

**Performance Analysis Report for the Hybrid Learning Master of Sciences Program
in the Department of Instructional Technology and Learning Sciences
at Utah State University**

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Department of Instructional Technology and Learning Sciences

Utah State University

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Executive Summary

The Instructional Technology and Learning Sciences Department at Utah State University is interested in expanding their face-to-face Masters of Science degree program to include distance education (online) learning. The faculty is hoping it will bring in more students and funding for the current MS program. The Performance Systems Class, Instructional Technology 6470, examined the current MS registration process, program, and the beginning course development and conversion process to online education. After reviewing three research questions, recommendations on improving quality and efficiency have been made. The suggestions are based on the value stream mapping of the current state of the program. The future state is then delineated and other possible barriers to efficiency and quality have been described.

The recommendations are as follows. First, a cyclical process which may include use of the FACT center or graduate students is suggested for developing online classes. The goal for course development is six weeks. Second, to enrich the student experience the following may be considered: secondary application deadlines, higher accessibility to department information, and more frequent contact time with advisors. Third, the alternative processes from several universities are described to provide the department with knowledge of possible routes in creating the online MS degree.

Introduction

As part of a class project for the Performance Systems Class, members of Instructional Technology 6570 created a performance analysis for the Masters of Science (MS) degree within the Instructional Technology and Learning Science (ITLS) Department at Utah State University (USU). Currently, the MS degree is only offered as a face-to-face (f2f) program. As a way to expand departmental course offerings and attract more students, an online program, (hereafter referred to as “hybrid” because courses will be offered simultaneously online and f2f), is being designed for the MS degree. The intention is to have both an on-campus (f2f) and an off-campus distance education offering, running simultaneously and starting fall 2010. The application process and requirements for completing the online degree are expected to be essentially the same as for the current f2f degree.

However, some potential differences between the online degree and the f2f degree are noted below:

- Registering for courses
- Interacting within a classroom setting
- Obtaining information from the department

This report is purposed to improve the process for students seeking to attain their MS degree in the ITLS department. Working with collaborators—M. Whitney Olsen, Linda Sellers, Sara Thatcher, Katherine Christensen, Joshua Pope, Gisela Martiz Abad, William Fullmer, D. Mark Weiss, April Fawson, Eric D. Stokes, Carrie Wang, Brad Allred, Rafael Gutierrez, R. Johnson, Max Cropper, Peter Blair, Nick Eastmond, Andrew Walker, Doug Holton, Sherrie Haderlie, Mimi Recker, Kristy Bloxham, Mark Saltern, and Justin Wright—class members outlined the process of what students must go through get into the program and what they will have to

complete in order to graduate. Discussions with the collaborators developed the Current State

Map, using the tools provided in *Lean Thinking and Lean Production* (Womack & Jones, 1996).

Taking into account the strengths and weaknesses of the current process, future maps were developed for students going through the MS program whether they are online or f2f students.

The class members also used force-field analysis and consulted with Max Cropper, a Performance Systems Analyst. The recommendations made should improve the success rate of MS students both online and off.

Research Questions

The research questions identified are:

1. What are the major issues that must be resolved for a distance provided MS degree program to succeed?
2. What are the current barriers to efficiency? How can the current process of course conversion be made more efficient, without sacrificing effectiveness?
3. What alternative processes are currently used (on our own campus, in other campus programs)?

Regarding question #1, the issues identified as a beginning were:

1. There is a tension between individual style of faculty in designing their course(s) and a certain uniformity that would facilitate student work. What are the benefits of each?
2. To what extent can the proposed system work in asynchronous fashion? How much of it can be synchronous (as it is primarily now)?
3. How much community building among students is possible and how much is desirable?
4. What branding of the program and establishment of identity is desirable?
5. Should there be different tuition rates (on-campus vs. in-state of Utah vs. out-of-state US vs. international student rate)?

6. Is there an openness to a developmental (“crawl, walk, run”) approach to implementing the new program?
7. What impact will having an online degree option have on state funding?
8. What will motivate faculty to engage in designing and teaching in the program? (Consider short term and long-term motives).
9. How much will (and can) we diversify our student population?
10. How will we design these courses?

Course Conversion of Classes to Online Format

Current conversion process.

In an interview (November 4, 2009), Justin Wright and Mark Saltern, Masters of Science (MS) graduate students in the program, describe the process they have been using to convert f2f classes to online classes. First, Sheri Haderlie assigns Mark and Justin a class to begin converting. Mark and Justin contact the professor who teaches that class. While beginning with a f2f meeting would likely save time, Mark and Justin have not been successful at reaching some professors quickly. E-mail is more successful than calling or finding the professor in person. Establishing a meeting time with the professor can take as little as a week and as long as a month.

When they do meet with the professor, Mark and Justin discuss course objectives, possible features of the online class, and tools to help the professor save time. After the meeting, they contact Sheri to verify the name for catalog listing of the online class. The FACT center then creates a “sandbox” in Blackboard (area for course creation) for Mark and Justin to set up the online class. CSS files are then uploaded and the graphic design is created.

As soon as the professor e-mails material for the online class, Mark and Justin upload the material. The material includes class objectives, the professor's contact information, the professor's biography, and materials for each class unit. Once all the content is loaded, Mark and Justin seek the professor's approval. They make any requested changes before the department meets to approve the class. The approval usually takes place in the next department staff meeting. The FACT center completes the final steps of checking the class against university requirements and making it available in Blackboard.

An advantage of the current process is the involvement of graduate students, who do the minor tasks in class conversion for the professor. Mark and Justin can also offer a second (and third) opinion on what would make the class interesting to students. The disadvantage is that the process can be long if Mark and Justin must wait to receive class material.

Quality assurance.

In creating a new degree, the department must maintain a high level of quality. Here, the term *quality* is defined as efficient, effective, and engaging, as David Merrill (Merrill, 2009) has described. Just as the f2f MS degree is successful because of its quality classes, the online MS degree will also succeed if it has quality classes.

We recommend that the department implement measures that ensure the quality of new online classes. Ultimately, it will be the department that decides what these measures are, in accordance with accreditation requirements. The following steps can help maintain quality. First, the department identifies characteristics of quality online classes. Professors could refer to these characteristics as they develop their online courses. The department could also use this knowledge to evaluate and approve classes before they are put online. Second, the professors begin developing their online classes early to avoid last-minute problems. Third, teaching

assistants or other students can review class designs from a student perspective. One perspective on this quest for quality is that if the course is not improved in the transition, becoming a better course than before, the effort has failed.

