

Restructuring a Masters Teaching Program

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This article will explain the process that Course Leads used to restructure the Masters in the Arts of Teaching program by working in collegial teams to completely restructure the program to meet the needs of 21st century educational providers. Materials, textbooks, library materials, and videos were researched to meet the course and program learning outcomes. Online evaluations from students, Exit surveys of students, Program Annual Reviews (PARS), and peer evaluations were used to form a framework for the best possible teaching and learning program.

INTRODUCTION

National University “is dedicated to making lifelong learning opportunities accessible, challenging, and relevant to a diverse student population” (National University, 2012, p. 14). The MAT program offers educational professionals the opportunity to enhance their skills. During the first decade of the twenty first century, significant changes have occurred in higher education curricula, with an emphasis on additional education about teaching and learning (Barnett & Coate, 2005).

In the MAT program, there are currently six core courses. The Course Leads met in collegial teams to restructure the core courses (Appendix A) to better meet the needs of educational professionals in the 21st century (Diamond, 2008). The content and order of the courses were changed to flow around themes that matched the program and course learning outcomes of the program. The twenty-first century has seen e-learning capturing the attention and imagination of teachers and students all over the world. Technology has altered the way information is acquired and distributed. In order to use technology effectively, instructors need to examine the curricula and learning goals. After such an examination, appropriate technologies to support these curricula and learning goals can be chosen (Svinivki & McKeachie, 2011).

METHOD

The Online Course student evaluations of 18 courses (3 each of the six core classes) from a random selection of faculty were used to judge what students considered effective teaching and learning experiences (Breslow, 2007). The evaluations were from May, June, and July of 2014. In addition, exit surveys of students, comments from peer evaluators, and the annual recommendations from the Program Annual Review were used to provide feedback about teaching and learning. The collegial teams met to review and analyze the data and match it to the three major Program Learning Outcomes: 1. Apply critical thinking skills and active reflection to evaluate and improve professional practice. 2. Analyze diversity issues in education to support equity pedagogy, social justice, and community collaboration. 3. Apply information literacy skills to inquire, research, teach, and learn (Appendix B).

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Based on a review of the *Exit Surveys* for the core classes, one course was rated less effective by the students, so that gave the teams data to not include much of the content from that class into the newly formed restructured courses. The Exit survey also gave high percentages from students to all three Program Learning Outcomes—all over 95%. (Appendix B).

Online Course Evaluations for all the courses in Teaching and Learning were between 4 and 5 (Mahle, 2007). One noticeable difference was the number of student comments in various courses as well as the number of respondents. It would be of interest to know if instructors with low responses had reminded the students to take the survey. In the *learning* category, the two that got the highest ranking out of the 8 questions were:

- If research was required, my ability to do research has improved.
- I can apply what I learned in this course to my job or career goals.

In the *teaching* category, the three out of the 12 questions with the highest scores were:

- Instructor responded promptly to emails and other questions.
- The instructor was an active participant in this class.
- Instructor provided timely feedback on my work.

These results match current research that states that interaction impacts student learning and satisfaction (Chang & Smith, 2008; Herbert, 2006; Wanstreet, 2006). Bollinger and Martindale (2004) suggested that student satisfaction with online courses is influenced by instructor variables and that the instructor is the main predictor of student satisfaction with online courses.

Since the instructor is such a key element, it is important that instructors teaching courses receive *Instructor Guidelines* in both written and oral form. It is also important that instructors receive peer evaluations from both their peers and the lead faculty staffing the courses. Since the collegial team has worked so closely together in developing the courses, peer evaluations for courses taught seem a natural follow up to this planning process.

RESTRUCTURING PROCESS AND TIMELINE

The MAT core team has had several WebEX meetings as well as meeting together as a whole team to discuss the courses, PLO's and CLO's, textbooks, etc. (Bok, 2006). Individual teams have also met in person or over the phone to discuss the course descriptions, units, and assignments.

A special planning day was held before National University Fall Assembly September 2014. The school's librarians attended the meeting and discussed all of the resources that could be accessed through the *National University Library*. In addition, resources were reviewed from *Educational Impact* in which videos could be used to review: Instructional Strategies, School Leadership, Student Behavior, Special Needs and Interventions, and School Wide Improvement (Kennedy, 2004). These could be purchased by the university to allow them to be imbedded into various courses. Resources from <http://www.lynda.com.ezproxy.nu.edu/> were reviewed in which a random group of 98 education courses 4,491 videos could be used in the new courses. It is very valuable that resources are available to enhance and enrich the new courses (Ely, 2003).

