Communicating Instructional Design with Faculty

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The purpose of this chapter is to provide tools and resources for structuring effective communications between instructional designers and faculty members in different settings where faculty engage in educational development. The chapter offers scripts for suggested communications, application exercises, and links to sample tools across stages of the ADDIE (Analyze, Develop, Design, Implement, Evaluate) instructional design (ID) process. The aim is to promote constructive and creative instructional design communications with faculty members in a variety of interactions.

Introduction

Case Scenario: Jack is an instructional designer meeting with a faculty member, Dr. Stem, who is new to online teaching. Jack receives a biochemistry syllabus for an existing face-to-face course and observes that there are no learning objectives. Each week is a bulleted list of lecture topics and there is a single final exam assessment. How should Jack begin to structure the conversations with Dr. Stem regarding instructional design?

If you already work as an instructional designer, Jack's scenario may be very familiar. Communication between instructional designers (IDs) and faculty often begins with a knowledge gap about where the course is today and each person's expectations for the final course product. The instructional design process is a communication intensive process requiring continuous collaboration between IDs and faculty members who hold subject matter expertise (Intentional Futures, 2016). Communications on route to a completed course may be fruitful or possess challenges that include resistance, non-participation or a lack of follow-up, or general difficulty embracing technology (Belt & Lowenthal, 2020). However, specifics for fostering a collaborative relationship between IDs and faculty are not well-defined (Chen & Carliner, 2020).

Three common challenges that IDs face are lack of faculty buy-in, working with subject matter experts, and faculty awareness or misconceptions of an IDs role (Intentional Futures, 2016; Richardson et al., 2019). Differences in understanding educational terminology or practices, like writing learning objectives, may derail communications. Researchers suggest that interpersonal communication skills such as building trust and rapport, active listening, asking effective questions, open-mindedness, and developing a common vocabulary are essential for fostering successful positive working relationships between faculty and IDs (Chen & Carliner, 2020; Richardson et al., 2019). Experienced IDs report that interpersonal and communication skills like listening, understanding, and providing clear feedback are the most frequently applied skills for fruitful collaborations (Ferguson, 2018).

Generally, research on instructional design tends to take the viewpoint of the ID and focuses less on the faculty perspective (Chen & Carliner, 2020; Richardson et al., 2019). In this chapter, we intentionally take a faculty perspective,

describing the spaces where faculty commonly learn about teaching, in an effort to show how these spaces provide opportunities to facilitate communications between the ID and faculty. The purpose of this chapter is to provide tools and suggestions for structuring effective communications with faculty members in different settings where faculty learn and across stages of the instructional design (ID) process. In this respect, we hope that the application questions and communication tools can be useful for IDs, in order to overcome challenges of faculty buy-in, working with subject matter experts, and faculty learning about the ID role.

Contexts for Learning about Instructional Design

Opportunities for instructional design communications may emerge anytime faculty are learning about teaching – a dimension of educational or faculty development. Faculty development practice and research emerged in the 1970s and since then, many approaches to faculty development for instructional or teaching improvement have been implemented and studied. A national survey of directors of centers for teaching and learning revealed that preparing faculty for teaching online and distance education ranked fourth among all services offered (Beach et al., 2016). Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic and disruption to face-to-face learning worldwide has increased the demand for faculty to understand effective instructional design as never before.

The next sections describe four common approaches used to prepare faculty for teaching online and in use by many institutions (Beach et al., 2016). Common faculty development approaches range from individual-level interactions to group-level collaborations including: 1) experience-based learning, 2) workshops, 3) faculty learning communities, and 4) peer-supported learning. To help IDs new to the field of instructional design effectively achieve the desired outcome of their interactions with faculty, we provide a brief description of the faculty development approach, an explanation of how IDs might communicate in each scenario, and a prompt for use by IDs.

