**Instructional Design Project:**

**Online Orientation for New UNG|online Students**

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**Executive Summary**

The University of North Georgia has experienced exponential student enrollment growth over the past four years. Online student enrollment has increased, but the amount of student support services offered to online students has not grown at the same rate. Specifically, new students who are attending courses on a physical campus are required to attend a robust orientation program that introduces them to the college academic environment, assists them with completing final enrollment activities, and provides strategies to being a successful college student. New students who are completing their courses online currently have no orientation to the online learning environment or learning management system (LMS).

UNG’s success and retention rates are some of the highest in the state of Georgia, but there is room for improvement, especially for new online students. UNG|Online has not adequately prepared new students for success online. To serve this population, we surveyed online faculty and new online students to determine areas of need. We developed an orientation to serve new online learners. The instruction will take place online, in the LMS to facilitate student practice in their new environment. Students who complete the orientation will be able to successfully complete the enrollment process, demonstrate navigation and use the LMS, and identify behaviors of successful online learners. We have completed evaluations of the instruction using subject-matter experts, small groups, and a field test. Based on those evaluations, the instruction was revised and has been released to new Summer 2017 UNG|online students.

**Needs Analysis**

*Background of the Problem*

UNG|Online is a collection of online courses that serve UNG students. UNG was formed through the consolidation of North Georgia College & State University and Gainesville State College in 2013. UNG is comprised of five physical campuses, and the online ‘campus’ UNG|Online. UNG|Online provides service to students from all five campuses, as well as students learning completely at a distance. About 8,000 students complete at least one online course each year at UNG, which is part of the University System of Georgia (USG). The USG is comprised of 28 public institutions with a total enrollment of over 318,027 students.

As UNG’s physical campus locations reach capacity, the demand to expand course offerings online has increased. Online student enrollment has grown exponentially, while online student services, such as orientation, have not. Face-to-face students are required to complete an on-campus orientation in order to register for courses. Online students have not been required to complete any type of orientation before registering for courses.

New online students are not as successful as continuing online students, or new face-to-face students. New online students request a withdrawal from their first online course more frequently than new face-to-face, or continuing students. This increased withdrawal rate for new online students holds true even for students who possess the same qualifications or similar academic backgrounds (high school GPA and standardized test scores). The rate of withdrawal for continuing online students is not as high as the rate of withdrawal for new students.

New online students are expected to persist at a rate of 77%, while new face-to-face students are expected to persist at a rate of 81% (based on predictive modeling using past semester Banner SIS grade reports). Continuing online students are expected to persist at a rate of 79%, and continuing face-to-face students are expected to persist at a rate of 84%.

*Problem Statement*

UNG|Online does not prepare new online students to successfully complete their first online course.

*Data and Analysis*

The UNG Student Information System (SIS) Banner was used to determine if new online students request to withdraw at higher rates than their peers. Banner reports provide data that allow us to distinguish 1) new students from continuing students, 2) online students from face-to-face, 3) end-of-course grades, success rates, and persistence rates. Student completion rates (the percentage of students who successfully completed their first online course with a grade of A, B, or C) informed recognition of the problem.

We surveyed 5 UNG|Online instructors about the most common problems that they noticed in new online students. We asked over 50 students to complete a survey about their experience as a first-time online student, specifically seeking information about where they ‘hit roadblocks’ and did not know how to proceed as new students. Those survey responses from online instructors and first-time students directed our focus throughout this project.

*Rationale for Need of Instruction*

New online students withdraw at a higher rate than continuing or face-to-face students, and persist at a lower rate, because they are not yet experienced with the tools and processes that are required to be a successful online student. Students will not be able to complete their first online course if they do not complete all enrollment requirements, understand the online environment (LMS), and choose to exhibit behaviors of successful online learners.