After the meeting, all members received information on *Stages of a Personalized Learning Environment* in which Stage One is Teacher Centered with Learner Voices Choice, Stage Two with Teacher and Learner-Centered as Co-Designers, and Stage Three Learner Driven with Teacher as Facilitator of Learning.

The planning process will probably take a year, because after the planning is complete, the courses will need to go through the Academic Affairs Committee (Appendix C). Course descriptions also need to

be printed in the university catalogue and a *teach-out* process will be given time to students currently in the program to complete their coursework.

CONCLUSIONS

The MAT core team met several times to restructure the core classes to update them to requirements of the 21st century. Previous Professional Assessment results, course evaluations, exit surveys by students were analyzed as a guide in the formulation of the new courses. Teams were formed for each course to update. Resources such as library services and media companies were invited to attend meetings to share media that would enhance each course. The syllabi template required for all courses was used as a format for all new courses to be reviewed by the university's Academic Affairs Committee. It is intended that this process could be used by other universities when restructuring their programs and courses (Diamond, 2008; National University, 2012).

REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A
WORK TEAMS FOR REVITALIZING THE MAT PROGRAM

Title of Course (30 characters)	Program Learning Outcomes	TEAM
Foundations of Teaching and Learning in Twenty-First Century	1. Apply critical thinking skills and active reflection to evaluate and improve professional practice. 3. Apply information literacy skills for inquiry, research, teaching, and leadership.	KEN, MARILYN, CYNTHIA S., , CYNTHIA C.
Twenty-First Century Pedagogical Practices	1. Apply critical thinking skills and active reflection to evaluate and improve professional practice. 3. Apply information literacy skills for inquiry, research, teaching, and leadership.	JAN, MARILYN, KEN, ONE ADJUNCT CURRENTLY IN THE FIELD
Instructional Strategies for the Diverse Learner	2. Analyze diversity issues in education to support equity pedagogy, social justice, and community collaboration. 4. Analyze digital data to inform instruction and improve learning in educational settings.	CYNTHIA S., MARILYN, TERRY, ONE ADJUNCT CURRENTLY IN THE FIELD
Issues and Trends in Educational Research	1. Apply critical thinking skills and active reflection to evaluate and improve professional practice. 3. Apply information literacy skills for inquiry, research, teaching, and leadership.	RON, CYNTHIA S., JAN ONE ADJUNCT CURRENTLY IN THE FIELD
Applying Educational Data	4. Analyze digital data to inform instruction and improve learning in educational settings.	TERRY, ONE ADJUNCT CURRENTLY IN THE FIELD
Instructional Leadership Project	1. Apply critical thinking skills and active reflection to evaluate and improve professional practice. 3. Apply information literacy skills for inquiry, research, teaching, and leadership.	RON, KEN
Foundations of Teaching and Learning in Twenty-First Century	1. Apply critical thinking skills and active reflection to evaluate and improve professional practice. 3. Apply information literacy skills for inquiry, research, teaching, and leadership.	KEN, MARILYN, CYNTHIA S., , CYNTHIA C.
Twenty-First Century Pedagogical Practices	1. Apply critical thinking skills and active reflection to evaluate and improve professional practice. 3. Apply information literacy skills for inquiry, research, teaching, and leadership.	JAN, MARILYN, KEN, ONE ADJUNCT CURRENTLY IN THE FIELD
Instructional Strategies for the Diverse Learner	2. Analyze diversity issues in education to support equity pedagogy, social justice, and community collaboration. 4. Analyze digital data to inform instruction and improve learning in educational settings.	CYNTHIA S., MARILYN, TERRY, ONE ADJUNCT CURRENTLY IN THE FIELD

Issues and Trends in Educational Research	1. Apply critical thinking skills and active reflection to evaluate and improve professional practice. 3. Apply information literacy skills for inquiry, research, teaching, and leadership.	RON, CYNTHIA S., JAN ONE ADJUNCT CURRENTLY IN THE FIELD
Applying Educational Data	4. Analyze digital data to inform instruction and improve learning in educational settings.	TERRY, ONE ADJUNCT CURRENTLY IN THE FIELD
Instructional Leadership Project	1. Apply critical thinking skills and active reflection to evaluate and improve professional practice. 3. Apply information literacy skills for inquiry, research, teaching, and leadership.	RON, KEN ONE ADJUNCT CURRENTLY IN THE FIELD

**APPENDIX B
OF THOSE WHO COMPLETED THE MAT CORE COURSES**

The responses from the MAT Exit Survey indicate that 77.95 % found EDT 612 Valuable or Very Valuable towards improving their abilities FY2010-2014.

