

ED 6224 – Needs Assessment Course Outline

Course information:

Term: Winter 2014
Dates: Jan. 6 – April 9, 2014

Instructor information:

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What's the course about?

All instructional design projects should be preceded by a needs assessment. Using questionnaires, interviews, and other data collection instruments, needs assessments involve determining the discrepancies between “what is” and “what should be,” identifying needs that may be amenable to instructional interventions, and finally generating recommendations that will guide the instructional design process all the way to the evaluation phase. Needs assessments are also an important means by which you can promote in learners a sense of ownership of the instructional solutions you propose.

Needs assessments are performed in a wide range of settings. For example, they are used in education to identify and make judgments about ways of addressing curricular needs; they are used by funding agencies to determine which projects to fund; and they are used by human resource development professionals to solve performance problems.

Why devote a whole course to this preliminary activity? Because a good needs assessment is crucial to the success of any instructional design project. As Smith & Ragan (1999) put it, “Those who omit this step risk developing instruction that may be unnecessary or inappropriate.” Indeed, many an instructional program has failed, and many millions of dollars have been spent on developing unnecessary instruction, because a needs assessment was deemed unnecessary. Nevertheless, this important activity is often omitted simply because few individuals have the knowledge and skills necessary to conduct an effective needs assessment. Therefore, for instructional designers, having the rare ability to conduct needs assessments for a variety of contexts can also be an important key to advancement within an organization.

What are the course goals?

I want this course to offer you opportunities to:

- read about the purpose and nature of needs assessment
- use and understand the vocabulary of needs assessment
- explain why a needs assessment should take place before any instructional design activity
- apply needs assessment ideas and processes to a variety of cases and scenarios
- evaluate and critique existing needs assessments
- conduct a complete needs assessment in an authentic context
- write an effective needs assessment report

What textbooks will I need for the course?

1) *ED6224 Course Text* — available online in our Desire2Learn module.

2) Mager, R.F., & Pipe, P. (1997). *Analyzing performance problems: Or, you really oughta wanna* (3rd ed.). Atlanta: CEP Press. (Available at the bookstore or from Amazon.)

What is the online learning process?

The course is divided into 13 sessions, all conducted via the Desire2Learn learning management system. **Sessions will begin on Monday and end on Sunday** (with the exception of the final session, which will end on Wednesday). For each session, **follow the session instructions** posted on D2L (as PDF files in each session folder). After completing the required reading(s) for the session, and watching my video mini-lecture, you'll be expected to participate in a variety of learning activities—these are not graded assignments but tasks that will help you to meet the course objectives and prepare you to complete the assignments. Use the checklist for each session to ensure you've completed all the learning activities. Completed discussions will remain open but will be moved to the bottom of the discussion list, so the current session will always appear at the top.

There will be a variety of learning activities: individual, small-group, and whole-class. Although learning activities are not assessed, it's important that you participate in all of them as they're designed to help you master the course content. I will set up discussion areas for the small-group work, although you may prefer to use Chat or another communication method. Note that I can check in on small group discussions to make sure everything is on track, but if you decide to hold your small-group discussions outside of D2L, it's your responsibility to check in with me if you have any questions! You're not expected to produce formal reports or documents from the learning activities, but I will often ask you to share your results informally with the whole class.

Regular and active participation is an essential, unmistakably important aspect of this online course. Participation means posting substantive contributions in threaded discussions, interacting during online discussions, and engaging in online activities and tasks. You should expect to spend about three hours a week in online discussions and learning activities, but please don't leave it all until the last day of the session! If you do, you will likely find yourself feeling lonely and frustrated rather than an integral part of the class. My expectation is that you will log on at least three times during a one-week session and post at least twice, but remember: *quality counts more than quantity!* A short, to-the-point posting is preferred by all to a long rambling one (see the Posting Protocol below).

Posting Protocol

So that we can make the most of our interactions, please make sure that your posts are:

- *directly related to the discussion topic* (if you do post on a new topic, make sure you change the thread and the subject line to reflect the change)
- *made early on in the session*, not in a last minute scramble (if you leave all your participation to the last day of the session, you'll likely find yourself feeling lonely and frustrated rather than an integral part of the class)
- *in response to what others have posted* (once again, if you introduce a new topic, please add a new thread)
- *substantive* (substantive postings refer to the reading, expand upon points made in other postings, and somehow deepen the discussion; while positive, "I agree" is not a substantive posting!)
- *as concise as possible* (if you find a helpful resource for others, paste a link to it in your message rather than the entire text)
- *clearly written and error-free*
- *respectful* of others' ideas and contributions
- and above all *thoughtful* (one thoughtful post a week is preferable—for you and for your classmates—to five hasty, ill-thought-out contributions)

What are the assignments and evaluation criteria?

1. Participation (15%)

Regular and active participation is an essential, unmistakably important aspect of this online course. Participation means completing assigned readings, and contributing to discussions and learning activities.

Near the beginning of the course, I'll ask you to download a Participation Self-Assessment form (you'll find it in the Grading Criteria and Rubrics folder). You'll use this form to keep tabs on your own participation. For each session except the last one, you should award yourself a single point for participation, *only if you complete all of the learning activities before the next session begins*. This may not seem like much but does add up over the weeks! At the end of the course, you can also award yourself up to three more points (for a maximum of 15), depending on the overall quality of your participation (see the participation rubric, in the same document as the Participation Self-Assessment form). If sickness or technical issues ever delay or prevent your completion of the learning activities for a particular session, please let me know and indicate this on your self-assessment form; I may pro-rate your participation mark accordingly.