New online students need a ‘path to follow’ that leads them through completing enrollment and getting started as an online student. There are a number of systems that a new student must learn to use quickly (Banner, Office365, College Scheduler, and most importantly, the LMS). Each of these programs is powerful and user-friendly, but before the online orientation, there was not a complete list (with a completion point to let students know that they have done everything they needed to do), or a tutorial provided to support students as they learn their new environment.

*Goal Statement*

New students who complete the Online Orientation for New UNG|Online Students will be able to complete all UNG enrollment requirements, demonstrate navigation and use the LMS, and identify behaviors of successful online students.

**Learner Analysis**

*Entry Behaviors*

Students who register for online courses should be able to demonstrate basic computer skills. Basic computer skills include use of:

* Hardware including CPU, monitor, computer mouse, keyboard, webcam, microphone/speakers
* Operating system (Window/Mac OS)
* Microsoft Office Suite (or similar software for word processing, spreadsheet creation/management, creating presentations, databases, etc.)
* World Wide Web browsers and search engines
* Basic networking connections and troubleshooting

*Motivation and General Learning Preferences*

Online students often face a number of challenges which prevent them from visiting a physical campus. The average age of an online learner at UNG is 27, and the online population is predominantly female. These students choose to take online courses to complete their degrees while working full-time, raising a family, or meeting other commitments that require them to work asynchronously from their home computers.

**Context Analysis**

Learners complete instruction asynchronously, and should have the ability to do so from their personal computers at home, provided that they have high-speed internet access. Students may also utilize a university computer lab, but UNG|online recommends that students have access to their own equipment (and do not rely on public libraries or computer labs to complete online coursework). Students are invited to begin the orientation via a personal email message that is sent to their person (non-UNG) email address. Instruction begins on a university web page (www.ung.edu/ungonline), and concludes within the LMS (eLearning). The first phase of instruction gives students the information needed to activate their UNG account, and access the LMS. Once students enter the LMS, the course is delivered through online modules created with Storyline 2 by Articulate. This environment allows students to view media, hear audio, and receive feedback through quizzes and interactive activities throughout the course. The online orientation course will have the same structure as a typical UNG|Online course, so the students will complete these objectives in the online learning environment in which they will be completing future academic courses.

**Course Design**

Through completion of the Needs Analysis, we determined that new online students need to receive additional support prior to beginning their first online course in order to be a successful UNG|Online student. To meet this need, we have developed instruction titled “Online Orientation for New UNG|Online Students” that includes three basic units which focus on the most common issues reported in the Needs Analysis surveys. Those three issues are completing the enrollment process, ‘learning the ropes’ of the LMS, and practicing the behaviors of successful, independent, online learners.

*Course Objective*

New online students who complete online orientation will be able to complete all UNG enrollment requirements, navigate the learning management system, and identify behaviors of successful online students.

See Figure 1 for the Course Instructional Curriculum Map (ICM).

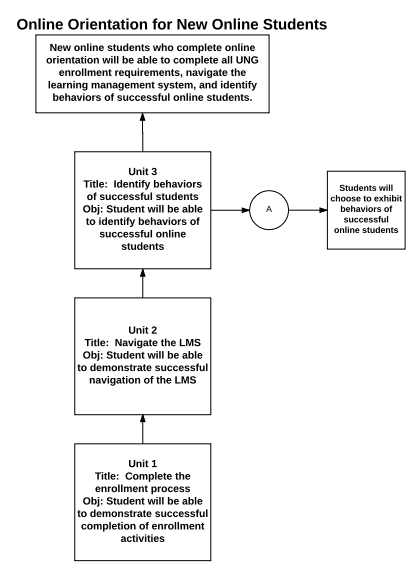
*Unit Objectives*

Unit 1. Student will be able to demonstrate completion of enrollment activities.

Unit 2. Student will be able to demonstrate successful navigation of the LMS.

Unit 3. Student will be able to identify behaviors of successful online students.

