Online and Distance Assessment Report
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Executive Summary

This report contains an overview of the development and testing of the Online Assessment Instrument. Over the past two years, the Faculty Senate Continuing Education Committee has been working on a course assessment tool for use by online and distance instructors. Included in this report are overviews of the development and testing of the instrument, an overview of the delivery system and a discussion of the results from the testing stage of this project. A brief discussion of theses results follows below.

A total of nine instructors used this evaluation over the last year, encompassing fourteen classes and 246 students. Seven of the classes were undergraduate level courses and seven were graduate level. The overall response rate for all of the classes was 67.07% with an undergraduate response rate of 66.67% and a graduate response rate of 67.42%.
Distance Education Assessment Introduction

This section provides an overview of the inception of the new distance education instructor evaluation.

In the past few years the number of distance courses offered at UNK has increased greatly. There are many areas of support necessary for online and videoconference instructors. The Division of Continuing Education has been working to fulfill these needs and has made considerable progress in these areas. One area that had not been addressed was instructor evaluation. Up to this point, all instructors in distance education have been using the standard evaluation from their respective colleges.

One of the problems with using the standard evaluation is that they do not address many of the issues that exist in a distance course. Technology is a necessity in distance education but not in on-campus courses. The standard college evaluations have no provisions for the use of technology in a course. Also, teaching styles can be dramatically different in an online or videoconference course. The aim of the instrument was to address these types of concerns while still maintaining the integrity of the evaluation process.

The Faculty Senate Continuing Education Committee was tasked to find a solution to the problem of evaluating distance courses in the 2003-2004 school year. What follows in this report is a look at the initial development of the instrument, results from the first testing phase and an overview of the delivery system used for this evaluation.

The committee submits this report to the UNK Faculty Senate for review. Questions relating to the instrument itself may be directed to the Faculty Senate Continuing Education Committee Members.
Development of Distance Education Course Evaluation

This section will introduce you to the procedures used to create the new distance education assessment instrument.

In the 2002-03 academic year the Faculty Senate Continuing Education Committee established a priority to develop a distance education course evaluation instrument and process for recommendation to the UNK Faculty Senate and ultimately the UNK Colleges. This initiative was given highest priority by the committee in response to feedback from the UNK faculty.

The bulk of the initial development took place in the summer of 2003, followed by testing and refinement during the 2003-04 academic year. We started by developing a base survey adapted from several different surveys from different institutions. Elements from some of the existing course evaluation instruments currently in use by UNK Colleges were also incorporated into this instrument. In the summer of 2003, a series of online meetings were held to further refine the instrument. A group of approximately eight faculty members from across campus, most with experience in teaching distance courses, participated in this process.

The product of this work was further refined as the Committee reconvened in Fall 2003. The first test of the instrument was conducted in December 2003 by Wyatt Hoback. Feedback from his student responses was incorporated, resulting in the current instrument.

In spring 2004 the Committee turned its focus to the process. After consulting with campus experts on both Blackboard and Opinio, the Committee decided to recommend Opinio as the mechanism to facilitate the surveys. The primary reason is that Opinio insures anonymity, which is critical in the process.

The final instrument and process were tested by several faculty members in May 2004. The following sections of this report will cover results from the testing phase of the process and gives an overview of Opinio.
Instrument Testing Results

This section will cover the results from the initial testing phase and comments from instructors that used the new instrument.

Initial testing of the Distance Education Assessment was conducted in the Spring and Summer of 2004. Several UNK professors were asked if they would participate in the testing phase of the assessment. A total of ten classes were evaluated during this time. Five of the classes were graduate level and five were undergraduate level. What follows are the response rates for those classes as well as some comments made by those professors who responded to a request for their personal input on the effectiveness of the Distance Education Assessment.

Response Rates

A total of 246 evaluations were sent to students in fourteen classes. Seven of the classes were graduate level courses and seven were undergraduate level. A total of nine instructors have used this instrument. Overall response rates were very high in both the graduate and undergraduate courses. The cumulative response rate for all of the courses in the testing phase was 67.07% (See Table 1.A). Response rates for the undergraduate classes ranged from 50% to 87% with an average response rate of 66.67% (See Table 1.A). Response rates in graduate classes were slightly better, ranging from 44% to 85% with an average response rate of 67.42% (See Table 1.A).
Delivery of Online Assessment using Opinio

This section will introduce you to Opinio, the program used to deliver the assessment instrument.

Developing the assessment instrument is only the first step in setting up an online and distance course evaluation. After the first draft of the instrument was finished there was a need to test it on actual classes. In order to accomplish this, a method of delivery needed to be chosen. The options available at the time of development were to send the evaluations by mail or post them online using Blackboard.

Mail was discounted immediately because of poor response rate in the past with the standard college evaluations. Blackboard was then discussed, but because of the potential lack of anonymity it was also discarded. A third choice presented itself when Information Technology Services purchased an online survey program called Opinio.

