andragogy refers to methods or techniques used to teach adults (Regino, 2009). German educator, Alexander Kapp is recognized for creating the theory (Knowles, 1970), however Malcolm Knowles made it popular in the 1960s. Malcolm Knowles, an American educator focused on adult education (Hiemstra, 2003). Simply put andragogy is the study of methods used to teach adults while pedagogy focuses on children, although common practice generalizes to just teaching (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005).

How andragogy works in practice is slightly more structured than the definitions and draws from the roots of pedagogy. The teacher still needs to teach and transfer knowledge to the student; however, andragogy takes into consideration the life experiences the student brings to the classroom. More emphasis is placed on reflecting on one's work-based and life experiences (Raven, 2014). A key example of this method of teaching is when I teach Customer Relations and Servicing online. In the weekly class discussions, students are requested to talk about the weekly material but also digest it and share how it applies to their lives, and determine whether the title Customer Service Representative applies or not.

There are six underlying assumptions that describe the adult learner, through the lens of andragogy: as someone who (1) has a self-concept, (2) has life experiences, (3) has a need that demands learning, (4) is problem-centered,

(5) has internal motivation, and (6) has knowledge of why learning is necessary (Hiemstra, 2003). “Self-concept” assumes adults want and choose to learn. “Experience” assumes adult learners have lived experiences that contribute to the richness of class discussions. “Needs” that demand learning indicate the adult has a readiness to learn. “Problem-centered” assumes that adults have an immediate desire to apply learned material. Internal motivation refers to adults turning to education to improve different aspects of her/his life like self-esteem, self-actualization, and a better quality of life. Finally, adults want to understand why learning is necessary (Merriam, 2001; Baumgartner, Lee, Birden, Flowers, 2003).

Students who fit the andragogy model may find online education attractive. Ideally all educational opportunities will provide students the ability to express all six assumptions presented by Hiemstra (2003); however, online education adds in flexibility. Depending how courses are built, students can participate in course discussions outside of traditional face-to-face time frames. For example, a student may choose to participate in a class discussion at 4 a.m. before his or her family starts to wake. Online course discussions may also provide a sense of safety allowing the student to share personal, relatable stories with classmates with some anonymity. Through the sharing of experiences relating to the subject matter, an adult may take that knowledge outside of the classroom and apply it in real-time to his or her life.

Transformative Learning Theory

Jack Mezirow is credited for introducing Transformative Learning Theory in 1978 (Mezirow, 1997). This theory explains how adults can critically examine previously integrated knowledge and determine how new information will fit into an individual perspective (King, 2007; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007; Mezirow, 1997). Adult learners are unique in their methods of learning and assigning meaning to new information. King (2007) and Nohl (2015) go on to further explain that by living, adults acquire many experiences through feelings, conditioned responses, norms, values, and various associations to define their life and the world around them. Frames of reference are the structures of assumptions through which we understand our experiences. Transformative learning theory allows for individual interpretation of life experiences and occurs when learners are faced with a dilemma which calls for action requiring critical thinking (King, 2007; Nohl, 2015). King (2007) further suggests transformative learning is a uniquely adult theory and attempts to explain how adult expectations influence meaning assigned to experience.

Because education facilitates the transfer of information, understanding how transformative learning impacts online learners is critical to the design of an online course (Yuzer, Kurubacak, and Information Science, 2010). Research that compares face-to-face and online instruction verifies previous studies that online students are engaged at a higher level of thinking as opposed to merely recalling facts (Ogito, 2013). This higher level of thinking, as explained by Ogito (2013), is

the result of students exercising self-regulation and taking charge of their educational activity. Scardamalia and Bereiter (2008) explain faculty can encourage higher levels of learning through instructional design with online discussion boards and chatrooms. Ongito's (2013) study found gender did not play a significant role in learners' engagement of reflective learning practices. The study also revealed class-level (i.e. freshman, sophomore, etc.) does not impact the students' experience with online discussions. Lastly, the study identified self-efficacy and previous knowledge as major contributors to this higher level of thinking.

Teacher Immediacy

The last perspective to help guide this project is immediacy, which was popularized by Albert Mehrabian in the 1960s (Roberts & Friedman, 2013, Powell & Powell, 2016). Richmond (2002) describes immediacy as a psychological closeness or physical closeness perceived by students. Janis Andersen expanded immediacy in the late 1970's to discuss nonverbal behaviors as gestures, leaning forward, relaxed body posture, movement, smiling, nodding, variations in vocal tones, and eye contact in relation to student learning (Andersen, 1978). The applications of immediacy to educational settings introduces the idea that a teacher, using certain cues, can reduce the perceived psychological/emotional distance between instructor and learners and thereby influence certain classroom

outcomes, especially student learning (Allen, Witt, & Wheeless, 2006). Andersen (1979) discusses how all the behaviors impact student learning.

Teacher immediacy represents a behavior that an instructor can be trained to exhibit and/or increase. Faculty can bridge the perceived distance between faculty and student by using certain immediacy behaviors (Allen, Witt, & Wheeless, 2006). Examples of verbal immediacy behaviors include using personal examples, asking questions, using humor, addressing others by name, praising others, initiating discussion, and using inclusive pronouns (Kidd & Song, 2008). Witt, Wheeless, & Allen (2004) explain how crucial it is to call students by their first names. These verbal messages show empathy and openness. Other ways to reduce the perceived gap is to use inclusive language such as “us” and “we” instead of “you” and “I”. It is also important to encourage communication by seeking more student interaction. This is done by simply asking the student to continue talking or praising the conversation with the request for more.

The efficacy of nonverbal immediacy behavior is based in a reinforcement paradigm underlying attraction theory (Mehrabian, 1981). Stated simply, people approach stimuli that provide rewards and avoid stimuli that are not rewarding or punishing. Immediacy behaviors that a teacher displays in communicative acts and interactions with students, therefore, is rewarding. These behaviors typically include looking toward someone, leaning toward someone, touching someone in a non-threatening manner, sitting near someone, smiling, and speaking in an animated way (Planalp, 1993). It follows that these rewarding behaviors may

serve as reinforcement for the attentive behavior, feedback and interaction from the student that increase affective, cognitive, and behavioral learning (Kim & Hunter, 1993; LeFebvre & Mike, 2014). Increasing the willingness of students to approach and engage in educational tasks is critical to the learning process.

Behaviors within the classroom lay upon a continuum from hostile or immediacy reducing to intimate. Certain immediacy behaviors favor one side over the other, and vary among distance from the continuum's extremes. For example, ways of increasing immediacy can include using calm vocals, ensuring a comfortable physical distance between faculty and student, appropriate touch, like a pat on the back or high-five, eye contact and smiling (Lamm, 2011).

Another topic Lamm (2011) discusses is the appearance of the faculty member. Formally dressed professors are repeatedly rated as intelligent, competent and prepared. Unfortunately, formal dress does not always incite positive interpretations. Some students may view the attire as an indication the professor is not open to students' needs and is rigid in the course. On the other end of the dress continuum is the informally dressed teacher. Students interpret these individuals are flexible, fair, friendly, and not as prepared. Dress is something easily controllable by the teacher. Openness to the idea of mixing dress, more formal in the beginning and less formal after a few weeks shows faculty can change perceptions and outcomes.

The ability of a teacher to improve the outcomes of the educational environment by changing his or her communication behaviors is vital for persons

studying classroom communication. As a matter of fact, research continues to demonstrate that increased teacher immediacy directly impacts cognitive and behavioral learning for the better (Adams & DeFleur, 2006; Manduca, McConnell, Koballa, & Mogk, 2007). When faculty practice immediacy to reduce the psychological and/or physical barrier between students and themselves, it positively correlates with student motivation (Kerssen-Griep & Witt, 2012). Another factor to increase student motivation is the use of self-disclosure by the faculty member. This includes humor, personal stories, examples, and narratives (Frymier,1994, Goldman & Brann, 2016). Communication researchers discovered the use of affinity seeking strategies, like self-disclosure, and humor, positively related instructors' clarity cues to students' motivation (Myers, Blackman, Andersen, Hay, Lee, & Gray, 2014), and confirmation behaviors (Goodboy & Myers, 2008).

In the classroom, teachers engage in instructional communication to accomplish educational goals. Competent teachers select and employ a type of communication or method of instruction with the expectation that students respond favorably and increase learning (Comstock, Rowell, & Bowers, 1995). The question is whether the reaction to the behavior of the instructor facilitates or hinders a learning outcome. If the outcome sought is greater satisfaction from instruction, the argument becomes a teacher should enact a set of immediacy behaviors due to an increased level of learning (Witt, Wheeless, & Allen, 2004).

Immediacy is positively correlated to student attendance, participation, and affective learning (Rocca, 2001; 2004).

Immediacy in computer-mediated communication, or online courses, requires something dubbed social presence. Social presence is the awareness of others in an interaction (Frisby, Limperos, Record, Downs, & Kercsmar, 2014). Hughes (2014) discovered through recent research, social presence has been renamed or referred to as instructor presence when discussing online learning, and it is closely tied to the idea of interactivity in media. Hughes (2014) continued to discuss that social presence is composed of three dimensions: online communication, interactivity, and social context. Sheridan & Kelly (2010) define interactivity as communication strategies, formality of messages, and timeliness of responses and social context describes the instructors out-of-classroom presence, such as personal website, videos, and engaging in various forms of chat. Students rated interactivity with higher importance than social context in an online course (Sheridan & Kelly, 2010, Hughes, 2014).

Pulling together information from the reviewed literature, online faculty can start reducing the perceived gap between instructor and student by using inclusive language (Witt, Wheeless, & Allen, 2004). In communicating with the student, whether through email, video, or class discussions, use the student's first name. Also, especially in class discussions, provide praise to posts that exceed expectations and offer positive engagement to posts that need a bit more work. Let the student know, if true, he/she is on the correct path and ask the

student to develop the idea more. When communicating with the student(s) be sure to reinforce the idea you and the students are a team by using the terms “we” and “us”.

The next way to demonstrate immediacy is to solidify communication strategies. Make sure students are aware the classroom communication strategies. When teaching for Everest University Online, I committed to respond to direct messages, within our Learning Management System (LMS), and emails within 24-hours, except for Sundays. I vowed to grade submitted assignments within 72-hours of the due date. Lastly, in a professional, yet casual tone, I would communicate in language appropriate for the grade-level. These three practices exhibited the strategies emphasized by Sheridan & Kelly (2010) and Hughes (2014).

Together these three perspectives, andragogy, transformational learning theory, and teacher immediacy, have the potential to allow online faculty to develop strategies that can improve a student’s online learning experience. Remembering andragogy is geared towards the adult learner with life experiences, assessments can focus on “real life” applications. Creating assessments where a student can apply knew knowledge with existing knowledge is the backbone of transformative learning theory. And finally, teacher immediacy explained how to lessen the perceived distance between instructor and student.

CHAPTER THREE

QUALITY

Now that some guiding concepts have been identified and explained, it is natural to investigate current quality measures in place at institutions around the world since most online learning does not require the learner or the faculty member to be in a specific location. Techniques used in face-to-face classrooms are foundations that online teaching is built upon; however, some techniques must be altered in the online learning environment. For example, day or night, students have access to the class materials because of the Internet, thus turning online courses an asynchronous learning environment.

Because there are so many different distance learning platforms, it is vital to ensure there are certain quality standards throughout the course. To address such a problem, several quality rubrics were developed to measure and guide quality instruction; however, only three rubrics are examined here: The Quality Online Course Initiative (QOCI) (Ion, 2015), Quality Matters (QM) (Quality Matters, 2014), and the Quality Online Learning and Teaching (QOLT) (Quality Assurance, 2016). These quality measurement rubrics were chosen because they have all received recognition from the U.S. Department of Education. By far, these three quality controls are the most widely referenced in the online education realm.

Quality Online Course Initiative

The Illinois Online Network, an initiative for staff and faculty from higher education interested in online teaching, in a joint effort with the Illinois Virtual Campus, came together to form the QOCI (ION, 2015). QOCI developed an evaluation system for online instruction or an online course rubric. The collaboration had one goal in mind: to create a tool to improve accountability for online courses within the State of Illinois. Three targets were derived to create the tool:

- “create a useful tool (rubric) that can help faculty develop quality online courses
- identify ‘best practices’ in online courses
- recognize faculty, programs, and institutions that are creating quality online courses” (ION, 2015).

