Evaluation for Faculty Blackboard Support

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MIT 530: Evaluation & Change in Instructional Development

14 February 2008

Introduction

Description of the Problem and Context

The University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW) is a public comprehensive university, one of the sixteen constituent campuses of the University of North Carolina. UNCW consists of approximately 12,000 students and 800 faculty members. Information Technology Systems Division (ITSD) is a division within UNCW that supports technology operations and provides service maintenance for network applications. Within ITSD are various departments that direct and advise program development, research, consulting, and communications involved with technology integration.   The mission of ITSD is to provide a technology progressive environment for students, faculty, and staff.

 ITSD is dedicated:

- *To lead*
- *To collaborate*
- *To support*

With cost effective services that support the mission of the university.

Technology Enhanced Learning is a department within ITSD that is responsible for training faculty and staff for approximately 4 colleges with current and emerging technology. Within the department of Technology Enhanced Learning is the office of e-learning, which is in charge of all online and web-enhanced instruction. The office hours of operation are 8 to 5, and it is staffed by 2 full time employees and 3 graduate assistants.

The e-learning office also provides instructional support and assistance to faculty and students who are using technology tools to enhance and/or expand course content and delivery. One technology tool is the Learning Management System (LMS), Blackboard Vista, which is used for delivery of instruction, course management, discussion boards, Wimba (a live online conference room), email, and chat.
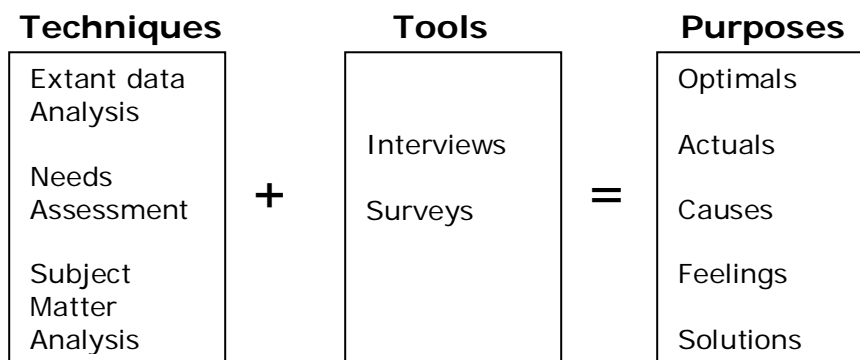
In the fall of 2007, e-Learning created a knowledge base entitled "Blackboard Help Course – 24/7" with the intention to provide additional support and assistance to faculty members who use Blackboard to deliver their courses. This allows instructors quick access to solutions 24/7 without having to call or email the Technology Assistance Center. Features provided for instructors within the course include discussion boards, job aids, email, chat, and Wimba.

There are currently 190 out of 800 (24%) instructors enrolled in the course. At this time only a small number of faculty members are actually using the Help course. Faculty members are added when they have identified themselves as Blackboard users. As faculty members come forward for assistance they are then identified as Blackboard users.

Purpose of the Needs Assessment

A needs assessment will be conducted to determine how the faculty would use a "Blackboard Help Course 24/7" and where the overall support needs lie. Information will be sought concerning what type of support the faculty would like to see added during non-business hours, as well as, information regarding the time of day the faculty seeks support and their preferred method of receiving support. The team will also probe to gage the amount of troubleshooting faculty are willing to put forth prior to calling for support. Of the 190 faculty enrolled in the course, the needs assessment will also determine the online instruction background of the faculty and the amount of online classes they have taught.   . The needs assessment will also seek the attitude of the faculty and staff that are using the course. Interviews and surveys will be conducted with faculty enrolled in the course and the e-learning staff.