Opinio is an online survey program that is sold by a Norwegian company called ObjectPlanet Incorporated. ObjectPlanet Inc. is a “vendor of network management, monitoring, and analysis software, online survey systems, and software components. ObjectPlanet is based in Oslo, Norway with customers in 80 countries around the world.”

**Opinio Interface**

Opinio functions completely online. There is no local client necessary to operate the program. This means that anyone who wants to post a survey needs only a computer with Internet access and an Internet browser. An account with a username and password is set up by the system administrator; in the case of UNK the administrator is Darren Addy from Information Technology Services. Once the account is set up, instructors can access their surveys from anywhere at any time with their username and password.

The interface is useable with a small amount of training and is clearly labeled. A listing of surveys that have been created on that account are displayed for easy access. Clicking on a survey link will take users to the options screen for that particular survey.
Survey Setup

The options screen allows users to set up or make any necessary changes to their survey (See Image 1.A). The options for each survey allow users to create questions.

Opinio has several types of questions to choose from. The available types are: Rating, Multiple Choice, Numeric, Drop Down, Matrix and Free Response. Each of these question types allow for text to be inserted before and after the question. Users can also customize the look of the survey. Opinio allows changes in the colors of the background and text as well as adding graphic buttons. The surveys can also be presented as one large set of questions, or sections can be defined so that the respondents see only a part of the survey at one time. Instructions can be set up for each section and the overall survey. Also, a thank you message can be set with a final redirect to a URL at the end of the survey.

Anonymity is a serious concern in course evaluations. Opinio has an option that allows total anonymity in conducting surveys. Invitations are sent to a list of email addresses entered by the instructor. When the invitations are set up, a message can be entered giving the students whatever instructions are necessary to complete the evaluation. There is also a generic message and a URL in the text area by default. An email with the instructions and URL is then sent to all of the addresses on the email list. An email reminder can also be set up to be sent after any number of days and any number of times. With the full anonymity set, everyone will receive reminders even if they have completed the survey. Survey can also be set up with certain time and date restrictions. This allows users to set a time window for the students to respond to the survey.

Results and Reports

Once the evaluation is completed, the results can be viewed from each individual survey options screen. There are two different sets of reports available to users: a summary of numeric results (Summary Report) and a summary of comments made to free response questions (Comment Report).

The Summary Report compiles all of the numeric information for each question and displays the results in both tabular and graphic form (See Image 1.B). The data can also be exported to comma delimited form. This data can then be imported into a spreadsheet or database program for further analysis and breakdown.
The Comment Report shows all comments made to free response questions (See Image 1.C). Also, individual surveys can be viewed to see what responses were made by individual students. All of the reports can also be printed.

Survey Anonymity

One of the reasons that Opinio was chosen as the vehicle for the delivery of this survey is the ability to create fully anonymous surveys. The professors will not be able to connect a survey to a student unless the student adds his or her name to the survey in one of the comment boxes. This was a powerful motivator for using Opinio as the delivery mechanism. The server that runs Opinio keeps track of respondents from the set list of email addresses and sends invitations and reminders to everyone on the list.
Appendices

Appendix A: Online Assessment Instrument (Proposed)

1. On average, how many hours a week did you spend on this course?
   (1) more than 16 hours
   (2) 12 to 16 hours
   (3) 8 to 11 hours
   (4) 4 to 8 hours
   (5) less than 4 hours

2. On average, how many times a week did you log onto your course?
   (1) more than 7 times a week
   (2) 5 to 6 times a week
   (3) 3 to 4 times a week
   (4) less than 3 times a week

3. On average, how many emails each week did you send to your instructor?
   (1) more than 7 emails a week
   (2) 5 to 6 emails a week
   (3) 3 to 4 emails a week
   (4) less than 3 emails a week

4. On average, how many phone calls each week did you make to your instructor?
   (1) more than 2 phone calls per week
   (2) 2 phone calls per week
   (3) 1 phone call per week
   (4) 0 phone calls per week

In this section, please answer the following questions based on your learning experience as a student. (5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree, NA = not applicable)

1. If the discussion board was a part of the course, I was an active participant.
2. If the virtual classroom was a part of the course, I was an active participant.
3. The discussion board, if a part of the course, contributed to my learning.
4. The virtual classroom, if a part of the course, contributed to my learning.
5. If part of the course, video and television presentations enhanced my learning.
6. As a result of this experience, I would take another course using distance education.
7. I would recommend distance education courses to other students.
8. My overall experience with learning at a distance was positive.

Comments: ______________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

In this section, please think about the professor and the quality of instruction as you answer the following questions (5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree, NA = not applicable)

1. The instructor stimulates thinking.
2. The instructor is knowledgeable about the subject matter.
3. The instructor facilitates students to seek assistance as needed.
4. The instructor created opportunities for me to interact with other students in the class.
5. The objectives for each part of the course were clear.
6. The course was well organized.
7. The required reading and assignments contributed to my learning.
8. Class materials are made available to students in a reasonable amount of time for completion of coursework.
9. If I took this course as an interactive TV course, the instructor allowed adequate time for responses from off campus sites during class discussion.
10. Assignments and/or tests are returned in a reasonable amount of time.
11. The instructor encourages students to participate and interact.
12. The instructor responded to inquiries within the timeframe stipulated on the syllabus.
13. The instructor provided opportunities for students to learn from each other.
14. Overall, considering the subject matter, this instructor was a good teacher.
15. Overall, considering its content, design, and structure, this was a good course.