Finally, it will be up to the department and professor to ensure that quality course conversion from face to face delivery to online delivery is occurring. The checklist/job aid supplied in the appendix is one way to ensure quality. Departmental review of courses is another way to ensure quality.

Combination classes.

Another issue the department must resolve is the combining of online MS students with f2f MS students in the same class, the hybrid course. Combining students may benefit students as they learn to collaborate with each other at a distance. Disadvantages may be extra work load for the professor and less cohesiveness as a class. We suggest the department consider pilot testing a combined, hybrid class, perhaps during Fall Semester 2010.

Iterative future state.

The future state of this process assumes that the instructor is starting from scratch converting a course from f2f delivery to an online format (see Appendix E, Figure 2). The future state also assumes the instructor will have at least the following two resources available to assist in the design of the course: a graduate student and a FACT lab representative. Ideally, the process of conversion should take no more than six weeks.

Week one begins with a f2f meeting between the instructor and the graduate student assistant. This meeting signals the beginning of an ongoing design cycle. At the initial meeting, the instructor will be asked to bring a syllabus for the course. The graduate student will supply the instructor with a checklist or job aid (see Appendix E) that will encompass all available

features a course can contain in Blackboard. In addition, the graduate student will go over the syllabus portion of the checklist with the instructor. The instructor will be asked to begin supplying content for the course to the graduate student on a weekly basis.

A f2f meeting will occur once a week for approximately six weeks. These meetings will provide an opportunity for the graduate student to gather content from the instructor to populate the course and will allow the instructor to verify the quality of the course as it is being developed. As time goes on, a cycle of course development will be implemented. This includes planning, inserting content, tryout for formative evaluation, and revision (see Appendix E).

As the course development comes to a close the instructor could assume the responsibilities for maintaining the course in Blackboard and the graduate student will be free to work with another instructor, with occasional help to this instructor as questions arise. It is hoped that the cyclical design of course development could possibly allow the instructor to work independently in the conversion process.

The cyclical course development will allow flexibility for the instructor to work independently or use available resources such as a graduate student or a representative of the FACT Lab. Therefore, the time estimate for course development will vary. A six week cycle is the ideal standard we've used. We feel that the biggest factor contributing to lean production of course development will be the weekly f2f meetings that should take no longer than 30-60 minutes each week.

Alternative methods.

An alternative method may have to be implemented due to departmental budgetary constraints. It relies on volunteer labor from a graduate student, possibly in the form of a for-

credit independent study course for the student, or assistance from a FACT Center developer.

The structure of this alternative method would follow the format outlined below:

- Beginning a semester ahead of when the course would be offered, the instructors are asked to start collecting materials for their classes.
- Week 1: The instructor is given a check list/job aid for an outline of the class. The instructor gives the developer the syllabus, biography, contact info, etc.
- Prior to Week 2: The developer or instructor creates empty units in Blackboard, uploads contact info, biography, syllabus, and designs course flow
- Week 2: The developer/instructor verifies course flow and begins loading content
- Week 3 to 5: The developer/instructor continues to load content/ make revisions
- Week 6: Quality check and department/FACT approval

Other alternative methods.

- Department allows graduate students to receive credit to help convert existing f2f courses to online delivery
- Grants for online conversion or resources to pay for grad student/FACT Lab assistance

Master of Science Program, Present and Future

Current process.

The current process for applying to the MS program is described below. The steps are based on the value stream map that was configured with the help of the collaborators. The two processes that are important to new MS students are the application and program procedures.

Application process.

Research program.

When students are interested in the program it is important for them to do initial research and make inquiries to see if they are interested in what the department has to offer.

Contact department, faculty, or alumni (optional).

Making contact with people who are and have been involved in the program is an excellent source of information for prospective students. Not all students make use of this resource, and it is not required before students apply.

Apply to program.

Prospective students have three different ways to apply to the ITLS MS program.

1. Application process includes submitting test scores, transcripts, letters of recommendation, and an application submitted to the School of Graduate Studies (SGS). Once the information has been received by SGS, the student's chosen department is notified.
2. Degree Advancement—While still attending USU, students can apply for graduate school through a degree advancement process. This type of application is specific for USU students who seek to obtain an additional degree from USU. They need to apply for graduate school within the last semester of their current program. This process applies to Bachelors to Masters, Masters to Masters, Masters to Doctorate, or Doctorate to Doctorate. In such instances, the application fee is waived.
3. Change of Program forms have to be accepted by a department for matriculated USU graduate students changing departments.

Acceptance to program.

Initially, a student needs to be accepted by the School of Graduate Studies. Then the ITLS Department faculty reviews the application received from the Graduate School. Two of three professors, members of the Admissions Committee, need to accept the applicant. A letter is then sent to notify the new student. If the applicant was not accepted, a letter is still sent, notifying the student of the denial of admission. If the applicant still wants to attend the program, he or she can petition the department head to be accepted as a non-matriculated student and complete up to 12 credit hours before being accepted into the program. A non-matriculated student can reapply to become a matriculated student and work towards the degree.

Program Process.

Meet with temporary advisor.

Many new students are not sure where to start in the program. They have an idea of what they would like to accomplish with their degree, but do not know what course work would be the best to pursue. To remedy this lack of information, it is important for students to meet with a temporary advisor to figure out the best course of action during the program. This meeting also allows students to become more familiar with a professor.

Register for courses (each semester) and take classes.

To complete the degree requirements, registering and taking courses are done every semester. This step of completing courses, term by term, is also the longest part of the process. It can take anywhere from one to five years to complete depending upon the student's needs.

Complete a Plan of Study for the Graduate Office.

The School of Graduate Studies requires that a plan of study document be approved early in the student's degree work. SGS policy is that it should be filled out by the end of a student's second

Running head: EVALUATION REPORT FOR THE HYBRID LEARNING MASTER OF SCIENCES PROGRAM IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY AND LEARNING SCIENCES AT UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY 12
semester. The plan can be updated and resubmitted anytime. The School of Graduate Studies

uses the plan as a contract, which outlines the courses the student intends to take as well as when a student will be graduating. Some assistantships or grants that are awarded have to be paid back by the student if he or she does not finish the program.