With the three objectives and goal in mind, the group established six categories to best achieve a rubric for building a quality online class. The rubric is built upon 1) instructional design, 2) communication, integration, and collaboration, 3) student evaluation and assessment, 4) learner support and resources, 5) web design, and 6) course evaluation. Illinois Online Network (ION) has created a sound rubric, which is seen when looking briefly at the six categories.

The first category, instructional design, addresses how the learner receives the skills and transferred knowledge through the digital instructional

methods. It specifically relates to the preferences, styles and strategies used inside the classroom. Next is the communication, interaction, and collaboration category. This category determines how technology uses, assignments, and course design support interactions between the content, instructor and learners. Student evaluation and assessment follows in the sequence. This grouping addresses the methods with which the institution measures quality of work and student progress. Moving on to the fourth category, learner support and resources, evaluates a virtual classroom on the technical, academic, and program resources available to the learners. Next is web design. Although content management systems (CMS) or LMS do not offer much flexibility; it is important to remember the use of outside webpages, multimedia, and graphics are important. The largest item to note is to follow the institution's accessibility standards. The last category is course evaluation. This refers to the mechanisms and processes where students can provide feedback and ways to improve the course and student experience.

To evaluate the course against these six categories, the QOCI team created an evaluation tool for the course creation rubric with five levels of achievement: non-existent, developing, meets, exceeds, and not applicable with an opportunity for the instructor to provide comments (ION, 2015). Designing the rubric and evaluation scale this way allows for the tool to be universal and altered to fit specific programs better than a rigid scale without narratives (ION, 2015).

Quality Matters

Funding from the US Department of Education Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education allowed MarylandOnline, a consortium of Maryland based colleges and universities, to improve their effectiveness of online learning (Quality Matters, 2014). Using the federal grant, MarylandOnline created the Quality Matters (QM) rubric addressing eight general criteria that they felt should be included in a distance learning course. Those criteria include 1) course overview and introduction, 2) learning objectives, 3) assessment and measurement, 4) resources and materials, 5) learner engagement, 6) course technology, 7) learner support, and 8) accessibility. The organization later expanded the eight criteria into 41 standards (Shattuck, 2010). This peer reviewed, faculty-driven process was built around being collaborative, collegial, continuous, and centered (Quality Matters, 2014). QM provides feedback, for faculty, through a peer-to-peer process, in the continuous improvement of courses and certifies courses as meeting shared best practice standards. The eight criteria are like QOCI's above.

The peer review process is an important part of the QM rubric. Initially, the designer can use the rubric to ensure graded areas are addressed before being reviewed. The rubric will help the designer demonstrate appropriate alignment among course components and other elements of good course design (Marlos Varonis, 2014). Ideally, if the rubric is used prior to the review, the review team should be able to quickly move through the review process.

The peer review team is comprised of three members that will fulfill multiple roles: the developer, an institutional representative, an external reviewer, a subject matter expert, and a team chair (Quality Matters, 2014). The reviewers work independently to determine if the course meets the 41 standards. Throughout the process, reviewers are encouraged to add comments to each standard. Once a review is complete, the team members individually enter their decisions online, and consensus is not required. Each standard must have a minimum of two meets standard to be awarded points. Once all standards have been entered by the team, the course must receive at least 85% of the points possible (Marlos Varonis, 2014). If the course receives an 85% or higher, the course is QM certified (Quality Matters, 2014).

Quality Online Learning and Teaching

The QOLT is a formal course review process developed by the California State University (CSU) system to design and evaluate online learning and teaching (Quality Assurance, 2016). Extensive research by the CSU went into the development of this tool, including the evaluation of the widely used QOCI and QM tools. The CSU expanded the above tools to a 10-principle guide, with 58 objectives. Mobile Platform Readiness (with four additional objectives) is the latest, optional, addition to the guide. Within the evaluation tool each principle contains several objects, which give instructors a detailed view of a quality online course. What makes this rubric unique is that each principle has incorporated a

rubric to provide responses based on the faculty's formative score. The QOLT design provides the designer with a formative rubric score after each section, and an overall, summative score at the end of the evaluation tool (Center for Distributed Learning, 2015).

QOLT's 10 principles are: 1) course overview and introduction, 2) assessment of student learning, 3) instructional materials and resources, 4) students' interaction and community, 5) facilitation and instruction, 6) technology for teaching and learning, 7) learner support and resources, 8) accessibility and universal design, 9) course summary and wrap-up, and 10) mobile readiness. A 5-point scale was developed to evaluate each objective: exceeds/always, meets/often, partially meets, sometimes, does not meet/rarely or never, and not applicable (Quality Assurance, 2016).

Using a combination of all three tools, designing an online course should achieve the desired learning outcomes. It should also increase both faculty and student satisfaction outcomes. Just as a syllabus is a roadmap for the students, and instructor, in the course, the evaluation quality control metrics are the roadmap for faculty creating a course. For example, student interaction and community helps students make connections inside the classroom, and see their peers and instructor as real people instead of a name that appears on the screen. Another example of a principle contributing to the course is clear instructions. When students understand what is expected of them and their work, there is less guesswork taking place, and less time spent trying to decipher what

should be done. The summaries and wrap-ups allow the instructor to reinforce ideas learned throughout the modules, but shares with the students what they should be grasping. If material in the module was not understood, the student can go back and review or reach out to the course community to seek further understanding.

One of the principles, which is growing quickly in popularity, is the need for mobile readiness. More courses are either being offered fully online, hybrid online, or provide supplemental learning materials (Condere, Krömer, & Schneider, 2016), consequently, mobile learning is on the rise as well (Lin, Lin, Ching-Hsuan, & Wang, 2016). Knowing how students access the online platform can assist with the design of the course. All the principles provide the necessary tools to ensure the course provides a superior educational experience.

Once the course has been developed, much of the heavy work for the faculty is complete. It then is time to moderate the class, and help students navigate through the sections or modules. One way of helping them along is to provide grading rubrics for assignments. Because online courses do not easily provide non-verbal cues, faculty members must be detailed when explaining expectations. When a grading rubric is provided to the class ahead of time, students understand the required work for that assignment. On the faculty's side, providing the rubric potentially lends itself to better prepared and thorough assignments.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that online learning has made an impact in the way universities present course content. The advancements in technology influence the methods of delivering education. For example, correspondence courses evolved into televised classes which then morphed into online classes, which are still evolving. As learners continue to embrace the leaps and bounds of improvements in electronics, educational institutions must remain on the forefront, constantly evaluating how education is presented.

By developing processes to provide checks and balances for online course creation, schools will continue to develop and improve curriculum. Andragogy, transformative learning theory, and teacher immediacy will help guide faculty developing online classes for an up-to-date curriculum that reaches all people who want to learn. The concepts discussed in the previous chapters provide framework for quality control measures when designing online courses.

In addition to the three theories, three large institutions have fine-tuned measures to ensure quality in an online education. The University of Illinois has developed the QOCI (ION, 2015) to support faculty designing and teaching online courses. MarylandOnline received federal money to develop QM (Quality Matters, 2014), to assure quality and course improvements in online learning. Finally, the California State University system developed the QOLT (Quality

Assurance, 2016) for faculty to develop effective online classes that contain appropriate teaching and learning.

Combining the three quality measures developed into *Quality Online Teaching: Effective Course Design Strategies* (Appendix A). The guide helps to focus faculty on vital parts of the online classroom. A proper and effective design within a Learning Management System will supplement the content entered for the learner. The guide will generate ideas for smooth navigation once online. Most importantly, it facilitates designing an online course with proven techniques. Some items within the guide will help faculty develop a course that meets program and course learning outcomes, help develop materials relevant to the course topics, and create a logical flow within the learning management system. Throughout the guide, checklists are provided to assist faculty with each of the major components discussed. The goal is for a faculty member to create an engaging learning experience for students, regardless of the subject matter.

APPENDIX A

QUALITY ONLINE TEACHING:

EFFECTIVE COURSE DESIGN STRATEGIES

Quality Online Teaching: Effective Course Design Strategies

By

Patrick A. Bungard, M.B.A.

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A huge thank you goes out to my savior Jesus Christ, without whom this manual never would have come to fruition. Next, I would like to thank and acknowledge my husband, my mom, my dad, the Communication Studies faculty at California State University, San Bernardino, and of course my friends and classmates. You all played a vital role in the success of this manual. You gave me a sounding board, provided comical relief, pushed me to succeed, and gave me encouragement to persevere to the end. I've missed dinners, social gatherings, family functions in the name of this manual and your understanding throughout the whole process means the world to me.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Due to the ever-changing nature of technology and education, the definition of distance learning evolves. What once could have been a correspondence course, over the years, developed into a tele-course and eventually evolved into an online course—mostly due to the advances in technology.

In some institutions, online education is taking a predominant role in educational institutions. Faculty, staff and students are supporting this trend while some are reluctant to the change. Despite faculty warming up to the idea of online learning, there are still many who are skeptical about the quality of online education (Allen, Seaman, Lederman, & Jaschik, 2012).

This manual intends to address quality concerns by introducing you to online learning and help you understand the common, repetitive factors that affect the success of students. It will also describe the design approach used to assist you with creating your online class. This manual discusses the need for key persistence variables, which greatly impact students in online learning environments. A large portion of the manual discusses the quality standards for online classroom design by three large institutions, Maryland-based colleges and universities' Quality Matters (QM) (Quality Matters, 2014), which was derived from a US Department of Education grant, the Illinois Online Network's Quality Online Course Initiative (QOCI) (Ion, 2015), and California State University's Quality Online Learning and Teaching (QOLT) (Quality Matters, 2014).

Throughout the chapters, there are samples of design criteria discussed within. After the examples, a course checklist is provided to give the designer a roadmap and eventually an evaluation rubric for the course.

CHAPTER 2

COURSE OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION

The course overview and introduction should be the first item a student sees; however, many of the items contained within the overview are among the last to be created (Thormann & Zimmerman, 2012). The course overview provides a general roadmap for learners. It should briefly orientate the learner to the platform and navigation. A struggle that most first time online learning students face is their ability to engage in online learning and decipher the expectations from the instructor. When students are not sure of what is expected of them, it causes lots of confusion which, if not addressed develops into anxiety. The anxiety then compounds preventing the student from fully participating in the course and may lead to dropping out (Palloff & Pratt, 2013). The next couple of pages will help create a well-designed course overview, which can alleviate the above uncertainties.

Organization

The most crucial aspect of an online faculty member to consider is the organization of the course. A poorly designed course provides unnecessary frustration for both the students and the instructor. Creating an intuitive navigation, in the online course, will prevent students from wasting time looking for assignments, as students typically complete assignments at the eleventh hour (Motte, 2013). The effective management of information within the classroom is vital when the course is completely online and students never meet face-to-face (Cole & Foster, 2008).

Since the average online student has responsibilities: work, family, and other distractions, the course organization is crucial for the student's success. Instructors should keep this in mind when designing a course. Make items like the grade book, modules, and announcements easy to access with the least amount of clicks as possible. (Motte, 2013). Research shows that courses that students perceive as overwhelming tend to have a design that is neither logical nor clear (Wighting, Liu, & Rovai, 2008). Well-designed online courses were reported to produce more positive learning outcomes and be related to overall student satisfaction. Design and quality are important. Student learning outcomes, attitudes and success can be directly linked to the organization of online course per Simonson (2006). Tallent-Runnels, Thomas, Lan, Cooper, Ahern, Shaw, & Liu (2006) found that student success, in an online environment, was attributed, in part, to the transparency of the interface. This is to say, there should not be information that is difficult to find or hidden from the learner.

Once again, to provide clear and detailed navigational instructions for students to begin accessing all course components, faculty must pay close attention to the aesthetics of the main page or entry point of the course. Items that must be easily accessible are the class syllabus, course calendar, assignments, and support files (Quality Assurance, 2016). This area should also include basic items like course goals, objectives, and outcomes. An explanation of the modules should be on the first page that appears, along with the course description. Within a click or two, students should be able to discover their instructor's information, like contact methods, biography, office hours, a picture, and any other pertinent information the instructor feels is necessary (Quality Matters, 2014).