Comments: ______________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Student Services
1. The admission process was effective.
2. The registration process was effective.
3. Instructions on how to get started in my online course were easily available.
4. I was able to effectively utilize UNK library services, both on-line and off-line.
5. Academic advising was responsive to my needs.

Comments: ________________________________
Technology
1. UNK’s Help Desk helped me solve technology issues.
2. Instructions for getting into the course website were easy to follow.
3. The audio quality of the television transmission was good.
4. The video quality of the television transmission was good.

Comments: ______________________________________________________________
### Appendix B: Raw Response Data Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class #</th>
<th>Graduate/Undergraduate</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>85.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>62.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>73.68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>57.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>52.38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>58.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>77.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>77.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>87.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>70.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>Graduate</strong></td>
<td><strong>90</strong></td>
<td><strong>63</strong></td>
<td><strong>70.00%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>Undergraduate</strong></td>
<td><strong>81</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
<td><strong>61.73%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>Graduate/Undergraduate</strong></td>
<td><strong>246</strong></td>
<td><strong>165</strong></td>
<td><strong>67.07%</strong></td>
</tr>
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</table>
Appendix C: Feedback from Online Instructors

Feedback from Instructors Who Have Used the Instrument

In addition to calculating the response rates for the ten courses that were used in the testing phase of the Distance Education Assessment, professors who used the instrument were asked to provide their views on how the assessment works. The general feeling about the assessment was positive, although some concerns were raised. Below are some of the comments sent to the committee about the assessment.

- I was very pleased with the ease of distribution and confidentiality for the students.
- I found the assessment very easy to use and was pleased at the high response rates.
- The evaluation sought responses to questions that are not within the faculty member’s control.
- Regarding question #28: Overall, considering its content, design, and structure, this was a good course, this question may need some further clarification. Are you asking the students to rate the content, design, and structure of the online course? If so, maybe the wording could be more clear and straightforward.
- I strongly believe the questions are a better measure of online teaching effectiveness than the form we use for "live" courses, for example the questions regarding instructor response timeframe and student-to-student participation are important.

Feedback from Instructors Who Have Reviewed the Instrument

The following comments were given by professors who reviewed the instrument but have not used it in a class.

- I took a look at the assessment and everything looked fine to me. If this is going to replace the on campus version then you may want to ask the question why they are taking the course. I have found that students taking it for their major complain less about the workload than those taking it for an elective. Also, do you want a question concerning expectations? Students often expect online courses to take less time than they do and get upset when they actually take more. Finally, it might help to get an idea of how many online courses a student has taken prior to the one they are currently evaluating.

- Second page 1-15 you mix and match your tenses; some present, some past.

- The sentence: “The instructor facilitates students to seek assistance as needed,” does not read very well for me. ...facilitates students seeking assistance...  ??

- Really overall I think the assessment is much better than trying to use the classroom one. On #10 (page 2) you might consider timely manner rather than reasonable amount of
time. Hard question because what one considers reasonable or timely may vary with someone else.

- I do not understand responded within the timeframe stipulated on the syllabus. My syllabus does not mention my response time. Is it supposed to? I rarely go over 24 hours; however, nowhere is that stipulated.

- How about adding: Over all, considering the subject matter and the online environment, this instructor was a good teacher.

- I do feel that the question: considering the course content, do you think this teacher was a good teacher? needs to be clarified. Are we wanting the students to compare this online teacher to all teacher they have had in the past (which would be virtually all in-class instructors)? Or is the question asking them to compare this online teacher with other online instructors they have had in the past (probably a limited comparison)? I'm not sure what the correct way to ask this question is and I agree that the question should be on the evaluation in some form. The problem with comparing the teacher to in-classroom teachers is that they are comparing unlike items. The problem with comparing with only online teachers is that they probably have a limited exposure to other online instructors.

- Is it possible to condense the space used for the answers. I say this because it will appear to be shorter which might cause the students to be more enthusiastic about answer the questions.

- This may be very nit-picky; however, the numeric order reverses. Earlier, the higher the number the more negative the response. Here, though, higher numbers are positive. However, if this is based off of a mathematical equation which subtracts the sum of the early from the latter to determine participation vs use of tools then, that is awesome.

- These questions will glean a lot of very good information.

- I don’t think of logging on to a course. Would it be clearer to say “log onto Blackboard to access your course materials”. You may be trying to keep this generic so you don’t have to change it if we change course management systems.

- Likert scale questions should be stated as plain old declarative statements like, “I was an active participant in the discussion board for the course.” You have the NA response that people can use if the statement does not apply to them. The if statement just makes the statement more difficult to understand

- The Comment Boxes are good. People can explain any of their answers if necessary.