
Administering Distance Courses Taught in Partnership with Other Institutions

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When she learned that I would be teaching a course in her department, the department secretary made a mailbox for me and made sure that I received a copy of every memo and announcement distributed to the rest of the faculty. Other part-time faculty appreciated this service, so it became a part of the secretary's standard operating procedures. But I never received the mail because the mailbox was in Crookston, Minnesota and I taught the course by instructional television (ITV) from St. Paul, Minnesota, approximately 350 miles away.

To fill a gap in its curriculum, the University of Minnesota at Crookston school contracted with the University of Minnesota---Twin Cities to receive a series of courses for majors in scientific technical communication. The program is called a partnership program because one school in the state university system "partners" with a second to provide programs the first might not otherwise be able to provide. The first -- or home -- schools provide all general academic requirements (made possible because the university system has a standard set of requirements for all B.A. and B.S. students in the system). The partner schools provide some or all of the major courses using technology for distance education. Some of the courses are offered by a closed-circuit, instructional television system. (These are likely to be replaced by synchronous software in the future.) Others are offered by totally on the Internet.

This scenario is increasingly common as colleges and universities increase their use of distance education to fill in gaps in their curricula. Some use distance education to make courses more conveniently available to their own students. Others, like the University of Minnesota at Crookston, use distance education to fill gaps in the curriculum. Such arrangements are not only happening within a single higher education system, but also across borders (Rumble, 2000). For example, many U.S. and European schools offer degrees in conjunction with a local host in countries like Israel and Singapore.

The actual arrangements for teaching distance education courses are as almost varied as the number of channels on satellite television these days, the specific issues vary widely among institutions. They vary by instructor, institution, technology, and arrangements among institutions participating in the course. For example, those who have access to it might use a closed-circuit television network to broadcast courses, as the University of Minnesota does. As the bandwidth of the Internet expands (that is, its ability to carry voice and video as well as text and data), others increasingly use collaboration software that allows simultaneous transmission of video, audio, and a visual.

Dooley and Murphrey noted that perspectives vary among administrators, faculty, and support units when implementing distance education programs (2000). McKenzie, Mims, Bennett, and Waugh add that instructors play the key role in the successful implementation (2000), perhaps because they serve as the intermediary among all of the participating institutions. Administration of a distance course substantially differs from its classroom counterpart, especially when several institutions are involved. This article identifies thirteen administrative issues that arise when teaching distance education courses with students enrolled through other institutions.

Issue 1: Identify the Administrative Model

Before considering specific administrative issues associated with a distance education course, instructors need to identify the model under which the distance education program operates. The administrative issues that the educator needs to consider vary based on the model of operation.

Three models are among the most common. Under the first, all of the locations involved are administered by the same

school and, therefore, operate under the same administrative policies and procedures. This is called a remote classroom arrangement. For example, if University A broadcasts its courses to corporate classrooms so workers can take credit courses without leaving their work locations, then all of the locations are merely extensions of the same classroom. Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute has such an arrangement with IBM Corporation; Southern Polytechnic State University has established such an arrangement with the Savannah River Plant. Similarly, many colleges and community colleges broadcast courses on local Public Broadcasting Stations.

Under the second model, students from University C can take courses at University D (and for which there are no similar courses taught at University C) and the courses transfer back to University C. This type of arrangement is called cross-enrollment. Although students usually enroll through their home institution (University C), the course operates under the policies and procedures of the teaching institution (University D). This is called cross enrollment; several universities in Pittsburgh offer this arrangement, as do Georgia State University, Georgia Tech, and the University of Georgia.

Under the last model, a course taught by University E is broadcast or webcast to University F. Students in each university enroll through their own institutions, and are governed by the policies and procedures for their home institutions. This is called a joint offering. For example, the University of Minnesota--Twin Cities offers such a degree program in technical communication with 3 other institutions: University of Minnesota--Crookston, Southwestern State University, and the University of Minnesota, Rochester Center.

Joint offerings add a level of complexity because the instructors must simultaneously operate under the policies and procedures of several institutions. For example, should an instructor schedule class for a day when 1 of the 4 institutions is on break, but the other 3 schools are not? Although the next several issues are ones that must be considered for administering joint offerings; many are also issues for administering cross-enrollment and remote classrooms.