Most learning management systems (LMS) or course management systems (CMS) are designed for faculty to use modules that can be arranged in several ways. A common way to create modules is to mirror face-to-face courses in time delineation. Some other ways faculty can organize modules is by topic, project, or whatever is believed to be able to assist students' navigation of the course. The modules can be complex or simple, depending on the instructor's preference and the course material (Cooke & Grant-Davie, 2013). A typical module will have several items: discussion, teamwork, quiz, and lecture material. A more extensive module may include detailed overview of a topic, module objectives, several subtopics, individual and group activities, assignments, reading assignments and more (M. Skinner, personal communication February 10, 2015).

When content is broken into weekly, biweekly, monthly, or other combinations, it is easy to guide students through the subject matter. It is a sign of a well-designed online course. A module could even be related to a classroom lecture and activity. Typical learning modules have their benefits. Instructors can build on classic classroom lectures, can govern what is seen and when it is visible, and can control the pace of the course. These techniques can virtually eliminate students' confusion by requiring methodological movement though the modules. Learners generally applaud the transparent structure provided by well-designed modules, and often feel a greater sense of advancement as they work their way from module to module. Students can see how they are achieving the various course objectives when each module is completed (Cooke & Grante-Davie, 2013).

It is important that learners feel confident in their ability to engage in the course, so as soon as learners enter the course, their focus should be clear. Since some learners, especially if this is their first online course, have difficulty understanding where to start and navigating the platform, an orientation guide should be created. This guide may help the students navigate the classroom and improve their confidence in the class. Stavredes & Herder (2014) recommend the guide include items such as an explanation how they can interact with the instructor and fellow classmates, how they will receive feedback, recommendations on time management, support contacts, and rules of netiquette. Other items the authors recommend is to include a personal teaching style, the organization and pace of the course, important due dates, and specific policies that apply to online learning.

Communication

Written communication is the main method of communication in online learning, therefore, it is important to be conscious of the tone of the message. Living in the 21st century, you know that written communication is very different from face-to-face communication. The tone of a message is not always easy to interpret by the receiver. You could write to a student with the intention of being lighthearted, but the receiver might not see it that way. The same can go for serious or sarcastic tones. Without the visual or audible cues, it is hard for the receiver to truly understand your tone. Per Tubbs & Moss (2006), individuals will use a variety of techniques to express feelings or create impressions. They will change the tone of their writing by using incorrect or

inappropriate punctuation, capitalization or lack of, or emoticons in their message. This is when online etiquette, or netiquette, comes into play. If a section in the introduction of the course is dedicated to netiquette, misinterpreted messages can be minimized (Betts, 2009).

Common suggestions for generating best practices, according to Everest University (Corinthian Colleges Inc., personal communication, October 16, 2013), are:

- Always be professional; but allow your personality to show
- Proofread your message, checking for spelling/grammar errors, and clarity
- Use easy to read fonts and colors
- Never say anything electronically that you would not say face-to-face
- Always be respectful and polite
- Humor is not easily understood when written and may be interpreted as offensive
- Avoid writing when angry or upset
- Use proper capitalization (avoid all caps) and punctuation

Another item to consider, when thinking about communication in your online class, is to communicate often with your student. Think about when you were earning your degrees. Imagine you were sitting in a classroom all alone, trying to figure out an assignment. This is how an online student can feel: alone. One way you can reduce that feeling is by showing a presence in the class. That can be done with mass emails, personal emails, announcements, and participating in class and/or team discussions.

Two more items come to mind, which are vital to making a connection with students. Create a communication policy in your course. One policy that was encouraged by Everest University is to respond to student emails within 24 hours, except for one

specified day a week (Corinthian Colleges, Inc., personal communication, October 16, 2013). Many faculty chose to not work on their classes on Sundays, after all we all deserve a day off. The key is to make sure your students know that if they send a message late Saturday, they probably will not get a response until Monday.

The other item important to making a connection is calling your students by their first name. Typically, the one word we like to hear most is our name. We pay attention when we hear it. When you address your students by name, it communicates to them that you see them as a real person who matters (Johnson, 2013). This is a simple way to engage your students and get them to be more receptive.

The course overview and introduction take a lot of time and energy when designing a course. Most often, they are the last items to be created as they address items created in the course. Many of the checklist items (seen below the examples) in this section can be addressed in the welcome message or first page of the course, announcements, and syllabus.

Home
Announcements
Syllabus
Modules
Grades
People
Files
Quizzes
Assignments
Discussions
Pages
Outcomes
Conferences
Collaborations
Settings

Customer Relations & Servicing

Edit

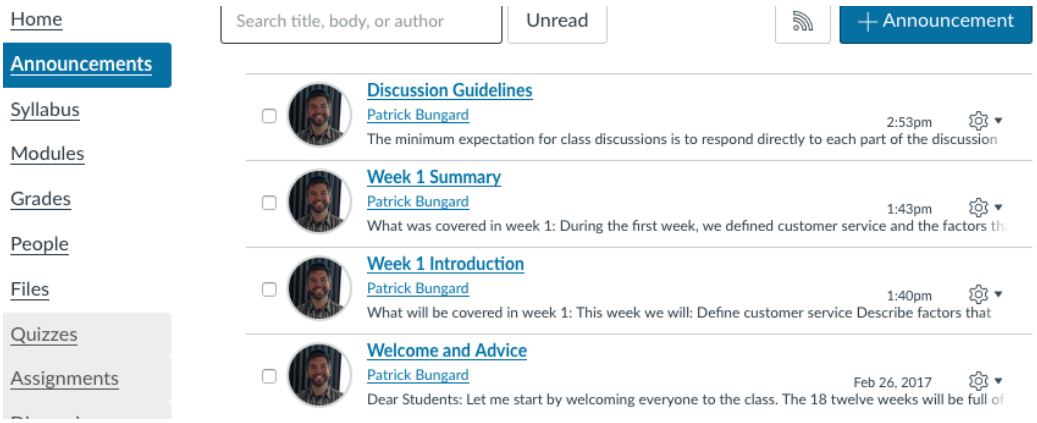
Welcome to Customer Relations & Servicing. As you found out (or will find out) in the announcement, I have degrees in business and communication studies. All the degrees were a lot of work with a lot of public speaking.

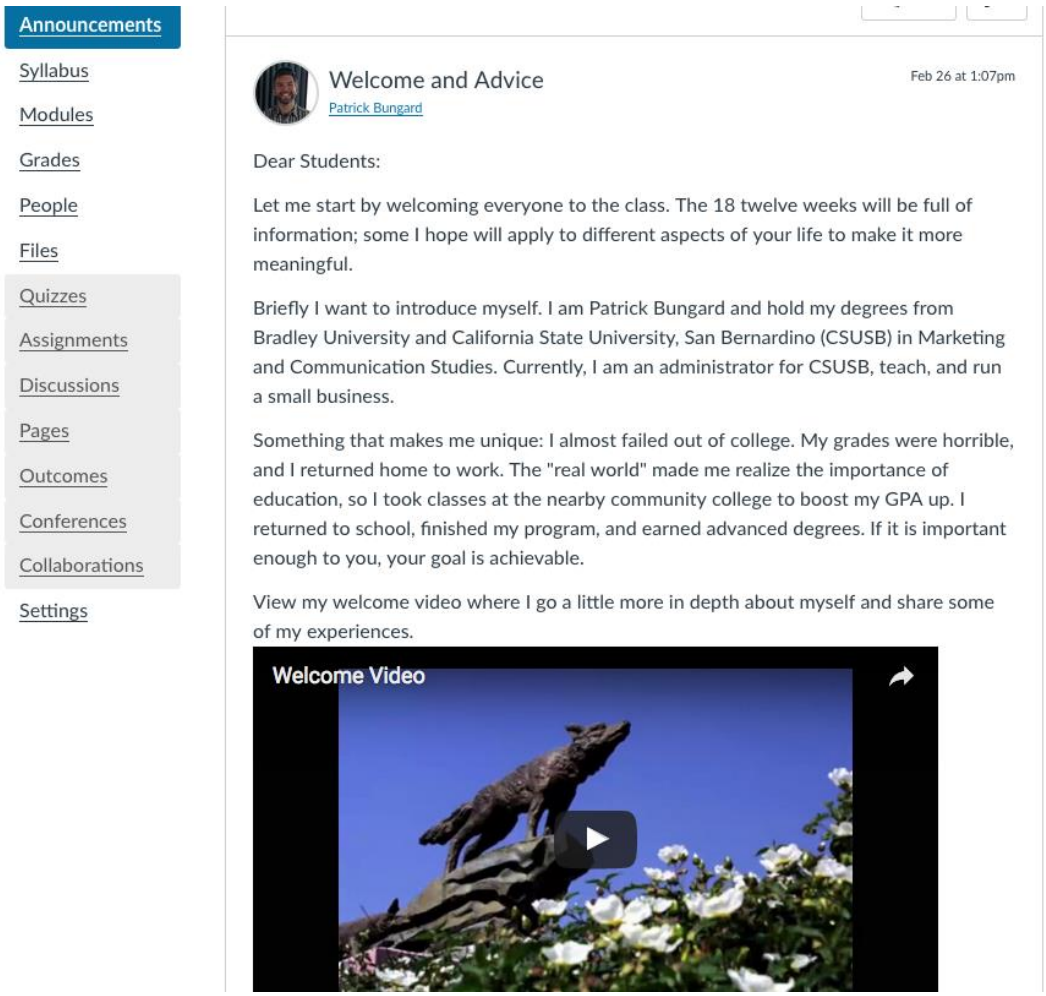
Right now, if you have not gone through the Course Syllabus, it is a good time to familiarize yourself with it. You can find it by clicking on Course Syllabus or Syllabus on the left side of your screen.

This first partial week will be light. We will introduce ourselves, be assigned to teams, complete a short assignment, and complete a syllabus quiz. This will be the structure throughout the term.

Before we begin, I would like to point out the Announcements link (to the left). Get in the habit of checking the announcements regularly. I will include pertinent information to tackle the modules, summary information, and important items as they arise.

To begin click on Modules (to the left), select the module you want to work in, and begin reading the materials for the week.


Home
Announcements
Syllabus
Modules
Grades
People
Files
Quizzes
Assignments
Search title, body, or author
Unread
Announcement
Discussion Guidelines
Patrick Bungard
2:53pm
The minimum expectation for class discussions is to respond directly to each part of the discussion
Week 1 Summary
Patrick Bungard
1:43pm
What was covered in week 1: During the first week, we defined customer service and the factors th
Week 1 Introduction
Patrick Bungard
1:40pm
What will be covered in week 1: This week we will: Define customer service Describe factors that
Welcome and Advice
Patrick Bungard
Feb 26, 2017
Dear Students: Let me start by welcoming everyone to the class. The 18 twelve weeks will be full of


Announcements
Syllabus
Modules
Grades
People
Files
Quizzes
Assignments
Discussions
Pages
Outcomes
Conferences
Collaborations
Settings
Welcome and Advice
Patrick Bungard
Feb 26 at 1:07pm
Dear Students:
Let me start by welcoming everyone to the class. The 18 twelve weeks will be full of information; some I hope will apply to different aspects of your life to make it more meaningful.
Briefly I want to introduce myself. I am Patrick Bungard and hold my degrees from Bradley University and California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB) in Marketing and Communication Studies. Currently, I am an administrator for CSUSB, teach, and run a small business.
Something that makes me unique: I almost failed out of college. My grades were horrible, and I returned home to work. The "real world" made me realize the importance of education, so I took classes at the nearby community college to boost my GPA up. I returned to school, finished my program, and earned advanced degrees. If it is important enough to you, your goal is achievable.
View my welcome video where I go a little more in depth about myself and share some of my experiences.
Welcome Video

Now that that some examples of an introductory page and an announcement have been shared, it is time to review the checklist items for this chapter.

