

CEP 820 - NOTEBOOK ENTRY 6.0

This is a brief summary of significant learning points and pitfalls encountered as I created my first online course. Throughout the course development I tried to focus on the following two features:

1. Clear and consistent communication
2. Establish a personal presence.

These had an impact on both design and pedagogical decisions. The two ideas were emphasized (and modelled) by the instructors throughout the course and are consistent with the theoretical concepts recommended by the National Center on Universal Design for Learning: <http://www.udlcenter.org/>

Critical design decisions

1. Clear and consistent communication - Rather than focusing on making the site look 'pretty' I tried to ensure that students understood how to navigate the site, what was expected of them each week, how to use the related technologies and how they were going to be assessed.
2. Establish a personal presence - A variety of tools were used to establish a personal presence including; a 'getting started' screencast, a personal introduction (including a goofy slideshow) screencast, a synchronous face-to-face and online introductory session. Weekly video updates and screencasts will be included throughout the course to maintain the personal presence.

Critical pedagogical decisions

1. Clear and consistent communication - Once 'clear and consistent communication' became my mantra I had to simplify my course a bit as my original plans may have been somewhat ambitious and confusing. Ultimately I focused on three areas of emphasis for the course: technical accounting material, application of the material through case writing strategies and development of group study materials.
2. Establishing a personal presence - I will be providing students (and groups) with a variety of feedback formats (audio, text, video) in the first three weeks and then will provide feedback using their preferred approach (based on a brief survey) in subsequent weeks. I've also tried to provide office hours in a variety of formats (online chat, in-person and by phone) and at a variety of times so students have personal access when they have important questions.

Pitfalls

Some of the technologies (Google Docs, Screencasts etc...) used in the course took some time to understand at a functional level. However a learning curve with any new technology is to be expected and the rewards were positive and tangible. Indecision on my part with regards to group work has slowed down progress on the course and, to be honest, I'm not sure I've really made a final decision with regards to the extent or assessment of group work. This will be fine-tuned as I move forward.