Figure 1. Course ICM



**Unit Design**

*Lesson Objectives within Unit 2*

From the needs analysis, we determined that students are unfamiliar with the LMS, and the tools used within the LMS to complete assignments. The lesson objectives below support the Unit 2 Objective that students will be able to demonstrate navigation of the LMS by completing practice discussions, quizzes, assignment submissions, and communications within the LMS. See Figure 2 for the Unit Instructional Curriculum Map.

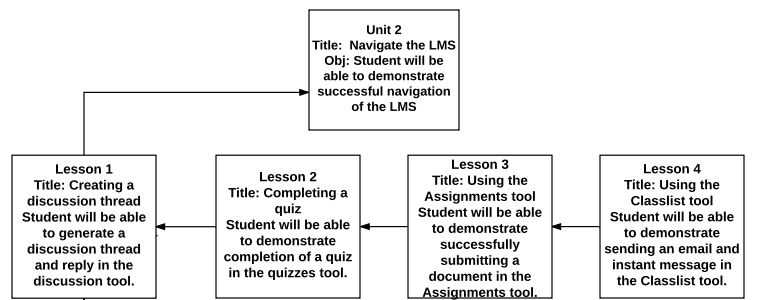
Lesson 1. Student will be able to generate a discussion thread in the discussion tool.

Lesson 2. Student will be able to demonstrate completion and submission of a quiz within the LMS quiz tool.

Lesson 3. Student will be able to demonstrate successfully uploading a document to the LMS Assignments tool.

Lesson 4. Student will be able to demonstrate sending an email and instant message in the Classlist tool.

Figure 2. Unit 2 ICM



**Unit 2 Lesson Design Plan**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ***Lesson 1 Objective*: Given an online course template, the learner will be able to locate the Discussion Tool and generate a new thread within an assigned topic.** | | |
| ***Lesson 2 Objective*: Student will be able to demonstrate completion and submission of a quiz within the LMS quiz tool.** | | |
| ***Lesson 3 Objective*: Student will be able to demonstrate successfully uploading a document to the LMS Assignments tool.** | | |
| ***Lesson 4 Objective*: Student will be able to demonstrate sending an email and instant message in the Classlist tool.** | | |
| Instructional Component | Instructional Plan for Each  Component | Media Choice (Flash, HTML, etc.) |
| 1. Pre-instructional activities   1. Motivating the learners/gaining their attention 2. Informing the learners of the lesson objectives or purposes 3. Informing the learner of what they already need to know to be successful in this lesson (i.e. prerequisite skills) | 1a. Describe the orientation as a required activity to complete before course registration. Introduce online terminology and environment.  1b. Overview a course template in the LMS and explanation of the types of assignments used in online courses, including the Discussion Tool (Lesson 1), the Quizzes Tool (Lesson 2), the Assignments Tool (Lesson 3), and the Classlist Tool (Lesson 4).  1c. Explain and review the basic computer skills and web navigation skills required to be a successful online learner. | 1a & 1b & 1c  Learners receive directions to complete the orientation in the acceptance letter and by email, and will be invited to view pre-instructional materials as a video or narrated presentation placed on UNG’s public website. |
| 2. Content presentation   1. Presenting the content to be learned (i.e. stimulus material) 2. Guiding the learners as they are presented with the content | 2a. Diagram of an UNG online course to demonstrate an overview of the students course view, location of course tools  2b. Screen-recording with voice-over demonstrating how to locate the Discussion Tool (Lesson 1), the Quizzes Tool (Lesson 2), the Assignments Tool (Lesson 3), and the Classlist Tool (Lesson 4) | 2a & 2b  Content would be delivered via Storyline 2 by Articulate. Pre-Instructional materials would be posted to a public site, but actual content would be published within the LMS to allow assessment & completion tracking. |
| 3. Learner participation   1. Giving the learner opportunities for practice (i.e. eliciting the performance) 2. Giving the learner feedback during practice | 3a & 3b During the Storyline 2 course, diagram of course will include “hover-over” buttons, which are triggers that provide more information on the selected topic. Students will complete ‘quizzes’ on relevant vocabulary (topic, thread, reply). After the course content is completed, students will create a discussion thread within a given topic (Lesson 1), Complete and submit a review quiz (Lesson 2), Upload a document to the Assignment Tool (Lesson 3), and send the instructor an email using the Classlist Tool (Lesson 4) | 3a & 3b  Hover-over topics and quizzes will take place within the Storyline 2 course. The practice discussion thread (L1), quiz submission (L2), assignment upload (L3), and email to instructor (L4) will be completed within the LMS. |
| 4. Assessment  Tests and other assessments to see if anything has been learned as a result of this lesson | 4. The quizzes (matching, drag and drop) created in Storyline will provide feedback/tips for incorrect responses. Students and instructors will be able to view feedback to determine if follow-up is necessary.  Completion Survey – students will be asked to complete a survey identifying 1) the most helpful parts of the course, 2) if they enjoyed the delivery-style of the course, 3) if there was an area they still need assistance navigating or understanding | 4. Assessments will include the Storyline activities, completion of the LMS practice assignment, and interviews with online instructors (to see if their students seem to more easily navigate the LMS as first-time online students) |
| 5.Follow-through activities   1. Memory aids for retention 2. Activities to help learners transfer their learning to other contexts | 5a & 5b  Students will receive a “Quick Reference Guide” to the LMS and commonly used terms.  Students will have continued access to the orientation course so that they can reference it if they ‘get stuck’ once academic classes begin. | 5a & 5b  Quick Reference Guide will be available as a .pdf and will be posted to public web site and within the LMS orientation (so it will be close-by in time of need).  Access to the eLearning Orientation will remain in the LMS, in the student’s course list for ease of access. |