Choose and complete a track option: Plan A, B, or C.

As part of the credits needed, a student has three different options for completing their degree. Plan A involves writing a thesis, Plan B involves writing a literature review, and Plan C is either working on a creative project or completing an internship. Each plan requires at least 400 hours of work and should be discussed with and approved by a permanent advisor. Each plan has its own process to complete, but will not be elaborated upon because it is out of the scope of this review.

Assemble portfolio for department.

An electronic portfolio is required by the department to see what each student has accomplished while going through the MS Program. This way the department can assess whether or not students have met their goals.

Complete graduate paperwork.

When a student nears completion of the requirements for the degree he or she needs to submit the final paper work to the graduate school. This is usually done one semester before graduation. When completed, the ITLS department provides documents stating that the department requirements have been met and the graduate school checks for completion of all university requirements before the MS degree is awarded.

Research question 1.

What are the major issues that must be resolved for a distance provided MS degree program to succeed?

As the ITLS Department embarks on designing a distance MS Degree program, it is important to look at the process students will go through to apply, progress, and eventually graduate from the program. The department could design a quality program with outstanding courses provided for a reasonable price, yet still not have the program be successful. If prospective students experience confusion, are presented with contradictory information, or feel that the program's requirements are not clear, they may choose to not apply or simply not finish their degrees. This process, largely defined by University policy, is rather rigid. As a result, the department is unable to alter it, at least to change it very much. Yet there are still actions the department can take to make this process seem more intuitive and less overwhelming. Some specific areas for improvement the department could focus on include:

- Online organization of application forms, requirements and deadlines
- Current process of one deadline to apply to the program, whether this is the most effective way to admit and orient students or not.
- The time it takes for applicants to find out if they have been accepted
- The current process of deciding on a permanent advisor
- The current process of selecting a program of study
- Cultural differences in learning

We feel if these different areas are addressed students will be able to concentrate on the program itself instead of behind the scenes details.

Within the application process, the following strengths have been identified.

- The program is very linear
- Choices in course work and program options are relatively clear
- The program is self-timed; students can choose the pace at which they go through the program
- The application process is aligned with the university's current expectations
- The MS program prepares students for future job prospects, with a fairly high placement rate for graduates who choose jobs in the field.
- The program and faculty are actively involved in finding jobs, internships, and other resources for students

Research Question 2:

What are the barriers to efficiency for the MS degree program process and conversion to distance education?

As students of the class and the collaborators discussed the current program and set up the value stream map, barriers were discovered. To overcome these critical hindrances, the group examined what is currently being done and how to improve the process for prospective and current students. Listed below are three barriers for the current state MS degree program process.

- The time needed to decide on acceptance of students after the deadline is seen as excessive (estimated at 3-4 weeks).
- Information availability for new and current students is somewhat limited.
- Minimal guidance from advisors leaves some students unsure of what direction to take

Application improvements.

Applying to the MS program could be more efficient for all students by letting them know the current deadline and possible future deadlines. The beginning of April is the only

deadline set up for prospective students applying to the ITLS MS program. If this date is missed, then students have to wait to see if there are still openings available that would allow them to apply. Then they would have to wait for several more applicants to apply, because the faculty waits until there are many applications before making a decision. Wait time can take a week to a month or more before applicants hear a response.

International students who want to attend f2f and miss the April deadline are put under greater pressure when applying to the program. Not only do they have to wait to get a response they have to wait to apply for their visa until they are accepted into the program. When international students are accepted late they may not be able to attend because of other factors that need to be taken care of to come to the United States. A solution would be to set up two other deadlines for students based on availability. The priority deadline is the first and if there is space available in the program then the next deadline becomes priority. With this method, students know when they can expect to hear back about their acceptance into the program and allows for them to plan for their future. Faculty should have enough time to collect applications to base their decisions on the application pool per each deadline instead of waiting for a larger stack.

Information improvements.

Information for prospective and current students is disorganized. The website needs to be re-organized for better comprehensibility. Right now, the categories in finding the forms, expectations, etc. are not necessarily intuitive. Students have to guess at where they would be. Since it has been a frustration to current students, it is predictable that it will be even more of a frustration to prospective, online students, who will be depending heavily upon the website for information. Pertinent tools, amenities that are discussed with students at the beginning of the

program, could be posted on the department website. If students miss the orientation or forget, then they are unaware of things like the availability of server space or involvement with Instructional Technology Student Association (ITSA).

One amenity that is needed is flexible server space. This would allow students to post their work in a safe place to help establish their portfolio. Currently, server space accounts in the ITLS department are comprised of only two gigs of inflexible data collection. Each account has a main folder with two subfolders that cannot be altered but where information can be stored. In addition, students are unable to change the names of folders or add folders to their account, which makes it difficult to organize their work. Thus, it is more a hindrance than helpful. This could potentially be very problematic for online students because the server space may be their main source of saving their work.

Students who use the server space to create a website have found it to be very inefficient. When updating the website on the server, files need to be completely re-loaded, and the old files erased. This is not an efficient use of time and is frustrating to those trying to use the server. To make the server accounts more accommodating, students should be allowed to add more folders into the main folder. This would help students organize their file space and use it more efficiently, especially when building web pages. Finally, the last suggestion would be to allow the students access to their space up to a year after graduation in case it is needed while seeking employment. The current policy of deleting all student files at the end of the semester is efficient for the technical support staff, possibly, but certainly not for the students.

Another suggestion for streamlining the learning process would be to provide tutorials or instructions on how to use the distance education tools, such as Wimba and Blackboard, which can then be accessed through the department webpage. A two-credit course that teaches how to

use the tools for the program is currently being developed. The department will be requiring the online MS students to take the course. F2f students who take the occasional online class rely on the professor to teach them how to use these tools, but soon it would be expected that students taking an online course already know the tools. By implementing a web page or a link that offers instruction on learning how to use these tools, students can access the tutorial on their own, while learning at their own pace. Since instruction for the tools are already being created as an online course, a supplement with the same information can be used for the web page, thus giving all students access. In addition, it will prevent class time being spent on re-teaching a tool that may be needed for a course.

Another consideration for retaining students or recruitment may be to provide an online question/answer forum. For current students a discussion forum could be used in an open departmental blackboard course where students could pose questions to each other or a department faculty member. That way, general questions about degree policies/prerequisites could be answered and all students could check the forum first to see if their questions were already answered.

