

## Faculty Training – Two-stage learning for faculty on designing and developing online learning courses at Georgian College

### Opportunity

The Strategic Plan for Georgian College in Barrie presents its commitment to advance student access and success through a goal “to expand academic pathways and alternative learning opportunities, including continuing education programming and technology-based learning.” Students, especially those graduating directly into a profession and those returning from the workforce, look for experience using technologies for learning as essential preparation for the workplace. The College sees online learning as an essential component of offering pragmatic, career-oriented, continuous, flexible, and accessible opportunities for learning. The Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) plays a key role in working with faculty to determine which courses are best suited for online learning and offering training, workshops, resources, and ongoing support.



### CENTRE FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

### Innovation

Among its many services, the Centre for Teaching and Learning provides faculty with two programs to help them design and develop online learning courses. Both are based on a pedagogical approach that puts the student and the learning, rather than the technology, content, or teacher, at the core of the course design.

Designing for Online Learning Series: In this five part Georgian College series (two hours a week), faculty interact with their colleagues to explore interests, perceptions, and ideas concerning online learning. Prior to attending this series, faculty must have completed two online modules on planning instruction and introduction to assessment, as well as

attended a face-to-face session on designing assignments. The face-to-face Designing for Online Learning Series consists of:

- Discussion of the learning centred approach and how it applies to online learning;
- An exploration of learning theories, such as constructivism and problem-based learning, and how they might be incorporated into online learning design;
- The issues in online course design, what is involved, and what supports are available;
- The types of assignments that can be offered online, whether available from online sources or created by the teacher, including the use of wikis, blogs, discussion boards, and journals; and
- The design of online tools, with hands-on experience creating learning objects.

A discussion of online learning tools looks at those found within Blackboard, the learning management system (LMS), as well as those found outside the LMS, such as wikis, Camtasia for lecture capture, and Dropbox for document sharing. The goal of this series is informational and reflective, with some skill development. To help faculty prepare or convert a course for online learning, a more intensive and extensive program is offered.

Online Course Development Workshop: In the past, faculty would tell their Deans that they were ready to develop an online course, often after completing the Designing for Online Learning Series. They would then be matched with a staff member in the Centre for Teaching and Learning and would work face-to-face to develop each course. To provide wider access to the expertise in the CTL, a 14-week, part-time, online workshop on online course development is now offered. The 10 to 15 registrants in the workshop start with a brief outline of their course and an empty course shell and, if they work through each of the modules, can have a complete online course developed in Blackboard and ready to be tested at the end of the 14 weeks.

The workshop is arranged in 14 folders in Blackboard, one of which is released each week. Each one may contain weekly objectives, guiding materials, rubrics, templates, examples, readings, and multimedia materials. For example, in week six the topic is Developing Assignments, which highlights guided discussion as a common choice for faculty in designing their online courses. The online module provides information on how to introduce and moderate a guided discussion, incorporate student research, create rubrics and assess participation, and deal with technical issues. Other modules look at student and resource analysis, course mapping, evaluation and testing, media, lesson designs and instructional activities, and assessing usability. In the last five weeks of the workshop, faculty focus on building their course.

The course is described by Bob Marchessault, Senior Faculty Developer as “asynchronous but not a-temporal” as the faculty are expected to participate in discussion boards to encourage a community of learners.

## Outcomes and Benefits

Designing for Online Learning Series: Initially, many faculty members were more interested in learning about the tools than the theories and some hoped simply to convert their PowerPoint slides to an online course. The series has been offered five times and is now over-subscribed as faculty have recognized the value and importance of starting from a student-centred, learning theory-based approach. In some cases, faculty cohorts have been developed from those who attended the classes together. The graduates of this series are well-equipped to move on to the next level workshop.

Online Course Development Workshop: With the innovation of offering the workshops online, many more faculty members are able to participate, while still having access to one-on-one support when they wish. Many more courses are developed, incorporating best practices in online learning – so that students are the ultimate benefactors.

Within the course structure there is flexibility to address faculty concerns such as how to manage workloads in relation to online learning. The discussion forums can lead to the development of ongoing communities of faculty members who support each other during and after the workshop.

Offering the course online helps the faculty members appreciate the online learning experience from the perspective of students – a most valuable asset in planning their own online courses.

Faculty are usually given relief time in order to participate in the workshop and consequently must present their finished, or almost finished, course to their Dean. This reporting can encourage continued participation and completion.

## Challenges and Enhancements

Designing for Online Learning Series: Some faculty are disappointed with the series as it does not provide them with the full range of skills and expertise to develop a course or to adopt all the latest technological learning tools. The information concerning the course is clear about its focus and limitations. Because of faculty schedules, only two hours a week are possible, which limits the scope of the information provided and issues discussed.

Online Course Development Workshop: Faculty tend to get caught up in the delivery of their ongoing face-to-face courses and comfortable with their traditional ways of classroom presentation. It can be difficult to maintain their time commitment to the development of an online course.

## Potential

The staff in the Centre for Teaching and Learning would welcome discussion of their plans and approaches to faculty support for online learning. The web site [www.georgianc.on.ca/staff/ctl](http://www.georgianc.on.ca/staff/ctl) has a wide range of resources, links, and information pieces related to online learning. They are also interested in discussing issues related to creating communities of learners and use of the LMS.

## For Further Information

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### Online Course Development Workshop

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