Course Design Criteria **Overview and Introduction**	
Criteria	**Met (Yes/No)**
Follows university standards.	
Comments	
Upon first logging, student can easily understand what to do.	
Comments	
Provide course orientation and explain various components.	
Comments	
Introduction to the course with expected outcomes.	
Comments	
Explanation of unit length, weekly activities, deadlines/due dates, etc.	
Comments	
Explain course policies, expectations of discussions, and codes of conduct.	
Comments	
Explanation of minimum technical requirement as well as technical skills needed.	
Comments	

Course Design Criteria Overview and Introduction	
Criteria	**Met (Yes/No)**
Defined methods of communication with response times for voicemail, e-mail, and course messages	
Comments	
Provide timeline for when assignment grades will be posted.	
Comments	

CHAPTER 3

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF STUDENT LEARNING

Before we get too far into this topic, the difference between assessment and evaluation must be framed. Assessments are ongoing processes, in education, to improve learning. The goal of an assessment is to recognize how well students comprehend the components of a topic. Assessment is an ongoing process, generally formative (Dayton, 2015). A formal definition, according to Dayton (2015) of evaluation is an appraisal or estimation of something's value. In contrast, evaluations are summative and more of a final process.

Although assessments are seen by some as a burdensome and demanding task, it is essential in educational environments. To improve and reinforce the transfer of knowledge, students need feedback on their learning activities. The assessments must align with the content and skills being taught. They must also match the learning styles of the students. Early assessments provide the instructor with the ability to tailor the delivery methods, pace of the course, presentation material (Dede, 2004). Based off these arguments, assessments are critical to ensure learning is happening, despite critics' concerns that online learners cannot be effectively evaluated (Miller, 2008). Stavredes & Herder (2014) present evidence that there are many valid ways to evaluate students learning in online course, such as tests, portfolios, authentic performance-based assessments, collaborative and peer assessments, self-assessments, or reflective assessments.

Minimizing Cheating

Just as a traditional class, choices about how student performance will be evaluated are made during the preparation stages of the class. The burning question becomes what is the best method for determining how students understand content and relate it correctly? Quizzes, tests, and papers are most often used to assess knowledge acquisition in face-to-face classrooms (T. Stavredes, personal communication, August 11, 2016). In a digital environment, faculty must carefully consider the assessments used to evaluate a student's progress. Ensuring the student is completing the assessments is more difficult online than face-to-face.

However, tests and quizzes may not be the best measure of knowledge acquisition and application online due to concerns of cheating. There are, nonetheless, ways to minimize the possibility of cheating. More and more LMS are including options to sign up for proctored exam eservices, like those offered by ProctorU (ProctorU, 2016). The process, however is burdensome for the students since ProctorU charges the students, they must show proper identification, and use a webcam when taking the quiz or test. This does, however, drastically reduce the chance of cheating (Thormann & Zimmerman, 2012).

For the instructor to generate trust in the students' capabilities to complete the work, it is recommended to use thought-provoking writing assignments. Quizzes and tests, are an easy way to measure learning; however, without tools like Turnitin, a plagiarism detection software (Turnitin, 2017), and ProctorU, a proctoring service, faculty cannot not be certain the person completing the test is the student (ProctorU,

2017). Therefore, it is advisable to limit the use of tests and quizzes and replace them with critical thinking exercises. It also provides the teacher reoccurring proof the work students can produce, and most significantly, empowers students to engage in their own learning process. A benefit to teaching online is as the class advances, teachers learn to distinguish the unique writing style each student has (Palloff & Pratt, 2013). The advantage in the online course is that students not only submit papers but also post written responses to online discussions. Therefore, any variations in a student's writing become more obvious and can be addressed by the instructor. Plagiarism detection applications or running a few sentences through a search engine can also help reassure the instructor that the student is doing her/his own work and is paraphrasing and citing appropriately.

Authentic Assessment

Thormann & Zimmerman (2012) identify several student learning evaluation methods: authentic assessment, pre- and post-testing, observing, weekly discussion postings, peer evaluation and self-evaluations. An authentic assignment actively engages the learner and demonstrates understanding plus application in real life and contains the following characteristics: include a performance task, requires one to solve complex problems, involves real world connections, offers a level of choice, and involves opportunities for feedback (Egan, Waugh, Giles, & Bowles, 2017). Thormann & Zimmerman (2013) emphasize using a combination of these methods throughout the course will provide the most feedback to whether students can comprehend and apply the

learned data. Mixing the evaluation procedures also prompts students to maintain motivation and engagement. Each method is briefly discussed below.

Authentic assessment actively engages students and demonstrates to the instructor that students not only understand the concepts but also can apply them in real-life scenarios (Mueller, 2006). Assignments should serve as constant evaluations of students. The assignments should maximize their efficacy by generating work relevant to the student's situation.

By continuously evaluating the students' activities in the classroom, instructors have an opportunity to evaluate how effective the assignments are and can ensure quality teaching and learning is being offered to the students. One method of superior teaching, which allows continuous evaluation, is breaking down large assignments into smaller ones that build upon each other (Thormann & Zimmerman, 2012). An example for a marketing class is creating a marketing plan. Each week, students can complete a section of the plan, then complete the plan and present to the class at the end of the term. This type of evaluation is appreciated by online students, as it allows them to receive regular feedback, since there are no other signals to let them know how they are doing in the class. Constant evaluation and continual progress serve as inspiration for all and offer tangible gauges of how teaching and learning are advancing (Cole & Foster, 2008).

Professors Haavind and Carter, as cited in Thormann and Zimmerman (2012) formulated the following questions to help faculty with class and team discussions. They share these samples in hopes of generating more engagement and meaningful discussions within the classroom. As a faculty member, when you participate, do you…

1. raise new questions

2. share and explore confusion
3. pose hypotheses or conjectures
4. take risks by sharing incomplete ideas
5. share new insights gleaned from the discussion
6. respond to the questions of others
7. build on the ideas of others
8. move beyond brainstorming
9. ask for clarification
10. use questions to stimulate thinking
11. appropriately challenge assumptions
12. support or challenge assertions or explanations with additional data, evidence, or counterevidence
13. support findings and conjectures of others with explanations
14. support the learning of others
15. make cogent summaries
16. point out commonalities or differences
17. note and compare differing approaches/answers/perspectives
18. find connections between ideas
19. consider and celebrate multiple approaches and explanations
20. help to resolve differences (when appropriate)
21. suggest a focus
22. evidence genuine interest in understanding the ideas of others (vs. just determining whether they agree or disagree with you) and see this as a source of learning for themselves (Thormann & Zimmerman, 2012, p. 115)

Thormann & Zimmerman (2012) stress the importance of self- and peer-evaluation being added into the course. Having learners appraise their own efforts using rubrics that the instructor generates encourages students and helps acquire greater

ownership of the learning process. In addition, it can contribute to students concentrating closely on what the class requirements are and what students want to acquire (Palloff & Pratt, 2013). Self-evaluation places more accountability for learning on the student.

The importance of peer evaluations is not always recognized as valuable to students, but Stavredes and Herder (2014) point out, class and team discussions are public. It is their experience that most students do not want to appear inadequate or foolish in front of their classmates. This unintentional form of pressure also improves the quality of the student's work throughout the course.

Just as in traditional face-to-face learning, it is necessary for students to complete assignments as part of their learning and evaluation process. Typically, instructors should choose to have students complete an assortment of activities throughout the class rather than just test sporadically. Students should know, from the beginning that all the coursework contributes to their grade. Along with graded assignments, it is important for students to recognize how assignments are graded and receive feedback that will contribute to further understanding and improve future grades.

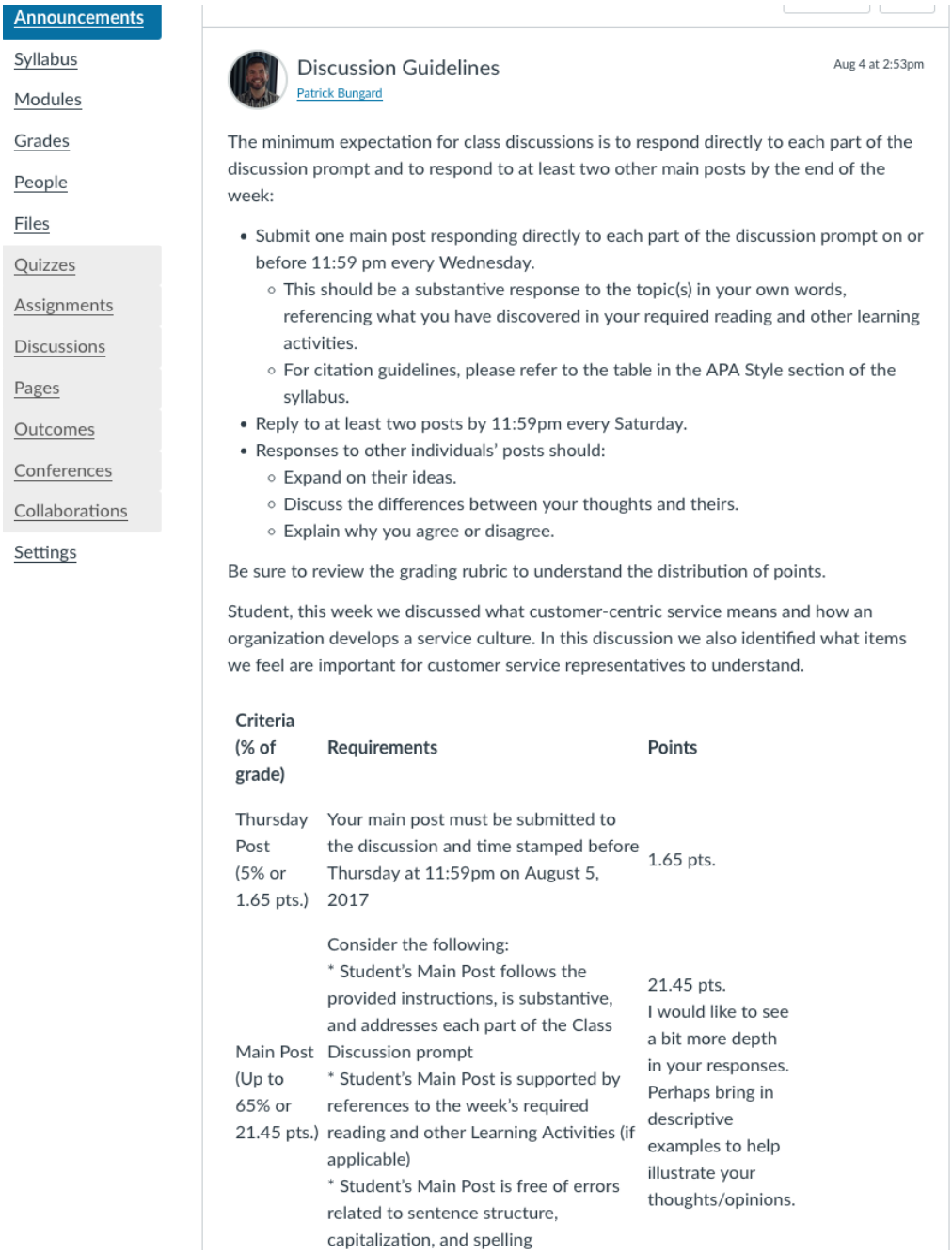
Lastly, grading is addressed. Grading in the online courses depends on the rubrics created prior to the class going live to students. Generating the assignments, and rubrics, before the class begins, as discussed earlier, frees the faculty member's time so he/she can focus on the class activities rather than preparing for "the next thing." Traditional visual cues are not as abundant in an online environment, so faculty do not have as many opportunities to pick-up visual cues about a student's performance, like a questioning face. Feedback is the ultimate measure of performance (Palloff & Pratt, 2013). Students

need corrective feedback on each assignment because the teacher does not have the ability to monitor the classroom live and give verbal feedback while work is being completed (Thormann & Zimmerman, 2012). Since feedback is vital in education, online faculty members must ensure their students receive regular feedback on activities inside of the classroom. Graded assignments provide one way of letting students know their progress throughout the term. Grades that include comments, with substance, within 72 hours of an assignments due date, is a foundation for the courses I've taught for over ten years. (M. Skinner, personal communication, February 10, 2015).