Needs Analysis Procedure

Techniques		**Tools**		**Purposes**
Extant data Analysis Needs Assessment Subject Matter Analysis	**+**	Interviews Surveys	**=**	Optimals Actuals Causes Feelings Solutions

Description of Model

Allison Rossett's "Needs Analysis Procedure" will be used as the basis for the planning and conducting of the needs assessment for this project. This particular approach presents the relationships between techniques, tools and purposes.
- ❖ *Techniques*
  - o Extant data will be collected in order to represent current and actual performance of the Blackboard Help Course.
  - o A Needs Assessment will be conducted in order to seek the opinions on the optimals, actuals, feelings, causes and solutions from different sources.
  - o The subject matter analysis will help establish the details of the optimals and what information the employees need to know.
- ❖ *Tools*
  - o The team will utilize various tools in order to help gather the necessary information.
  - o One-on-one interviews will be conducted with faculty members.
  - o A survey will be submitted to faculty members in order to help gather further information.
- ❖ *Purposes*
  - o Our team will seek information for the following purposes: optimal

performance or knowledge, actual or current performance or knowledge, feelings of faculty members, causes of the problems from various sources, and solutions to the problems from different perspectives.

Context	
Resources	**Constraints**
• LMS • Horizon Wimba • LMS System Administrator	• Staffing • Lack of quantitative data • Glitches within Blackboard • Maintenance of LMS • Time

Purposes		
Description	**Status**	**Sources**
Optimals: Provide an effective 24/7 troubleshooting resource for the faculty at UNCW who utilize Blackboard learning management system for instructional purposes.	badly need	E-learning faculty
Actuals: All job aids and handouts were compiled and organized in a Blackboard course as a knowledge base for instructors.		E-Learning

Feelings:	Badly Need	Faulty
Causes:		
Solutions:		

Stages/Techniques	Tools and Sources
Subject Matter Analysis	• Preliminary interview of E-Learning staff • Document Analysis (summary activity, usage, initial planning documents) • Review Course Objectives • Identify Course Functionality
Needs Assessment	• Survey Faculty with UNCW online survey tool
Analysis Extant Data	• Meet with E-Learning group • Interview faculty one-on-one

TNA Stage Planner

1. **Subject of TNA:** Help Course for Instructors using Blackboard Vista

2. **Stage #:** 1

3. **Summary of information being sought:** To gather the optimal and actual design of the Blackboard help course for faculty support.

4. **Source of information:** e-learning staff

5. **Tools required for this stage:** Interview/Extant data analysis

6. **Questions/Agenda:**

- Gain a sense of the problem
- Faculty knowledge
- e-learning's feelings
- Promotion of help course
- Design of help course
- Course Functionality

TNA Stage Planner

1. **Subject of TNA:** Help Course for Instructors using Blackboard Vista

2. **Stage #:** 2

3. **Summary of information being sought:** Faculty input and data regarding the effectiveness of the help course

4. **Source of information:** UNCW faculty

5. **Tools required for this stage:** Online survey

6. **Questions/Agenda:**

- Who is accessing it?
- How helpful was it?
- What are the faculty needs?
- Troubleshooting

Data Collection

Description of data collection process
The data will be collected in two ways. First a survey will be designed and sent out through the UNCW Select Survey tool. This survey will be sent out to each faculty member that is teaching an online course. The survey will be completed by February 22nd and deployed on February 24th. On February 27th the first reminder e-mail will be sent out, the second reminder will come on February 29th, with a final reminder on March 2nd. March 4th will be the cut off date for the survey leaving the rest of the week for analysis of the results.

The second data collection process will involve one on one interviews with faculty members from various departments throughout the University. The faculty interviews will take place through March 5th – 11th with the rest of the week set aside for interview analysis.

Description of instruments
A written survey will explore themes such as the times the faculty are usually on line accessing their course. It will also measure most preferred method of communication

for help, and the methods that faculty use prior to seeking assistance. Questions will also be raised regarding what the faculty knows about the online help course, and what they would ideally like from the course. Interviews will be conducted with the faculty to find out what they perceive as problems with the help course, and how they feel about using the help course. The faculty will also be asked how they perceive the help desk can optimally serve them.

Data Timeline

- January 28th – Informal meeting with E-Learning
- February 5th – Preliminary Interview
- February 24th – Deploy survey
- February 27 – 1st reminder sent to faculty
- February 29 – 2nd reminder sent to faculty
- March 2nd – 3rd reminder sent to faculty
- March 4th - Survey cutoff
- March 5-11th – Faculty interviews

Gantt Chart