Issue 2: Consider the Different Academic Cultures at Each Institution

If students at the home institution regularly contact an instructor for permission before turning in late assignments, imagine how that instructor might react when a student at a partner institution turns in a late assignment--without asking permission to be late and with no explanation for the lateness. If the practice is common in the partner institution, however, both the instructor is likely to be surprised by the behavior and student is likely to be surprised by a resulting failing grade.

Academic cultures vary among institutions. For example, consider the differences between commuter and residential institutions. Students at commuter schools tend to spend less time on campus. Similarly, consider the difference between research and teaching institutions. In research institutions, faculty have smaller teaching loads, but are more focused on research. Therefore, many courses are taught by graduate students. In contrast, faculty at teaching institutions primarily teach and administer programs. Students are often more likely to take courses from a full faculty member than at a research institution.

These differences in academic cultures also result in differences in approaches to academics and expectations among students. For example, in some institutions, faculty rarely take attendance. In others, most faculty have an attendance policy, in which instructors reserve the right to lower grades of students who miss a certain number of classes

Generally, the prevailing academic culture in the home institution guides the educator in classroom management. But the culture at the home institution might significantly vary from that in other institutions; and those other cultures guide students in their work.

The better an instructor understands the culture guiding students at each of the institutions and the better that an instructor incorporates those different cultures into the classroom, the better expectations at the other locations match those of the instructor. For example, if the culture at just one of the institutions is to avoid class attendance unless required, an instructor might explicitly require attendance of all students to establish a new culture for the classroom.

The sidebar "Learning the Culture of Another Academic Institution" suggests some ways to learn more about the cultures guiding the other classrooms in a distance education agreement.

Issue 3: Consider the Academic Calendars of Each Institution When Scheduling Courses

Imagine scheduling the first class of a term a week before the term begins. Or scheduling the last class a week after grades are due. Although this is not likely to happen at the home institution (instructors are usually aware of the academic calendars at their home institutions), it could easily happen at the partner institutions, unless the academic calendars for the other institutions are considered when scheduling courses.

Four scheduling issues arise when planning courses for instructional television. One pertains to scheduling for the academic calendar, the second pertains to scheduling courses in advance, the third pertains to scheduling classroom facilities and the last pertains to enrollment limits.

When scheduling for the academic calendar, instructors should specifically consider the following issues:

- Start and end dates of the term at each institution. Generally, the term of the distance course should begin no earlier than the latest of the starting dates and end no later than the earliest of the ending dates. In most instances, this results in a shorter term for the distance course. To accommodate the shorter term, class sessions might be lengthened to make sure students receive the required amount of face time in class for the number of credits. Instructors should be able to easily find the schedule for the other institutions; most publish their academic calendar one or two years in advance.
- Interim holidays, such as mid-term breaks and national and state holidays that are observed by the institution. If only one of several institutions observes the holidays, the instructor should consider holding class anyway, while making arrangements for students at the schools on break to receive a videotape and lecture notes from the missed class.
- Unanticipated closings. Should several hundred miles separate participating institutions, the likelihood is high that one institution being closed by a blizzard or some other adverse weather condition while the other schools are not even affected. Your course syllabus should mention policies for handling such situations. Usually, class usually goes on, but the instructor videotapes the class and makes lecture notes available to students in the affected location.

That class goes on when one of the institutions is closed admittedly creates a problem for that one institution, but canceling class is unfair to the others; in many cases, the "other" students are a large number. To make students aware of this potential learning barrier, instructors should include a section in their syllabi informing them of this policy.

The second scheduling issue also pertains to the scheduling of courses. Although some schools like to plan their calendars one semester in advance, when other schools are involved, administrators must schedule courses far in advance: often a year or more. This can actually be helpful for students, because the advance scheduling helps students plan their schedules long in advance. For example, when students know that they can only take a certain course during a certain term (for example, senior seminar is only offered in the spring term of even-numbered years), they can plan their schedules accordingly.