Assessments are a large part of education that document student's progress understanding material. Unfortunately assessments are not foolproof, and prone to dishonesty, especially in an online setting. Therefore, faculty must be aware of options that help ensure the correct individual is completing assessments, like quizzes or exams.

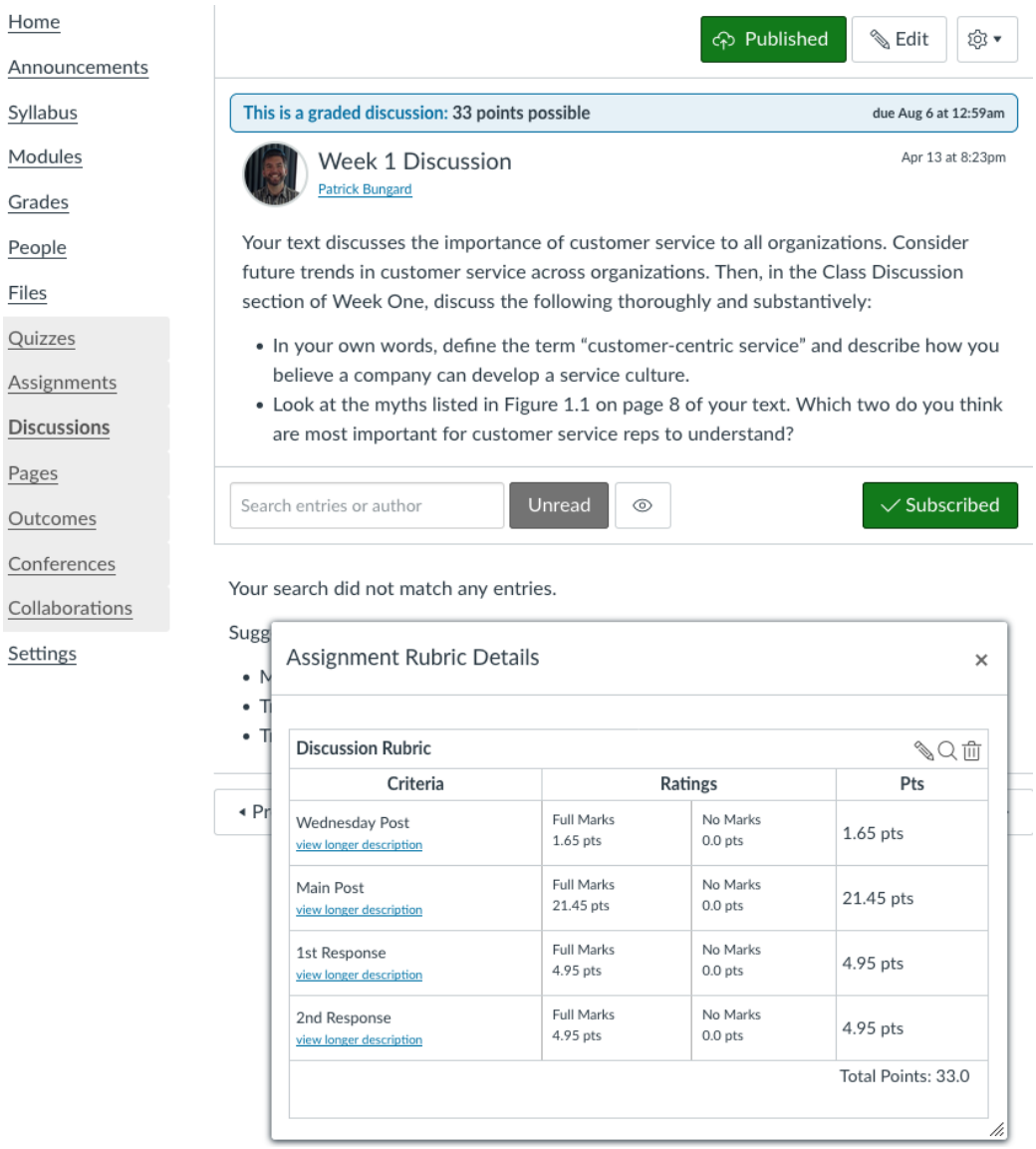
When designing authentic assessments, such as class dicussions, make sure to let students know the expectations for the discussion. It is also beneficial to provide them with a grading rubric.

This announcement explains due dates and point distribution.



This assignment allows students to formulate a response based upon their personal experiences guided by the reading assignment. This particular LMS has an

option requiring the student to respond to the discussion prompt before seeing classmates' responses.



The next page contains a checklist covering items discussed in the chapter.

Course Design Criteria Assessment and Evaluation	
Criteria	**Met (Yes/No)**
Assessments are relevant to current events.	
Comments	
Assessments align to competencies.	
Comments	
Strategies allow opportunities for students to demonstrate skills and knowledge.	
Comments	
Strategies provide adequate opportunity to illustrate performance standards.	
Comments	
Course provides appropriate practice before being assessed.	
Comments	
Students appropriately prepared for activities.	
Comments	
Opportunity for students to re-evaluate prior to final assessment.	
Comments	
Adequately prepares students for final assessment.	
Comments	

Course Design Criteria Assessment and Evaluation	
Criteria	**Met (Yes/No)**
Instructor and peer feedback is consistent and timely.	
Comments	

CHAPTER 4

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

There are two approaches for supplying instructional material using the philosophy of online education in conjunction with the theory of andragogy. They are, specifying assignments for the complete course at the beginning and revealing tasks as the course progresses (Palloff & Pratt, 2013). Research that suggests allowing learners to view all the assignments at the beginning of the course reduces apprehension (Chou, 2003). Furthermore, if students choose to prepare ahead of time, this option gives them the opportunity to do so. One reason for revealing coursework as the class progresses is to prevent losing the learning progression by students from jumping ahead. Several LMS's offer tools to allow a certain progression of learning activities within time restrictions. For example, in discussion posts, students must first submit their response to the prompt before they can see their peer's contributions. Creating modules with time restrictions allows the instructor to control when students can move on to new material. If these techniques are used, be sure to explain the progression of the course and share the dates of when items will be available as well as due dates.

The instructor's teaching style will dictate what methods is used, as there are several convincing arguments for both sides. One side contends that assignments and material are too complex to share with students at the beginning of the course. Others argue that assignments are outlined in a syllabus, so it is not unreasonable students get the information from the start (Cole & Foster, 2008). No matter which approach is selected, it is imperative to provide assignments in a logical sequence to learners. Dede (2004)

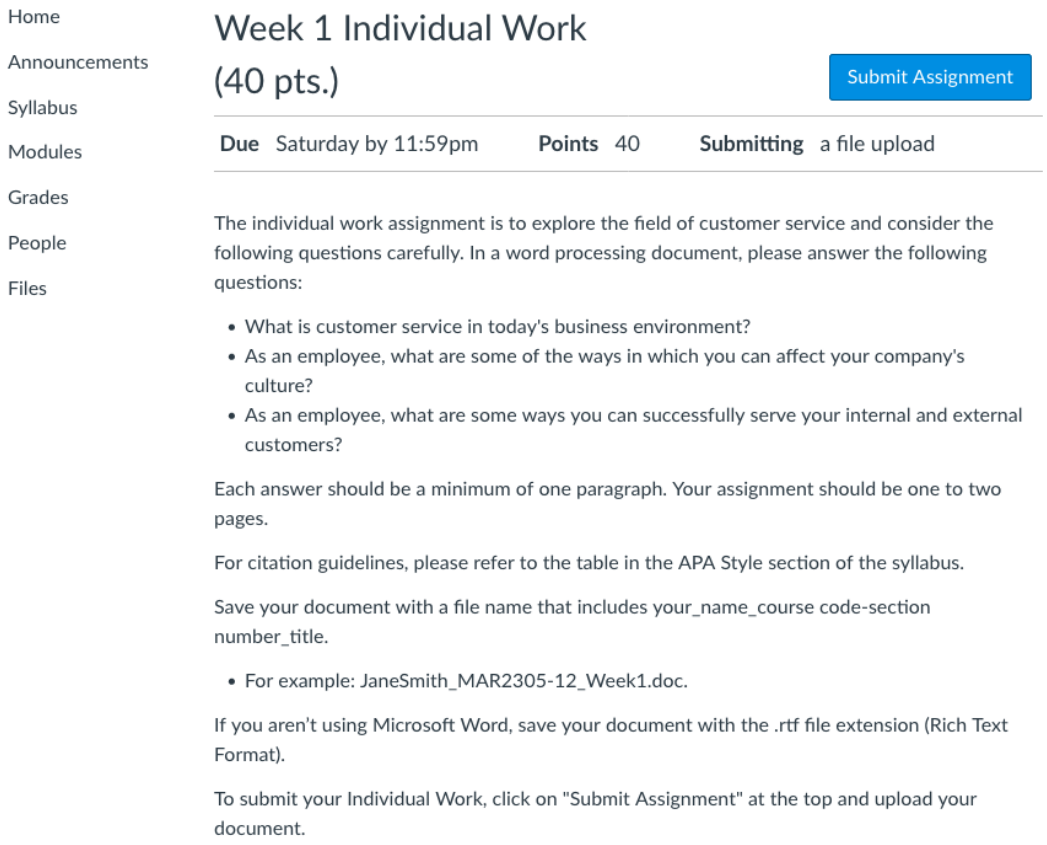
proposes that a sequential or progressive approach is not always essential as some learners can impose their own structure on the activities/assignments. Dede's argument has one major drawback: class discussions. When individuals post to moderated discussion boards early, there is a tendency to not return when the rest of the class is active in the discussion. Because of this, assignment distribution is just one of the areas in which the instructor needs to make decisions.

Since learning activities like assignments and discussions are primarily communicated through text, clear directions to for assignments, as well as having materials ready prior to releasing them to class, is vital. When the whole course is developed before the start of class, online teaching is most successful. The instructor, then, can concentrate on student interactions and maintain a presence in the classroom rather than focusing on next module (M. Skinner, personal communication, February 10, 2015).

An organized and effective syllabus will clearly indicate required textbooks and materials, and explain the course roadmap (Center for Distributed Learning, 2015). At the beginning of each module, the instructor must clearly communicate the purpose of each institutional material and how it is related to the module activities, learning objectives and students' success. Information should be grouped to help students to learn the content (ION, 2015). Lastly the designer must incorporate a variety of instructional delivery methods, accommodating multiple learning styles are available throughout the course and ensure instructional materials are current. It remains vital, however, to not over- rely on

only one content type (Center for Distributed Learning, 2015; ION, 2015; Quality Matters, 2014).

Whatever is deemed applicable by you, make sure to provide students with the appropriate details, or access to details about the assignment and due date. In the example below, this assignment requires critical thinking as well as written skills.



Course Design Criteria Instructional Materials and Resources	
Criteria	**Met (Yes/No)**
All instructional materials and resources support program outcomes.	
Comments	
Learners understand how materials and resources help achieve objectives.	
Comments	
Instructional materials are comprehensible to target population.	
Comments	
Received copyright clearance where necessary.	
Comments	
Learners are engaged with online resources.	
Comments	
Critical thinking is promoted.	
Comments	
Assignments improve writing skills.	
Comments	

Course Design Criteria Instructional Materials and Resources	
Criteria	**Met (Yes/No)**
Relevant to real-world.	
Comments	
Explanation of how activities achieve expected outcomes.	
Comments	

CHAPTER 5

COMMUNICATION, STUDENT INTERACTION AND COMMUNITY

With online classes, the instructor and students communicate electronically several times a week through email, telephone, voicemail, and video conferencing. The bulk of the asynchronous communication will take place on the classroom discussion board (ION, 2015). For effective learning to occur, there must be a sense of community. The discussion elements play crucial roles in creating and sustaining this sense of community. In fact, the synergy of the discussion is probably the most important learning tool of an online course (Palloff & Pratt, 2013). To help create an online environment where learners are eager to participate, successful online instructors use several strategies. Several of the strategies also assist with the demands and pace of the online discussion (ION, 2015). For example, ION (2015) suggests discussion questions that are not completely straightforward. A straightforward discussion does not lend itself to much discussion as a question that allows for multiple correct answers or multiple ways to come to a correct answer.

