What Graduate Students Want

By
Steve Bounds
Arkansas State University
NCPEA 2010

Research has found that students want their professors to use technology, BUT only if it is used well.

Student complaints:

PowerPoint slides filled with lots of verbiage

Professor reading verbatim

Wasting time

Failing to moderate discussion boards

Not making good use of the LMS

Best practices (Kosak et al, 2004)

1) Thorough planning
2) Communication between faculty and students
3) Student to student interaction
4) Respect for diversity of learning styles
5) Activities that ensure time on task
6) Prompt feedback
7) High expectations

Student suggestions for effective online instruction (Young, 2006)

1) Adapt to student needs
2) Provide meaningful examples
3) Motivate students to do their best
4) Facilitate the course effectively
5) Deliver a valuable course
6) Communicate effectively
7) Show concern for student learning

More Student Concerns:

1) Course navigation

 * *Large quantities of information but not easily found*
 * *Too easy to get lost in layers of content in multiple locations*
 * *Linear design is preferred – few mouse clicks to find information*
 * *"Keep it simple" principle*

2) Too much information in a short period of time

 * *Prefer shorter modules or "chunks"*
 * *10-15 minute segments*

3) Syllabus too vague

 * *Clarify expectations*
 * *Detailed directions for every assignment*

More Student Concerns:

4) Examples of student work, both good and bad

5) Instructor should be online regularly

6) Quick response to student questions
> ** Tendency to expect 24/7 service*
> ** Good practice is to establish "office hours"*

7) Timely evaluation of submitted work

8) Occasional contributions to student discussions

9) Social interaction needed
> ** Need to know one another*
> ** Introduction of class*

AN ONLINE *Introduction to Statistics Course*

>LMS = Blackboard 8

>Linear Design so student could access an assignment within 4 mouse clicks from the home page

        Example: *Home > Assignments > Lesson 1 > Video 1*

>Student introductions on discussion board

        Prescribed elements to include:

                Name

                Place of employment and job responsibility

                Degree major and why it was chosen

                Little known or interesting fact about student

                Optional: family, hobbies, interests, etc

                Photograph(s)

>Online calendar contained assignments, due dates, etc.

>Syllabus – very detailed with assignments, due dates, grading procedures & rubrics, objectives, etc.

>The Mud Room – a discussion forum where students could anonymously post questions or comments for feedback from other students or the instructor. Used to clarify issues for students.

>Lessons – consisted of lesson objectives, readings, examples of research, study questions, answers to study questions, and video presentations.

VIDEO PRESENTATIONS

All videos were created by the instructor

Items used included a Flip Mino video camera, Windows Movie Maker, Camtasia Studio, Photoshop, a flatbed scanner, digital camera, digital tablet, Microsoft Office, and SPSS.

Video length – 2 to 18 minutes
        * Attention span
        * Smaller size, faster download

Placed on Blackboard as a viewable/downloadable file
                * Could be downloaded and viewed later
                * Slow internet connection at home
                * View from location without internet
                * Used WMV format
                        No special software needed to view

Content-oriented
        Practically no "talking head" used
        Recorded screen capture
        Demonstrated step-by-step procedures for using SPSS/Excel
        PowerPoint lessons
        Digital tablet for hand-written notes (mimic whiteboard)

Production
        Record "talking head" intro
        Record PowerPoint, screen capture, hand-written notes
        Gather photos
        Place various clips on timeline, edit, splice, and produce

STUDENT COMMENTS:

"I really enjoyed this class… I really liked it when he did the videos for each chapter. He broke it down so that we were able to understand it step by step."

"The organization of the video's that were given to explain the respective information was very helpful."

"He is always available, and goes to great lengths to answer questions, emails, etc. for his students."

CONCLUSION:

Creating a quality online course usually requires more time than that to create a face-to-face class.

Using multimedia helps overcome the typical shortcomings of text-based online courses (body language, eye contact, tone of voice, etc)

Inexpensive devices and software are available to produce quality productions