The Appendix details suggest how one-one communication between IDs and faculty typically occurs in our experience with faculty members. The first column (i.e., from top-to-bottom) addresses aspects of communication (e.g., purpose, approach, frequency, prose/prompts, and intended/expected outcomes) that are pertinent for fruitful collaborations between IDs and faculty. We contend different aspects of communication will evolve as a course design project evolves from start to finish. To capture this evolution, we organize prompts by stages of the ADDIE model (Analyze, Develop, Design, Implement, Evaluate; Branch, 2009) so that given a stage of development, IDs have a useful reference for structuring conversations. An ID may find the best approach to using this matrix is by reading each column from top-to-bottom, left-to-right.

Finally, we refer to Jack's and Dr. Stem's scenario as a basis for practice application exercises throughout the chapter. The communication strategies in the Appendix at the end of the chapter are sourced from experienced instructional designers, literature, and our own practice working with faculty in a center for teaching and learning. These strategies reflect practices across disciplines and subject matter, at community colleges, traditional four-year, and graduate and professional universities.

Communicating with Individual Faculty

Communicating about instructional design may begin as a one-to-one conversation between an ID and a faculty member, who may be experienced or inexperienced with the instructional design process. In this approach, faculty learn about instructional design by engaging in the process overtime. Experiential learning focuses on how individuals learn directly by doing, reflecting on their experience, and experimenting with new learning (Kolb & Fry, 1974). Many communications between faculty and IDs occur in this experiential learning context because faculty members have unique prior experiences, educational knowledge, and comfort with teaching online.

Generally, experiential learning requires two conditions to be met for the experience to result in learning. These conditions are activation of prior knowledge and the connection of prior knowledge to the current experience (Bransford et al., 2000; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). At this stage, communications should aim to establish rapport and surface the

faculty member's prior knowledge about instructional design. The Appendix details how one-one communication between IDs and faculty can occur and change in each phase of the ADDIE model. For example, IDs may ask the faculty member to outline the focal or primary objectives of the course. This step eases faculty into the practice of writing learning objectives or provides information about faculty skill level that the ID can use to coach the faculty member on elements of a well-written behavioral objective. Through additional conversations, the faculty member can be prompted to reflect on the completed work and revise the objectives where needed. In the case of a more experienced faculty member who has previously worked with an ID or designed an online course, rapport and a shared vocabulary may exist, so communications are more easily facilitated. By establishing a mutual understanding of the faculty member's existing knowledge with basic instructional design practices, the next stage of communication will involve helping faculty knowledge to engage in the next stage of applying instructional design to a course.

Next, IDs may move into the use of templates like a storyboard, for example, the UMB FCTL Storyboard or the Table-Style Course Design Template, which are tools for both the faculty members and the ID to begin course development work helping to organize design tasks for faculty.

Application Exercise 1

Given the status of the biochemistry syllabus that Jack received, what questions could Jack ask Dr. Stem to establish rapport and evaluate the faculty member's prior knowledge about course design? Jot down a few questions you would want to ask Dr. Stem to get started with building rapport. After you write your questions, refer to the prompts in the first column in the Appendix) to check your ideas. Also, refer to the linked web tools for practice developing a set of course objectives with a faculty member.

Faculty Peer-Supported Learning

Peer learning is a broad term that encompasses those experiences where peers help one another to learn new knowledge or skills (O'Donnell, 2006). Faculty peers play a significant role in faculty learning and should not be overlooked in communications about instructional design. A highly structured process like ADDIE does not fit with peer learning, but peer learning is included because of its significance to faculty learning. Peers are an excellent source to create comfort with and knowledge about instructional design.

In a recent survey of health professions on our graduate campus, almost half of faculty respondents (n=476) reported learning about educational technology or virtual teaching from a peer. Peer learning occurs in a faculty member's workplace, classroom, or clinical teaching environment. Peer learning may be structured, as in the case of peer observations of teaching, to follow a cycle of observation, feedback, and reflection (Chism, 2007; Martin & Double, 1998; Webb & McEnerney, 1995); however, peer learning via teaching observation is less common in online settings. So how might IDs communicate through peer learning networks about instructional design?