Clear communication is critical to express expectations in the class. Justin Keel, an instructional designer for Frostburg State University, explored the effect immediacy has on clear communication at BbWorld17, which brings together educators from around the world for inspiring keynotes, educational sessions, product demonstrations, hands-on workshops, knowledge sharing, and networking (Keel, 2017). His presentation relates immediacy to instructor presence, which is a combination of projection of a real person, attitude, timeliness, and student interaction. Wakefield

(2015) touches on how the Internet and social media create a free-for-all in online interactions allowing us to write things to or about strangers that we would never say face-to-face. Creating the projection of a real person reduces this behavior because the students see the instructor as a real person, not a typed name flashing on their screen. Ways to make that real person projection is by sharing personal stories with pictures, or by creating a brief introductory video introducing a new module or assignment.

Ladyshewsky (2013) discusses the instructor's attitude towards online learning, which plays a large role in student success and satisfaction. If you preferred not to teach a class online and do not think the class will be successful, your attitude is projected to the students through your various interactions with them. If your attitude is that the class will not be successful, the student reviews at the end of the class will prove it was not a success (Keel, 2017). On the other hand, if you are positive and excited about online learning, it will show through your interactions and your students will have a more positive experience in your online course.

Timeliness relates to your policies in the course- like how soon you will respond to emails/voicemails and how quickly you grade. It is a fantastic idea to put this information in the syllabus, and letting students know your expectations up front will improve students' experiences. If your policy is to respond to emails within 24-hours, except for Sundays, you must stick to that policy. The moment you slip, students are likely to jump to the conclusion that you do not care.

Student interaction means how you interact with students. Certainly, timeliness is going to be important. Be sure to follow the communication policy you share with the

class. Other ways to make a connection with your students is to address them by first name, give praise, contribute to discussions and ask questions, and use inclusive pronouns—use “we” instead of “you” or “I” (Keel, 2017).

Grading can be arduous, however, simplify the process by creating a grading rubric, which includes a participation policy for discussions. Experienced online faculty, Stavredes and Herder (2014), share that a participation policy should include numerical amounts for the minimum number of weekly student contributions to class and team discussions. The two authors go on to say students may provide short, trivial posts, however, that is a beginning for the group discussion. Over the next several days, or weeks, responses and contributions will become more meaningful and insightful. This is an opportunity for the instructor to ask probing questions and reward quality postings. When grading, first and foremost, address the student by name, then provide details where points are deducted.

Pulling from Chapter 4: Instructional Materials and Resources (above), the faculty member should always provide an agenda for the weekly activities. The agenda should include all assignments and due dates for the week. This will prove useful to students as it helps them to know what is expected of them and to keep them on track (M. Skinner, personal communication, February 10, 2015).

Another useful technique to encourage communication and community is to provide conversational toned lectures—these are lectures that are less formal. The lectures should be written like you are telling a story. This can be done by avoiding a passive voice, using contractions, asking questions, and using “you” and “I”. Adding a

little bit of humor to responses or providing personal stories helps the students know their professor is a real person. Avoiding a dry, purely factual tone, which is often found in scholarly writing, can help students feel more at ease and hopefully be willing to participate. Also avoid abbreviations, acronyms, colloquialisms, and slang (ION, 2015). Use, or overuse of these, can derail the instructor's authority in the classroom. As a faculty with an advanced degree, make sure to write in well-structured, complete sentences and be precise.

Discussion board communication should not be more than one screen long. By placing too much of a burden on writing, students will check out. Long posts imply a lengthy response is necessary. Also, readers will start to lose focus and interest in the post if it goes on and on and on. At the same time, try to be sensitive to varied cultural backgrounds and multiple communication styles. Most faculty begin a course with a get-to-know you discussion. Use this opportunity to learn about your students, so you can be aware of cultural backgrounds, if students share. Humor is typically culturally specific and will not be interpreted the same by everyone. Students with different backgrounds will also have different language skills and understanding (Cowan, 2009). This introduction can also indicate the communication style of the student, and you can even ask them to identify their preferred communication style, for example, phone calls, text messages, messages sent through the LMS, emails directly, or even face-to-face (if it is an option). Not being aware of student communication preferences can alienate learners and ultimately harm their grade.

Faculty must maintain substantial visibility in online courses in order for students to not feel isolated (Crawford-Ferre & Wiest, 2012). Higher quality instruction was perceived by students in classes with asynchronous communication and high instructor visibility (Ward, Peters, & Shelley, 2010). High visibility in the online classroom sounds daunting, however it is as simple as providing quality, constructive, and timely feedback; participating in the class discussions giving feedback, encouragement, and critiquing; thanking students publicly for posts that are in-depth and insightful (Hughes, Ventura, & Dando, 2007).

The following list will assist faculty navigate faculty-student interactions.

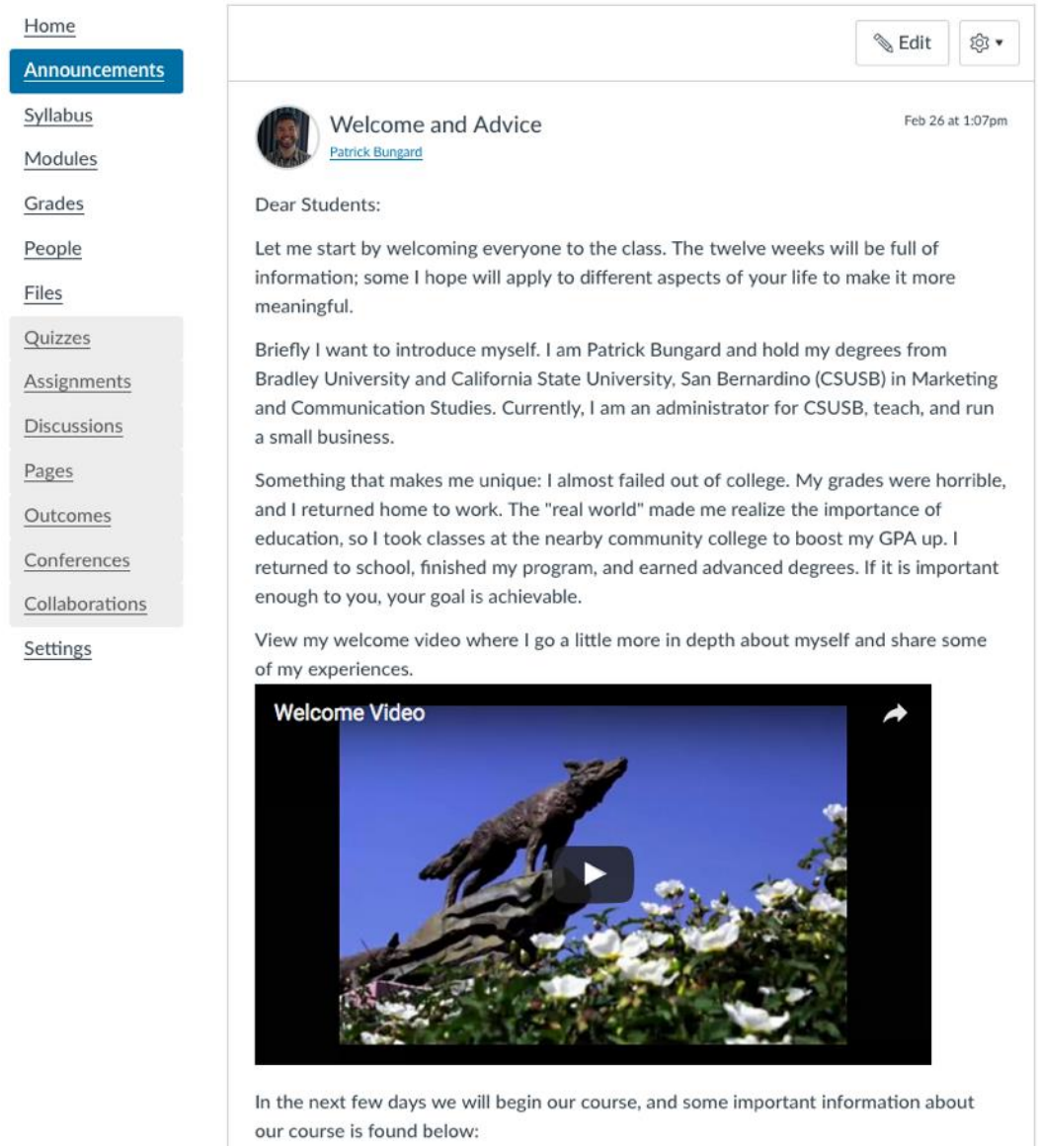
- Give well-defined and sufficient guidance.
- Provide frequent and continuous support, as well as regular feedback.
- Use a variety of communication methods to postulate greater responsiveness and approachability in public forums, email, and telephone.
- Openly articulate institutional policy on plagiarism and cheating from the very beginning.
- Create an open forum, visible throughout the duration of the class, to address frequently asked questions, which will avoid repetitiveness as several students may have the same question.
- Emphasize the importance of good study habits throughout the course.
- Create coaching opportunities to facilitate student knowledge development.
- Clearly explain course requirements.
- Do not give negative feedback, comments, etc. in a public forum. This type of information should be dealt with privately.
- Monitor each student's progress and check in regularly with students who appear to be struggling.
- Support positive, creative dialogue.

- Personalize communication by addressing the student by his/her first name.

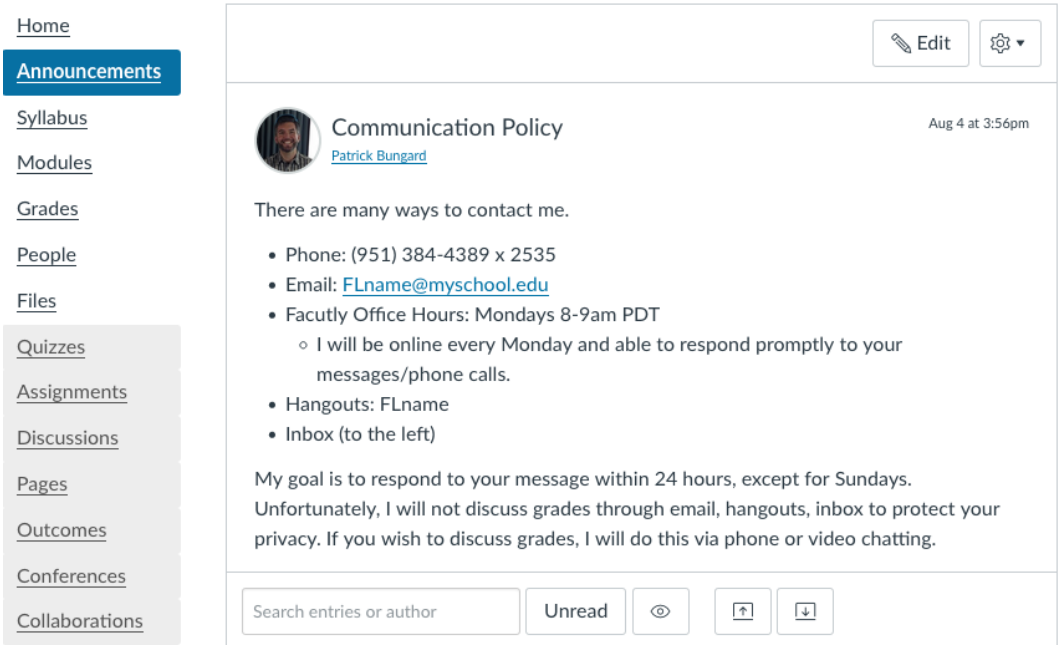
Adapted from The Hanover Research Council (2009)

Communication, in most aspects of life, is key to comprehension. Be explicit in assessment instructions, letting students know what is expected of them. There is a tone you create in the course; ensure the tone matches the expectations and materials. A mismatch in tone can cause negativity in the course and ultimately result in an unsuccessful or satisfactory term. Another important item to remember is to set-up timeline guidelines for the students. Let them know your policy on responding to direct messages as well as speed of grading. Feedback from completed assignments is an easy way to help students improve. Another item discussed is the idea of showing students you are a real person rather than a name that appears on their screen.

In the introductory video, contained in the welcome announcement below helps create presence by showing their instructor is a real person.



Announcement explaining communication policy/expectations within the course.



