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Barbara Carder

Franklin University, barbara.carder2@franklin.edu

E'lise Flood

Joel Gardner

Franklin University, joel.gardner@franklin.edu

Sharon Taylor

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Using a Team Approach to Redesign the First Course in a Master's Level Instructional Design and Performance Improvement Program

Barbara Carder, M.S. ♦ E'lise Flood, B.S. ♦ Joel Gardner, Ph.D. ♦ Sharon Taylor, Ph.D.
Franklin University ♦ College of Arts, Sciences, & Technology ♦ Columbus, Ohio

Introduction

Course History

The first course in the Instructional Design and Performance Technology Program at Franklin University is IDPT600 – Principles of Learning Theory. This program began two years ago using a cohort format. The first course ran several times during 2011 and 2012. The original design served us well but, as the rest of the program was being completed, we realized that we had several opportunities to improve IDPT600. In addition, feedback from faculty and students provided the impetus to redesign the course and make the learning opportunities for our students even more robust.

This poster presentation describes the unique team process used to revise IDPT600. We also describe the course content and show how it better prepares our students for graduate studies and professional growth, aligns with industry standards, and features real world application.

Design Team

Our design team included:

- Joel Gardner, Ph.D. - IDPT Program Chair
- Sharon Taylor, Ph.D. – Adjunct Faculty teaching IDPT600
- Barbara Carder, M.S. – IDPT Student / Content Editor in the College of Arts, Sciences, & Technology
- E'lise Flood, B.S. – IDPT Student / Content Editor in the College of Arts, Sciences, & Technology

Each of these individuals provided their unique perspective and made valuable contributions to the design effort.

Methods

The design team relied on the ADDIE Model, a five-phase instructional design model consisting of:

Analysis > Design > Development > Implementation > Evaluation

Analysis

In the Analysis phase, instructional goals and objectives are established, and the learning environment is identified.

Our needs analysis included gathering information from students, faculty and other stakeholders. The team found the input offered by the students on the design team particularly valuable as they had completed the course and were enthusiastic about implementing numerous design ideas learned in subsequent courses in the IDPT program.

The results of our needs analysis provided the following data:

1. The current text was too large and covered too many theories, thereby distracting from the three major theories used in the field of instructional design: Behaviorism, Cognition, and Constructivism (Mayer, 1992).
2. The course included a large number of assignments, which did not allow for adequate depth of learning.
3. An introduction to graduate studies was needed.
4. An introduction to writing at the graduate level was needed.
5. Multimedia components would greatly enhance the course.
6. Focusing assignments on real world application would provide opportunity for professional growth.

Design

The Design phase deals with learning objectives, assessment instruments, exercises, content, subject matter analysis, lesson planning and media selection. The team made the following design decisions based on the needs analysis:

1. The textbook we selected is *Psychology of Learning for Instruction* (Driscoll, 2005). This textbook is shorter in length, focuses on key theories, and is more application focused.
2. The number of assignments was reduced; the assignments that were retained incorporate more case studies and encourage critical thinking.
3. A Graduate Skills for Success learning object was created to jumpstart the learning path for new students.
4. A Writing & Graduate Studies learning object was created to further introduce graduate studies and expectations.
5. Multimedia components were created to introduce the program and provide information on important course topics. A key addition to the course was a video that provides the “big picture” of the IDPT program.
6. A strategic effort was made to incorporate real world application in all assignments.

Design, cont.

After several team meetings, Dr. Gardner created a document showing the results of our analysis and suggestions for design. Dr. Taylor used this document to align the information with the new textbook and create a visual showing the layout of the course (see image below). She also created an IDPT 600 Course Map with the following course description:

In this gateway course, students will begin the process of understanding what it means to be a graduate student at Franklin University. This includes tangibles, such as scholarly research and academic writing, as well as intangibles, such as critical thinking and attitude. Students will employ various strategies as they develop a thorough understanding of selected learning theories and philosophies. They will then apply these theories and strategies to create a learning event.

Development

In the Development phase the developers create and assemble the contents that were created in the design phase.

LMS – A framework in our unique LMS was created to house all course components.

Multimedia - The design team selected the three theories focused on in the new design, and created a PowerPoint for multimedia development by the program chair.

Assignments and course content - Specific content and assignments were created during this phase.

Implementation

During the implementation phase, a procedure for training the facilitators and the learners is developed.

IDPT 600 was offered in the new design in April-May 2013, in both online and face-to-face formats, and the initial feedback was very positive.

Evaluation

The evaluation phase consists of two parts: formative and summative.

Minor adjustments were made, including moving some assignments to better serve the content. The course ran for the second time in August-September 2013.

Conclusions

Reflection on the design process

A cohesive design team, comprised of the right people who work well together, can create an effective and collaborative effort. Such was the case with this design team.

We also found that including current students in the design team significantly enhanced our ability to tailor the design to student needs.

An important part of our design effectiveness was the positive approach taken by each member of the design team. This positive environment included a friendly and respectful atmosphere where each team member felt comfortable openly sharing ideas. We found that this positive atmosphere enhanced our creativity and enabled us to brainstorm and then select the correct path for our course redesign.

After students complete the course in Fall 2013 we will gather student retention rates, course evaluation results, and faculty feedback to evaluate the effectiveness of the new design.

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