

Chapter 8

The “Online Teaching, Design, and Development” Course: Supporting K–State Faculty in E–Learning and Instructional Design on the Axio™ Learning/Course Management System (A Case Study)

Shalin Hai-Jew
Kansas State University, USA

ABSTRACT

“Online Teaching, Design and Development” was created as a 5-week instructor-facilitated online course to support the instructors at Kansas State University (K-State) in creating online courses and whole degree programs in the distance mode. This dual-track course accommodated both K-12 and university-level instructors, from on- and off-campus. This chapter describes how the course was conceptualized, structured, and deployed. This describes the curricular design and strategies; the creation of the various digital learning objects, the creation of the rubric evaluation structure, the assignment design, and the interactivity plan; and the course housekeeping management. Faculty members (learners) were recruited from both main and branch campuses at K-State and from other institutions of higher education using the Axio™ Learning/Course Management System (L/CMS), which was showcased in the curriculum. The lessons learned from the four years that this course has been offered (twice annually at minimum) include insights on the challenges of learner retention, the importance of learner incentives and record-keeping, and curriculum design and evolution. The curriculum was structured to have faculty build parts of an online course as they proceeded, so that all academic work done was also professional academic work towards building their online course(s). This chapter describes an online learning design structure that was sufficiently open to accommodate a variety of domain fields and teaching approaches and that encouraged peer support among faculty in the co-building of their respective courses.

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INTRODUCTION

At Kansas State University, the move to online learning has evolved at different tempos across departments and colleges depending on a range of local factors: the local administrators and the leadership and incentives that they are able to provide; the awarenesses and skill sets of various faculty in the departments; the ease of the move to online learning based on the subject matter (with wetlab courses harder to transfer, for example), and the availability of open-source digital learning objects (see Figure 1).

The university is a public land grant university founded in 1863, with 1,305 academic staff and some 23,588 students in Fall Semester 2010 (18,778 undergraduates and 4,366 post-graduates). On campus, the Division of Continuing Education is the centralized unit that supports the development of online learning. This unit provides grants for online course development, and they also provide a range of coordination services to faculty and support services to distance learning students.

Within the Office of Mediated Education, three instructional designers were supporting the endeavors of the university in moving faculty online. These designers worked with faculty one-on-one to help them acclimate to the campus-created learning/course management system (L/CMS) and to digitize their course contents. They also worked with them to create coherent e-learning paths. The designers would also work on grant-paid projects to create socio-technical spaces for various learning aims. They offered presentations on relevant issues through the Instructional Design Technologies Roundtables (IDT Roundtables) that involved face-to-face presentations that were web-cast live to the Salina branch campus and also were archived online. An Instructional Design Open Studio (IDOS) blog already had been formally launched at the end of March 2006, to raise awareness of the need for designed e-learning. This endeavor was seen as a non-threatening way to introduce e-learning concepts and practices to both on-campus and off-campus readers.

Figure 1. Opening page for the online teaching, design, and development (OTDD)

The screenshot shows the opening page of the Axio 'Online Teaching, Design and Development' (2010) course. The page has a sidebar on the left with navigation links: Home, Tools, Files & Content, Assignments & Grades, Attendance, Message Board, Chat Room, Virtual Classroom, Groups, Calendar, Profile, Private Message, and Email Instructor. The main content area features the course title, a logo, and a description: 'Axio-Online Teaching, Design and Development' is a 5-week non-credit course offered by Information Technology Assistance Center (ITAC) at Kansas State University. It includes a 'Pre-week Learning and Review' section with links to 'Making the Change', 'Learning Curricular Issues', 'Technology Issues', 'Building Community and Launching Virtual Teams', and 'Learning the Course'. There is also a 'Post-week for Stragglers' section. The right sidebar contains 'Announcements' and 'Postweek for Stragglers' sections with dates and messages.

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