For prospective students, perhaps a live chat feature could be added to the departmental website where these individuals could ask either the staff assistants or volunteer students questions about programs available, degree requirements, etc. Having either of these two features in place could help students feel more connected to the department and allow their questions to be answered more quickly.

Improvement in Guidance.

Advisors who communicate often with their assigned students increase the morale and success of students in the program. Right now, it is up to the students to contact their advisor

with any questions or concerns. By reaching out to the students once a semester through e-mail (a form letter could be used, similar to the annual review currently done in the doctoral program), to see how they are doing or if they have any questions, would help the online students feel connected and a part of the department and community of students. It may also encourage f2f students to interact with faculty outside of class. When students feel a part of the community they are less likely to drop out and stay on track to finish their degree.

Future State.

Taking these recommendations into account, the future process is fairly similar to the current state, but the efficiency of students attaining their degree is improved. By having extra deadlines, students have a better chance of knowing when they will be accepted, which will help them plan their future. A more robust website allows both online and face-to-face students to find the information that will help them through the course of their program. Advisors frequently communicating with the online students will help strengthen the community of learners.

When things have been altered it is important to re-evaluate the changes to make sure they are efficient and are working well. Other considerations and possible future barriers to efficiency for distance learning are as follows:

- Online students want the ITLS distance coordinator as their advisor because she is the initial contact
- Difficulty in getting to know the professors frequently occurs because it is a distance program. There is a degree of “out of sight, out of mind” operating.
- Professors need to know about distance education to be effective
- The increase in online communication may tax the energy of the professors

- Automatic translations from English to another language may be a frustration, if someone who speaks a language other than English goes through the program

These issues will need to be addressed as the program proceeds. The solution for each issue will vary, depending upon the perspective of each faculty member.

Conclusions.

The recommendations for making the future online MS program become efficient were examined within three categories: the application and attendance process of the program, access to department information, and guidance from faculty. For the application process, secondary deadlines should be set along with the current primary deadline, which will help prospective students know when they can expect an answer from the department.

Higher accessibility to information was submitted as the next suggestion, along with providing tutorials and larger capacity server space. The last suggestion was to help build the community of learners through increased contact time with advisors. Hopefully, these recommendations will build an effective and quality online MS program for the ITLS department.

Other University Hybrid or Blended Programs

Definition.

The terms hybrid and blended learning have been used here to describe any learning environment—specifically, a higher education learning environment—that is some amalgamation of f2f and online learning. In some cases, this refers to a hybrid structure like the one the ITLS program proposes for the online MS degree, where online students and f2f students will take the same course, but in different environments. In other cases, this refers to blended

learning courses which utilize f2f and online meetings during the course of the semester. Each author has delineated which type of hybrid or blended program they describe.

Yale University.

At the 2008 Center for Open and Sustainable Learning (COSL) conference at USU, the presentation team described that the Yale offering “is built on the belief that that better we can capture each professor’s personal approach to a subject, the more meaningful the educational content shared with the world will be. The approach . . . centers on the actual lectures presented by professors in Yale classrooms, offered in video, audio and transcript formats. We have implemented design features and site architecture that provide end users a highly accessible and contextualized learning experience”(Open education 2008, Conference Program, p. 14).

This approach assumes an effective classroom environment that could be filmed and replicated. Benefits to the faculty included no further preparation requirement. These lectures were delivered each week, and content was incrementally filmed, converted, and loaded into the website for delivery to students. Program coordinators focused on faculty who were comfortable with their lectures being filmed, not feeling the need to accommodate those who were not comfortable. The number of classes delivered online was fewer than other programs. Their funding was from the Hewlett Foundation, an entity committed to promoting open courseware and open resources. Presenters from Yale expressed concerns about pursuing a model that was not sustainable once funding ran out and at that time had no concrete answers for this dilemma, as their approach is perhaps the most expensive of the strategies considered.

Pennsylvania State University.

The information from Pennsylvania State University (PSU) was largely gained from personal interview at the COSL Conference of 2008 at the USU campus and email

correspondence. PSU is a land grant school much like USU. Their model is Teaching, Research and Dissemination. Their priority is content first, then dissemination. They use a shared creation approach to increase quality. Shared creation includes assistance to faculty from World Campus resources. PSU adds over 300 courses each year and has 50 courses under review and revision at any given time. Their total enrollment for online courses is well over 25,000 students. They have a one-year development cycle for courses through a partnership process between the World Campus center and academic units. Professors utilize outside resources to offload content and get ideas for effective online instruction from World Campus. PSU has many blended, or hybrid, courses. Courses are delivered with a proprietary software system.

PSU has determined that effective development designs are iterative. This means that development and deployment require commitment from both faculty and World Campus to meet more than once, and to work together to assemble content and improve its delivery. It is understood that better instruction occurs in a collaborative environment. It is part of the PSU team concept.

One question PSU has had to deal with is the question of course material ownership. Some of the faculty felt that formalizing content for an online setting meant giving up their tacit assumption of ownership.

Carnegie Mellon University.

Carnegie Mellon's (CMU) original goal for their Online Learning Initiative (OLI) was to offer online instruction that produced the same learning outcomes as a f2f class. CMU considered that the online environment itself did not have the requisite support to enable reaching that goal. The challenge became a research question for CMU in addition to an

educational pursuit. Over time, this initiative morphed into what they call their hybrid environment.

At the outset, the first step was to ask the professors in a lengthy interview to identify the “student centered measurable learning outcomes” for the course. This was a problem for many instructors, who seemed to decide what to talk about on their walk to class.

The second step was to identify the affordances of technologies available to CMU which would help students best accomplish the identified objectives. Most found it of great worth to find out what technologies would help them better communicate the topics they were passionate about.

All of this was couched in the framework of solving a research problem. Members of a special team focused on solving the instructional problem. The team consisted of the professor (SME), a qualified learning scientist, a Learning Management System (LMS) programmer, a graphics creator, and a member of the resource center staff. The professor was the content expert and brought his or her passion for the subject to the table. A key concept of their LMS is to provide data to the team of how active students are, what the students actually accomplished, and what their “help score” was. The help score identified times when students asked for hints, or answered iterative assessment questions wrong, that indicated that the instructional methods were less successful.

