

## Competencies for Online Instructors

### Why have instructor competencies for online instructors?

Many factors influence the outcomes of instruction. The instructor's role in the success of instruction, including learner retention and achievement, is clearly documented. In online learning, this role is even more critical, as the instructor has to help learners overcome potential barriers caused by technology, time, and the way interactions with learners and the instructor occur. The following online instructor competencies come from instructional theory and research, as well as many years of combined (mine and others') experience as an online learner, instructor, and instructional designer.

The actions are divided into five competency areas: administrative, design, facilitation, evaluation, and technical and there is some overlap between them. The individual actions are general and apply mainly to asynchronous instruction. Some contexts may require additional or different actions. Credible content knowledge and obtaining help as needed to complete these actions are assumed to be present and are not addressed here.

#### *Administrative*

The primary goal is to assure smooth course operations and reduce instructor and learner overload.

- Provides an unambiguous roadmap through the instruction.
- Provides clear objectives, expectations, and policies.
- Posts course materials (syllabus, assignments, discussion topics, etc.) in advance so learners can plan.
- Conveys changes and updates.
- Assures that all learners are 'on board' at the beginning of a course.
- Returns learner calls/emails quickly to allow learners to progress.
- Refers problems to appropriate sources and follows up to assure resolution.

#### *Design*

The primary goal is to assure adequate learning outcomes and satisfaction.

- Plans activities that allow learners to attach personal meaning to content.
- Provides opportunities for hands-on practice and application.
- Balances design to help learners manage load.
- Helps learners assess their learning and attain personal learning goals.
- Incorporates social aspects to improve satisfaction, provide a realistic environment, present multiple viewpoints, and overcome anonymity.

- Assures materials are easy to use.

### *Facilitation*

The primary goal is to provide social benefits and enhance learning.

- Sets or facilitates setting of communication rules and group decision-making norms.
- Provides compelling opportunities for online discussion, negotiation, debate.
- Moderates discussion, contributes advanced content knowledge and insights, models desired methods of communication.
- Fosters sharing of knowledge, questions, and expertise.
- Contributes outside resources (online, print-based, others) and encourages learners to do as well.
- Responds to discussion postings adequately without 'taking over.'
- Provides acknowledgment of learner contributions.
- Moderates disagreements and group problems.

### *Evaluation*

The primary goal is to assure that learners know how they will be evaluated and help learners meet course objectives.

- Provides learners with clear grading criteria. Uses rubrics, grading criteria, or examples to help learners recognize expectations.
- Assists learners who are having problems completing the assignments.
- Allows learners to track assignment completion and impact on final grade.
- Quickly acknowledges receipt of assignments.
- Provides feedback and help with remediation, as needed.
- Contacts learners who have not completed assignments and helps them plan to complete assignments.

### *Technical*

The primary goal is to assure overcome barriers due to technical components.

- Becomes proficient with all technical systems used in the course.
- Helps learners troubleshoot technical systems.
- Refers problems to appropriate sources and follows up to assure resolution.

## Selected Resources

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