

## Chapter 4

# Online Policy–Compliance Training in Higher Education: A Preliminary Design Model

**Shalin Hai-Jew**  
*Kansas State University, USA*

### **ABSTRACT**

*In higher education, compliance trainings are necessary to ensure that the diverse workforce adheres to any number of regulations. With faculty and staff who are working on multiple branch campuses and traveling for research, conference presentations, and consultations, many such trainings are often created for online delivery. Policy-compliance trainings are a sub-set of professional development trainings, and they are unique in terms of their objectives—of both raising policy-awareness and providing the skills to enable behavior change to minimize liabilities and risks from non-compliance. Very little has been written about the design and delivery of policy-compliance trainings in any work context. This chapter proposes a simplified preliminary model for the design and delivery of online policy-compliance trainings in a higher-education context; it derives insights from the limited research literature and also from common practices and trainings in online policy-compliance trainings at a university.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Training is defined as “the systematic acquisition of skills, concepts, or attitudes that results in improved performance in another environment” (Goldstein & Ford, 2002, as cited in Landy & Conte, 2010, p. 317). Policy-compliance trainings are an ever-present aspect of work life in higher education. These trainings are generally based on mastery orientation, to support the development of awareness and skills to employees to fulfill their professional responsibilities. These are outcomes-based trainings, with critical awareness and skills learned, so as to directly apply them in the workplace. There are near-term ways to assess the efficacy of the training through various assessments, but effective trainings have to be effective for the length of the training cycle and beyond.

The work of higher education is heavily regulated on a wide range of issues: student care, crediting, accessibility, privacy, safety and security, financial aid, the safe handling of chemical and biological agents, and building standards, among others. To maintain staff awareness and policy compliance, a range of trainings are offered. These types of trainings are a subset of workplace trainings. They combine a range of types of learning that require skills that play the range of the revised Bloom’s Taxonomy: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and even creativity. In another conceptualization, some types of policy-compliance training may aim for the highest principled reasoning levels of moral development, on Kohlberg’s six stages and three levels of moral development model. Policy compliance, ultimately, requires the understanding of abstract laws and related policies, their practical applications to the local circumstances, and the analytical and behavioral requirements necessary to be accommodate and to uphold the policies. Further, regulations and policies are constantly being evaluated and revised; new case interpretations and lawsuits change understandings. To be adaptive to legalities, institutions of higher edu-

cation set up regulatory offices to ensure direct “single sourcing” of issues and overall campus compliance, and one of their major endeavors involves creating and deploying trainings to the general campus as well as to target sub-groups.

General policy-compliance trainings often involve those policies that apply broadly—on issues related to employment (like fair hiring laws), safety and security (such as fire drills and IT security); privacy (Family Education Rights and Privacy Act), professional ethics (avoiding conflicts of interest), and others. There are unique trainings for faculty, related to intellectual property (copyright, patenting, and others), human subjects research (and research involving animals, hazardous substances, and other policies), export controls, and others. There are unique trainings required by professional organizations in particular domains.

In general, policy-compliance training may be understood as occurring periodically (twice-yearly, annually, biannually, tri-annually, etc.), with refreshers offered in between trainings (to head off awareness and skills decay), and with special trainings offered just-in-time at a point-of-need. Policy-compliance trainings are about raising learner awareness about particular policies and the steps they need to take in order to be legal and compliant as part of their professional roles. For example, export controls and information technology (IT) security for travel may both be more critical just prior to a trip abroad. A human subjects research training (complemented by the work of institutional review boards) may be especially relevant prior to the submittal of a grant proposal. [The on-campus regulatory office for IRB compliance has as its mandate the provision of comprehensive training for new members. This capability is seen as a crucial aspect of the office’s mandate (Reeser, Austin, Jaros, Mukesh, & McCarty, 2008, p. 28.) It is also not uncommon to have remediation trainings be assigned in the aftermath of unfortunate incidents.

For an organization that has to ensure that its members meet the requirements of a thicket of

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