Now that some examples have been shared, the next page contains the design criteria checklist. The checklist is smaller than previous chapters, mainly because several items discussed in the chapter are measurable once the course has begun or after the course concludes.

Course Design Criteria Communication, Student Interaction and Community	
Criteria	**Met (Yes/No)**
Conversationally toned lectures.	
Comments	
Open forum available for frequently asked questions.	
Comments	
Explains communication policy.	
Comments	
Sets expectations for grading and graded materials.	
Comments	
Generates week/module agendas.	
Comments	
Develops social presence (realness feeling in online student interaction).	
Comments	

CHAPTER 6

FACILITATION AND INSTRUCTION

In the introductory documents for the class, it is crucial to establish guidelines that provide adequate structure for the learners to follow. One of the guidelines is public discussion posting requirements. It is a good idea for the course design to include mandated participation and incorporated into the evaluation and grading. Some faculty recommend including in each module entry the number of hours that are expected (Center for Distributed Learning, 2015).

At the beginning of each module, after the first module, ensure there is a summary of the previous module's activities. It is a good idea to create a public forum, outside of a module, where students can socialize and publicly ask questions, as well as, if appropriate, a venue for the instructor to post public responses (ION, 2015; Quality Assurance, 2016). By publically addressing questions, the answers may benefit other students.

This brings up another fundamental topic. Be present in the classroom. By commenting on students' posts in class discussions, teamwork discussions, and responding to emails within 24 hours, sends a message to learners that they are not alone in the cyber world. However, some caution and judgment needs to be made from the instructor to not be intrusive on students' conversations. Balance is a major portion to active involvement.

Students' needs are the reason the course exists in the first place, so ensure the activities within the course are relevant and interesting. By ensuring discussions and

activities are relevant and interesting, students have a reason to be engaged in the discussion topic as they can pull from life experiences, ambitions, and/or interests. If research papers are required in the course, consider offering students the ability to choose their own topic within the scope of the class and that will achieve course objectives. Create collaborative learning experiences through simulations, case studies, group assignments, and group discussions about reading assignments (Palloff & Pratt, 2013).

Another strategy to encourage engagement and participation is providing learners with enough time to read and comment on classmates' posting prior to the start of the next module. One reason for enough time is because faculty should encourage the group to bring in real-life examples. As the course relates to their lives, the easier it will be for the students to participate and share personal experiences. Mix items up within each module like staggered assignments. For discussions, make the initial posting due by Wednesday of each week and the two response posts due by the end of the week (M. Skinner, personal communication, February 10, 2015).

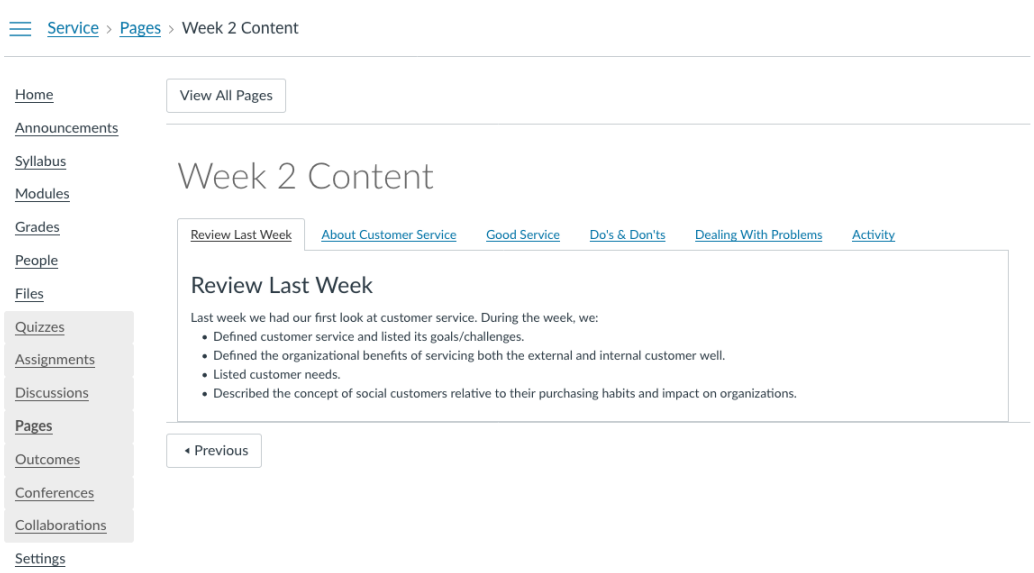
One of the best pieces of advice that Skinner (personal communication, February 10, 2015) shares is to ensure there are no *lectures* within the course. That can be misleading, however, it is intended to structure lectures into short clips, between five and ten minutes, with conversational tones, rather than an hour and a half, and ensure the clips will support key topics within the module. This will allow the learner to view and/or listen to them quickly. Following American Disabilities Act of 1990 practices, a transcript must be provided for all audio and visual material (Thormann & Zimmerman,

2012). These transcripts not only support individuals with learning challenges, but also support students who are visual learners.

It can be challenging at first for faculty to teach online. An instructor's role differs from the traditional face-to-face class. Like a faculty member facilitating a face-to-face discussion, online faculty roles resemble facilitators of learning most of the time. To make a transition to facilitator, faculty members need to become familiar with the LMS and options within it. Doing so should make the transition to teaching online easier and adds an extra layer of support for students as faculty are often the front-line troubleshooter when problems with technology arise. Professor Skinner's (personal communication, February 10, 2015) last piece of advice to online faculty is have fun and be open to learning from students as they will discover from each other and from the instructor.

You have probably noticed a repetitive theme throughout the first six chapters: communication. In chapter 6, it was stressed to establish guidelines. The goal is to communicate expectations for various items in the course.

The example shown on the next page, demonstrates one of the many criteria discussed throughout this chapter and in the checklist.


Service › Pages › Week 2 Content
Home
Announcements
Syllabus
Modules
Grades
People
Files
Quizzes
Assignments
Discussions
Pages
Outcomes
Conferences
Collaborations
Settings
View All Pages
Week 2 Content
Review Last Week
About Customer Service
Good Service
Do's & Don'ts
Dealing With Problems
Activity
Review Last Week
Last week we had our first look at customer service. During the week, we:
• Defined customer service and listed its goals/challenges.
• Defined the organizational benefits of servicing both the external and internal customer well.
• Listed customer needs.
• Described the concept of social customers relative to their purchasing habits and impact on organizations.
Previous

Course Design Criteria Facilitation and Instruction	
Criteria	**Met (Yes/No)**
Explains discussion requirements.	
Comments	
Generate public forum for general student questions and comments.	
Comments	
Provides relevant, real-life discussion topics.	
Comments	
Learning experiences are collaborative (simulations, assignments, etc.).	
Comments	
Videos meet ADA regulations/standards.	
Comments	
Course outcomes and competencies are clearly stated.	
Comments	
Learning objectives are aligned to outcomes and competencies.	
Comments	
Activities correlate to outcomes and objectives.	
Comments	

Course Design Criteria Facilitation and Instruction	
Criteria	**Met (Yes/No)**
Instructions are clear on how to meet objectives.	
Comments	
Prerequisite skills are shared and appropriate.	
Comments	
Contains adequate amount of coursework for level.	
Comments	
Course workload is consistent throughout course.	
Comments	

CHAPTER 7

TECHNOLOGY FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

Students may have more knowledge about certain software and hardware than the instructor does, but there are also students who will not be totally comfortable with the technology at hand. This can be a humbling experience for faculty when they must rely on students to assist with imperfect software or hardware. Weather can play a role in whether students have access to the class. Often, a power outage may not prevent the learner for using his/her laptop, because of the battery, but it can turn off the Internet since routers and modems require electricity to function. Other items that may prevent students from accessing the classroom portal are overloaded servers, slow Internet connections, and faulty hardware. Faculty must also recognize that Internet access may not be as widespread and reliable as on the university campus, and should emphasize a backup plan should the Internet become unavailable for an extended period. Urban and suburban locations will likely have Internet access nearby, at a Starbucks, McDonald's, or other fast food like establishments, but rural area students may not be so lucky.

LMSs often provide upgrades as time passes. The development of emerging technologies brings more bells and whistles to learning management systems. Although the new technology claims to enhance the educational experience, it can hinder it as well through a digital divide. More bells and whistles take up more space on a computer (Allen & Seaman, 2011). Students from economically challenged situations may not have the means to update or upgrade the computer use to gain access to the online class. All

this ultimately boils down to the principle that the faculty member must be innovative and quick to respond to unforeseen situations and coming up with solutions.

Once inside the online course, with connectivity issues presumably resolved, there are many different technologies at the disposal of both the instructor and the student. The course may have audio and video clips to supplement the material. The instructor may post PowerPoint slide shows and provide support documents to lectures, like handouts, graphic illustrations, supplemental articles, lecture notes, and even provide links to other sites of interest. On the flip side, students can also contribute with technology by taking pictures or videos with their smart phone and uploading them to sites like Google Photos. The development of mobile devices, including smartphones, allows students to move learning outside of building with the confines of a computer and later upload experiences.

Technology helps address different learning styles, which can be helpful to students who are accustom to one or two learning styles. Listening to an audio clip on a concept may be more comfortable to an auditory learner. A learner who is more kinesthetic may appreciate an assignment requiring online research or visiting other websites. Visual learners perform better when text and video clips are used. Together, the use of a variety of technologies keeps learning fresh and interesting for students, and encourages engagement (Palloff & Pratt, 2013).

All three-online learning quality assurance standards, QOCI, QM, and QOLT, state that an online classroom must use technological tools and resources only as they support student learning outcomes (Quality Matters, 2014; ION, 2015; Quality Assurance, 2016). The tools should be used to enhance the learning environment rather

than be relied on to push learning. Whatever tools are used, they must enable the student to engage with the material, each other and the instructor, which should create active learning. Finally, the instructor should provide clear information regarding access to the technology and related resources required in the course.

Since there are several online tools for evaluating student work, it is important to choose only those that enhance the learning process. Faculty often get trapped in that pitfall when the evaluation tool itself impedes the flow of learning. If students spend more time learning how to use the tool than learning the class materials, then that tool is not appropriate. Evaluation tools should focus on the content of the class rather than the technology. That may be a foreign concept since online learning would not be possible without technology; however, each tool must be looked at in a way that brings value to the student and the course (Thormann & Zimmerman, 2012). There are, of course, methods to assess student learning that are less technical. Some items were discussed in Chapter 3: Assessment and Evaluation.

Other tools that can be used in the online environment are voice over Internet protocols (VoIP), video conferencing, podcasts, and presentations. Voice and video conferencing technologies are most useful in group work. Sometimes, communication through discussion board and email does not provide the students with immediate feedback. Organizing conferences creates a real-time environment with instant feedback. Instructors can use voice and video technology to follow-up with students and provide one-on-one evaluations. Garrison and Ehringhaus (2009) state live conversations, not through typing, are particularly useful in formative evaluations.

When online classes were gaining popularity, podcasts and video podcasts were primarily used as a method to deliver contact. The faculty member would record lectures and distribute them to the class, rather than the class using the technology to complete assignments (On the Horizon, 2008). Rapid advancements in digital technology have expanded on the use of both podcasts and vodcasts allowing individuals to generate content anywhere in the world. As both students and faculty become more familiar with these tools, communication of content rich information will enhance the digital course. When grading; however, the evaluation should be on the presentation of content and completion of all the assignment components rather than the technology (Thormann & Zimmerman, 2012).

Asking students to use presentation software to distribute ideas or research is a complementary way for them to validate their comprehension. Learners can be graded for these productions virtually the same way as a face-to-face classroom, but, there are some features of this assignment that clash. The emphasis ought to be on the substance of the presentation instead of on the presentation style. Students can also ask colleagues to assess each other's participation in a discussion (Stavrdes & Herder, 2014). Ultimately, technology should be used to enhance the learning experience. Grades should not depend too heavily on flashiness of technology, but rather the content provided within the technology.

Helpful Software/Technology Links can be found at:
http://www.ion.uillinois.edu/resources/tutorials/software/index.asp

Use a variety of technology within the course to assist different learning types. Include videos, either self-produced or produced by others, with their permission. Understand video chatting and how you can use it to communicate with your students. Befriend techie friends that will be able to assist you with new and emerging technology—that your students probably already know about! The checklist on the next page will help you vary delivery methods with technology.

