

# Best Practices Manual

## For Teachers, Administration, and Staff

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## **I. Introduction**

### **A. Overview of the Manual**

This manual lays a foundation for best practices in distance education for educators. The topics include domestic and global diversity issues, distance education issues, key points in distance education history, learning objectives, communication, technological modes, learner attributes, theoretical framework, student, teacher, administrative, and staff issues, copyright and handouts issues, communication tools, and assessment and evaluation issues.

### **B. Purpose of the Manual**

The purpose of this manual is to provide a best practices guide for distance educators through answering common questions about key issues in distance education.

### **C. Targeted Audience**

The intended audience for this manual is teachers, administration, and staff who are involved in the design, development, and delivery of distance education.

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## **II. Domestic and Global Diversity Issues**

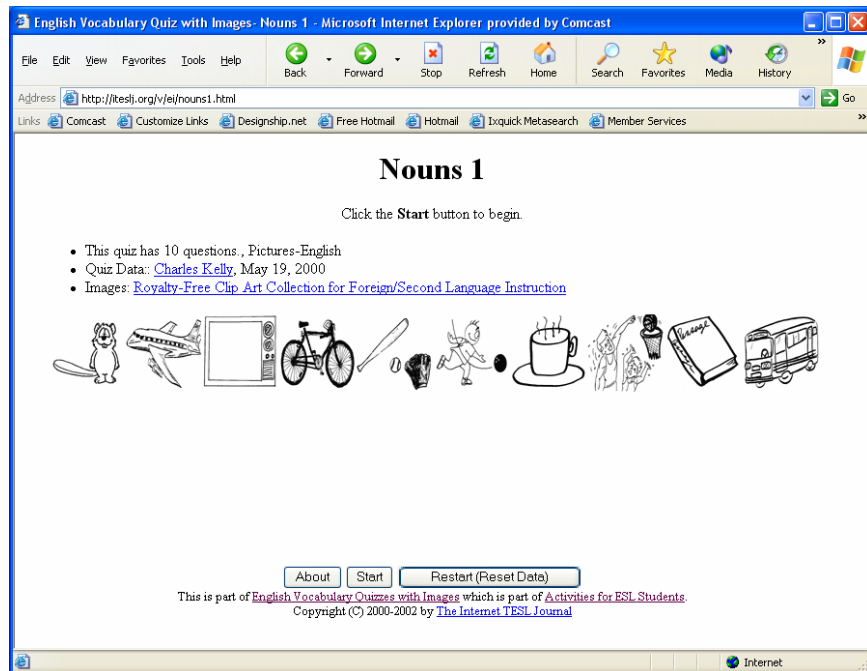
### **A. Purpose of this Section**

The purpose of this section is to examine domestic and global diversity issues in distance education. Domestic and global diversity is not easy to obtain; there are both cultural and technological issues to overcome. However, as online instructional organizations wish to become more intoned to both domestic and global diversity issues, they will have to find ways to create a framework to successfully offer their product both domestically and beyond their own borders.

### **B. Domestic Diversity Issues**

Distance education classrooms reflect the diversity of changing demographics. Students represent a myriad of languages, ethnicities, cultures, and values. It is imperative for educational organizations to build a workforce that taps the talents of our population and reflects the rich diversity in the United States. “An increasing share of the work force consists of women, underrepresented minorities, and persons with disabilities” (Congressional Commission, 2002). Information is available through the World Wide Web to assist faculty in giving students access to high quality, culturally relevant content. The Digital Equity Portal (U.S. Department of Education, 2002) is an excellent resource (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Digital Equity Portal provides a resource for culturally relevant material.



Source: "Activities for ESL students " by U.S. Department of Education PT3 Digital Equity Task Force (2002) Digital Equity Portal Web site. Retrieved March 1, 2003 from: <http://digitalequity.edreform.net/details/?uri=%230.0.0.0-f2a046f9c9-f4cdd2a9bf5095>

Each distance education organization should give individuals equal access to programs, facilities, admission, and employment irrespective of personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications. A written policy should prohibit discrimination and harassment against any person because of age, ancestry, color, disability or handicap, national origin, race, religious creed, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status. The policy should firmly state that discrimination or harassment against students, faculty, administration, and staff will not be tolerated in accordance with Federal and State laws. The policy should recommend that each individual be afforded respect, recognition, and encouragement in a diverse and integrated learning environment. Individual learners may study, live, and work securely and productively in an atmosphere that promotes civility and openness in the pursuit of academic excellence. Dr. Pedro Noguera (1999) suggests organizations “move away from their preoccupation with assimilating those who are culturally different and promoting a version of American history that has rendered many groups—racial minorities, women, workers, etc.—largely invisible.” Organizations need to teach students to respect differences and develop curricula aimed at helping them to understand more about themselves and others (Noguera, 1999).

### C. Global Diversity Issues

The Internet reduces distances; as a result, there is a cultural transformation occurring. Differences between cultures in an online class have become transparent. There is hope that the computer may have a standardizing effect on educational offerings (Alkan, 2000). Online education has had a major impact on

institutions seeking to broaden their scope from a regional to a global market.

However, this shift to the global market places pressure on the provider to be more sensitive to issues that may not have seemed as important before.

A major global diversity issue is in the very technology that allows online education to advance. In over a hundred years, it has segued from print, radio, and audio recordings, to television and video recordings, and finally online applications via the Internet. Some suggest the final stage will be wireless broadband that will at last give credence to the "education anytime, anywhere" slogan. However, in every advancing stage, the disparity between the levels of technology from one country to the next widens. "What is the 'quality' of the access? Does the student have the necessary skills to use the technology? What are the best ways to participate in synchronous communication? Is there adequate technical support? (Phipps & Merisotis, 1999, p. 7). These questions must be answered in order for a diverse global educational domain to exist. Other sections of this manual will provide guidance in these areas.

Technology is not the only online problem. There are also "inherent differences in organizational cultures, academic cultures, education and training philosophies, and teaching and learning values and traditions within different cultural groups [that] have not been adequately recognized by those attempting to transplant models of practice from other contexts" (Calder, 2000). To recognize global diversity issues holistically, the online provider must understand that it is both a cultural and a technological concern.

### III. Distance Education Issues

#### A. Purpose of this Section

The purpose of this section is to introduce the general framework of Distance education and, in doing so, to introduce areas requiring multicultural sensitivity. As the Internet delivers education at the same time to many different parts of the world, it is important that we understand the structure of distance education. "... it is essential to know the nature of the audience. The instructor may have to plan more carefully for the types and levels of interaction to ensure a quality education for all members of the class" (Albright, Simonson, Smaldino, & Zvacek, 2001, p.116).

#### B. Distance Education Issues

Distance education relies on the integration of several elements: the learners, the format of the content, and the delivery system. Making considerations in each one of these areas ensures that the learners gain the requisite understanding from the instruction.

Knowing the learners' needs, abilities and motivations will help the distance education course designer create a course to meet instructional goals. In developing courses for learners of many cultural backgrounds, it is essential that the course developers assess the importance of language, image, interaction, among other areas, upon the users' ability to participate in the course. The content of the course must be adapted to make good use of the transmission media. If the course is to be a Web-based offering, the designer may make use of the visual and pictorial aspects of the Web. Large passages of text can be transformed into a

meaningful chart or interactive graphic or animation. In doing so, the course designer assists the learner to focus attention on the content and increase comprehension. In offering courses worldwide, the designer must consider the effect graphic content may have on learners in some cultures. These will be addressed in Section XI. Copyright, Handouts, Study Guides, and Visuals Issues, see page pending.