Scheduling courses in advance is also necessary to make sure that tight technical and support resources are available. Scheduling these support resources as early as possible is the third scheduling issue: scheduling support resources as early as possible. Although instructors must schedule courses well in advance, participating institutions often schedule instructional television facilities on a shorter lead time. That is, an instructor might schedule a course a year in advance, but the school only schedules instructional television rooms 6 months in advance. As a result, classroom facilities might not be available for the course.

One way to ensure that facilities are available is to work with the room scheduling staff to change their scheduling procedures. If that is not possible, make them aware of the intention to teach a course so that, when the rooms become available for scheduling, the request to schedule a course is more likely to be honored.

The last issue in scheduling courses is setting and communicating enrollment limits. Although some people view distance education as a way of expanding an instructor's productivity (Milken, 1999), certain realities often place limits on enrollment anyway. Should the class be broadcast or webcast to another classroom, the seating capacity of those classrooms limits enrollment. In other cases, the software used for managing synchronous distance education has capacity limits. Finally, because of the intensity of the assignments and grading needed, instructors can only handle a limited number of students effectively.

The best way to addressing the issue of limits is by setting them early, and communicating them. Before making a commitment to class limits, make sure that partner institutions are aware of, and comfortable with, those limits. If an institution is not comfortable with the limit, the instructor and administrators at the other institution should negotiate mutually acceptable limits.

Then, the instructor or a designated administrator should carefully monitor enrollments during the registration process to make sure that enrollment caps are observed. Because schools rarely coordinate their enrollment systems with others, watching enrollments becomes a labor-intensive task, requiring that someone separately check enrollments at each of the participating institutions.

Issue 4: Consider the Registration Process of Each Institution When Preparing Promotional Materials about Courses

Imagine sending the promotional materials for a course a week after the quarterly bulletin has gone to press. Although this is not likely to happen at an instructor's home institution, it could easily happen in the partner institutions unless the instructor becomes aware of the registration and course promotion process at each institution--and makes sure that materials are available when administrators at the partner institutions need them.

- Enrollments are one measurement of success in courses, and one way to ensure sufficient enrollments is by providing sufficient promotion. Typically, promotion for a college- or university-level course includes:
- A college bulletin or catalog, which lists the program of study for a particular degree and all of the courses that students can take to fulfill degree requirements. Some schools publish this material annually, others publish a bulletin or catalog (the term varies by institution) once every 2 or 3 years.
- Advance schedule, which lists the courses that are tentatively scheduled for an upcoming academic year as well as their tentatively scheduled times and instructors. The advance schedule is usually published in the spring of the preceding academic year, and includes many disclaimers that the schedule might change.
- Pre-registration schedule booklet, which lists courses available in the coming term, as well as the class time, classroom and instructor's name. Some schools merely publish a list of courses; others provide descriptive information about those courses. The booklet is usually distributed immediately before registration.
- Promotional flyers about individual courses. These are usually mailed to a known list of potential students either immediately before or during the registration process.

If a course is not mentioned in these promotional materials, degree-bound students generally are not aware of it and do not include it in their program. Similarly, special students (that is, ones who are only enrolling for an individual course and are not yet part of a degree program) might not realize the course is available.

Although schools rely on promotional materials to generate course enrollments, few widely announce the deadlines for submitting copy for these materials. The information needed for different promotional vehicles varies among institution. For example, some institutions only publish a course description; others include an estimate of the student workload and types of assignments. As part of the planning process, instructors need to find out what material is needed for each promotional vehicle in each school.

To make sure that each institution has the information it needs to promote the course in a manner that is timely for that institution, instructors might develop a format for preparing promotional information about courses that meets the needs of all institutions, although not all institutions will use all of the information in their promotional materials. Instructors should review the format with the participating institutions to make sure that it provides the information they need. They might also review the format with the faculty at their home institutions; the home institutions might choose to adopt the format to promote all of its courses, even those not scheduled for instructional television.

Instructors should also work closely with the partner institutions to learn about the deadlines for their promotional materials. Because instructors must meet so many different schedules, administrators at the partner institutions should also make a special effort to make sure that instructors are aware of upcoming deadlines.

Issue 5: Make Sure that Text Books Arrive on Time

Imagine coming to class one day prepared to discuss a reading, and none of the students at one of the partner locations can do so, because the school bookstore does not have the book. The instructor can be forewarned of the problem at the home institution by checking the bookstore before the first class begins, and can work with the local bookstore staff so the missing book arrives as soon as possible. But the instructor cannot make these in-person inspections at the partner schools.

