

OLL K-12 INTERVIEW PROTOCOL—2007-2008

INSTRUCTORS OF ONLINE APPLICATIONS

This protocol is for use with instructors. Ideally, you will have sixty minutes for this interview.

Introduction

The following is a suggested introduction. When you begin the interview, make these points, but use your own words for a more personal introduction.

You may know that we are working on a project sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education to look at characteristics associated with prevalent types of online learning and identify promising practices that are associated with improved student achievement. One of our priorities in this project is to learn more from you about *the features and capabilities of your online offering, as well as how the application is implemented and administered at your school.*

We want you to know that this project does not evaluate you or your school; we are looking to learn from your experiences to identify promising practices in online learning.

Before we start, I need to have you review and sign this consent form. [AFTER THE RESPONDENT REVIEWS CONSENT FORM] Do you have any questions before we get started?

Curriculum Design

Features of curriculum (subject matter / grade level, synch / asynch, pedagogical approach, strategies for maximizing student access, technologies used, hardware / bandwidth)

1. What is the goal of this online program (curriculum goals, etc.)?
2. Please describe the curriculum design features of this online program. (e.g., synchronous v asynchronous; technologies used).
3. What assumptions were made in the design of this online program? What did reality show in this regard?
4. What features of the curriculum are unique in this program, as compared with programs with similar educational intention? Why?
5. What makes this online program successful, from the curriculum design perspective?
6. If you were to redesign this online program, what features of the curriculum would you change? Why?

7. What means (e.g., forum, email, chat, voice chat, video conferences...) are used to support online interaction between facilitators, students, and/or facilitators and students? What are the facilitator and student responses to these forms of communication (do students like chatting, video, etc.)? What do you think is the right combination of these tools?

Type / frequency of interaction between facilitators, facilitators and students, and among students

8. Please describe the type / frequency of interaction between facilitators, facilitators and students, and among students in this online program.
9. Does the program promote face-to-face interaction between facilitators, students, and / or facilitators and students? When? Why? Does it add value to the program? If there is no face-to-face interaction, why not? Is there any advantage or disadvantage to a purely online model?
10. If there is some kind of blending (online / onsite) from the interaction perspective, how is that mix? Does it add value to the program?

Curriculum Development Process

11. What is the structure of a typical curriculum module, or unit, of this online program? How many weeks does it take to a participant to study a typical module?
12. Have you been involved in curriculum development or in curriculum evaluation processes for this online program? What was your role? Did you find that your ideas were taken into consideration?

Financing Model

13. Are there enough instructors to support all who want to participate? Did you experience any barriers or obstacles that would limit the scalability or sustainability of this program?

Quality Assurances

14. Prior to teaching a course, is there a way for you to review the curriculum and provide feedback? Please describe.
15. How did your site select/evaluate this and other online programs? After teaching a course, is there a way for you to provide feedback to the developers to improve the program? Please describe. Do you have the means of incorporating ongoing student feedback into the course yourself?
16. Is your performance as an instructor evaluated? Are there clear quality criteria for you to meet?

17. How does your course evaluate students in terms of: participation, completion & retention rates, formative and / or final assessments, learning outcomes, transfer of learning to classroom instruction? What are the participation measurements / requirements for this course? Are there a minimal number of logins / participations required for completion (e.g., number of postings, chats, emails)? What types of learning assessments do you use (e.g., quizzes, tests, other)?

Instructor Recruitment and Pay

18. Please describe how instructors are selected.
19. Are instructors paid or otherwise compensated?
20. Are there specific knowledge, skills, and competencies that candidate instructors must have in order to be selected?
21. Please describe the content, length, and structure of the training instructors receive.
22. How many instructors, facilitators, moderators, and other staff conduct a typical course? How do you interact with other members of the teaching team? How often? Using what means? Is there a common area for sharing?

Enrollment Process and Policies

23. Who is eligible for this online program? Are these criteria a good filter to get the right students?
24. How do students find out about the online program? How do students enroll in the online program? Do students decide to enroll themselves or are they selected or nominated? Do students enroll as individuals, in teams, or either?
25. Describe the demographics of the current participant cohort (e.g., gender, race, geographic location, grade, subject, level of experience with technology, etc.) What major challenges for the effective implementation of the project relate to the demographics? Why?
26. What is the maximum number of students per section in this online program? What is the recommended instructor: student ratio? If less / more than the ideal ratio of students are enrolled, how does this affect the online program?

User Services and Support

27. What types of academic support do you offer students? Who provides these supports (e.g., instructor, online facilitator, tutors)? How are the supports provided (e.g., via email, phone, in person, through the whole group interaction, in real time)?
28. What types of technical support, if any, do you provide to the students? Is it worth assuming this role? What suggestions do you have to improve technical support services?

29. Do you offer any additional supports or encouragements to students (e.g., financial incentives, scholarships)?

Facilitators/Barriers

30. Is access to technology and / or technology fluency by participating teachers considered a facilitator or a barrier in the implementation of this online program? Why?
31. Are there time requirements (e.g., X number of hours per week), interaction requirements (e.g., online / onsite synchronous activities), technology requirements (e.g., the use of X browser or software) for effective participation in the online program? Which requirements facilitate the process and which become barriers for participation?
32. What is the most significant barrier for participation in this program? What could be done in order to overcome it?
33. Does the program promote / give support to virtual study groups, online learning communities or other networking strategies for overcoming participation barriers from the part of participants?
34. What role do online tutors / facilitators play concerning barriers for student participation?
35. What barriers may online tutors have in their facilitation role? Comment on situational, technological, pedagogical, or other types of barriers for facilitating online learning by the students.

Strengths and Weaknesses

36. What are the benefits, if any, of taking this online program for students? For instructors? For the site?
37. What kind of changes in student learning have you seen with this online program?
38. What are some of the costs or drawbacks of taking this online program for students? For Instructors? For the site?
39. What are some challenges you have encountered while teaching this online program?
40. How would you compare the quality, flexibility, effectiveness of the online program with similar face-to-face programs?

Instructor Background and Characteristics

41. What do you do when not teaching this online program? How does this online program fit in with your other occupation?
42. What preparation / training / development do you have to teach / facilitate this online program? What is your content area expertise? What is your technical expertise? Have you taught this online program before (offline)?

43. How much time do you spend preparing for this online program? How much time do you spend weekly on online program delivery / interaction with students? If you have taught this online program off line, how much more or less work is required for this work online?
44. What do you think are the characteristics of a good online instructor? How would you rate yourself on those categories?

Closing

45. Is there anything else you would like to add about your school's efforts to implement this online learning application, or about your experiences as an instructor?

Before you leave, be sure to ask for data on student outcomes and for copies of documentation or reports on student achievement.