There are many methods for delivering courses to learners at a distance. Simply mailing learner's well-prepared educational materials and testing their increased understanding through course work can provide a sound educational experience. Collection, review, and providing feedback will only further enhance this experience. This experience can be improved and made timelier online when content can be delivered and feedback can be given in a time-compressed fashion. This experience is made better when the Web-based delivery system provides the opportunity for the learner to interact through the content with other learners and the instructor. In creating an opportunity for interaction globally, the course developer must understand the impact that language and cultural bias may play in the interactions.

## **IV. Key Points in Distance Education History**

### **A. Purpose of this Section**

The purpose of this section is to introduce the learner to relevant areas in the history of distance education. These historical references will illustrate the evolution of distance education beginning with the most basic of correspondence courses almost four hundred years ago. This study of the history of distance education will give the reader a basic timeline of the distance learning culture as it has evolved. “Understanding the history of distance education is valuable in that it shows there was more than one historical path to distance education and that the evolution of distance education has not been easy. Many of the same problems facing implementation and acceptance of educational innovations today have been faced by distance education throughout its history” (Jeffries, n.d.).

### **B. Overview of Distance Education History**

The history of distance education is one of constant change. There are still many unanswered questions about distance education. Ongoing research will answer many of those questions. History shows attempts to merge distance education with traditional education to meet the challenges of the ever-changing theories of learning and new technologies. Many of the implementation and acceptance problems faced by distance education throughout history are still present today.

### C. Early Distance Education

Distance education in its basic form began in the early Eighteenth Century. Correspondence education was the first known type of actual distance learning. During the Nineteenth Century, in the United States, several activities in adult education preceded the organization of university extension beyond campuses. In 1873, Anna Ticknor created the society to encourage studies at home for the purpose of educational opportunities for women of all classes in the society. This Boston-based, largely volunteer effort provided correspondence instruction to 10,000 members over a 24-year period despite its resolutely low profile (Ticknor, 1891, as cited in Nasseh, 1997). Printed materials sent through the mail were the main way of communication, teaching, and learning. In 1883, a Correspondence University headquartered at Cornell University was established, but never got off the ground (Gerrity, 1976, as cited in Nasseh, 1997). The first official recognition of education by correspondence came from 1883 to 1891 by Chautauqua College of Liberal Arts. This college was authorized by the state of New York to grant academic degrees to students who successfully completed work at the Summer Institutes and by correspondence during the academic year (Watkins, 1991, as cited in Nasseh, 1997). Interest regarding the effectiveness of correspondence study verses traditional study was the subject of debates and discussions (Nasseh, 1997).

### D. Distance Education in the Early 1900s

Today, technology-based distance education is connected to the introduction of audiovisual devices that were introduced in the early 1900's. The first catalog of

instructional films appeared in 1910 (Reiser, 1987, as cited in Jeffries, n.d.) and in 1913, Thomas Edison proclaimed that due to the invention of film, "Our school system will be completely changed in the next ten years" (Saettler, 1968, as cited in Jeffries, n.d.). Even though this major change did not happen, there was the introduction of slides and motion pictures into many extension programs through the instructional media. Even though instructional radio proved disastrous in the 1930's, instructional television gave learners a new plan. Seven years before television was actually introduced in 1932, the University of Iowa was experimenting with transmitting instructional courses. The war made the introduction of the television a slow process; but the military had already demonstrated the ability for using audiovisual media in teaching (Wright, 1991, as cited in Jeffries, n.d.).

#### E. Distance Education 1950s through 1970s

By the late 1950's, 17 programs were using television to transmit their instructional materials. The growth of educational television was slow, but by 1961, there were 53 stations were affiliated with the NET (National Educational Television Network).

The instructional technology movement was coming into its own during the 1960's. During this time, there was movement away from equating instructional technology with audiovisual devices. In 1970, the Department of Audiovisual Instructional changed its name to the Association of Educational Communication and Technology, and defined educational technology as "a field involved in the facilitation of human learning through the systematic identification, development,

organization, and utilization of a full range of learning resources” (AECT, 1972, as cited in Jeffries, n.d.).

#### F. Distance Education Today

The distance education programs in existence today are presented in many ways. Some programs offer independent study courses through computer networking and rely on computer based student contact and feedback. Computer delivered instruction is another method in which the students communicate with the teacher through electronic mail.

In its humble beginnings, distance education showed little of the powerful impact it would have on today's society. With computer delivered instruction students may attend centralized class sessions, and meet with their group at a set time. There are undergraduate and graduate degrees offered through cable networks with supplemental video courses and texts. "The historical view of distance education shows a stream of new ideas and technologies balanced against a steady resistance to change, and it often places technology in the light of promising more than it has delivered" (Jeffries, n.d.).

## V. Learning Objectives

### A. Purpose of this Section

The purpose of this section is to introduce learning objectives and stress the importance of writing clear statements of learner knowledge and ability outcomes.

### B. Overview of Learning Objectives

Clearly written performance objectives guide the instructional design process by describing precisely “what the targeted learners should know, do, or feel on completion of a planned learning experience” (Rothwell, 2001, p. 57.) It is vital for instructors to know what students are expected to learn and to focus on these objectives. The instructor should select course materials, assignments, activities, and assessments, supporting these learning objectives.

### C. Mager’s Theory of Behavioral Objectives

Robert Mager’s 1962 book, *Preparing Instructional Objectives*, has had a major influence on the development of learning and training programs (Kruse, 2002). Mager argued for the use of specific, measurable behavioral and performance objectives that both guide designers during courseware development and aid students in the learning process (Kruse, 2002). To Mager, the behavioral objective should have three major components: behavior, condition, and standard (Kruse, 2002). The behavior should be specific and observable in conditions under which the behavior is to be completed (Kruse, 2002). The standard is the level of desirable performance, including an acceptable range of correct answers.

#### D. Mager's Theory of Performance Objectives

Performance objectives define what learners show, know, do, or feel at the end of a planned instructional experience (Mager, 1975, as cited in Rothwell & Kazanas, 2001, pp. 62-66). Performance objectives should contain statements about at least two of these: performance, criterion, and condition. The performance objective should describe “what a learner will be doing when demonstrating mastery of the objective” at the end of the planned instruction (Rothwell, et. al., 2001). The criterion component of a performance objective describes “how well the learner must perform in order to be considered acceptable” (Rothwell, et. al., 2001). The condition component “describes the important conditions (if any) under which the performance is to occur” (Rothwell, et. al., 2001).

#### E. Ethical and Cross-Cultural Awareness Considerations

From an ethical point of view, the performance objectives should match up to the performance expectations of the job, task, or content analyzed and should be linked to learning needs (Rothwell, 2001, p. 69). In Western culture, most performance objectives are stated first, and then instructors work to help learners achieve them (Rothwell, et. al., 2001). In cultures viewing change as an iterative process rather than one targeted in advance, it is suggested to reveal and emphasize performance objectives gradually (Rothwell, et. al., 2001).

## VI. Communication

### A. Purpose of this Section

The purpose of this section is to define the importance of communication when designing and implementing a distance education program.

