

## **Critique and Re-Design of “VIULearn Basics” training materials**

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## **Introduction**

The ultimate goal in the Centre for Innovation and Excellence in Learning (CIEL) is to develop a course with modules specific to the training sessions that we currently offer synchronously face-to-face, with some material online for faculty members use after the session. The course and modules would be self-contained and be deliverable fully-online and asynchronously to allow faculty to take training at a time and place that respects their schedules and needs. As this is a large, multi-month project, I will speak to the rebuild and development of the “VIULearn Basics” training materials only, but will mention implementation goals where applicable in order to illustrate how the rebuild of the course materials will increase the overall effectiveness of the course. In some cases the goals of both Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Universal Design for Instruction (UDI) are only attainable in the larger context of the course as a whole, and not solely with the “VIULearn Basics” training materials.

## **Critique**

To begin my critique, I took the UDL guidelines (CAST, 2008) and created a table to summarize the strengths and weakness of the current CIEL “VIULearn Basics” training course. Afterwards, I also used the Rubric for Online Instruction (ROI) from California State University, Chico to assess the same course. My UDL table and ROI contain some reference to the face-to-face synchronous training session as well as the fully-online asynchronous course materials. Due to the online components not being meant to stand-alone, I have taken them together with the face-to-face session as a unit for the purposes of this critique. Both the UDL table and ROI are attached to this document after the write up.

The most obvious shortcoming of the current “VIULearn Basics” training session is that it requires the faculty members to participate in face-to-face training in addition to the online course components. As this limits faculty members to the times and dates when they can access training (especially in the cases of the Cowichan campus) individual choice is limited. Also due to the training being primarily delivered in the face-to-face and synchronous context, there is very little material in the online components that is not text based. Few options for

content delivery are given, but in some cases video and graphical elements are used. Besides the audio track on the videos, no audio elements are utilized.

In the face-to-face synchronous sessions, the material is not delivered using a learner-centered approach. Instead, the trainer will lead the faculty members through the steps to achieve certain goals in software. The reasoning behind this is to minimize frustration for faculty members and ensure they do not feel “lost” as the program is relatively large and complex. There is some scaffolding of tasks as well as attempts made to contextualize materials. Little feedback is given to faculty members beyond correction of course navigation and they are not given a forum to communicate in the online environment, although effort is made to have them communicate concerns and questions during the face-to-face session.

The goals of the training session are stated explicitly in the online as well as face-to-face components. Most time in the face-to-face sessions focuses on the faculty members moving through steps to achieve learning outcomes (such as “Access VIULearn”) but no assessment of the achievement of those learning outcomes is made.

While the “VIULearn Basics” training session functions well in the face-to-face context, much work is needed before it can be developed and delivered in a fully-online and asynchronous context. Some of the steps that need to be taken are outlined below.

## **Rebuild**

During the process of rebuilding these materials, I will be attempting to follow the principle of backward design developed by Wiggins and McTighe, in that the materials will be tailored with the end learning objectives in mind. An effort needs to be made to develop authentic and meaningful ways of assessing these learning objectives as well as providing feedback to faculty members (Gunawardena & Mclsaac, 2001). Without the assessment and feedback pieces, it will be difficult to encourage and develop independent learning, goal setting and autonomy in faculty members (CAST, 2008).

I will also try to introduce more choice to the faculty members in terms of what order they attempt the learning objectives in, as many of them do not build upon one another, as well as building in the ability to easily revisit learning objectives. The suite I will be using during

my rebuild, Articulate Storyline, also contains a branching function to allow faculty members to make choices on how they want to access information. I will attempt to offer video, text and “hands-on” opportunities for all learning outcomes. I hope that by allowing for multiple means to represent the information, faculty members can experience flexibility in their learning (Gunawardena & McIsaac, 2001). Through the use of multiple mean of representation, I also hope to model some of the UDL principles for faculty members. While this will not be assessed or taught directly, I feel it is important for CIEL to create materials that can help to scaffold faculty members when they develop their own materials.

Another feature of the Articulate Storyline software allows faculty members to experience interacting with the screen while overlaying feedback or hints on that view. In order to increase feedback and develop overall skills with the software, I hope to make use of this function. I feel that will add a level of authenticity to the learning experience for those who wish to learn that way, while still providing support. Of course, faculty members can always choose to be more self-directed in their learning by playing with the Desire2Learn software in the absence of training materials. Many faculty members prefer to start learning in that way, and seek help and support from CIEL if they run into issues. Hopefully the combination of training materials and self-directed learning can support many different learning styles.

In the context of a larger course, as opposed just the “VIULearn Basics” training materials, faculty member interaction with each other will be encouraged as much as possible. CIEL hopes to provide them an online forum and help area to encourage them to support and learn from each other. Right now, most training sessions do not allow for a lot of communication between faculty, especially due to the mix of departments we get in each session. With an online forum, we are hoping faculty members will be able to see who else in their department has taken training and begin to build support networks outside of our department.