Course Design Criteria Technology for Teaching and Learning	
Criteria	**Met (Yes/No)**
Uses of a variety of delivery methods (below) for different learning types.	
Comments	
Uses video (movies, shows, speeches, etc.).	
Comments	
Uses audio (speeches, recorded lecture, music, etc.).	
Comments	
Uses print (e-text, textbook, articles, e-zines, etc.)	
Comments	
Communication (chat, videoconference, teleconference, email, forums, etc.).	
Comments	
Students understand the technology used and how to use it.	
Comments	

CHAPTER 8

LEARNER SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

While it is important to encourage faculty to develop creative courses, it is just as important to remember the types of technology that students may or may not have access to. A way to ensure reach, which hopefully leads to engagement, is to use technology that most students have, rather than relying on technology to deliver all aspects of the course. Online students need training, not only how to use, access, and navigate the course management system, but how to learn in an online environment. If this is not addressed at the university level, the faculty member must take on the orientation obligation (Paloff & Pratt, 2013). Unfortunately, it is often expected if students can navigate a learning management system, they will positively complete the course. That is not always true. Students need the guidance to discover what is expected of them in the course. The best method to avoid such assumptions is to create a course and LMS orientation which is often overlooked when developing online courses (Thormann & Zimmerman, 2012).

The following paragraphs, derived from recommendations provided by the Quality Online Course Initiative, Quality Matters, and the Quality Online Learning & Teaching rubrics, will ensure faculty designing a course to be distributed online will adequately provide students with the proper resources to successfully complete learning in the online environment (Quality Matters, 2014; ION, 2015; Quality Assurance, 2016).

The first couple of items are to ensure the faculty state his/her role in supporting student learning. This most often is addressed in the course syllabus. The course syllabus lists and/or links to a clear explanation of the technical support provided by the campus

and suggestions as to when and how students should access it. It introduces campus academic support services and resources available to support students in achieving their educational goals (e.g., Disability Support Services, Writing Center, Tutoring Center, etc.). Lastly it provides information regarding how the institution's student support services and resources, like advising and mentoring, can help students succeed and how they can use these services (Quality Assurance, 2016).

Items that may be included in the syllabus or within its own section of the course are links and lists to a variety of support services offered. A statement of the American Disabilities Act (Thormann & Zimmerman, 2012) compliance and how to request services is needed. Links, e-mail addresses, and phone numbers to the university's technical support department as well as the LMS technical support must be easy for students to find and access. An item that tends to be quite beneficial, especially for first time online learners, is a glossary which provides terms that will be used within the course or that define an item or action within the course. Although gradebook does not necessarily need defining within the glossary, it should exist along with instructions on how to access it (ION, 2015).

Although to faculty, the items above are second nature, to the learner, they may not be. Stavredes and Herder (2014) stress the importance of course instructions because a student does not necessarily know what he/she does not know. Therefore, to increase the likelihood of success, the course instructions need to be clear, articulate university and course policies, and explain how all the services offered by the institution are to support the student at, during, and after the learning process (Quality Matters, 2014).

The syllabus is a powerful tool. Providing areas where a student can obtain help is highly recommended. Most schools have a help desk that will be able to address many technical problems your students may experience. You can also include links to the library's online search or tutorials here as well.

This chapter is meant to bring awareness of the student population and their access to designer. Courses rich with multimedia will inhibit learning if students do not have reliable, high speed Internet. Having said that, the short checklist on the next page provides an opportunity for you to learn about the various resources at your campus to help students with technical issues.

Course Design Criteria Learner Support and Resources	
Criteria	**Met (Yes/No)**
Provides access to student support resources.	
Comments	
Helps resolve technical and administrative problems.	
Comments	
Alternatives for students with limited technology/access.	
Comments	

CHAPTER 9

ACCESSIBILITY AND UNIVERSAL DESIGN

The 1973 Rehabilitation Act sets up many parameters for institutions receiving federal assistance. In Section 504 of the amended act, it is spelled out that programs who discriminate, deny benefits, or excludes individuals based on abilities will not receive federal funds (US Congress, 1998). Subsequent sections, specifically Section 508, orders that electronic and information technology developed, acquired, supported, or used by agencies receiving federal funds must have equivalent information for individuals with varying abilities. This means online courses must make accommodations for learners, just like accommodating students in a face-to-face class.

According to Stavredes and Herder (2014) within higher education, there is a debate whether compliance with the 1973 act should be applied on a case-by-case basis or developed into the course at the development stated. Most often, institutions interpret the registration created by the Rehabilitation Act by generating ADA Compliance Policies that guide the university to ensure the many elements of the Act are being fulfilled (Thormann & Zimmerman, 2012). All organizations, on the receiving end of federal funds, will have a department that regulates the policies and is available to assist faculty and ensure policies are followed.

In addition to each organization providing support, the United States General Services Administration (Stavredes & Herder, 2014) provides guidance for creating accessibility. The guidance provided includes tutorials and checklists, as well as training on screen readers. For online information, screen readers, and how they function, is

extremely important to know. That knowledge will reduce or eliminate stresses of learning while designing. When knowledge is obtained prior the course design phase, materials that comply can be used or sought out.

The US Department of Education (Palloff & Pratt, 2013) also offers a catalogue of requirements for accessible electronic and information technology strategy. Many of the elements require more advanced knowledge of information technology to interpret; however, these items will help achieve the goal of incorporating accessible materials into the online course (Palloff & Pratt, 2013).

The University of Illinois' Quality Online Course Initiative has created the following list to identify ways of ensuring accessibility by all levels of users.

1. Scrolling is minimized or facilitated with anchors
2. Consistent layout design orients users throughout the site
3. Font type, size, and color are readable and consistent throughout the site
4. Use of pop-up windows (windows with specific information, no scroll bars, and no menus) is appropriate
5. Windows open in appropriate frames that do not confuse users. The use of additional frames, other than those within the CMS is avoided
6. Audio/video hardware requirements do not extend beyond the basic sound cards, speakers, and video players unless appropriately needed to meet course goals and objectives
7. Audio/video files meet minimum standards
8. Audio/video quality is clear
9. Audio/video file length is adequate to meet the goals of the activity without being too large to restrict users' ability to download the file on computers with lower bandwidths
10. A written transcript is provided with all audio/video files

11. Audio/video file length is adequate to meet the goals of the activity without adding unnecessary information
12. Audio/video player required is compatible with multiple operating systems and requires on a standard, free plug-in
13. Images are clear
14. Image files are optimized for efficient loading
15. Use of animated GIFs is limited to only those that contribute to the learning experience—supporting the course content
16. Navigation aids are in the same location; graphics uses as links are consistent
17. Navigation cues are present, clearly identifiable, offered in text and graphic formats, and are obvious links based on visual cues such as color, underlining, and text directives (e.g. start here)
18. Course has no broken links
19. Hyperlinks open in appropriate windows or frames
20. Course design indicated a conscious effort to comply with or exceed accessibility standards generated by the American Disabilities Act of 1990.

(ION, 2015)

Addressing the above 20 items will facilitate course navigation for learners that need assistance. It is important to note that accessibility does not sacrifice academic rigor or student learning outcomes.

The Federal government mandates ADA compliance. There are many resources available to you; however, you should start with your school's distance learning department to understand university ADA regulations and how the department will be assistance to you. Most schools will have instructional designers who can help you make your course ADA compliant.

Course Design Criteria Accessibility and Universal Design	
Criteria	**Met (Yes/No)**
All materials follow ADA standards.	
Comments	
Multimedia is relevant to course outcomes.	
Comments	
Multimedia engages learners in topic.	
Comments	

CHAPTER 10

COURSE SUMMARY AND WRAP-UP

Often, institutions have course evaluations based on student satisfaction and opinions of the course. While learners stereotypically have skewed perceptions of their own studying, clarity of instructions and time spent on tasks, are types of queries that help resolve specific concerns that students experience throughout the course (Quality Matters, 2014). Fulfilling survey requirements at the midpoint of the course, as well as, the end, will assist faculty to gather information about the class. That just-in-time data can enable faculty to quickly address issues learners' experience. That swift action may provide relief to the student thinking about dropping out of and online course (Quality Assurance, 2016).

The surveys conducted on course assessments give the students a voice to express what is liked in the online course and areas that need improvement. By asking students to point out navigation errors, spelling mistakes, dead links, etc., they not only become engaged in the course, but the students are assisting with bettering the class for the next term. While identifying the good and not so good items in the course, learners are given the opportunity to reflect. This reflection allows the connection of individual learning goals with the course's learning objectives set forth by the instructor (ION, 2015)

CHAPTER 11

MOBILE READINESS

Smart phones and other mobile devices are influencing online learning. Online learning already provides some flexibility without having to travel to campus and sit in a classroom for hours. Now mobile technology is rapidly impacting online classes. Mobile learning, dubbed m-learning by Thormann and Zimmerman (2012) will greatly impact learning worldwide as cell phone use in poor regions of the world outnumbers access to computers. Seventy percent of the world's population is expected to use a smartphone by 2020 (Statista, 2016) with most growth in poor regions.

M-learning has a major presence in India where the probability of students having a smartphone over a computer is increasing (Leichman, 2010). M-learning also addressed the issue of spotty Wi-Fi preventing some students from accessing the Internet. With a mobile device that accessed data, spotty Wi-Fi was not an issue. M-learning is not only going to increase because of ubiquitous cell phone usage, but this generation of learners is comfortable with mobile technology and is constantly on their phones. Most of Generation Y has their mobile devices within arm's reach and would not consider studying, writing, conducting research, or living without their them (Thormann & Zimmerman, 2012).

As far as designing the course, several items should be considered to ensure the classroom does not include large images, moving text, pop-up windows, or long headings. The number of steps a learner needs to take to reach primary contact should be reduced to ensure easiness on a mobile device. The faculty member should not have

content that does not directly relate to the student learning outcomes for the course. Lastly, video and audio content should only be considered as it will display/play on mobile devices and computers (Quality Assurance, 2016). The demand for online education will continue to grow and technologies will demand advancement. As educators become more informed about the tools available and push the limits with technology, learning environments will change.

As LMSs become more and more expensive for institutions, opportunities for open source systems arise. Open source platforms have quicker responses to the demands of a mobile generation and can incorporate wikis, blogs, and social networking tools into the platform—ultimately allowing the inclusion of several multimedia tools. Palloff and Pratt (2013) predict the reincarnation of LMSs to personalized learning spaces. These personalized learning spaces allow the student to use applications like Google Apps to interact with others, and collaborate on projects to pursue their own learning goals. These new systems allow the creation of learning experiences by engaging and accessing learning communities around the world and piecing together learning that is meaningful to them. Personalization allows students to determine what they learn as well as when and how. In personalized learning, students are guided by an instructor who helps to co-design and co-create the learning experience (Fielding, 2009).

Mobile readiness is an emerging trend in distance learning, and at this point is optional; however, most LMS' provide a mobile version of their platform. The following are guidelines to consider when designing the course.

Course Design Criteria Mobile Readiness	
Criteria	**Met (Yes/No)**
Scrolling is minimized or facilitated with anchors.	
Comments	
Consistency through course (font color, type, are readable).	
Comments	
Appropriate usage of pop-ups, if needed.	
Comments	
Multimedia compatible with a variety of mobile devices and mobile data.	
Comments	

CHAPTER 12

CONCLUSION

Before launching the course, be sure to conduct a review your course one more time to ensure it meets learning outcomes effectively. Classes that have a variety of strategies will keep students motivated and engaged. Use checklists to reduce or eliminate tunnel vision that prevents catching possible problems. Right before the course is ready to go live, consider asking a colleague to review the course, with the same checklist, and ask for suggestions.

As this guide closes, inspiration was gained when I changed roles from online faculty member to an online student. Faculty should not expect students to be engaged and active in the course when the instructor her/himself is not fully active and engaged. Just because the class may not have a traditional meeting schedule like a face-to-face course, students must be able to see their instructor active in the class. It helps students realize, *I'm not in this class alone. There are others here with me.*

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