### B. Overview of Communications Issues

Throughout the history of human communication, advances in technology have powered paradigmatic shifts in education (Frick, 1991, as cited in Nasseh, 1997). Communication between teacher and student is a vital element of successful distance education. Media has played an essential role in the establishment of teacher and student communication. For communication to take place, at a bare minimum, there must be a sender, a receiver, and a message. To participate in an electronic communication system a student needs access to a telephone, computer and modem. If a message is intended as an instruction, then besides student, teacher, and content, we must consider the environment in which this educational communication occurs (Berg & Collins, 1995, as cited in Nasseh, 1997). Moore (1990, as cited in Nasseh, 1997) sees the success of distance education to be based on the content of the dialog between teacher and student and the effectiveness of the communication system in an educational process.

A computer, enhanced by CD-ROMs, helps facilitate instruction. This type of education encourages interaction between students where interaction may not have occurred in a traditional classroom. This type of educational environment “provides a printed dialogue as a reference, tightens the structure of the course

and provides concise information, and demonstrates the potential of `networking' to students” (Kemper, 1986).

## **VII. Technological Modes**

### **A. Purpose of this Section**

The purpose of this section is to define technological issues involved in designing and implementing a course online. A key point is that technology is not a given. In a global environment, it can vary widely.

### **B. Overview of Technological Modes**

Instructors, online course designers, and students must consider issues such as computer ownership, the type and speed of the Internet connection, the online course platform or interface, the computer hardware and software, connectivity, reliability, and potential disparities. Within the United States, large variances exist in computer access and usage. Consider these disparities: 42.1% of American households have access to computers; 32.6% of African Americans and 26% of rural Native American households have access to computers; 18.9% of Native American households have access to the Internet (First & Hart, 2002, p. 2) This digital divide increases when examining world Internet usage. An estimated 1.72 million people are online in Africa, but 1.622 of them are from South Africa. Approximately 8 million people in South America are online (CommerceNet, 2003).

The speed of Internet connections is inconsistent nationally and internationally. The U.S., Germany, Japan, and Canada lead the world in broadband connectivity; the rest of the world lags behind significantly (Macklin, 2003). Online instructors should realize that connection rates might vary from

28.8 kilobits per second to well over 300 kilobits per second downstream.

Therefore, when designing a course for global delivery, it would be wise to assume the lower dial-up connection speeds as the norm.

### C. Key Issues in Technological Modes

The three key issues are the computer used, the connection, and the platform.

- The computer. Since Microsoft® Windows is the prevalent operating system, courses designed for this platform are the most universally accepted. Macintosh users could take these courses using Windows compliant tools such as Office 2000.
- The connection. Internet connection speeds can vary from 28.8 kilobits per second to well over 300 kilobits per second (Macklin, 2003). A difficult decision will be whether to offer rich multimedia with the prolonged download times for dial-up modem users, or text only presentations with acceptable transmission rates for all modem speeds.
- The platform. Course designers need to consider the cost, convenience, and reliability tradeoffs when deciding on which platform to use.

## **VIII. Learner Attributes**

### **A. Purpose of this Section**

The purpose of this section is to describe the different attributes of the online learner and provide tips on how learners can be successful in an online environment.

### **B. Overview of Learner Attributes**

A motivated learner will be successful in a well-designed and supportive learning environment. Learning skills, attitude, and comfort level with various tools and policies also plays a role in the learner's success.

Successful online learners are self-motivated, self-directed, energetic, self-disciplined, self-reliant, and good critical readers who are competent and comfortable with information technologies. These successful learners are able to identify learning goals and objectives that apply to their environment, recognize the difficulty and time constraints of online courses are able to solve problems, gather information, and seek help when needed, and can evaluate and use various sources of information (Concordia University, 2002).

Several tips will help make online learning easier for learners:

1. Successful online students need to participate.
2. It is important for learners to give input on the topic to share their knowledge and receive feedback from their classmates
3. Learners should take the program and themselves seriously.

4. Learners should obtain support from family and friends. Learners should help them understand when the learner's time is limited.
5. Find a private, quiet study area. If there are too many distractions while studying, the distractions usually win.
6. Log into the course everyday to keep up with the class, and receive new information from classmates.
7. Distance learning is a great way to take advantage of being invisible to classmates. There are no pre-judgments made about students from others that might be made about them in a traditional classroom.
8. Speak up if there are problems. Instructors cannot see the students' reactions; the only way to discern problems is if students inform instructors about problems.
9. What better way to be successful than using what is learned? Apply what is learned on a daily basis to assist in remembering it. If learned information is applied on a daily basis then it is easier to remember.

## **IX. Theoretical Framework**

### **A. Purpose of this Section**

The purpose of this section is to describe the theoretical framework for Distance Education and offer insight into elemental learning theories influencing Distance Education.

### **B. Overview of Theories**

Learning theories explain how participants in the education process learn, instruct, and form course content. Four learning theories illustrate essential distinctions to frame understanding of learning: behaviorism, constructivism, cognitivism, and the theory of multiple intelligences. Constructivist theorist, Jerome Bruner, stated that to relate learning theory to instruction, educators should analyze four factors: 1) learner's predisposition, 2) structure of content related to abilities, 3) sequencing of content delivery, and 4) nature and pacing of the "rewards and punishments" (Bruner, J., 1966, as cited in Kearsley, 2002).

Behaviorists observe learners gain knowledge through clearly modeled learning tasks reduced to frequent practice. Guiding learners through models of appropriate performance instruction often takes the form of a drill. Course content is structured around specific answers rather than broad content meaning. Many forms of instruction use variations on the behaviorist theory to guide learners to deeper understanding of the content. For example, a series of pointed 'yes' or 'no' answers throughout a lesson can guide learners to reach conclusions as to the larger content objectives.

In Constructivist instruction, learners assemble concepts based on needs and prior understanding. Learners are presented with content as component parts and are guided through assembling the component parts into learning. Methods of interaction should allow learners to participate in the assembly of knowledge.

Cognitivism holds that learners form content's meaning and application. Learners' intentions to learn are central elements in cognitivist teaching and learning. Assessing ability and understanding prior to learning, and comprehension and knowledge after learning are essential in cognitivist learning. Pre-tests and post-tests build foundation-level understanding from within learners.

The Multiple Intelligences theory seems to be an amalgamation of other learning theories. Closer examination presents the distinction that, to multiple intelligence theorists, learning is a multi-sensory experience where learning is more poly-modal than uni-modal as the behaviorists may believe. Learners need sensory stimulation to address content. If visuals in training are flat, if audio is conservative, and if special-tactile interactions are absent, training is less effective.

## **X. Student, Teacher, Administrative and Staff Issues**

### **A. Purpose of this Section**

In addition to the student and teacher, relies upon a support network comprised of staff and administrators. This section will explain some of the issues and possible solutions they all face.

### **B. Overview of Student, Teacher, Administrator and Staff Issues**

Students and teachers realize that distance education requires a different type of interactivity. The visual cues are absent, the voice inflections are gone, and the written word becomes paramount. Cultural diversity must be both respected and accepted. Additionally, administrators and staff must integrate classes into the mainstream of the institution while recognizing the unique nature of the instruction.

### **C. Student Perspective Issues**

In a Web-based distance education situation, students do not see each other or their instructors. This absence of physical cues may lead to some frustration among students. Other examples of the sorts of student issues that might be of interest to distance education designers could include the following:

- Faculty-student relationships, such as the level of interactivity and feedback, satisfaction with the interaction, level of advising and academic support.
- The attitudes and opinions of those students involved that could have an effect on the success of the distance learning effort.

