



# The University of Texas at Dallas

SM 10 800 West Campbell Road Richardson, TX 75083-0688  
Ph (972) 883-4276 Fax (972) 883-6381

Date: June 27, 2013  
To: Academic Senate  
From: John Fonseka, Chairman – Distance Learning Committee  
Reference: Annual Report of the Distance Learning Committee for 2012-2013

## 1. Membership

The Distance Learning Committee was composed of:

### Faculty and Administrative members (2012 -2013):

---

John Fonseka	Chairman
David Parry	Vice Chairman
Dan Bochsler	
Larry Chasteen	
Mary Urquhart	
Mark Thouin	
Carol Oshel	
Hobson Wildenthal	

### Ex-Officio members:

Andy Blanchard  
Austin Cunningham  
Mark Spong  
Darrelene Rachavong  
Hasan Pirkul  
Darren Crone

## 2. Meetings

The Committee met 6 times to complete the agenda and program of work set out by the committee. Minutes of each meeting are included below in this memo.

## 3. Results

The committee decided to look into the quality of on-line courses. We first defined quality by comparing how well students receive a DL course compared with the same face to face course. Based on our examination of few selected courses at UTD, we concluded that there is no significant difference between the quality of an on-line course and a face to face course. The details of that study and other activities of the committee are found in the attached minutes of the committee meetings.

---

John Fonseka  
Professor, Electrical Engineering

10/16

Hi All,

Thank you for attending the meeting on Tuesday. For those who couldn't be there, we decided to study the methods that can be used to monitor/improve the quality of distance learning. We first decided to analyze methods that other institutions use, who we believe are doing well in monitoring and maintaining the quality of their distance learning activities. We also thought that Darren Crone would be able to provide us with valuable information on such activities. I have exchanged e-mail messages with him and, with his permission; I am attaching those messages below for your reference. I would also like to invite him to our next meeting, which I would like to schedule for **Tuesday, November 13, 2012** at 10.30am.

In the meantime, please collect any information that you can find related to quality in distance learning used by other institutions. You may use the e-mail from Darren to assist you, or feel free to use any other source.

Thank you.  
Best Regards,  
John

---

11/13

Hi All,

Thank you again for attending our last meeting on 11/13. Please find below a summary of the discussion:

1. Darren explained to us the features of the Quality matters tool.

This is a tool to improve development of an on-line course. It also appears that we appear to be following many of these steps already at UTD.

2. How do we define Quality?

The following two approaches were discussed:

(a) We can focus on the quality of the development of our on-line courses through means of tools such as Quality Matters, or

(b) We can focus on the quality from the student's side to see how well they can receive the course contents from an on-line setting compared with an in-class setting.

Related to (b), Darren pointed out, "The No Significant Difference Phenomenon" (<http://www.nosignificantdifference.org/>), which has shown globally that there is no significant difference in the two settings. Dan suggested that we can also look at the previous reports of this committee to

collect ideas on (b).

We first need to decide whether we want to consider (a), or (b), or both. I personally prefer to address (b) because it appears that we are already doing (a) reasonably well. We can decide it at our next meeting.

If we go with (b), we should try to come up with a framework to continuously monitor the quality of our on-line courses. We will need to identify the measures that we want to use (perhaps grades, evaluations, etc.) within that framework.

Please keep thinking about the above and bring your ideas to our next meeting. We decided to have our meeting regularly on the second Tuesday of the month starting January. We will not have a meeting in December due to the Final Exams.

Thank you and I apologize for the delay in getting this e-mail out to you.

Best Regards,  
John

---

#### Minutes of the 01/15 Meeting

1. We defined quality by comparing how well students receive a DL course compared with the same face to face course. We discussed the following factors that can be used in such a comparison:
  2. Student Evaluations: It was discussed that (a) we need to improve the student participation, and (b) it is better to have multiple small prizes in the raffle used to promote student participation and to announce the winners.
  3. Student Performance: Examine student performance on exams, quizzes, etc.
  4. Peer Reviews: Have peers evaluate courses and provide feedback. This is currently used in SOM and ECS..
  5. Meetings/Discussions: Instructors from different sections can get together at the beginning or end (or both) to try to maintaining uniformity among different sections including the DL sections. These discussions can be used to improve the delivery of courses in the future. If necessary, we can have course owners to coordinate these meetings. This is practiced in ECS to continuously improve courses.
  6. In the end, we decided to closely look at a couple courses that have one DL section and few face to face sections. Use already available information on them to try to develop a frame work for quality analysis. We hope to get this information from Darren.
- We also decided to meet on the third Tuesday of every month, so our next meeting will be on 02/19 at 3.00 pm.

#### Minutes of the 02/19 Meeting

1. We discussed the "Teaching Online" software and concluded that we are already doing most of what it can offer. Hence, we decided not to pursue it at this time.
2. We discussed the available student evaluations and sample questions in the following courses: ACCT 6335, MECO 6303 and OB 6301. Comparing the on-line sections with the respective face to face sections, we felt that there is no significant difference between the two sections. Hence, we decided that, at least based on these courses, our on-line courses are performing at a level similar to the

face to face courses. As result we decided that there is not much work needed at this time in terms maintaining quality of our online courses.

3. We agreed to look at blended courses closely during our remaining time. A blended course would cover about 50% to 85% of its material online. It will be useful if we can suggest ways to offer these blended courses effectively. Let us try to discuss this at our next meeting on 03/19 at 3.00 pm.

#### Minutes of the 3/18 Meeting

1. We discussed the article on Cheating that was brought to us by Austin. In the end we felt that these types of tools will continue to evolve and get cheaper with time. Hence, we decided to take no action on it at this time but continue to watch its development.
2. We also discussed the second item that we got from Austin related to the Chronicle. We decided that we do not have enough substance at this time to participate in it.
3. With blended courses, we started to discuss the requirement on the number of contact hours. We plan to continue this discussion after Austin brings more information to the next meeting.

#### Minutes of the 04/16 Meeting

1. As promised, Steve Yurkovich gave a nice presentation on his methods of teaching on-line.
2. We also discussed the second item that we got from Austin related to the Chronicle. We decided that we do not have enough substance at this time to participate in it.
3. With blended courses, we started to discuss the requirement on the number of contact hours. We plan to continue this discussion after Austin brings more information to the next meeting.