Several elements encouraged faculty participation. First, their love of the knowledge domain was beneficial. This initiative would provide yet another avenue, in this case online, for them to share their passion and excitement about the topic itself. Second was the challenge of the research project. Third was getting the data back from the course experiences of each student provided quantitative and qualitative data that each professor could use in research as well as

helping students “get it.” Finally, online learning can create problems explaining complex ideas.

Faculty from various disciplines collaborated on evaluating approaches currently being employed and as a team, they shared alternate suggestions, even from those in other departments, that made the instruction that much more robust and satisfying. This cross-pollination has improved instruction over all and increased a sense of purpose and teamwork in the faculty that has been very satisfying.

Their definition of *hybrid* clearly differs from the definition used in the remainder of this report. CMU has 100% resident students. CMU has no purely online classes. The OLI is an open content offering. However, in lieu of distributing books, the course material for these hybrid courses is online. Instead of students reading assignments in a book, they go to the companion online course, where they find reading assignments, along with sections called “knowledge checks” and “application challenges.” The advantage of this approach has been that instructors may observe online participation, learning progress, and “help” requests prior to each week’s in-class experience. CMU considers the in-class experience to be most valuable for promoting student learning. Because students work online before each f2f class, professors can preview student work to see what they have already learned. Class lectures can then be tailored to the actual class need, thus making the entire course more effective. This kind of real-time assessment is invaluable in the fine-tuning of instruction throughout the semester. Many professors have said this kind of experience in teaching is the most enjoyable of their careers. The instructor enjoyment of the experience extends to the students as well.

Crawl, walk, run.

At CMU, instructional design teams create classes. Teams consist of professors and instructional designers, who help professors, enhance the presentation of content knowledge. At

first instructional designers provide a high level of assistance, which they reduce over time.

Professors at USU may benefit from such instructional design teams as they begin creating new classes.

Take-away for f2f to online course conversion.

- The process of bringing course material online is a crawl-walk-run process, even for the faculty of the ITLS department at USU. The first year contains elements of a “crawl” process.
- Scaffolding the first-year process is helpful for all concerned. Instructional design teams of four to six people may ensure classes are high quality.
- A variety of online pedagogical approaches is helpful, but each should be informed. Collaboration between instructional design experts, faculty, and students can produce world-class online classes that will further distinguish the department and the program.
- Peer review or department evaluation of course designs may help guarantee courses are effective.

University of Tennessee.

The University of Tennessee provides an example where blended learning is actually better than both traditional classroom teaching methods and the forms of e-learning technology alone. Physicians in the Physician’s Executive MBA (PEMBA) program can complete their degrees in about one-half the time, at less than half the cost, with a mix of synchronous e-learning, self-paced instruction and traditional classroom teaching (Kupritz, Lim, & Morris, 2006). That the learning occurring is equivalent is established by test scores and instructor observation of student practice. Students can finish their degrees within a year with only four residential periods and each a one-week long and completed on campus.

Strengths and weaknesses.

The best part of this program is that students can learn through physical and virtual e-learning, on their own time schedule and to some extent in the way they learn best. Students then apply what they have learned with their peers to unique environments in the real world. One weakness this program faced is technology support was not provided in the f2f class format some students who were not tech-savvy had concerns that they could not participate in this program effectively because of lack of immediate technology support (The University of Tennessee).

Hybrid learning versus online learning.

Another example of blended learning at the University of Tennessee is a program evaluation course. This course was delivered completely online for two years, and then, through a blended learning format for another two years. The program surveyed two different groups. One group was in the online course, while the other was in a blended learning course. The researcher found that the learners who were in the online-only course felt they had a larger workload than those in the blended learning environment. Also, those in the online-only course felt they received less support and experienced more challenges in understanding course content and achieving the same learning levels as those in the blended learning group. The researcher believed this is because they felt less emotional engagement with peers and the instructors. The researcher also found that the blended learning format seems to present class content more clearly than the online format alone (Singh, 2003).

Western Illinois University and Sullivan University Scholar Perspectives.

In their 2009 Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT) presentation, Harris, Pina, and Thurman identified over 40 master's degree programs in Instructional Design and Technology (IDT). These programs are similar in curriculum to the

(USU). Harris et al. note that between programs, there is similarity, but also a great deal of difference.

Strengths and weaknesses.

One issue Harris et al. discuss is that IDT programs can feasibly be offered in a multitude of colleges or departments. For ITLS, already situated in the College of Education at USU, this is not an obvious concern; however, the design of the hybrid Master of Science (MS) program should reflect that the degree is offered within the College of Education. An emphasis on education has already been achieved through the Master of Education (MEd) program, but the role of educator must still be emphasized through the new, hybrid MS program.

Harris et al. assert that successful online master's degree programs address the needs of working adults needing flexible schedules in their education, access more students than before without dramatically increasing costs, and personalize their students' education. The personal element is particularly important, as the nature of interaction with faculty and other students is dramatically changed online. Thus, collaborative activities, reusable learning objects, and "virtual experts" (Harris et al., 2009) are necessary.

The learning management system (LMS) for a successful online or hybrid master's degree program can be commercial or open source, should utilize multiple communication options, and should employ personal learning environments. All are particularly important options to consider for USU's MS program. Learning outcomes should also be clearly delineated (Harris et al., 2009).

El Mansour and Mupinga (2007) have published “Students’ Positive and Negative Experiences in Hybrid and Online Classes” to discuss and explore certain successes and failures of hybrid and online learning environments. The authors describe a hybrid learning environment as synonymous with web-enhanced or web-assisted programs, or blended learning environments.

Strengths and weaknesses.

El Mansour and Mupinga recommend that hybrid learning environments be used to introduce material to students online before they meet face-to-face (f2f). This is a slightly different approach to hybrid learning than USU’s MS program is taking, as their notion of hybrid learning is that the same class will be offered simultaneously to online and f2f students. What might be considered from El Mansour and Mupinga’s recommendation is a pre-course orientation that occurs online. One obstacle that has been discussed is the difficulty of bringing foreign students to the USU campus for a f2f orientation. Perhaps this might be solved using alternative notions of hybrid learning, and a pre-course orientation be devised for online delivery to save students the hassle of applying for student visas and travel to the campus.