We propose two ways IDs can communicate with faculty and their network of peers: 1) collect data on faculty instructional design experiences through periodic evaluations, and 2) making direct requests for referrals to other faculty. At many colleges and universities, evaluation of instructional design projects occurs via evaluation surveys, semi-structured feedback, or focus groups. The results of these evaluations can be shared on a website or within the institution. IDs may choose to share data directly with new faculty members, especially if data pertains to services the ID provided.

IDs can also build networks of faculty with anyone they have engaged with in a constructive instructional design process. IDs may ask faculty members directly if they may be used as a reference or referral. When establishing work relationships with new faculty members, IDs can connect new instructional design clients to established instructional design clients – who may represent their experiences to peers. Faculty members experiencing the instructional design process serve as champions for the ID by sharing experiences and challenges to break down barriers to the process of engagement. The challenge for IDs is determining the best ways to network and communicate their expertise with faculty in this informal learning approach.

Communicating in Groups

An extension of both experiential learning and peer learning is faculty learning communities (FLCs). FLCs are small groups of faculty members that may be cohort-based (i.e. same rank or hiring date) or interest-based (e.g. online teaching or assessment)and meet regularly to advance their knowledge on educational topics (Cox, 2004). FLCs typically meet during an academic year and may be peer-led or facilitated by teaching and learning staff (see https://edtechbooks.org/-ufsZ or https://edtechbooks.org/-qUFa .

FLCs focused on online teaching offer a platform for the ID to communicate with faculty either formally or informally. For example, an ID may educate faculty on the instructional design process or facilitate educational technology demonstrations. Informally, the ID may attend as a subject-matter expert to answer questions about the design of assessments in a learning management system.

IDs may also collaborate with faculty on specific scholarly projects involving online educational tools. IDs have expertise using features of polling tools or audio/ video recording and annotation tools like Screencast-O-Matic (see https://screencast-o-matic.com/) or VoiceThread (see https://voicethread.com/). This specific knowledge is valuable in the design, conduct, and analysis of the impact of projects involving educational technology interventions. Depending on the topical focus of the FLC and the purpose of an ID's participation, as consultant, subject-matter expert, or scholarly partner, the communications approach of the ID will vary.

Application Exercise 2

Jack incorporates a game-based tool in Dr. Stem's biochemistry course to engage the students. Dr. Stem reports he is not technologically savvy. Jack invites Dr. Stem to join an FLC where online teaching faculty share their experiences with similar tools. Brainstorm a few approaches to working with Dr. Stem on learning to use the game-based tool. After writing some ideas, refer to the prompts in the Appendix for the Development stage, to check your ideas.

Application Exercise 3

Refer to the linked web tools Screencast-O-Matic (see https://screencast-o-matic.com/) or VoiceThread (see https://voicethread.com/). Outline a step-by-step communication guide to help faculty learn how to use the tool. Share work with a colleague or peer for feedback.

Communicating in Workshops

The development and facilitation of workshops on instructional design is a prime opportunity to communicate with faculty about instructional design. Often, faculty want to learn about educational technology without a sound pedagogical justification for how it helps to achieve student learning outcomes in a course (Zhu et al., 2011). Communications in planning or developing workshops help the ID to target the pedagogical goals of a department or group of faculty members and then coach them on the selection of the specific tool to achieve that goal. Workshops, or short educational sessions, comprise nearly 60% of all faculty development efforts across higher education institution types. Sessions range in duration from one to three hours and are often customized to discipline-specific needs (Beach et al., 2016). For example, Chairs holders of a biochemistry department may want a workshop on ideas for structuring activities that promote student engagement in an online course whereas an English department may be more concerned with approaches to assessing writing with rubrics.