Additionally, the materials will be available outside of the Desire2Learn Learning Management System. They will also be downloadable for offline viewing to increase the ease of access to the initial “VIULearn Basics” material, which includes signing in and initial navigation

information. The material will likely be made available as either HTML, HTML5 or .swf (or a combination thereof) and will be hosted on the VIU mediawiki.

### **Summary**

The goals of the rebuild of the “VIULearn Basics” course materials include: developing multiple means of representing training materials and developing assessments and feedback mechanisms. These will be designed such that faculty members can tailor the delivery of the material to a time and space that compliments their learning and helps them to develop autonomy.

## References

California State University, Chico (n.d.). *Welcome to the Rubric for Online Instruction (ROI)*. Retrieved from: <http://www.csuchico.edu/roi/>

CAST (2008). *UDL Guidelines Graphic Organizer | National Center On Universal Design for Learning*. Retrieved from: [http://www.udlcenter.org/aboutudl/udlguidelines/udlguidelines\\_graphicorganizer](http://www.udlcenter.org/aboutudl/udlguidelines/udlguidelines_graphicorganizer)

Gunawardena, C. N., & Mclsaac, M. S. (2001). Distance Education. In D. H. Jonassen (Ed.), *Handbook of research for educational communications and technology: A project of the Association for Educational Communications and Technology* (pp. 355-395). Mahwah, N.J.: L. Erlbaum Associates.

<b>Provide Multiple Means of Representation:</b>	
<b>Provide options for perception</b>	
Offer ways of customizing the display of information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desire2Learn offers customization of default font and font size (though this information is not explicit in the course materials).</li> <li>• Information is presented directly in audio format during face-to-face sessions, with some visual support using a projector. Some videos used are captioned, although not all.</li> <li>• Some graphics are presented to augment text, but there are no spoken descriptions or other audio cues in the course materials.</li> </ul>
Offer alternatives for auditory information	
Offer alternatives for visual information	
<b>Provide options for language, mathematical expressions, and symbols</b>	
Clarify vocabulary and symbols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most vocabulary is presented in context of what the faculty member is learning. Symbols are graphically represented and then described in common vocabulary.</li> <li>• Text is written in plain-text, and necessary jargon is explained for the most part.</li> <li>• No second-language options are available, although text-to-speech software should work with this system.</li> <li>• Video is used as a support for some concepts, but in other cases it is the only means of representation.</li> <li>• During face-to-face sessions, clarification can be made verbally at any time – no such option exists in the course materials.</li> </ul>
Clarify syntax and structure	
Support decoding of text, mathematical notation, and symbols	
Promote understanding across language	
Illustrate through multiple media	
<b>Provide options for comprehension</b>	
Activate or supply background knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reference is made to past experience with the old LMS rarely. During face-to-face sessions some reference is made to the old LMS or other known technologies (such as email and facebook).</li> <li>• No organizers are used, except that which is present in the course structure.</li> <li>• The course is structured as workflow dictates (ie: the steps they would take when working with their own course). For the most part, this means the structure is from least to most complicated.</li> <li>• No review or practice opportunities are present; as well there is a lack of organizers or checklists.</li> </ul>
Highlight patterns, critical features, big ideas, and relationships	
Guide information processing, visualization, and manipulation	
Maximize transfer and generalization	

<b>Provide Multiple Means for Action and Expression:</b>	
<b>Provide options for physical action</b>	
Vary the methods for response and navigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Material is meant to be accessed after a set time in a face-to-face training session and is not meant to be stand-alone. As such the faculty member is limited to when and how they can access the face-to-face communication.</li> <li>• Due to the material being meant for after-training support, access to the materials depends on the resources available to the instructor and is not controlled by CIEL.</li> </ul>
Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies	
<b>Provide options for expression and communication</b>	
Use multiple media for communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty member are encouraged to communicate with the trainer, other faculty member members and other members of the CIEL team during training sessions. There is not a dedicated space for the faculty member to communicate in the online training materials.</li> <li>• There are only two pieces of software used to communicate the information to faculty member – Desire2Learn and VIUTube. Some reference is made to the wiki, but it is not explicitly developed.</li> <li>• Some reference is made to common problems and solutions for faculty member members – most of this is trainer-directed.</li> </ul>
Use multiple tools for construction and composition	
Build fluencies with graduated levels of support for practice and performance	
<b>Provide options for executive functions</b>	
Guide appropriate goal setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some reference is made to going at an appropriate speed with new technologies during the face-to-face session. Attempts are made to provide faculty member with multiple means of support to build confidence and skills.</li> <li>• Most training is single-shot (ie: no follow up is done unless explicitly asked for) so progress over time is not monitored.</li> </ul>
Support planning and strategy development	
Facilitate managing information and resources	
Enhance capacity for monitoring progress	