One difficulty that El Mansour and Mupinga point to is the phenomenon of disconnection that can occur in asynchronous online learning environments. By this they mean students often feel less emotionally involved. It may not be possible to avoid asynchronous communication for USU’s hybrid MS program, as international students are likely to comprise a portion of the program’s participants. However, designers and professors can be aware of these pitfalls and attempt to avoid them in the implementation of the program. The length of time that may pass between a student posting and subsequent responses can be a problem; as such, deadlines may need to be imposed to ensure that students are posting and responding to one another in a timely

manner which will imitate the call-and-response of the f2f classroom and avoid disillusionment with the program. A lively, engaging, but relevant blend of multimedia would also help to avoid student alienation or boredom (El Mansour & Mupinga, 2007).

As a result of their qualitative study, El Mansour and Mupinga make the following recommendations in terms of the strengths and weaknesses of hybrid learning environments:

Some Strengths	Some Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a professor available online in realtime for in-country students. • Allow students to complete work on their own time but with deadlines. • Include online discussions. • Allow students to work from multiple computers, if they need to. • Make the development of the course financially and intellectually worthwhile for instructors and professors. • Flexibility should be built into the course design. • Time between assignment and deadline should be enough for student to produce a reflective, thoughtful response. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not require on-campus meetings. • Anticipate problems with technologies as much as possible; make arrangements for alternative activities should something go wrong. • May make some students feel lost in a virtual environment. • Make sure CMSs are highly functional. • May make some students feel distant from the class. • May make it difficult for instructors to respond to students quickly.

University of Maryland Eastern Shore.

In 2005, the University System of Maryland Board of Regents instituted a policy recommending that, on average, students take 12 credits through out-of-classroom experiences (Buzzetto-More & Phiney, 2006) in completing their undergraduate degrees. Among other experiences, the regents included e-learning, internships, and student teaching in their definition of out-of-classroom experiences (Buzzetto-More & Phiney, 2006).

Strengths and weaknesses.

In order to comply with the new policy, the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES) Office of Instructional Technology developed a set of guidelines, requirements, and a

rubric to assist in creating online courses (Buzzetto-More & Phiney, 2006). To create the guidelines, requirements, and rubric, the UMES Office of Instructional Technology looked extensively at other programs and models currently in use. The result was the selection and modification of a rubric to be used in the course creation process (Buzzetto-More & Phiney, 2006).

When the guidelines, requirements, and rubric were initially created, existing online courses at UMES were evaluated using the new criteria. During this evaluation it was found that roughly 50% of the existing courses met the newly created guidelines (Buzzetto-More & Phiney, 2006). Following the implementation of the new criteria, an informal survey of the faculty indicated that those who taught online courses felt that the new guidelines improved the quality of their courses and provided meaningful feedback on the course itself (Buzzetto-More & Phiney, 2006).

After reviewing the experience UMES has had in the development of online courses, it becomes clear that their greatest success has come from the establishment of guidelines and requirements for those who are creating online instruction. Buzzetto-More and Phiney (2006) indicate that the quality of online courses has improved after implementing a rubric that allows faculty to gauge the quality of their course.

Overview of several university programs.

Some concerns and constraints are present when building online courses—both in undergraduate and graduate programs—that try to reach students in other countries, in what is called transnational or offshore education.

Strengths and weaknesses.

Miliszewska (2008) defines transnational education as one received by learners who live in a country other than the one where the institution is located. From a study's findings at an Australian university that provided transnational education for South East Asia, some factors are described that may affect learners' experiences:

- Degree of feedback and guidance given to students offshore in online programs may be less effective than students within the same country who have the option of f2f interaction.
- Localization of teaching is sometimes more difficult if delivered online because in many cases, making curriculum significant to students requires more direct contact with the teacher.
- Technology can be out of reach for some students who live in other countries. Internet connections may be less effective in some places than others, plus some institutions may be more limited in equipment than others. In many cases, even when technology is available, media alone cannot offer students guidance and personal engagement.

Miliszewska (2008) also remarks that face-to-face interaction is important for transnational students. The popularity of fully online program is decreasing, whereas hybrid models are becoming more popular in distance learning. Miliszewska suggests that in order to make f2f experience possible, the educational provider should have a partner where offshore learners are located.

University of Calgary and Deakin University.

The University of Calgary in Canada and Deakin University in Australia conducted a study about differences and similarities between instructors in their organizational cultures in

online and f2f teaching environments (Stacey & Wiesenberg, 2007). The authors presented a series of positive and negatives situations found. Online discussion was used in some cases to replace f2f interaction, and students frequently responded positively to this format. Additionally, online teachers enjoyed the student-centeredness of their blended classes. They were able to upload material in response to student interest or need. Furthermore, online and f2f learning influenced each other. Online learning has been combined in a hybrid mode so that students can interact online after meeting f2f. Instructors applied the best and most adequate strategies from f2f to online environment. However, some participants admitted that both online and f2f teaching involve different learning styles and success of delivery methods depends on the level of student acceptance (Wisenberg, 2008).

Robai & Jordan (2004) report that successful online students are sometimes interested in material-taught, self-motivated, self-directed, environments. However, students who feel frustrated with fully online courses need frequent direction and reinforcement from a professor in person, which means they need periodical face-to-face interaction. They also state that fully online learning environments must have the capability of being altered to students' particular needs and concerns.

Conclusions for Other University Programs

A number of other universities have begun and even fully instituted the process of creating hybrid or blended learning environments like USU's ITLS department seeks to do. The purposes for doing this are diverse; accessibility, finances, and innovation are some factors that motivate colleges and universities to consider the combination of online and f2f environments.

Programs that students and faculty consider good involve some of the following features: an exceptional amount of student-faculty contact, preferably through a variety of media;

structured or scaffolded assignments or rubrics; additional materials uploaded to the course or disseminated as students need or ask for them; courses designed and built by teams; students have contact with one another, and are able to communicate throughout the semester; collaborative learning techniques are employed; and high productivity, that is, the course or degree does not take significantly longer than a f2f course or degree would.

Programs that students and faculty consider unfavorable involve some of these features: students feel they lack guidance or direction; technology is complex, or creates obstacles to learning; insufficient instruction or guidance (which results in poor-quality student work); costs are dramatically increased for programs or students; on-campus meetings are required (this is often seen as an inconvenience for online students who work or are distant from the offering campus); and instructors take too long to respond to students.

