eLearning Course Review Best Practices

Instructional design focuses on course DESIGN. It does not focus on content DELIVERY. Design addresses how a course is structured and navigated. Delivery addresses course content and means of instruction. Instructional designers review and advise on course design, not course delivery.

Instructional designers assess and assist with course navigation, alignment, accessibility, usability, technology, interactivity, and support. Instructional designers give options and alternative ways of framing and arranging course materials, activities, and interactions.

When advising on course development, instructional designers recommend instructors:

- Think like a (first-time) student.
    - Imagine you have never used your Learning Management System and consider how you would work through a course for the first time.
- Decide what you want to do.
    - Have a specific goal in mind when designing or revising elements.
- Keep your development or revisions limited.
    - Specify the boundaries of your revisions.
- Take small steps.
    - Make local rather than global changes.
- Work on one thing at a time.
    - Every change can have unforeseen consequences in other elements of a course. Changing one thing at a time, allows designers to check outcomes.
- Rest and test.
    - Check for outcomes after each change. If possible, use student view or elicit user feedback after each change.
- Collaborate with peers.
    - Seek alternatives and research from multiple sources for the widest variety of possible development and revision.

What is instructional design?

Instructional design involves the process of identifying the performance, skills, knowledge, information, and attitude gaps of a targeted audience and creating, selecting, or suggesting learning experiences that close this gap, based on instructional theory and best practices from the field.

Ideally, learning improves student productivity and value and enhances self-directed learning. As social media and learning management system technologies become increasingly important to educational institutions, organizations, and individuals, instructional designers need to focus on broad learning events and strategies that incorporate many approaches in addition to individual courses.

What is the instructional design process?

Although the approaches people use to design and develop online instructional events vary widely, the common denominator is that the process is systematic and iterative. The process typically starts with an analysis to define the requirements and specifications, proceeds through a design/prototyping phase, follows through with development and production, and "ends" with Quality Assurance, evaluation, and more fine-tuning. (It never really ends.) Generally, the instructional design process results in a set of one or more learning events or experiences.

The standard instructional design process can expanded by including design thinking. Design thinking is a process used by people who need to be creative on demand.

What does an instructional designer do?

According to the IBSPI (International Board of Standards for Training, Performance and Instruction), the following is a list of the competencies most instructional designers demonstrate. These competencies are brief and do not represent the full breadth and depth of instruction design, but provide a sense of what instructional designers might do. Not every instructional designer focuses on or performs all these tasks.

Professional Foundations

1. Communicate effectively in visual, oral and written form.
2. Apply current research and theory to the practice of instructional design.
3. Update and improve one's knowledge, skills and attitudes pertaining to instructional design and related fields.
4. Apply fundamental research skills to instructional design projects.
5. Identify and resolve ethical and legal implications of design in the workplace.

Planning and Analysis

1. Conduct a needs assessment.
2. Design a curriculum or program.
3. Select and use a variety of techniques for determining instructional content.
4. Identify and describe target population characteristics.
5. Analyze the characteristics of the environment.
6. Analyze the characteristics of existing and emerging technologies and their use in an instructional environment.
7. Reflect upon the elements of a situation before finalizing design solutions and strategies.

Design and Development

1. Select, modify, or create a design and development model appropriate for a given project.
2. Select and use a variety of techniques to define and sequence the instructional content and strategies.
3. Select or modify existing instructional materials.
4. Develop instructional materials.
5. Design instruction that reflects an understanding of the diversity of learners and groups of learners.
6. Evaluate and assess instruction and its impact.

Implementation and Management

1. Plan and manage instructional design projects.
2. Promote collaboration, partnerships and relationships among the participants in a design project.
3. Apply business skills to managing instructional design.
4. Design instructional management systems.
5. Provide for the effective implementation of instructional products and programs.

Adapted from:
http://theelearningcoach.com/elearning_design/is-this-instructional-design/

For further information, see: https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2017/08/02/what-do-instructional-designers-do