<b>Provide Multiple Means for Engagement</b>	
<b>Provide options for recruiting interest</b>	
Optimize individual choice and autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty member is expected to follow the training as provided and no choice or autonomy is built-in. Some tailoring of examples is made for faculty member interest.</li> <li>• Faculty member feedback is taken into account when running sessions (responsive to questions and concerns).</li> <li>• Examples are taken as much as possible from real courses, and faculty members are encouraged to apply lessons to their contexts.</li> <li>• Effort is made to support faculty member questions and concerns, and treat all questions and concerns as important and legitimate.</li> </ul>
Optimize relevance, value, and authenticity	
Minimize threats and distractions	
<b>Provide options for sustaining effort and persistence</b>	
Heighten salience of goals and objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty member is encouraged to use as little or as much of the Desire2Learn software as they feel comfortable with.</li> <li>• When possible, faculty member is told what others in their departments are using the system to encourage the building of personal support networks.</li> <li>• Feedback is rarely given unless asked for. Verbal encouragement and help is offered during face-to-face training only.</li> </ul>
Vary demands and resources to optimize challenge	
Foster collaboration and community	
Increase mastery-oriented feedback	
<b>Provide options for self-regulation</b>	
Promote expectations and beliefs that optimize motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effort is made to connect faculty member with their designated support person (generally a Learning Technologies Support Specialist) so they can seek help when needed from CIEL if they do not want to ask their peers for support.</li> <li>• No long term coping strategies or reflection is facilitated.</li> </ul>
Facilitate personal coping skills and strategies	
Develop self-assessment and reflection	

# Rubric for Online Instruction

## Rationale

California State University, Chico's first strategic priority is to create and enhance high quality learning environments. Academic technologies, especially online or web-enhanced courses, have a significant role in the creation of those learning environments. The University's Strategic Priorities challenge faculty and staff to use academic technologies to create and enhance high quality learning environments in a demonstrable manner.

## What should a quality online course look like?

Chico's Rubric for Online Instruction offers a framework for addressing this question. Use of this rubric represents a developmental process for online course design and delivery, and provides a means for an instructor to self-assess course(s) based on University expectations. Furthermore, the rubric provides a means for supporting and recognizing a faculty member's effort in developing expertise in online instruction as part of our commitment to high quality learning environments.

## The Rubric for Online Instruction can be used in three ways.

1. As a course "self-evaluation" tool - advising instructors how to revise an existing course to the Rubric for Online Instruction.
2. As a way to design a new course for the online environment, following the rubric as a road map.
3. As a means for getting recognition for exemplary online instruction - going through a nomination/recognition process on campus. Faculty can receive recognition to go in their RTP file.

## Historical Perspective

The process by which faculty and staff came together to write this rubric is available for your review. This describes the history and work of a dedicated committee.

The Rubric for Online Instruction initiated the **Exemplary Online Instruction Awards**, a recognition made public at the annual **CELT Conference** at CSU, Chico. The website demonstrates examples of exemplary online instruction and is available for viewing.

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## Category 1

### Learner Support & Resources

#### Baseline

- A. Course contains limited information for online learner support and links to campus resources.
- B. Course provides limited course-specific resources, limited contact information for instructor, department, and/or program.
- C. Course offers limited resources supporting course content and different learning abilities.

#### Effective

- A. Course contains adequate information for online learner support and links to campus resources.
- B. Course provides adequate course-specific resources, some contact information for instructor, department, and program.
- C. Course offers access to adequate resources supporting course content and different learning abilities.

#### Exemplary

- A. Course contains extensive information about being an online learner and links to campus resources.
- B. Course provides a variety of course-specific resources, contact information for instructor, department, and program.
- C. Course offers access to a wide range of resources supporting course content and different learning abilities.

## Category 2

### Online Organization & Design

#### Baseline

- A. Much of the course is under construction, with some key components identified such as the syllabus.
- B. Course syllabus is unclear about what is expected of students.
- C. Aesthetic design does not present and communicate course information clearly.
- D. Web pages are inconsistent both visually and functionally.
- E. Accessibility issues are not addressed. (Including: sight, mobility, hearing, cognition, ESL, and technical.)

#### Effective

- A. Course is organized and navigable. Students can understand the key components and structure of the course.
- B. Course syllabus identifies and delineates the role the online environment will play in the course.
- C. Aesthetic design presents and communicates course information clearly.
- D. Most web pages are visually and functionally consistent.
- E. Accessibility issues are briefly addressed. (Including: sight, mobility, hearing, cognition, ESL, and technical.)

