Reinventing an Online Business Research Course

Willow E. Fuchs
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Faculty Development Program

In the fall of 2018 I participated in an intensive 8-week faculty development program, Design4Online, run by the University of Iowa’s Distance & Online Education (DOE) instructional designers. This hybrid program, which had us meet in-person as well as complete additional online course tasks, took us through a number of topics, including:

- course alignment
- instructional strategies
- engagement
- evaluation
- syllabus development
- assessment
- course management

We focused on relevant literature, and began with a goal of creating an educational experience based on the Garrison, Anderson, & Archer (2000) Community of Inquiry model.

Alignment & Syllabus Development

Successful course alignment begins with backward design and clear course goals and learning outcomes, which must be measurable and specific. We used Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy to practice writing effective learning objectives and then worked to add aligning assessments and learning activities.

Course Structure & Design

The instructional designers demonstrated the importance of organization for course structure. We applied Mayer & Moreno’s (2003) signaling and segmenting principles. Consistent, straightforward course pages with clearly defined sections and visual icons to reinforce tasks help cue students, while chunking content into discrete modules helps students to pace themselves and learn effectively.

Instructional Strategies & Engagement

Perhaps the most important part of online course design is ensuring engagement both between student and teacher and among students within the class. Baker (2010) found that instructor immediacy and presence predicted student learning, cognition, and motivation. To improve engagement I made the following changes to my course:

- added an orientation module – with student icebreaker
- reduced video lectures to 7-10 mins
- added class discussions – applying content
- added short quizzes after each video/demo
- scheduled ongoing interaction – contact and reminders multiple times a week

The changes and enhancements I made positively affected student engagement and interaction, course feel, and learning outcomes. The added assessments have given me additional ways to evaluate how students are progressing and what changes need to be made to make the course go more smoothly in the future. Participating in the online component of the Design4Online program gave me insight into what it is like to take on online class and helped me to reinvent our online business research course.

“Excellent instruction and presentation. Five stars, I’d take it again :)”

~ Student

Evaluation

The changes and enhancements I made positively affected student engagement and interaction, course feel, and learning outcomes. The added assessments have given me additional ways to evaluate how students are progressing and what changes need to be made to make the course go more smoothly in the future. Participating in the online component of the Design4Online program gave me insight into what it is like to take on online class and helped me to reinvent our online business research course.

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