



Redesigning web-based courses for nurse educators

Fully online? Hybrid?

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BACKGROUND

Schools of nursing are experiencing faculty shortages which limit student admissions. The additional time and effort needed to gain competency as an academic nurse educator is one reason for this shortage. Nurse educator web-based courses offer increased flexibility in time management as well as reduced commuting time, however not all nurses embrace the online learning environment.

AIM

Expand access to two web-based nurse educator courses at the University of Massachusetts Worcester by offering nurses the choice, within a single course, of completing either a hybrid or fully online course.
N620: Teaching and Curriculum Development
N623: Identifying and Measuring Outcomes

RESEARCH DESIGN

Exploratory prospective design.
Qualitative data gathered from student focus groups and interviews.
Quantitative data gathered through initial, formative and end of course surveys, student assignments, grades.



STUDENTS

65% are > 35 years of age.
65% have > 10 years experience in nursing.
50% are in either leadership or educator positions.
59% have had previous on-line course experience.
100% expressed comfort with basic internet and PC functioning.

IMPLEMENTATION

Fully Online Format	Hybrid Format
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•No face to face (F2F) classes, all coursework completed online.•Faculty identified course assessment measures first and then created appropriate corresponding learning activities.•Limited course content enables application and synthesis levels of learning.• Adobe Presenter© used to upload narrated Powerpoint© faculty lectures.•Integrated hybrid and fully online format students to extent possible. All students review required readings, websites, narrated lectures, upload short assignments and engage in online discussions and peer critiques.• Fully online students engage in additional online discussions during weeks F2F classes held.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Designed a fully online course first then identified F2F classes by identifying content students might find confusing or offer opportunity for meaningful F2F dialogue.•Hybrid format students attend six (6) F2F classes during the course.•Hybrid format students review online narrated lectures and post responses to faculty generated questions prior to F2F classes to “blend” F2F and online learning.•F2F learning activities emphasize learner-centered discussion and reflection of online resources and postings. Online lectures not repeated during F2F classes.•Students selected desired format during first two weeks of course and may not change format during the course.

FINDINGS

1. 50% of the students completed the hybrid course because face to face interaction was highly valued.
2. Students with prior satisfactory online learning experiences and who knew each other from other courses completed the fully online course.
3. Students with no previous experience taking online courses did not anticipate the time commitment.
4. Even a hybrid course format can increase access to graduate courses for busy students with jobs and families. The online format reduced the burden of commuting and allowed for flexibility. Enrollment in N 620 more than doubled from the previous year (four versus nine students).

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Potential students should complete a self-assessment to determine if they are motivated to be self-directed learners and learn basic computer skills, Powerpoint© and Blackboard Vista© technology prior to beginning a hybrid or fully online course.
2. To facilitate communication in a hybrid or fully online course, course syllabi should contain detailed descriptions of all assignments, grading criteria and due dates. (U Wisconsin Milwaukee Learning Technology Center)