Adding the Student Perspective to the Design of Studio-Based Art Courses

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Nowhere is the need for thoroughly designed instructional materials more evident than in the creation of studio-based projects for e-Learning courses. This presentation will tackle this issue by discussing why instructional materials are so important and the challenges inherent in creating studio-based projects for this environment. This presentation will present a case study centered on the development of ILLU714: Drawing for Illustrators, a graduate level course that centers around the development of three studio-based projects. Overall, this presentation will show the audience how a careful examination of available resources and a willingness to include a representative student in the design process can greatly improve the quality of a course.

Like other courses developed for SCAD-eLearning, the ILLU714 professor worked with an eLearning instructional designer to develop the master version of the course that would be offered online. The professor developing the course had never taught the course before but would be the first professor to teach the course online. These circumstances meant that existing project descriptions, rubrics, and project work samples were not readily available. The instructional designer recognized the danger that project materials might have suffered because the written instructions and rubrics would not have been fully tested and would not have been supplemented by work samples. While not prohibiting student success, materials in this condition increase the likelihood of students being uncertain of what is expected from them during the project.

The instructional designer and professor enlisted the help of a graduate student who had prior experiences with the professor and SCAD-eLearning courses. He was also an experienced illustrator, capable of working at the level required by the projects. The goal for the student involvement was to create models of how to complete each project. As the
student completed the project tasks, he asked questions that exposed deficiencies in the project description, instructions, and rubric that were immediately revised.

Unexpectedly, differences in the illustration style of the student and the expectations of the project led to work samples that were deemed by the professor to be unsuitable for use as model examples. Rather than discard this work, the plan was adjusted to include this work not as a model but as the work of a hypothetical student in the class. This provided the opportunity to not only supply a visual examples of how to complete the projects but also a written example of how the rubric would be applied to the work at each step of the process. This work and examples of how the work would be graded using the rubric, was included in the final materials for each project as a “Sample Assessment.” Now, the students had a guide to judge the quality of their work by comparing the graded examples.

Without the inclusion of a student to provide feedback during the design of the instructional materials, this level of clarity in the project materials would not have been possible until students had already taken the course and made avoidable mistakes.