- Student self-regulation skills and learning style preferences.
- Student to student interactions and the impact of cooperative team efforts in learning.
- Student interaction with course materials.
- Whether distance learning facilitates active learning and constructivist approaches commonly accepted in K-12 education. Learners should be constructors and producers of personal knowledge rather than receivers and repeaters of inert knowledge.
- The effect of time-on-task and the effect of distance learning on studying and learning efficiency.
- The impact on student performance, retention, academic program outcomes, and career placement and performance (USC, 2003).

Many student processes are dependent upon interpreting body language and other nonverbal clues to assess the meaning of member communications. In distance education environments, many of these clues will be lost, while some new clues will emerge from the nature of the technology itself (USC, 2003). Many frustrations are caused by a lack of feedback from instructors. Because students cannot see instructors, and implicitly determine the instructor's expectations, their anxiety levels may increase. The lack of communication cues is a disadvantage because people cannot use any nonverbal cues, such as gestures and facial expressions.

Delayed feedback from instructors is another major source of frustration for students because they are concerned about their performance. Swift interaction is fundamental to the effectiveness of a distance education program.

#### D. Teacher Perspective Issues

In designing an effective distance learning course, instructional objectives must be the first priority. The technology used should be as invisible as possible. Technology should be just another tool that is used by instructors to deliver information and interact with students.

After instructors have established the goals of the class and the objectives have been outlined, the instructional materials can be planned and developed. Lack of commitment during this process could result in creating ineffective material for the distance learning classroom. "Creating effective materials for distance learning is an extremely time-consuming and energy-consuming process" (Florida Center for Instructional Technology, 1999). No matter what type of technology is used, instructors must take ample time to create learning materials.

Distance learning requires a unique set of skills and techniques. Training programs for distance learning teachers are important in assisting teachers to become familiar with the use of technology and helping to re-design instructional strategies.

"Tele-learning allows us to do the same things, but differently...but also, to do things differently" (Thornburg, 1995). In particular, most teachers need assistance and practice in:

- Strategies for implementing small group activities and individual practice

- Techniques for maximizing teacher/student and student/student interactions
- Successful approaches for integrating technology into the teaching/learning process
- Tactics for motivating students at a distance (FCIT, 1999)

In addition to instructors, facilitators and support personnel are important to the success of distance learning experiences. At remote locations, facilitators act as liaisons for students. It is important that they are familiar with courses and constantly communicate with instructors. Support personnel are important to everyone involved in distance learning. In order to prevent frustration and confusion, support personnel are there to ensure that everything runs smoothly and to make certain that everything functions properly.

“The following factors have been shown to influence the success of a distance-learning project. The instructor is responsible for most if not all of these” (FCIT, 1999):

- Select the appropriate technology
- Allow plenty of time for planning
- Provide consistent and timely feedback to students
- Encourage student-to-student interactions
- Provide training for the instructors and facilitators
- Ensure a support structure for students
- Have a back-up plan for the technology
- Practice, practice, practice

## E. Administrative and Staff Matters

Administration and staff roles in distance education should not be minimized. They integrate the institution's distance education program into the overall vision and mission of the organization, and provide centralized funding and distribution networks. They also allow faculty to have input into the choice of content and the technology used to disseminate it (Penn State, 1995). As the roles of universities and colleges become redefined in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, they cannot look upon distance education as an oddity or fad. Rather, distance education must be elevated and mainstreamed into the institution as an integral part of its overall mission.

Administrative personnel are charged with shaping distance education policies of institutions. It is important to remember that the staff's role to make sure that policy has been appropriately implemented. Adequate training of staff is imperative to build understanding of institutional policies and missions. This training should impart a strong sense of shared purpose, clear policies and procedures, and high expectations for institutional performance, while clearly showing support from administrators (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). In so doing, the staff will know how to appropriately market and educate prospective students wishing to pursue online learning options.

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## **XI. Copyright, Handouts, Study Guides, and Visuals Issues**

### **A. Purpose of this Section**

The purpose of this section is to describe how copyrights pertain to distance education, and the role of handouts, study, guides, and visual materials in distance education.

### **B. Copyright Issues**

The 1976 United States Copyright Act protects “original works of authorship” including literary works, musical works with accompanying words, dramatic works with accompanying music, pantomimes and choreographic works, pictorial, graphic, and sculptural works, motion pictures and other audiovisual works, sound recordings, and architectural works (U.S. Copyright Office, 2000).

Copyright protection is available for published and unpublished works. Individuals should assume all works are copyrighted and ask permission to use the materials. The Act and subsequent amendments give the owner of the copyright the exclusive right to reproduce the work and distribute these copies to the public by sale, rental, lease, or lending; prepare derivative works based upon the work; perform and display the work publicly (U.S. Copyright Office, 2000).

Several amendment sections (S) of the Act pertain to education and distance education (Harper, 2000):

- S107, Fair Use Rule, permits fair use of the owner’s work without permission for purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting,

teaching including multiple copies for classroom use, scholarship, or research

- S108, permits libraries to archive works, to make copies for patrons, and to participate in interlibrary loan operations
- S109, The First Sale Doctrine, permits all individuals the right to dispose of individual copies of a work without regard to the wishes or the pocketbook of the copyright owner
- S110, permits certain educational performances and displays in face-to-face teaching and distance learning
- S117, allows individuals to make backup copies of their software programs
- S121, permits entities to make copies for individuals with disabilities when a copyright owner has chosen not to make available special versions for individuals with disabilities

The Berne Convention, which the U.S. joined in 1988, gives greater protection for proprietors, new copyright relationships with 24 countries, and eliminates copyright notice requirements (Masciola, 2002). A World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) 1996 conference statement permits the application of fair use in the digital environment (Masciola, 2002).

The Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) of 1998 implemented two WIPO treaties requiring members to provide protection to “certain works from other member countries or created by nationals of other member countries” (U.S. Copyright Office, 1998). The DMCA adds amendments to the Copyright Act that facilitates Internet broadcasting. It exempts nonprofit libraries, archives, and

educational institutions from criminal liability from applying the fair use rule to copyrighted works, and allows circumventing “for the purpose of making a good faith determination as to whether they wish to obtain unauthorized access to the work” (U.S. Copyright Office, 1998).

The “Technology Education and Copyright Harmonization Act,” or the “Teach Act” of 2002 expands “the scope of materials that may be used in distance education; the ability to deliver content to students outside the classroom; the opportunity to retain archival copies of course materials on servers; and the authority to convert some works from analog to digital formats (Masciola, 2002). The Act adds compliance restrictions. The organization needs to adopt and disseminate copyright policies and information resources; implement technological restrictions on access and copying; adhere to limits on the quantity of certain works that may be digitized and included in distance education; and use copyrighted materials in the context of “mediated instructional activities” similar in some respects to the conduct of a traditional course (Masciola, 2002). The Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act extends copyright protection to the life of the author plus 70 years, with the exception of permitting “libraries, archives, and non-profit educational institutions to treat copyrighted works in their last twenty years of protection as if they were in the public domain for non-commercial purposes, under certain limited conditions” (Masciola, 2002).

**Copyright Policy.** Each organization should have a copyright policy customized to meet the needs of the organization, related to different types of media, providing clearly written solutions to proprietary copyright issues, and

ensuring that individuals follow one approach to copyright, reducing copyright infringement and liability (Harris, 2003). Copyright policies should include references to Fair Use Rules, DMCA, the Technology Education and Copyright Harmonization Act, and the Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act. Copyright policy should include the use of print, photographs, music, video, Internet, and other digital media. It should include sample permission letters and forms and sample copyright notices.