While by no means comprehensive, these features are integral to implementing a program that builds on the successes and learns from the weaknesses of similar programs.

Final Conclusions

The overarching goal of this report is to ease the transition of the ITLS department as it creates the online MS degree, and to improve the student experience in the online and f2f degree. Class members of Instructional Technology 6570 researched three questions and developed several recommendations. The research questions that were addressed are:

1. What are the major issues that must be resolved for a distance provided MS degree program to succeed?
2. What are the current barriers to efficiency? How can the current process of course conversion be made more efficient, without sacrificing effectiveness?
3. What alternative processes are currently used (on our own campus, in other campus programs)?

The first recommendation was a cyclical process for developing online classes. The process is a six-week timeline with professors developing their own classes. If possible, graduate students or the FACT center may be involved as well. Class members also recommend the following to enrich the student experience: secondary application deadlines, higher accessibility to department information, and more frequent contact time with advisors. Lastly, the class's research of other universities' programs demonstrate that the most successful programs have the following characteristics: frequent student-instructor contact (preferably through a variety of media, e.g. e-mail, chat, audiovisual communication, etc.); well-structured assignments and rubrics; additional materials as requested by students; team-designed courses; high amount of student-to-student contact and collaboration; and a time table equivalent or less than a f2f program.

These recommendations should assist the department in creating its online degree and improve the success rate of MS students both online and off.

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Appendix A: Memo of Understanding



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October 14, 2009

Dr. Mimi Recker, Head
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Dear Mimi:

Our class in Performance Systems met with you exactly one week ago today, exploring how we could provide important information regarding the ongoing process of converting our Master of Science (MS) degree from on-campus and face-to-face, to a blended program of online and in-person instruction. We recognize that this process of curriculum redesign has begun, but is still in its formative stages.

The research questions identified are:

1. What are the major issues that must be resolved for a distance provided MS degree program to succeed?
2. What are the current barriers to efficiency? How can the current process of course conversion be made more efficient, without sacrificing effectiveness?
3. What alternative processes are currently used (on our own campus, in other campus programs)?

Regarding question #1, the issues identified as a beginning were:

1. There is a tension between individual style of faculty in designing their course(s) and a certain uniformity that would facilitate student work. What are the benefits of each?
2. To what extent can the proposed system work in asynchronous fashion? How much of it can be synchronous (as it is primarily now)?
3. How much community building among students is possible and how much is desirable?
4. What branding of the program and establishment of identity is desirable?

5. Should there be different tuition rates (on-campus vs. in-state of Utah vs. out-of-state US vs. international student rate)?
6. Is there an openness to a developmental (“crawl, walk, run”) approach to implementing the new program?
7. What impact will having an online degree option have on state funding?
8. What will motivate faculty to engage in designing and teaching in the program? (Consider short term and long-term motives).
9. How much will (and can) we diversify our student population?
10. How will we design these courses?

We will work primarily with people in the department who are involved currently in course and curriculum development, to include: Sheri Haderlie, Kristy Bloxham, Justin Wright, Mark Saltern, and Drs. Walker and Holton. We will develop a report providing our best insights from Lean Thinking and other aspects of the Performance Systems class, to include Value Stream Mapping (Present and Future States), Force Field Analysis, and at least three other analysis tools. We intend to report our findings to you in the class session on December 2nd.

We do not anticipate needing to access any confidential records, and will not be engaging in any systematic inquiry with human subjects. Thus, we will not be seeking approval for our study from the USU Institutional Research Board (IRB).

We look forward to working with you. If substantial modifications in this agreement are needed, we will do so in writing and would ask you to do so as well, in the form of a memo.

Respectfully submitted,

J. Nicholls Eastmond, Professor

Appendix B: 2003 Cultural Audit

Cultural Audit: Instructional Technology Dept. (InsT 6470: Class purposes only) October 2003. See Eastmond, J.N., Martiz, G., Gutteriez, R., & Shanley (2009).

1. Assumptions

Faculty & Students:

- Implicit assumption of people being motivated (faculty and students)
- Required educational level means that you can assume people are fairly bright (can read, can discuss issues, can write).
- Cooperation is valued, and excessive competition is viewed unfavorably (group work & quality of effort are valued).
- High performance is expected and usually delivered
- Your reputation among peers is important.
- Collegial respect is an important value. (People are fairly diplomatic about how they refer to others).
- There is a low failure rate (or nonexistent).
- There is a similar assumption about faculty: they should be able to teach, publish & do scholarly work.
- Evaluation is primarily based upon products produced: articles published, assignments, i.e. portfolio assessment. (Tenure comes after 6 years. The evaluation for faculty afterward is less rigorous).

2. Practices: formal and informal

- Portfolio assessment: the quality of your work that you can show an employer counts.
- We don't often give written tests, especially final tests (project based work instead).
- Lots of effort is made to connect with the real world. (Job hiring, consulting, class projects).
- It's OK to be paid for work.
- Grading is different: more work is required, but the range is B and above.
- Interaction between faculty, PhD level students, and Masters students is encouraged. (less for off-campus students)
- The cohort system means you get to know a certain group of people.
- Funding has a lot to do with what happens. Getting in-state tuition or a tuition waiver is important to students.
- Getting socialized into larger professional associations is part of the agenda.
- Getting a job after graduation is really up to the student. There is some advice given, but not much more. (Maybe some suggested course sequences for particular types of jobs would be welcome).

3. Communication channels

- People generally know each other by name, at least within cohorts.

- There is less separation between faculty and students than exists in some other depts.
- The communication seems less hierarchical than there is in some disciplines.
- Some of the faculty act as employers for students, and classes often act as a screening mechanism.
- Several mechanisms help enhance communication: the ITSA organization, the InsTa Grad listserve, e-mail between individuals.
- Students are expected to communicate through e-mail, i.e. you have to check it frequently.