Books actually present two key challenges to instructors. One pertains to missing books at the partner institutions (the one just described). The other pertains to packets of additional readings.

The easiest way to avoid the problem of missing books at partner institutions is by placing book orders early. Because the ordering deadline for each school varies, instructors must become aware of the book ordering cycle for the remote institutions and make sure that they receive book ordering information on a timely basis.

Even when an instructor orders books well in advance of the first class, however, books do not arrive. Situations like these become especially frustrating for students and instructors. The missing books only highlight the fact that their instructor works remotely; indeed the instructor is not even aware whether or not books have arrived. An instructor also feels similarly remote. To limit exposure to such a problem, an instructor can contact the bookstores at the partner institutions before class to find out whether the textbooks have arrived. If the books have not arrived, the instructor can announce this in the first class. This gives students the good feeling that the instructor is indeed on top of their needs. Similarly, the instructor should find out when the bookstore staff expects the book to arrive and contact the store on that date to verify that it has arrived. In some instances, an administrator at the remote school can handle this task for the

instructor.

Packets of additional readings pose a different set of problems. One is multiple requests for permission to reproduce copyrighted material. The requests can create unnecessary work for copy centers. But a coordinated approach requires extra work at the home institution. Permission requests must indicate that the course is taught at several institutions. Similarly, copies of permissions must be sent to the partner institutions so that they are aware that they already have permission to copy the material.

Issue 6: Consider Library Resources at Each Institution

Imagine assigning a research project whose intention is familiarizing students with the journals, magazines, and books in the field. But the library at the other institution has none of the journals.

The situation could likely happen in any remote classroom situation. One of the reasons that remote institutions like distance courses is that they extend the teaching capabilities of the school. The school can augment its catalog of courses with ones it might not typically teach because it lacks qualified staff or accreditation to teach.

If the institution has not taught courses nor had staff specializing in the topic area of a particular course, the likelihood is slim that its library has materials to support outside research on the topic. That library probably relies on interlibrary loan for materials. This, too, is a problem, because the library that is most likely to loan the materials is the one at the home institution--and students at the home institution often need the same materials to complete their assignments.

Before teaching at the remote school, instructors should check with the librarians at those schools to find out which periodicals and books they carry in the subject area. If the school does not carry the resources needed, the instructor should consider these options:

- With sufficient lead time and funds, and a long-term need established, work with the remote institutions to purchase the missing books and subscribe to the missing periodicals.
- If the previous option is not viable, reconsider library assignments. The instructor might compile a course reading packet in lieu of a library research assignment or might design projects so that they use resources that students would have access to locally.

Issue 7: Consider the Logistics of Getting Course Materials to Students

Recall the last minute rush before the first class of the semester: making last minute adjustments to the syllabus, hurriedly making copies for class, then dashing to the classroom before students arrive. No problem at the home institutions, but how can those copies be distributed to students in partner institutions if they are prepared moments before class begins.

Getting materials to students at partner institutions is one of the most significant logistical issues in synchronous distance education. Because materials must be sent to several schools, copied, and distributed to several classrooms (most of which are not monitored by a member of the faculty or staff), spontaneity and last minute brainstorming are not options.

The temptation exists to distribute all materials through the Internet, either using e-mail or course websites. But some students might not have developed the habit of checking e-mail and the web regularly (at least, not for school and business-related tasks). Even those who have developed this habit might not have an opportunity to check the Internet before class.

Advance planning, therefore, is the only reliable way to ensure timely copying and distribution of class materials. Some instructors rely on the Internet as a primary means of doing so, but distribute materials at least a day in advance.

In addition to distributing materials to students early, instructors must also work with students to develop the habit of checking e-mail before class begins. Some have not yet not yet developed the habit of doing so. Others -- especially those using dial-up connections from home -- only check e-mail a few times a week. Instructors might develop the habit by requiring students to send them e-mail messages between the first and second class and at certain intervals during the course as a means of developing this habit.