### C. Handouts, Study Guides, and Visuals

Applying the Multiple Intelligences theory (see Section V) to distance education suggests that instructors seek polymodal forms of interaction with learners. Embodying this approach improves handouts, study guides, and course materials, irrespective of any particular learning theory. Internet delivered distance education materials demand careful preparation due to the immediacy and broadcast nature of instruction. Materials for multicultural audiences necessitate a study of cultural views towards written and pictorial information. Language, social interaction, and bias in graphic interpretation filter polymodal interactions for learners of all cultures. Handouts and study guides describe course content, the manner in which the content is learned, and measures for comprehension of instruction.

**Handouts:** In distance education, virtual handouts share the requirements of their physical world counterparts. Clear and relevant to the content points they support, the best handouts elaborate upon content details establishing context, and supplying case studies and research depth. Instructors use articles, Web-based

media presentations, and third party reports as handouts to maintain content's currency. Language is a primary consideration in designing handouts. Materials gain multicultural effectiveness when translated into languages and edited based on a study of learner background.

**Study guides** focus attention on areas within course content, manage reading activities, and increase learner comprehension. Study guides can take the form of annotated lectures, objectives-based outlines for content review, and interactive tests. Instructors should be prepared to change guides quickly to meet learner needs. Language also plays a role in study guides. Instructors may wish to use the study guide as a way to develop regional course texts or lectures into more global materials.

**Visual materials** in distance education personalize courses. Graphic images can be onscreen visuals for computer or television, or printed handouts and study guides. Clarity and content support measure successful educational graphics. Images must be topical and cannot overwhelm messages in the content. Beyond capturing learners' attention, images must inform appropriately in easily evaluated ways. Accordingly, cultural interpretations of graphics, colors, and images must be studied prior to publication of course visuals. Focus group testing within the formative course evaluation can isolate and define cultural negatives in the visual materials.

All materials supporting content should have easy-to-read type in a simple serif or sans serif typeface (see Figure 2). Twelve-point type is a standard type size for textbooks, handouts, and Web pages where small type can cause eyestrain.

Select type color and background colors for an appropriate contrast level (see Figure 3). If materials are available from cultures within the learner audience, these should be studied for any color or type bias. Relate text and images to each other in the layout of each page (see Figure 4). Images should bear captions expressing their relevance to the content, thereby avoiding any image misinterpretation. Establishing a visual structure for the content increases learners' enjoyment heightens learner interaction with visual materials (Albright, et al. 2000, p. 156-167). Designers planning materials for culturally diverse audiences should design materials with minimal home-culture specificity. Examples of culture specific graphics include stop signs and mailboxes. The materials should broadcast that they are multicultural documents and encourage readers to experience them as such.

Figure 2: Type in course materials must be easy to read.

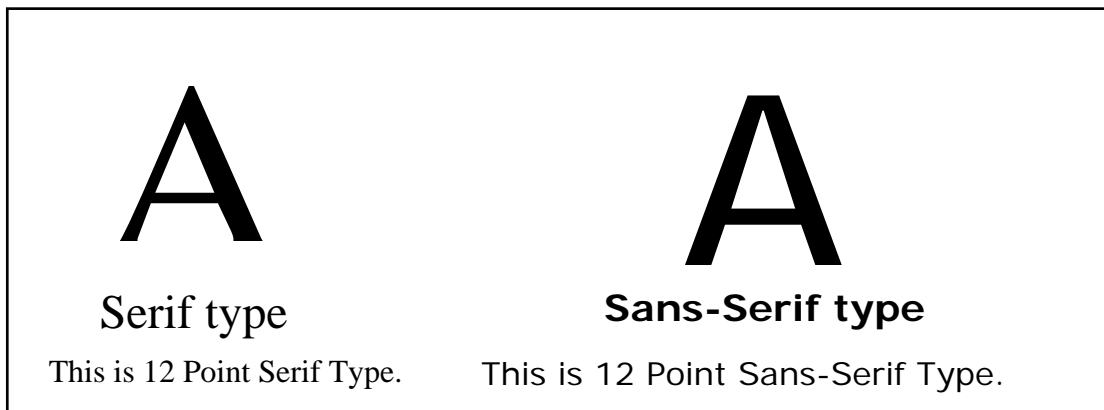


Figure 3: Type color and background colors effect readability.

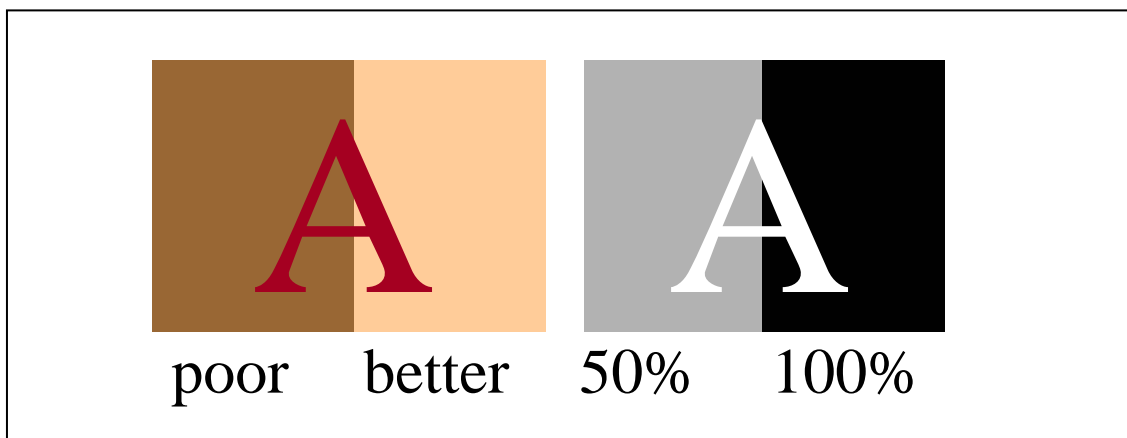


Figure 4: Text and images should be clearly related in the page layout.



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## **XII. Communication Tools**

### **A. Purpose of this Section**

The purpose of this section is to explain the different communication tools that are available on the World Wide Web.

### **B. Overview of Communication Tools**

The Internet is a worldwide network of information resources and a powerful communication tool. There are varieties of ways for learners to share information globally both in real time and asynchronously.

### **C. Internet Communication Tools**

The Internet is a powerful communication tool. E-mail and Web page advertising illustrate only a fraction of the Internet's communication features. "The Internet can be used as a tool for communicating outside of the classroom. Students can easily collaborate with peers across continents or ask questions directly to an expert in their field of interest. The multimedia capabilities of the Internet allow students to share information, stories, artwork, movies, and other productions with multiple audiences" (FCIT Web Site, Chapter 4). The Internet offers a means of communication unimagined ten years ago. Some of the tools available for communication on the Internet are: chat, e-mail, FTP, Web page design, bulletin boards, hyperlinks, messaging and paging.

**E-mail** is the most basic level of Internet communication. "E-mail provides the opportunity for students to collaborate with their peers across town or across

the globe. Of course, email use in the classroom should be carefully monitored and subject to the school's Acceptable Use Policy (AUP). Once students are aware of safety and netiquette issues, they may begin to work with students around the world” (FCIP Web Site, Chapter 4).

E-mail is often free with Internet service provider (ISP) subscriptions. Microsoft’s Hotmail, Yahoo!, Excite, and other free e-mail accounts do not require a subscription and are accessed through the Internet. E-mail users compose and send messages to an e-mail address. They receive messages and decide whether to open and respond to them. E-mails may have file and image attachments. Some e-mail accounts only support text mail messages, but others support hypertext markup language (HTML), which allows color, text styles, and image displays.