#### Exemplary

- A. Course is well-organized and easy to navigate. Students can clearly understand all components and structure of the course.
- B. Course syllabus identifies and clearly delineates the role the online environment will play in the total course.
- C. Aesthetic design presents and communicates course information clearly throughout the course.
- D. All web pages are visually and functionally consistent throughout the course.
- E. Accessibility issues are addressed throughout the course. (Including: sight, mobility, hearing, cognition, ESL, and technical.)

### Category 3

### Instructional Design & Delivery

#### Baseline

- A. Course offers limited opportunity for interaction and communication student to student, student to instructor and student to content.
- B. Course goals are not clearly defined and do not align to learning objectives.
- C. Learning objectives are vague or incomplete and learning activities are absent or unclear.
- D. Course provides limited visual, textual, kinesthetic and/or auditory activities to enhance student learning and accessibility.
- E. Course provides limited activities to help students develop critical thinking and/or problem-solving skills.

#### Effective

- A. Course offers adequate opportunities for interaction and communication student to student, student to instructor and student to content.
- B. Course goals are adequately defined but may not align to learning objectives.
- C. Learning objectives are identified and learning activities are implied.
- D. Course provides adequate visual, textual, kinesthetic and/or auditory activities to enhance student learning and accessibility.
- E. Course provides adequate activities to help students develop critical thinking and/or problem-solving skills.

#### Exemplary

- A. Course offers ample opportunities for interaction and communication student to student, student to instructor and student to content.
- B. Course goals are clearly defined and aligned to learning objectives.
- C. Learning objectives are identified and learning activities are clearly integrated.
- D. Course provides multiple visual, textual, kinesthetic and/or auditory activities to enhance student learning and accessibility.
- E. Course provides multiple activities that help students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

## Category 4

### Assessment & Evaluation of Student Learning

#### Baseline

- A. Course has limited activities to assess student readiness for course content and mode of delivery.
- B. Learning objectives, instructional and assessment activities are not aligned.
- C. Assessment strategies are limited in use to measure content knowledge, attitudes, and skills.
- D. Opportunities for students to receive feedback about their own performance are infrequent and sporadic.
- E. Students' self-assessments and/or peer feedback opportunities are limited.

#### Effective

- A. Course has adequate activities to assess student readiness for course content and mode of delivery.
- B. Learning objectives, instructional and assessment activities are adequately aligned.
- C. Ongoing strategies are used to measure content knowledge, attitudes, and skills.
- D. Opportunities for students to receive feedback about their own performance are provided.
- E. Students' self-assessments and/or peer feedback opportunities exist.

#### Exemplary

- A. Course has multiple timely and appropriate activities to assess student readiness for course content and mode of delivery.
- B. Learning objectives, instructional and assessment activities are closely aligned.
- C. Ongoing multiple assessment strategies are used to measure content knowledge, attitudes, and skills.
- D. Regular feedback about student performance is provided in a timely manner throughout the course.
- E. Students' self-assessments and peer feedback opportunities exist throughout the course.

## Category 5

### Innovative Teaching with Technology

#### Baseline

#### Effective

#### Exemplary

A. Course uses limited technology tools to facilitate communication and learning.

A. Course uses adequate technology tools to facilitate communication and learning.

A. Course uses a variety of technology tools to appropriately facilitate communication and learning.

B. New teaching methods applied to enhance student learning are limited.

B. New teaching methods are adequately applied to innovatively enhance student learning.

B. New teaching methods are applied and innovatively enhance student learning, and interactively engage students.

C. There are limited multimedia elements and/or learning objects for accommodating different learning styles.

C. Multimedia elements and/or learning objects are used and are relevant to accommodate different learning styles.

C. A variety of multimedia elements and/or learning objects are used and are relevant to accommodate different learning styles throughout the course.

D. Course uses Internet access and engages students in the learning process in a very limited way.

D. Course optimizes Internet access and effectively engages students in the learning process.

D. Course optimizes Internet access and effectively engages students in the learning process in a variety of ways throughout the course.

## Category 6

### Faculty Use of Student Feedback

#### Baseline

- A. Instructor offers limited opportunity for students to give feedback to faculty on course content.
- B. Instructor offers limited opportunity for students to give feedback on ease of online technology and accessibility of course.
- C. Instructor uses student feedback to help plan instruction and assessment of student learning for the next semester in a limited way.

#### Effective

- A. Instructor offers adequate opportunities for students to give feedback on course content.
- B. Instructor offers adequate opportunities for students to give feedback on ease of online technology and accessibility of course.
- C. Instructor requests and uses student feedback a couple times during the semester to help plan instruction and assessment of student learning for the rest of the semester.

#### Exemplary

- A. Instructor offers multiple opportunities for students to give feedback on course content.
- B. Instructor offers multiple opportunities for students to give feedback on ease of online technology and accessibility of course.
- C. Instructor uses formal and informal student feedback in an ongoing basis to help plan instruction and assessment of student learning throughout the semester.