Similarly, instructors might only distribute certain key assignments electronically, providing students with an additional incentive to check the system. Some students do not like this practice, even on campuses that have a strong technology infrastructure and culture of Internet use. They typically print the assignments and prefer to receive them in written form.

Other instructors rely on administrators at the partner institutions to copy and distribute materials for class. Because the instructor is usually invisible to these administrators and because they have several local professors to support, instructors must leave a reasonable lead time for administrators to honor their requests. The lead time varies among administrators.

In addition, some schools have limits on faxing and copying, and the limits might vary among schools. Instructors need to check on this in advance to make sure that they stay within the prescribed limits.

Issue 8: Get Copyright Clearances for Broadcasts

Imagine sharing a favorite comic strip with class, only to be arrested a week later for violating copyright law. According to an article on cnn.com, copyright laws were not written with distance education in mind and the fair use provisions for the classroom do not extend to the distant classroom. Specifically, it is the broadcasting or webcasting of images that is at odds with the copyright laws. (2000). Copyright laws place three copyright restrictions on instructors in distance education.

The first restriction pertains to using printed images. Although instructors often share comics and news articles with classes, they cannot do so on an instructional television system without first receiving permission. Many publishers have generously given permission to distant instructors, but this requires pre-planning. Items found at the last minute cannot be used in class.

The second restriction pertains to the use of video and computer images. Most video rentals and purchases by school media centers assume that the video will only be shown in a classroom, not broadcast over television (even a closed circuit system). Before using these resources, an instructor must make sure that they have rights to broadcast the videos and computer images.

The last restriction pertains to videotaping the class. Because the images of students might appear in these videotapes, instructors need a signed release form from each student saying that they have given permission to use their image before videotaping a class. These releases are standard practice for video productions (other than news), but usually not thought of for instructional television.

Issue 9: Pay Personal Attention to Students and Administrators at All Institutions

Imagine never meeting the professor in person -- or feeling as though one had not. Although students at the home institution, who have direct, face-to-face contact with the instructor are not likely to feel that way, students at partner institutions often feel this way. In fact, one of the most significant problems that distance learners face is that of anonymity. No one is aware that they're taking the course, not even the instructor.

One part of the problem is an educational one: instructors who primarily rely on lectures and tests, and minimize interaction are unintentionally distancing themselves from their students. Markel suggests that distance education works when instructors adopt a student-centered approach (1998).

Another part of the problem, however, results from outside-of-class communication. For example, drop-in office hours are useless to students when the office is a many-hour drive away. Using only office hours as a means of direct communication outside of class is not sufficient. Instructors might also adopt one or more of the following strategies:

- In addition to drop-in office hours, hold office hours on the Internet, during which the instructor promises to be available online during certain hours to answer questions and review assignments, just as the instructor might be available for local students during office hours. The discussion might occur through an online chat, a voice hookup, or some other form of synchronous online communication.
- Requiring direct e-mail contact early in the semester to initiate an ongoing outside-of-class relationship and increase the likelihood that students will contact the instructor.
- Calling students back who live outside of the local calling area, so students incur minimal telephone costs when interacting with the distant instructor.
- Posting a website with course resources. Many instructors already do so for their face-to-face classes; the practice becomes especially important for distance classes. Students in partner institutions might have difficulty following content, yet might also be uncomfortable asking remedial questions over a broadcast or webcast. A course website can provide remedial information for these students, as well as a variety of other resources that students might find helpful. Sidebar B lists resources that an instructor might include on a course website.
- Visiting the other school at least once a term. As much as the other activities listed thus far help build communications with students at partner institutions, anecdotal evidence suggests that students still appreciate an in-person visit. Some distance programs include a budget for instructors to travel to the other institutions where their courses are broadcast. If so, teach from that school. If feasible, the visit might also include an extra-curricular activity (such as a club meeting or a pizza lunch) and drop-in office hours so students have several opportunities to interact with the instructor face-to face. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that including a visit to the other school increases course evaluations by from one-half to one point on a five-point scale.

Issue 10: Coordinate Grading Procedures among Institutions

Imagine an A student failing a course because the instructor forgot to submit a grade. This is not likely to happen at the instructor's home institution; administrators usually provide instructors with grade sheets well in advance of the deadline and also post signs saying "Grades due by..." throughout the department office.