**Chat** is another exciting means of communicating online. Chat rooms have emerged as a serious technology for colleagues in business and education to communicate in real time without special and expensive software. An excellent example of a professional chat room is the Groove Technologies platform at [www.groove.com](http://www.groove.com). Chats run automatically through Web browsers.

**File Transfer Protocol (FTP)** is an essential tool in Internet communication. FTP programs enable users to transfer files between computers utilizing the Internet. Good FTP software programs are essential for individuals and organizations with Web pages. This has practical applications for education because it allows Web sites to be constructed and files to be transferred peer-to-peer.

**Web pages** are methods of communicating allowing the outside world to step inside and learn more about an individual or classroom. Web pages can be as simple or complex as the author desires. The only tool really needed is a simple word processor such as Simpletext on the Mac, or WordPad on the PC (FCIP, Chapter 4).

**Messaging and paging** through Instant Messengers (IM) AOL, Yahoo!, ICQ, MSN, JabberIM, Odigo, Netscape, and Trillian, represent a popular way to communicate. They can be utilized both synchronously and asynchronously. From a global perspective, IM's allow free communication between countries and cultures and represent an important tool for learners and instructors. These instant messaging and paging programs offer instant messages that resemble real time chatting. This not true chatting because the participants take turns sending the messages, with all participants following the ongoing conversation visually.

**Bulletin Boards and Newsgroups** are types of communication that can be helpful for students to stay in touch with one another and to gain information from individuals whose interests are similar. Newsgroups are available in almost every subject imaginable and offer tremendous global perspectives.

**Hyperlinks** through key phrases to relevant sites allow educators to present content that is enriched and not overly busy. For example, if the topic is Ecuadorian culture, a hyperlink can take the student to a site that offers much more content than might be possible otherwise. Hyperlinks can also be used to direct interested parties to e-mail accounts.

#### D. Teaching with the World Wide Web as a Communication Tool

Instructors can utilize this vast array of information to explore different cultures and to circulate knowledge that heretofore was impossible. E-mail can be utilized to deliver English language instruction to foreign scholars prior to their arrival in the United States (Goodwin, Hamrick, & Stewart, 1993). The University of South Carolina English Program for Internationals (EPI) has been successful in e-mailing “Latin American scholarship students a series of assignments designed to take them from basic academic writing to text analysis for varying academic purposes” (Marcos, 1994, p. 1).

Instructional Designers must incorporate this network into content development, delivery and assessment. Instructors need to be trained in the proper use of the Web as a communication tool. Using the World Wide Web’s communication structure, Instructional Designers open content to a global level encouraging rich cultural perspectives and interaction.

### **XIII. Assessment Issues**

#### **A. Purpose of this Section**

The purpose of this section is to illustrate the different types of assessment used in distance education and the issues associated with assessment.

#### **B. Overview of Assessment Issues**

"Assessment is an ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning. It involves making our expectations explicit and public; setting appropriate criteria and high standards for learning quality; systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well performance matches those expectations and standards; and using the resulting information to document, explain, and improve performance" (Thomas, 1995, p. 7).

Issues associated with assessment in distance education are numerous. This section will cover the core issues. A major obstacle in distance education is overcoming the lack of body language and speech patterns that are usually good learning indicators in a face-to-face learning environment. The Internet offers many tools for overcoming these issues.

When designing assessment tools for a distance education course, there are important steps to take:

- Define your culture
- Measure your culture

- Determine if your organization's culture works for or against your strategic objectives
- Change your culture
- Maintain your culture (HRD, 2003).

The following are some basic definitions of content and performance standards, as well as an overview of the issues involved in developing assessments to measure the course content and student performance standards.

**Content Standards.** “Content standards specify the general domains of knowledge that students should learn. These typically reflect traditional subjects--math, science, English/language arts, geography, and the arts--but also may include thematic, interdisciplinary work” (NCRE, 1998).

**Performance Standards.** Performance standards define how students demonstrate their proficiency in the skills and knowledge framed by states' content standards.

**Cultural Issues.** In designing assessments for multicultural learners, the primary concerns are language, instruction, and the negation of bias. Language forms a major component of most forms of assessment. Quizzes, papers, and interview-formats use language to pose questions and to gather responses. Any language differences that act as impediments to the clarity of the assessments tools work to invalidate the assessment.

The test designer must use an understanding of the role of culture in giving directions for assessments to diverse audiences. In some cultures quizzing by rote, or assembling principal facts, signifies prowess in the course content. An essay test in this instance may not match the learning styles of the participants. It would run the risk of both confusing the learners and not supporting their strengths as they see them.

Bias, in all forms, works against the true purpose of assessment. It predisposes certain learners to perform in a predictable way or otherwise impacts the objectivity of the assessment.

### C. Core Issues in All Forms of Assessment.

**Needs Assessments.** The importance of assessment in a distance-learning course is unquestionable. A major problem however is that assessment instruments can be poorly planned. Witkin (1984) concludes "there is no one model or conceptual framework for needs assessment that has been universally accepted, and there is little empirical evidence of the superiority of one approach over another" (p.29). Witkin developed a model that can assist in the choice of an educational need assessment approach. The model consists of nine questions that are keyed to a needs assessment product locator (Witkin, 1978). If a needs assessment product locator is unavailable the following questions are useful in evaluating the needs assessment model.

1. Who wants a needs assessment?
2. Why is a needs assessment wanted?
3. What should be the scope of the assessment?
4. On whose needs will you focus and at what level?
5. What kinds and amounts of data should be collected for your purposes?
6. What sources and methods might you use for data collection?
7. What are your constraints on data collection?
8. What can you invest in people, money, and time?
9. What needs assessment products meet your purposes, constraints, and resources?

**Assessments for distance learning.** It would be an understatement to say that there are problems in understanding assessment's role in distance learning. In defining learning assessment, Bloom, Hastings and Madaus (Mendes 1998), proposed that the evaluation process should include a variety of experiences, going beyond the traditional paper and pencil final examination. In face-to-face contexts, professors use more than formal test mechanisms to evaluate students. Body language, participation, and quality of questions posed by students are good indicators of learning. In distance education, the largely text-based formal mechanisms may be used exclusively. This is not due to a lack of accessible mechanisms that can assist instructors in this task. Many professors prefer to work with more traditional methods of evaluation.

The development of the Internet, networks and computers have mediated the differences between forms of assessment delivery. Various tools now are able to keep up with the interactions and activities for the distance learning student. These tools emulate the way students learn. These tools can also be used for learning assessment. There are a number of examples available to illustrate the advantages of using the Internet for assessment:

- Reduction of distribution costs
- The corrections and updates are simple
- Several techniques for evaluation are possible using multimedia for interaction professor to student and student to student
- The Internet facilitates collaborative writing

- Ease of providing feedback promotes ongoing formative assessments and evaluations (Tarouco, 1997).

**Assessment tools.** There are tools on the market today that assess the progress of the distance learning student. One major tool is WebCT. Typical of many course management systems, Web CT offers instructors opportunities to assess students in several forms including subject tests, quizzes, and term papers. The product also provided attendance and usage statistics for grading (Tarouco, 1997). Table 1 shows an assessment rubric used to grade interactive qualities in distance-learning courses.

Table 1: Rubric to assess levels of interaction in distance learning courses.