4. Anomalies, problems, and exceptions

- Unrealistic expectations can arise: can be grad assistant for Dr. X, (More realistic to stay open to options).
- Doing group projects with International Students requires editing by a native speaker.
- There are no set answers (even solid definitions) in this field. It's hard to say, "Here's the right answer!" Sometimes you get completely conflicting requirements with different faculty).
- There is an expectation to socialize that sometimes excludes some students (older students, less outgoing by nature).
- Staying current with technology and with the industry presents a major challenge (Internet upgrades, software upgrades, etc.).
- A disadvantage to the cohort system is that new folks may feel out of place (or old-timers may feel like there are suddenly many strangers). A cohort-gap exists.
- There is a feeling that some people do work the system to get through too quickly (the one-summer-wonder syndrome).
- Religious background of both faculty and students can be problematic (LDS majority, CES teacher involvement). Staying sensitive to religion is important for many reasons, in order to keep adherents of other faiths from feeling discriminated against).
- Having a person with a reputation like Dave Merrill's makes it difficult to challenge his ideas.
- Having many international students at a time of concern about national security (post 9/11) may bring in divergent views (which may or may not be welcome by other students and faculty). It gives us a window on opinions about the USA from the outside.
- Utah's marriage pattern (younger marriages) means that a larger percentage of grad students are married than would be the case elsewhere in the USA or in Europe or in Asia.
- The program changes frequently (classes, Core requirements, expectations), and that can cause problems.
- The tools classes are quite different from the other courses in the dept. in level of difficulty, grading system, assumptions about preparation. (Maybe different expectations depending upon background could improve this).
- Having an undergraduate minor in the field means that people will differ in their level of technical skills in the Masters program.

- When jobs in our field are so dependent upon the health of the economy, it leaves us feeling vulnerable. (Maybe more coaching about job hunting skills, interviewing, negotiating for salary, would help all students).
- The masters program is more internally focused (few interdisciplinary options are encouraged) than might be most healthy. Similarly, not very many students come in from other departments.

Appendix C: Force Field Analysis

In implementing a Hybrid Version of USU’s Master of Science program, helping forces bring it about and hindering forces stop or hold it back:

Helping Forces

Student demand
Prospect of larger enrollment
Cash flow to the department
Technology available
Department scholarship and experience
Investment in “recyclable” learning objects
On-campus enrollment
Faculty buy-in

Hindering Forces

Cost to students and to the program
(reducible by raising prices to keep enrollment low)
Faculty readiness
Pressure on faculty for research (make this project a part of their research)
Negotiations about RCDE overhead
Maintenance cost
Initial investment
Culture, language, and time differences

Note: These forces are assumed to roughly balance each other out. To bring about a change in the desired direction, it is usually a better strategy to seek to reduce or minimize certain hindering forces. For example, working out a way to minimize the initial investment or to obtain a better funding pattern for courses brought into a blended format might be expected to move a change forward.

Appendix D: Course Checklist/Job Aid

Syllabus

Include instructor image
Post office/virtual hours (if used)
Provide complete contact information
Phone number and availability
Email and turnaround time
Online chat availability
Instructor Bio (Does the instructor bio give the students a sense of the instructor’s background and personality?)
Course overview (Does the overview set the stage for what the student will learn in the semester? Does it paint a picture of what the instructor expects of the student?)
What are the attendance policies or work completion policies? What are the consequences for non-compliance?
Does the course outline allow the student to plan their time/workload for the semester?
Does the course outline include assignments and due dates?
Does the course outline contain the required and optional textbooks?
Does the instructor want to include a link and/or textbook image when available?
Is online etiquette discussed and clearly defined? What are the consequences for non-compliance?
Are the grading standards made clear? What separates A work from B work?
Does the instructor want to publish a grading scale and define how the final grades will be figured?
What are the technical requirements required to take the course? Is a specific browser required? Is a PDF reader, software or plugin required?
Does the instructor want to clearly define the university policy for cheating and consequences for dishonesty?
Does the instructor want to advertise that online courses will adhere to university add/drop guidelines?
Are there any other dates that should be included? Special events? Department meetings/gatherings?
How will accommodations for students with disabilities be handled?
Does the instructor want to include HIPPA/FERPA policies? Does the course design ensure student privacy?
Are there any other departmental or college policies that should be included in the design of the course?

Course Home Page

Does the instructor want to include a welcome announcement for the first week of class? Will this announcement include a summary of the tasks the student will be expected to
--

complete?
Will the course contain a checklist that must be completed by the student? The checklist could contain the following student supplied information? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you read the syllabus? • Do you have a working e-mail address? • Do you check your e-mail account several times a week? • Do you have the necessary technology to take this course? • Do you agree with the cheating policies? • Do you have any questions in regard to how this course will be offered?
Will the course facilitate a general class discussion forum?
Can students quickly find the best method for contacting the instructor? Is there an e-mail or phone number prominently displayed on the course home page?

Design and Content

Does the instructor want to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class discussions • Quizzes • Papers • Group Work • Other
Does the instructor want to include links to relevant web sites or relevant supporting documents?
Does the course contain a consistent set of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fonts • Font sizes • Type-face • Other
Is the course visually appealing? Is color used to highlight text and create visual variety?
Is the course content organized using sections and sub-sections?
Is consistency used for presentation material?
Will clipart or images be used to create visual appeal?
Has the course content been checked for spelling or grammatical errors?

Lessons/Units

Does each lesson or unit contain a clearly stated objective?
Are the work tasks clearly summarized for each lesson? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readings • Labs • Discussion Forums • Quizzes • Papers • Other

Do all lessons specify a start and end date?

Does the course require that accessibility to content be turned off on a specified date or time?

Groups

Will the instructor require group assignments for the students? Have all students been assigned to a group?

Quizzes/Exams

Does the pre-quiz introduction clearly indicate the length of the test, number of questions, etc.?

Do all quiz questions have points assigned to them?

Will the instructor allow student feedback for quiz questions?

Does the total number of points assigned to quiz questions equal the total quiz points?

Is the review date for quizzes set correctly? Will students be allowed to view their quiz results online?

Discussions

Are discussion questions framed in an open-ended manner so that answers to questions will be more than a simple “yes” or “no”?

Are participation guidelines clearly stated? How many posts or follow-ups required?

Have the discussion start and end dates been clearly advertised?

Grade Center

Are all gradable items set up in the grade center?

Do all gradable items have points assigned?

Do grade center assignments and points match the syllabus?

Are gradable items assigned for each week of the course?

Do all gradable items have an associated grading rubric?

First Week Checklist

Does the instructor want to author a welcome e-mail – reminding students to log in?

Will the instructor verify with the Fact Lab that all students taking the course have access to the online course?

Do all the students have working e-mail addresses?

Do all the students have the technology required to complete the course?

If you were taking this course, would you consider it a quality course?