*Rationale for Media Choices*

A narrated presentation/video would allow the instructor to easily overview a student’s view of an online course while describing the different components. This media would be placed on a public site (that doesn’t require a UNG login), so that students can view before activating their UNG account. An online course with modules created in Storyline 2 can be published to a web site or within an LMS course. Storyline 2 offers a number of interactive activities and ‘triggers’ based on learner selections. Easy to navigate and explore at student’s pace. Storyline 2 provides data on completion and scores, which could be integrated in the eLearning (LMS) gradebook. Since the goal of this instruction is to navigate and successfully complete assignments within the LMS, it is important that the student have practice in the LMS. The .pdf for a quick-reference guide is a convenient ‘one-sheet’ option that can be easily uploaded and posted in a variety of places for student convenience, and downloaded from a Storyline module.

**Formative Evaluation Plan**

*Overview*

In order to evaluate the orientation, a number of formative evaluation reviews was completed to check for content, technical accuracy and quality of instruction. These reviews included an evaluation by subject-matter experts (SMEs) from UNG|online, one-to-one and small group trials with new and continuing online students, and a field trial with new Maymester 2017 UNG|online students.

*Expert Review*

A team of SMEs from the UNG|online Leadership Team reviewed the instruction for errors, completeness and accuracy. After this evaluation was complete, it was found that there were no errors in the instruction, however, the SMEs had knowledge of helpful short URLs that could be used instead of longer web addresses that were previously included in the student instructions. The orientation was revised to include these short URLs, and instructions to students now reference these useful and frequently visited sites for task completion.

*One-on-One Evaluation*

A one-on-one evaluation was completed by three students, including a new user (novice), and familiar user (average), and a continuing online student (experienced). The novice was a new student at UNG who has not yet completed any online courses. The familiar user has completed a face-to-face course that uses the LMS minimally. The experienced user is a continuing online student. No errors were found and the three student employees were able to successfully complete the instruction without problems.