Level of interaction	Social Rapport-building Activities Instructor-led	Instructional Designs for Learning Instructor- led	Levels of Interactivity Technology Resources	Impact of Interactive Qualities Reflected in Learner Response
<b>Few</b> <b>(1 point)</b>	Instructor does not encourage students to get to know one personally. No activities require social interaction, or are limited to brief start-of-course introductions.	Instructional activities do not require two-way instructor/ student interaction; they call for one-way delivery of information (e. g., instructor lectures, text delivery).	Fax, Web, or other technology resource allows one-way (instructor to student) delivery of information (text and/or graphics).	By the end of the course, all students in the class are interacting with instructor and other students <i>only</i> when required.
<b>Minimum</b> <b>(2 points)</b>	In addition to brief introductions, the instructor provides for one other exchange of student information, e.g., written bio of personal experiences.	Instructional activities require individual communication with the instructor only (e.g. asking/responding to questions).	E-mail, listserv, bulletin board or other technology resource allows two-way, asynchronous exchanges of information (text and/or graphics).	By the end of the course, 20-25% of students are initiating interaction with the instructor and other students on a voluntary basis (i.e., other than when required).
<b>Moderate</b> <b>(3 points)</b>	In addition to exchanges of personal information among students, the instructor provides at least one other activity designed to increase student social rapport.	In addition to requiring students to communicate with the instructor, students work and share results with one another (e. g., in small groups)	In addition to technologies used for two-way asynchronous exchanges of text information, chatroom or other technology allows synchronous exchanges of written information.	By the end of the course, 25-50% of students in the class are initiating interaction with the instructor and other students on a voluntary basis (i.e., other than when required).
<b>Above average</b> <b>(4 points)</b>	In addition to exchanges of personal information among students, the instructor provides several other activities designed to increase student social rapport.	In addition to requiring students to communicate with the instructor, students work and share results with one another (e. g., in small groups) and the class.	In addition to technologies used for two-way, asynchronous exchanges of text information, additional technologies (e. g., teleconferencing) allow one-way visual and two-way voice student/instructor communications	By the end of the course, 50-75% of students in the class are initiating interaction with the instructor and other students on a voluntary basis (i.e., other than when required).
<b>High level</b> <b>(5 points)</b>	In addition to exchanges of personal information among students, the instructor provides a variety of in-class and outside-class activities designed to increase student social rapport	In addition to requiring students to communicate with the instructor, students work and share results with one another (e. g., in small groups), outside experts and the rest of the class.	In addition to technologies for two-way exchanges of text information, two-way videoconferencing allows synchronous voice & visual instructor /students/students communications.	By the end of the course, over 75% of students in the class are initiating interaction with the instructor and other students on a voluntary basis (i.e., other than when required).
<b>Total each:</b>	_____ pts.	_____ pts.	_____ pts.	_____ pts.
<b>Overall:</b>	_____ pts.			
Low interactive qualities		<b>1 - 7 points</b>		
Moderate interactive qualities		<b>8 -14 points</b>		
High interactive qualities		<b>15-20 points</b>		

Note: *Adapted from* How Interactive are YOUR Distance Courses? A Rubric for Assessing Interaction in Distance Learning. (2000) by M. D. Roblyer, & L. Ekhaml. Retrieved March 28, 2003 from: <http://www.westga.edu/~distance/roblyer32.html>

**Assesment materials.** Four areas to be considered when writing testing materials and exercises are: validity, reliability, clarity, and transferability of skills (Clark, 1995).

**Validity.** Cultural validity in assessment investigates how cultural background influences students' interpretations of educational assessment items and the cognitive activities they use in completing those items. The analysis of the data, determines: (1) whether students from different cultural groups exhibit different patterns by which they understand the exercises; (2) how culture influences the inferred cognitive activity elicited by those exercises; and (3) whether those differences can account for performance score differences among cultural groups. (Solano-Flores, n.d.).

**Reliability.** Reliability refers to the degree to which an assessment or instrument consistently measures an attribute. There are several types of reliabilities, for example:

- Intra-Rater: the degree to which the measure yields consistent results over different administrations with the same teacher performing at the same level by the same assessor;
- Inter-Rater: the degree to which the measure yields similar results for the same teacher at the same time with more than one assessor;
- Internal Consistency: the degree to which individual observations or items consistently measure the same attribute; and

- **Test-Retest:** the degree to which the measure produces consistent results over several administrations assessing the same attribute of a teacher. (WMU, 2003).

**Clarity.** Clarity relates to the interpretability and plausibility of the questions posed, and the way in which the survey is conducted (NRS, 2002). The testing materials and exercises must have clarity in order to be considered valid. When dealing with diverse cultures, is care being taken so that the questions are offered clearly and understood by all respondents? Only when there is clarity can the achievement of quality be managed and quality itself be credibly measured.

**Transferability of Skills.** This term refers to (1) the degree to which the knowledge and skills demonstrated in solving an assessment task can be used in solving other work-related tasks and real-world activities; (2) one of several characteristics used to evaluate assessments (WMU, 2003).

#### D. Core Issues in Distance Education.

**Assessment Testing.** Assessment methods can include computer-marked assignments, such as multiple-choice questions, instructor marked tests, short answer questions, and electronically submitted papers (NRS, 2002).

**Scoring.** This is the process of determining the value of a performance on an indicator or criterion. There are many scoring systems. The scoring of some examinations can be just as complicated as the exercise given. Examples of such scoring systems include rating scales, distribution of scores and rating standards.

In distance education students can receive almost immediate scoring information and feedback

**Alternative Assessments.** Online alternative assessment can include electronic portfolios, peer assessment of online activities such as team work, participation in discussions or collaborative projects, self assessment, through instant feedback questionnaires, and student publication of assessment items such as Web pages (Faculty of Education & Arts Web Team, 2002).

**Cheating or Plagiarism in the Electronic Classroom.** One solution is to offer proctored exams, where the student pays for an independent supervisor to administer the exam for the institution. The idea is similar to having a document notarized, in that, a professional proctor administers the test and attests to the validity of the testing procedure. Another solution is Web based testing, which is password protected and whose results can be immediately displayed to both the student and the instructor. Retinal scans, ear shape analysis, and facial recognition software are the newest tools to provide security in the non-proctored distance education exam. Additionally, specialized search engines can be employed to verify whether any parts of a paper are either improperly referenced or plagiarized altogether (Tulloch & Thompson, 1999).

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## XIV. Evaluation Issues

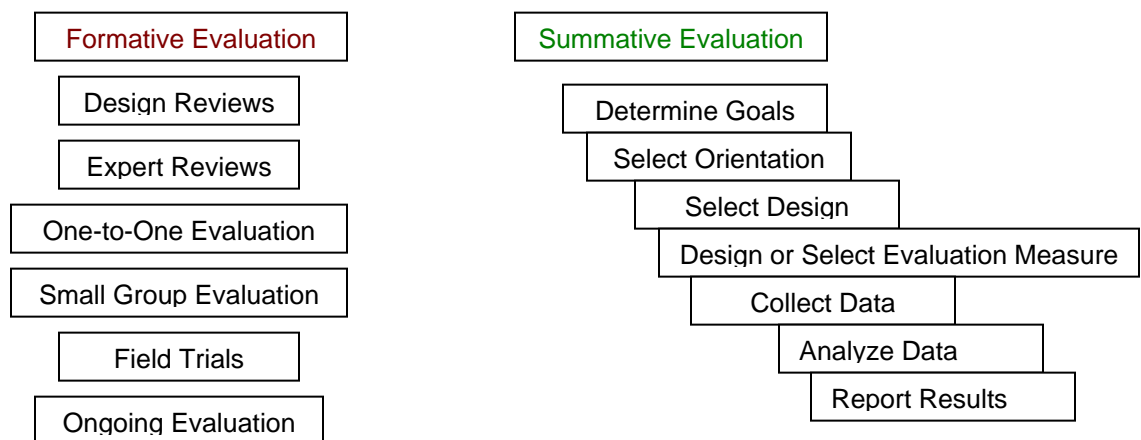
### A. Purpose of this Section

The purpose of this section is explain the necessity for conducting formative and summative evaluations in distance education programs while considering cultural diversity issues.