IDs may help plan or run the workshop which begins with the individual consultation process, such as, clarifying the goals and purpose of the workshop. IDs may also conduct a pre-workshop needs assessment via a survey (see Sample Teacher Professional Development Survey, and Sample Workshop Evaluation Forms) to further analyze workshop topic needs for instructional design education in the broader institution. From this point, IDs create workshop objectives, develop a segment where the skill is modeled, and guide faculty in the use of any new skills for their teaching. For example, conducting a workshop on using Flipgrid (see https://info.flipgrid.com/) in the online classroom. A workshop

includes a demonstration of how instructors can use Flipgrid to host asynchronous video discussions with students online. In the practice segment, workshop participants practice creating a one-minute multimedia file of a topic in their course and then comment on another participants' files by video recording.

Workshops are a dominant approach to faculty learning and ideal space for IDs to lead communication with faculty regarding a broad range of skills from the introduction of the instructional design process to specific educational technology demonstrations with hands-on practice.

Application Exercise 4

After attending a workshop on Flipgrid, what could Jack do to follow up with Dr. Stem on the activities in which he can incorporate Flipgrid in his course? Brainstorm a couple of questions to ask Dr. Stem about the workshop and how he will integrate what he learned into his course. After writing down some ideas, refer to the prompts in Table 1 (see Appendix), the Implementation stage, to check your ideas.

This section of the chapter provided background on environments where faculty are likely to learn about instructional design for online teaching including one-on-one interactions, communicating in groups, and workshop settings. The next section discusses overcoming communication barriers.

Overcoming Communication Barriers

Three common challenges that IDs face are lack of faculty buy-in, working with subject matter experts, and faculty awareness or misconceptions of an IDs role (Intentional Futures, 2016; Richardson et al., 2019). Forward motion in any design project can be stalled due to faculty resistance, non-participation or follow-up, and general difficulty embracing technology (Belt & Lowenthal, 2020). How might IDs handle resistance and non-participation?

First, it is important to recognize that in learning new technologies or adapting new ways of teaching, IDs will often meet resistance or apprehension from inexperienced faculty. As educators, instructional designers, and faculty members, we observe many kinds of behaviors that suggest difficulty in the instructional design communications process. While not an exhaustive list, the behaviors may include one or more of the following: misunderstanding the online instructional process, miscalculation of effort needed to design a full course, avoidance of the design work process, or failure to follow-up. Misunderstanding the online instructional design process is when the faculty member believes that there is a direct transference of in-person course content to the online space with synchronous lectures, or scheduled class meeting times. Miscalculation occurs when the faculty member does not initially understand that the entire course requires planning and building in advance of its start date. This misunderstanding can derail a project because the faculty member is not expecting to spend the sustained time needed to build and plan the majority of the course. IDs need to clearly and consistently communicate expectations, time, and effort requirements during the individual meeting stage, early in the engagement process, and during the development stage. Ineffective communication including unclear expectations hinders the faculty-ID working relationship (Chen & Carliner, 2020).

Avoidance and procrastination may also be encountered in the design process. Once work begins, faculty may avoid meetings and calls with the ID. This can be because they feel overwhelmed or are not sure where to start. The ID's role here is critical in assessing where help is needed, being gently persistent, communicating regularly, and chunking tasks, so that faculty experience success. Small successes help the development process move forward.

Finally, IDs may support faculty that teach in different disciplines and modalities (e.g., online, blended) to build a variety of courses. Thus, exposure to courses across disciplines, coupled with educational technology expertise, position IDs as a nexus for instructional support with and among faculty. IDs can leverage this broad experience to overcome faculty challenges and barriers to the instructional design experience.

Application Exercise 5

Jill is a new ID and excited to begin working on her first ID project. She starts designing a course without having an initial meeting with the faculty member to delineate faculty and ID roles and responsibilities. How might this misstep in communication affect the design process? Reflect on your experience with faculty or interview an experienced instructional designer.