2) Needs Assessment (50%) - due April 6 (work plan due January 31)

In addition to the in-class needs assessment activities, you will have the opportunity to conduct an actual needs assessment—ideally, related to your own occupation or studies. (If you will not be able to conduct a needs assessment related to your work or studies, let me know early on so that I can arrange an opportunity for you to conduct one within an authentic context.)

As part of this assignment, you'll be asked to prepare and submit a draft work plan (**due January 31**), which will be reviewed but not marked. The final outcome of the needs assessment assignment will be a detailed Needs Assessment Report (**due April 6**). It should be accompanied by a one- or two-page paper in which you:

- briefly describe what you did, and why
- indicate who the audience of your report is (besides me!)
- provide the rationale for your decisions about how the report is organized and presented

A rubric and grading criteria for the needs assessment are available in the Grading Criteria and Rubrics folder in D2L.

3) Chosen Assignment (35%) – due Feb. 23

Choose one of the following assignments that best helps you meet your learning needs and goals for the course. All assignments should be **no more than eight double-spaced pages** and **should include a reflection on the lessons you've learned** from the assignment—lessons that you might apply to your own NA experience:

- a) *Critique of a Needs Assessment*. (Choose this option if you feel you would benefit from a detailed analysis of a completed NA report.) Find an existing, completed needs assessment report (one which describes the process followed) and write an evaluation/critique of it. Is it a real needs assessment? Are the findings meaningful? Are they well presented? What would you do differently? You should critique both the needs assessment process followed and the way the findings are presented. (Note that there are many needs assessment reports available online; try to find one that is in the domain of *instructional* needs rather than, for example, technology or health needs.)

- b) *Review of a Book on Needs Assessment.* (Choose this option if you feel you would benefit from having more information on needs assessment.) The library has a number of books on needs assessment (some are e-books). Choose one, read it, and then write a review-essay—in other words, a description of the book and a thorough critique/reflection on it.
- c) *Short Essay on Needs Assessment.* (Choose this option if there is an aspect of needs assessment that you would like to learn more about.) Choose an aspect of needs assessment or a topic related to needs assessment that interests you (e.g., needs assessment for special needs learners, cross-cultural issues in needs assessment), research it, and write a short essay about it.

Rubrics for each of these options, as well as grading criteria, are available in the Grading Criteria and Rubrics folder in D2L. I'll also be asking you to prepare a brief online presentation about your chosen assignment (what you did and what you learned) to share with others in the class.

FEEL FREE TO WRITE IN FIRST PERSON

Note: If you feel that an assignment other than those suggested above would better help you to meet your learning goals for this course, please feel free to discuss it with me.

Academic Integrity Statement

The University of New Brunswick places a high value on academic integrity and has a policy on plagiarism, cheating and other academic offences. Plagiarism includes:

- quoting verbatim or almost verbatim from a source (such as copyrighted material, notes, letters, business entries, computer materials, etc.) without acknowledgment;
- adopting someone else's line of thought, argument, arrangement, or supporting evidence (such as, for example, statistics, bibliographies, etc.) without indicating such dependence;
- submitting someone else's work, in whatever form (film, workbook, artwork, computer materials, etc.) without acknowledgment;
- knowingly representing as one's own work any idea of another; or
- contravention of written instructions of the instructor dealing with plagiarism.

A complete description of university procedures for dealing with plagiarism and resulting academic penalties can be found online at

<https://eservices.unb.ca/calendar/graduate/display.cgi?tables=regulationsSubLevel2&id=18>.

Course Plan

Session	Dates	Topics, Readings, and Due Dates
1	Jan. 6-12	<u>Topics:</u> Introduction to the Course and Needs Assessment <u>For this session, read:</u> Course text, pp. 1-11
2	Jan. 13-19	<u>Topic:</u> Human Needs Theories <u>For this session, read:</u> Course text pp. 12-19
3	Jan. 20-26	<u>Topic:</u> Data Collection I: Determining Methods & Developing the Work Plan <u>For this session, read:</u> Course text pp. 20-26
4	Jan. 27- Feb. 2	<u>Topic:</u> Data Collection II: Developing Instruments <u>For this session, read:</u> Course text, pp. 27-39 *** Due Jan. 31: Draft work plan for your NA (for feedback only)
5	Feb. 3-9	<u>Topics:</u> Goal & Gap Analyses <u>For this session, read:</u> Course text pp. 40-51
6	Feb. 10-16	<u>Topic:</u> Cause Analysis <u>For this session, read:</u> Course text pp. 52-53, Mager & Pipe, pp. 1-89
7	Feb. 17-23	<u>Topics:</u> Population Analysis & Context Analysis <u>For this session, read:</u> Course text pp. 54-57 *** Due Feb. 23: Chosen assignment
8	Feb. 24-Mar. 2	<u>Topic:</u> Sharing Chosen Assignments
	Mar. 3 -9	MARCH BREAK
9	Mar. 10-16	<u>Topic:</u> Performance Analysis <u>For this session, read:</u> Course text pp. 58-60, Mager & Pipe pp. 91-169
10	Mar. 17-23	<u>Topic:</u> Cost-Benefit Analysis <u>For this session, read:</u> Course text pp. 61-64
11	Mar. 24-30	<u>Topic:</u> Preparing the NA Report <u>For this session, read:</u> Course text pp. 65-71
12	Mar. 31-Apr. 6	<u>Topic:</u> From Needs Assessment to Instructional Design <u>For this session, read:</u> Course text pp. 72-73 *** Due April 6: Your Needs Assessment Report, plus one- or two-page paper, as described on p. 3
13	Apr. 7-9	<u>Topic:</u> Wrap-up *** Due April 9: Your Participation Self Assessment