*Small Group Evaluation*

A small group evaluation was completed with a group of six students (two from each level – novice, average, experienced). In order to find six students willing to complete an evaluation, an email offer was sent to the UNG Online Student Ambassador group. These students were given a t-shirt for participating. One of the students was a returning student whose UNG Account had been deactivated. He needed to contact the UNG I.T. HelpDesk for assistance, but that information was not included in the original version of the instruction. Upon this discovery, the orientation was revised and contact information for the Helpdesk was added throughout the instruction.

*Field Test*

A field trial was completed using recently accepted Summer 2017 students who intend to enroll in Maymester classes. There are very few online Maymester courses, so this select group experienced the instruction before it was introduced to all other new Summer 2017 students. All student responses received indicated the students found the instruction to be easy to follow, and felt the instruction increased their confidence as they begin their first online course. Students indicated through completion of the lesson activities and through a post-instruction survey that they could demonstrate the steps to complete enrollment, demonstrate navigation of the LMS, and identify characteristics of successful online students. See a Formative Evaluation Worksheet for Unit 2, Lesson 1 below.

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| **Formative Evaluation Planning Worksheet** | | | |
| **Unit 2.**  **Lesson 1.**  **Objective: Given an online course example/template, LWBAT locate the Discussion Tool and start a new thread within an assigned topic.** | | | |
| **Who** | **What will be evaluated?** | **When (sequence of events)** | **How (what kind of assessments)** |
| **Experts** | A team from UNG|online Administration, consisting of the Online Student Success Coordinator, the D2L Administrator, and an online faculty member will serve as the SMEs, and will evaluate the instruction for content, technical accuracy and quality of instruction. The content that students will be able to create a discussion thread upon completing the lesson. The technical accuracy review will ensure there are no mistakes in the information or instructions for accessing the lesson. The quality of instruction will be reviewed to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of the lesson. | The evaluation of the lesson instruction will begin as soon as the lesson is complete, and prior to presenting the lesson to the students. Experts are ready to review and available for evaluation as soon as they are needed. | The review will be conducted through a checklist and an evaluation survey that can be completed by each expert individually. The checklist will guide the evaluators through the same steps that students will receive. The survey will check for completeness, accuracy, and missing information or directions. After each individual evaluator has completed the evaluation, interviews will be conducted to gather feedback for suggested changes prior to the start of instruction to students. |
| **Learners:**  **one-on-one** | Three sample students will be selected for the evaluation of the “learnability” of the instruction. The learners will be selected based on their level of prior knowledge of UNG|online and the LMS: new (novice), familiar (average), experienced (continuing successful online student). | The one-on-one sessions will occur with the selected students as soon as experts have reviewed the material, given feedback, and instruction has been revised. | The designer will provide each learner directions for accessing and completing the instruction, and will be available to observe areas in the instruction where it appears to be confusing to the students, and answer learner questions as they complete the instruction. An interview will be conducted after each learner has gone through the lesson to clarify any information, and answer any remaining questions. |
| **Learners:**  **small group** | Revisions to the lesson completed after the one-on-one evaluation will be evaluated through a small group evaluation, which will evaluate the ‘learnability’ of the instruction. The small group will consist of six students (two at each level – novice, average, experienced). | Evaluation will occur as soon as revisions are made after the one-on-one evaluations. | The designer will provide each learner directions for accessing and completing the instruction. Students will complete the instruction individually (without assistance from the designer). The designer will use a rubric to assess the creation of a discussion thread within the LMS. Students will be provided with an evaluation form to submit upon completion of the lesson. |
| **Learners:**  **field test** | The learners in the field test will be new online Maymester 2017 students, who will evaluate the ‘learnability’ of instruction (after revisions were made from the small group evaluation). | The field test evaluation will occur after the small group evaluation is complete and revisions have been made, at which point the design of the instruction is complete. | The evaluation will take place online, in the LMS where the instruction will be used on a regular basis. As with the small group, a rubric will be used as well as a post-instruction evaluation form. |