Examples in Practice

The communication matrices (see Appendix, Table 1) are framed by the phases of the ADDIE model (i.e., analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation), where applicable. We reference three faculty learning approaches with a concrete deliverable (e.g., a course, collaborative scholarship, or a MOOC), where the ADDIE process is applicable. Within the phases of the ADDIE model, the communication matrices are organized by their purpose, frequency, type of communication, prompts, and expected outcome. We hope that IDs will find this a robust communication reference for fostering effective communications with faculty and leading to smooth instructional design projects.

Implications for Instructional Designers

Our aim in this chapter was to provide resources to IDs for immediate use in communicating with faculty. Communicating instructional design goals with faculty is effective when it includes multiple methods including face-to-face meetings, collaborative tools, team meetings, and frequent status updates. It is also important to have a central website to use for communicating and accessing materials electronically and for submission of consultation forms and support content (see UMB FCTL Consultations and Sample Consultation Request Form).

We hope the communication matrix offered in this chapter (see Appendix) with associated prompts and the links to templates will help IDs establish new relationships with faculty members in a variety of settings. Embedded within this chapter are templates, including initial intake and consultation meeting templates, and instructional design project development tools, such as storyboards and project plan charts. The examples, tools, templates, and the communications matrix included in this chapter have been tested to support constructive and creative instructional design communications with faculty members across settings, project types and faculty development approaches. While applying these to communications resources for instructional design with faculty, we hope they also lead to smooth and fruitful collaborations across all skill levels and types of institutions.

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Appendix

Table 1

Communication Matrix Resources for Course Design, by Instructional Design Phase

	Analysis	Design	Development	Implementation	Evaluation
Purpose	Build rapport, assess faculty member's prior knowledge and experience level	Clarify role of the ID and faculty member; negotiate deadlines and deliverables	Manage development progress, monitor milestones attainment or address challenges	Pre-launch to review, acclimate faculty member to course tools, and test functionality	Collect feedback on course design and performance.
Approach	Initial meeting between ID and faculty	Regular meetings with the faculty member	Regular meetings with the faculty member; Follow up with non-responsive faculty	Regular meetings with the faculty member	Debriefing meeting; Planning meeting for revisions or enhancements.
Frequency	Four to six months prior to course start	Regular intervals, driven by course implementation	Regular intervals, driven by course implementation	Weekly or bi-weekly check-ins	Mid-point and end of course
Prompts	Thank you for meeting with me today. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss transitioning your course online. First, I would like to learn more about you and your course. How long have you been teaching this course? Have you taught online before or been a student in an online course? Do you have experience working with an instructional designer? Do you have any concerns putting	As we begin our work on this project, we will spend time outlining the course's goals, objectives, assessments, and activities. Now that I understand your availability (comfort, ideas) with creating an online course, I suggest we meet bi-weekly for an hour, until the month before course launch. Will this frequency work for you? We will develop a project plan of expected milestones, so that we can be sure to hit our start date target.	Your module objectives are aligned to what you assess in the course. For module 5, though, I don't see assessments. How can I help with this module? What assessments are you planning? Do you want to reschedule our next meeting so you have time to work on those? If you are hitting some roadblocks maybe we can brainstorm some ideas?	Do you have any changes you would like me to make? How comfortable are you with the functions of the learning management system/tools? What areas of the course would you like me to review with you or change?	While we made notes about issues during the course and some edits that needed to be made, now that the course has completed, what aspects of the course went well? What did not go well and needs to be improved? Have you reviewed your course evaluations? When would you like to get together to plan any revisions or changes to the course while it is still fresh?

	Analysis	Design	Development	Implementation	Evaluation
	this course online?				
Outcome	Project commitment between ID and Faculty member	Project development planning and milestones established	Completion of module specific material. Address roadblocks	Course testing and final changes	Enhanced course design or content changes for re-offering of course.