### B. Formative Evaluations

Formative and summative evaluation should be planned early in the design process. Formative evaluations are ongoing and should be considered at all stages of the design process. The formative evaluation allows for reviewing the goals of the course; analyzing the environment, learners, and tasks; reviewing materials and assessments; allowing subject matter experts and instructors the opportunity to review the materials and assessments; and pilot testing the materials; and making modifications as an ongoing process.

Figure 5: Comparison of formative and summative assessments



Note: Adapted from Smith and Ragan, 2001. *Instructional Design*. Indianapolis, IN: Jossey-Bass.

### C. Summative Evaluation

The summative evaluation is used to collect, analyze, and summarize data to present to decision makers so they can make a judgment regarding the effectiveness, appeal, and efficiency of instruction (Smith and Tillman, 2001, p. 177). In order for evaluations to be carried out in a systematic way, they need to be conducted and reported in a timely fashion while using state-of-the-art methodological standards (Woodley, & Kirkwood, 1986, as cited in Albright, Simonson, Smaldino, & Zvacek, 2000 ). This includes the program's logic and pedagogical models. Evaluations would have to be performed by professionals who are qualified to do so, managed properly, and given enough funding so as to collect independent data and conduct appropriate analysis while being sensitive to cultural issues pertaining to low or high self worth. If these steps are taken, the necessary progress of the educational content can be ascertained whether it is online or on the ground. Decisions regarding the improvement or upgrading of the learning activity can be made from the results.

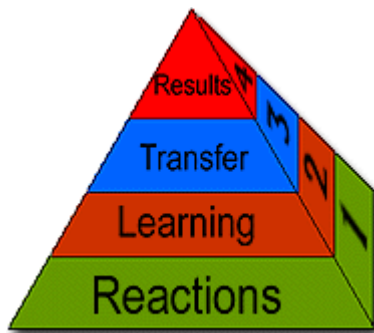
Distance education instructors may ask their students questions as part of the summative evaluation (Gottschalk, 2003):

- List five weaknesses of the course.
- List three (or five) strengths of the course.
- If you were teaching the course, what would you do differently?
- What did you think would be covered in this course but was not?

#### D. Kirkpatrick's Four Levels of Evaluation

Kirkpatrick's four levels of evaluation are reactions, learning, transfer, and results (Winfrey, n.d.). Level 1 evaluates how the participants reacted to the instruction and materials, and whether the course was relevant to their work. Level 2 assesses the extent students have advanced in skills, knowledge, or attitude. Assessments include formal and informal testing, team assessment, and self-assessment. Level 3 evaluates the transfer of learning. Level 4 evaluates results.

Figure 6: Graphic model of Kirkpatrick's Four Levels of Evaluation



Note: Adapted from Kirkpatrick's four levels of evaluation. Retrieved March 29, 2003 from: <http://coe.sdsu.edu/eet/Articles/k4levels/index.ht>

#### E. Core Issues in Distance Evaluation.

“Program evaluation is the systematic investigation of the worth of an ongoing or continuing distance education activity” (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994 as cited in Albright, Simonson, Smaldino, & Zvacek, 2000 p. 226). Distance learning institutes need to collect evaluation data because they usually do not have students present. The absence of students and

teachers often leads the decision makers to assume that abundant evaluation data may not be available.

Specific methodology to evaluate distance education was addressed by Woodley and Kirkwood (1986) when they identified six categories of information unique to distance learning programs. They are: 1) measures of activity such as the number of courses and how many students were served, 2) measures of efficiency which looks closer at the students' successful completions, costs, profits, and the total number enrolled, 3) measures of outcomes which pertains to grades, end-of-course interviews, and surveys, 4) measures of program aims which determines if the course accommodated the intended students such as rural students who otherwise may not have attended, 5) measures of policy which is a form of market research in that surveys are conducted to determine the need for a distance education offering, and 6) measures of organizations which evaluates the institution offering the distance education and can include on-site visits and interviews of the organizational leaders (Woodley, & Kirkwood, 1986, as cited in Albright, Simonson, Smaldino, & Zvacek, 2000 ). Distance education instructors can use surveys, post cards, electronic mail, and the telephone to collect formative data.

#### F. Applying Cross-Cultural Awareness to Evaluating Instruction

A prerequisite to evaluating instruction effectively is the consideration for cultures in which the evaluation will be carried out. Group evaluation efforts may take longer in low task-oriented cultures than in high task-oriented cultures because group members will seek consensus on what they think of the instruction

(Rothwell and Kazanas, 2001, p. 175). Participants in low individualism cultures may falsely agree to statements about their opinions because they aim to please an instructional designer or higher perceived status (Rothwell, et. al., 2001). It is often necessary to rely on cultural informants because they can suggest ways to achieve results when cultural differences may lead to unexpected results during the formative evaluation.

A compact method of program evaluation, The AEIOU Method (Fortune & Keith (1992); Sweeney & Sorenson (1994), as cited in Albright, 2002) is especially effective in describing the evaluation of global distance education. The method features five measures:

1) Accountability: Did all participants in the planning development and delivery of the course perform as required? In the multicultural context, it is important to evaluate the delivery and management of instructions to a varied population.

2) Effectiveness: How valuable was the instruction? Grades, user responses, and evaluative feedback regarding the course materials form measures of meaning to the learners. Learners of many cultures should be polled for descriptions of the course's meaningfulness.

3) Impact: Did the course matter to the students? This is an important follow up to education. If the goal of the instruction is to offer the students a source for more instruction, or to participate more fully in the practice connected with the instruction, this should be studied formatively. Impact is difficult to

evaluate and usually is accomplished over time. Planners for instruction at a global distance should account for extended time and logistics.

4) Organizational Context: Was the institution fully prepared to offer instruction? An environment that fosters and supports instruction influences the value of the instruction for all participants. Measuring the effects of the global environment upon the instruction should build better programs for diverse learners.

5) Unanticipated Consequences: Are there unpredicted meaningful outcomes in the instruction? This area has a profound value to international distance learning in that any cultural bias in the planning of the instruction could result in a significant negative or positive learning experience. Reaction to these experiences should be factored into further instructional development.



## **XV. Conclusion**

We hope that you have found this Best Practices Manual informative. Team B has supplied foundation guidelines for distance educators. We hope we have supplied concrete planning tools for increasing the readers' ability to instruct online and cross culturally by introducing these topics:

- domestic and global diversity issues
- distance education issues
- key points in distance education history
- learning objectives
- communication
- technological modes
- learner attributes
- theoretical framework
- student, teacher, administrative, and staff issues
- copyright and handouts issues,
- communication tools
- assessment and evaluation issues

This manual is the combined efforts of Sue Croes, Lisa Day, Scherry Harris, Michael Leonard, and Ray Tims. The authors have created this manual for anyone involved in the teaching and/or administration of distance education.

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