Partner institutions often have different deadlines and may or may not actually deliver the grade sheet to the instructor on a timely basis. If an instructor works with four institutions, the instructor likely faces four different grade deadlines. Close collaboration between administrators at the remote locations and the instructor among institutions can help remind instructors of the deadline for submitting grades and make sure that instructors have grade sheets in advance of the deadline, and backup procedures if the grade sheets do not arrive.

In addition, some of the institutions have interim grade reports. For example, some schools report mid-term grades, others request reports of students in danger of failing, and others request performance data on minority students. Instructors should find out whether any of the participating institutions requires such interim reports and when they are due.

Issue 11: Prepare for Technology Disasters

Imagine the last day of class, when students are scheduled to present their final projects. These projects account for 20 percent of students' final grades. Just before class, a construction worker in a nearby suburb accidentally cuts a fiber optic cable and cuts off all telecommunications with classrooms in partner institutions.

Although distance learning is usually reliable, technology disasters like this occur (Vogt, 1989). The challenge for distance educators is anticipating these disasters and developing contingency plans in advance. In addition to a loss of communications, other issues to consider:

- Problems with e-mail servers that prevent students from submitting papers or questions about them on a timely basis. In such instances, instructors might have administrators pass on notices about system failures, and give students a time frame afterwards by which they expect to receive information.
- Problems with online testing software. In some cases, the software "eats" tests, effectively losing a students' work. To address such instances, instructors should require that students also print their answers and submit the printed version. The printed version can be ignored if the software performs properly, but serves as a backup in the event of a problem.

Issue 12: Plan Student Evaluations That Provide Instructors with Consistent Feedback

Imagine awaiting feedback on a course, then realizing that the students at each of the participating institutions complete a different evaluation form. In such instances, instructors have no consistent means of assessing their performance. At the least, the evaluation scales might differ among the evaluation forms. At the most, the different evaluations might ask different questions. And the evaluation might not address issues specific to the experience of instructional television.

On the one hand, the practice of using the evaluation form of the institution has merit for the institution, because it allows administrators at that institution to compare all of their courses. On the other hand, this practice does not have merit for the instructor, because the evaluations are not likely to have an internal consistency.

To address this situation, instructors might consider developing and administering a second evaluation. The second evaluation might address these issues:

- Overall learning experience. In this way, the instructor can determine--across sites--the effectiveness of teaching.
- Questions specific to instructional television. These questions might address the following issues: quality of the transmission, quality of technical support, accessibility of the instructor, and perceptions of student involvement in the learning experience.
- Location. The instructors might ask students to identify their location on the evaluation. In this way, the instructor can review evaluation results by location to assess whether perceptions about the course are universal or differ by site.

Administering the evaluation requires special coordination by the instructor. The instructor must contact an administrator at each location, send the master form to each site, and make arrangements for administering and returning the evaluation. Admittedly, the instructor could also send the second evaluation directly to students and ask them to return them to the instructor. But most institutions stress the anonymity of course evaluations. Arrangements that involve sending materials directly to the instructor might detract from the perceived anonymity and inhibit students from responding honestly. The instructor should also let students know in advance when evaluations are scheduled to make sure that students attend that class session.

Issue 13: Develop and Nurture Relationships with the Administrative Staffs at Each Partner Institution

Because administrative assistants, secretaries, and other members of the administrative staff oversee scheduling, grading, orders for textbooks, and coordination of evaluations, as well as communications with instructors, they can simplify the administrative burden of a distance course. Develop the relationship early and maintain it throughout the course.

Specifically, distance instructors might consider:

- Introducing themselves to the administrative staffs at each institution as soon as possible after learning of the assignment. Use this introduction to identify the policies of the institution (the person who assigns the course rarely has full familiarity with it) and your needs.
- Before the course begins, call to verify the understanding of policies and procedures, as well as the arrival of textbooks.
- During the course, check-in with the administrator to find out how things are going at the partner institution.
- Before finals, coordinate plans for receiving final assignments, submitting grades, and administering evaluations.
- After the course ends, assess the course and send a thank-you note for the assistance received.