- The responses from the MAT Exit Survey indicate that 69.28% found MAT 641 to be Valuable or Very Valuable towards improving their abilities FY2010-2014.
- The responses from the MAT Exit Survey indicate that 85.02% found MAT 642 to be Valuable or Very Valuable towards improving their abilities FY2010-2014.
- The responses from the MAT Exit Survey indicate that 83.55% found MAT 643 to be Valuable or Very Valuable towards improving their abilities FY2010-2014.
- The responses from the MAT Exit Survey indicate that 80.62% found MAT 644 to be Valuable or Very Valuable towards improving their abilities FY2010-2014.
- The responses from the MAT Exit Survey indicate that 81.81% found MAT 640 to be Valuable or Very Valuable towards improving their abilities FY2010-2014.

PLO	Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Agree or Strongly Agree
Apply critical thinking skills and active reflection to evaluate and improve professional practice.	4.8%	95.2%
Analyze diversity issues in education to support equity pedagogy, social justice, and community collaboration.	3.2%	96.8%
Apply information literacy skills to inquire, research, teach, and learn.	4.8%	95.2%

APPENDIX C STANDARD COURSE SYLLABUS

- Course: [Number and Name of Course]
- Last revised: [Insert date] by [insert name of lead faculty]
- Textbook: [Required and suggested textbooks]
- Course Prerequisite(s) [Copy prerequisite (if any) from Course Description in catalog]
- Major Course Goals [General learning outcomes, such as the ability to think critically, interact with professionals, communicate with the public, and/or write coherently.]
- Recommended:
- At the conclusion of this course, the student will be able to: [Course Description Copy from Course Description in catalog, or revise if necessary]
- Learning Outcomes: [Specific learning outcome tied to program outcomes.]
- Recommended: completion of this course, students will be able to:]
- Course Requirements [Example: Students are expected to attend all class sessions, participate in all class activities, complete exams as scheduled, and turn in all assignments on time. Failure to do so may result in the loss of points.”]
- **Students with Disabilities**
- Students seeking special accommodations due to a disability must submit an application with supporting documentation, as explained under this subject heading in the General Catalog. Instructors are required to provide such accommodations if they receive written notification from the University.
- **Writing Across the Curriculum:**
- Students are expected to demonstrate writing skills in describing, analyzing and evaluating ideas and experiences. Written reports and research papers must follow specific standards regarding citations of an author's work within the text and references at the end of the paper. Students are encouraged to use the services of the University's Writing Center when preparing materials. The following website provides information on APA, MLA, and other writing and citation styles that may be required for term papers and the like: <http://nu.libguides.com/citations>
- **National University Library:**
- National University Library supports academic rigor and student academic success by providing access to scholarly books and journals both electronically and in hard copy. Print materials may be accessed at the Library in San Diego or through document delivery for online and regional students. Librarians are available to provide training, reference assistance, and mentoring at the San Diego Library and virtually for online or regional students. Please take advantage of Library resources:
URL: <http://www.nu.edu/library>.
Contact the Library:
 - RefDesk@nu.edu
 - (858) 541-7900 (direct line)
 - 1-866-NU ACCESS x7900 (toll free)
- Use the Library Training Tools (on the Library Homepage) for additional help
 - Recorded class presentations
 - Tutorials & Guides (APA/MLA, Peer-Review, and more)
- **Plagiarism:**
Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else's ideas or work as one's own. Students must give credit for any information that is not either the result of original research or common knowledge. If a student borrows ideas or information from another author, he/she must acknowledge the author in the body of the text and on the reference page. Students found plagiarizing are subject to the penalties outlined in the Policies and Procedures section of the University Catalog, which may include a failing grade for the work in question or for the entire course. The following is one of

many websites that provide helpful information concerning plagiarism for both students and faculty: <http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml>

- **Ethics:**
Ethical behavior in the classroom is required of every student. The course will identify ethical policies and practices relevant to course topics.
- **Technology:**
Students are expected to be competent in using current technology appropriate for this discipline. Such technology may include word processing, spreadsheet, and presentation software. Use of the internet and e-mail may also be required.
- **Diversity:**
Learning to work with and value diversity is essential in every class. Students are expected to exhibit an appreciation for multinational and gender diversity in the classroom.
- **Civility:**
As a diverse community of learners, students must strive to work together in a setting of civility, tolerance, and respect for each other and for the instructor. Rules of classroom behavior (which apply to online as well as onsite courses) include but are not limited to the following:
 - Conflicting opinions among members of a class are to be respected and responded to in a professional manner.
 - Side conversations or other distracting behaviors are not to be engaged in during lectures, class discussions or presentations
 - There are to be no offensive comments, language, or gestures