More than Issues, A Series of Relationships

In fact, this relationship issue is ultimately the key to success in and out of the classroom. For more than a relationship between technology and learning, distance education offers a broader stage on which to develop relationships among people. Some of those relationships exist between students and instructors, others exist between instructors and administrators.

Certainly the development of the learning environment affects the success of that relationship. But so does the availability of textbooks, classrooms, and technology. So does access to the instructor outside of class. So does a workable class schedule. So do valid copyrights.

In other words, successful distance education involves more than successful pedagogy. The entire learning experience must be well-planned, coordinated, and executed.

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Appendix A: Learning the Culture of Another Academic Institution

To learn the culture of another academic institution, consider:

- What type of school is it: teaching? Research?
- What are the entry qualifications? What is the profile of the student body, as prepared by the admissions office?
- What is the attitude of the students towards education? Faculty?
- What level of initiative do students take in their learning? For example, if students have difficulty understanding a lesson, how will they address the problem? Are they assertive about their needs or are they passive, waiting for the instructor to discover the problem and initiate discussion?

- What is the attitude towards class time? Do students attend of their own accord or does the instructor have to require attendance? Do students generally participate of their own initiative or does the instructor have to actively include them? Although the answer depends, in part, on individual learners, cultures also have attitudes towards participation in class.

Instructors can learn about the culture of the other institutions from:

- Other instructors and administrators
- Admissions staff
- Interviews with students
- Literature about the institution, such as catalogs (bulletins) and student and faculty newspapers.

Appendix B: Content to Include on a Course Website

Area	Possible Content
Syllabus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course description • Objectives • Policies • Learning resources (text, website, others) • List of assignments • Schedule of events* • Message indicating that students have read the syllabus and have registered for the Blackboard website
Graded assignments	<p>To be performed off-line by the student</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment sheet • Other resources <p>To be performed online, using online testing facilities</p>
Exercises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-assessments (of attitudes or skills) • Cases (with answers or without) • Drills (with or without automatic grading online) • Problems

Readings	<p>Publisher's websites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For your text book • Other textbook-related sites, such as ccholar.com and kaboom.books.com <p>Periodicals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newspapers (such as the local daily paper) • Online journals and magazines <p>In your content area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General (such as www.computer world. com) • Professional and trade associations serving your content area • Identify as professional or academic • Include links to local and society-level organization <p>To private websites (include a disclaimer that this is self-published information)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate • Professionals
Teaching materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tips of the day • Links to current news articles • Guest speakers (probably through online chats)
Remediation materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternate explanations of content • Worksheets • Sample exercises • Illustrations • Copies of your course notes (such as PowerPoint slides)
Enrichment materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Above-and-beyond exercises • Readings that explain how to relate generic content to a specific topic area • Links to museums and other courses • Links to information about professional association meetings and conferences
Pre-requisite materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readings about content students must know before starting the course • Exercises about pre-requisite material • Placement exams (graded online or not) • Readings and exercises for the first class • Student information sheet
Provide Post-Class Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worksheets • Samples • Readings • Follow-up evaluations

Abstract

In addition to learning the technology and adapting classroom practices, instructors of simultaneous online courses must also address a variety of administrative issues to ensure a successful learning experience for distance learners. These issues include:

- Determining the administrative model; that is, whether learning follows the administrative policies of the hosting institution or another one.
- Preparing to teach in the academic culture of several institutions, in which those cultures might conflict with one another.
- Ensuring that the academic calendars of each participating institution do not pose conflicts with the planned schedule for the course.
- Watching registration at each institution to make sure that enrollment minimums and maximums are met.
- Ensuring that text books arrive at partner institutions on a timely basis.
- Ensuring that library resources at each institution can support class assignments.
- Devising plans for copying and distributing class materials, and planning for that activity in advance.
- Receiving copyright clearances for printed and video materials displayed during class, and from students who might appear on a videotape of the class.
- Making sure that deadlines and procedures for submitting mid-term reports (if any) and course grades are followed for each institution.
- Anticipating and developing contingency plans for technical problems that might affect the ability of students at partner institutions from submitting graded assignments.
- Developing a student evaluation form that addresses issues unique to the distance education classroom.
- Developing relationships with administrators at each site to ensure that they understand the needs of teaching at a distance and can provide timely support.

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