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Internet and Distance Education Delivery Models

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Technological developments over the past twenty years have given people across the globe the ability to interact and obtain information at a tremendous rate. Due to these developments, the field of distance education is also growing at an exponential rate, as is the research conducted on the availability, effectiveness, and best practices for distance learning. This increased interest has led to a variety of options in distance learning systems and the primary methods for course delivery. Distance education courses are primarily taught via one of three course models: synchronous, asynchronous, or blended; choosing the best model requires consideration of course management and communication preferences.

The first model of distance learning is synchronous. Synchronous co[...] conducted in "real time," which means the instructors and students are onli[...] and typically interact via streaming video, live chat, or an Internet meeting [...] post or ask questions and receive immediate responses from the course inst[...] students.

In the asynchronous course model, the instruction is conducted when the students and instructor are not online at the same time. These classes typically occur through a distance-learning system that allows users to post and respond to messages in a specific location within the course. For example, Ashford University conducts online classes using the asynchronous method. Students and instructors are assigned to specific online courses. Within these courses, students participate in discussion forums, post assignments, and retrieve learning materials. Correspondence with the instructor is conducted primarily via the online course discussion forums and email. When the instructor and learners are separated by time and geographic location, asynchronous communication occurs. Asynchronous communication does not require

Here, the student has a clear thesis. The reader knows that this essay will be about three models of distance learning and how to choose the best one for a class.

The key words in this thesis should then be repeated throughout the essay, especially in the topic sentences of each paragraph.

the participants to interact simultaneously. Asynchronous learn[...]

of teaching and workplace situations.

> The **first sentence of each paragraph** clearly states the topic of the paragraph. Here, we know that this paragraph will define blended learning.

The final model is blended learning. The blended learning model is a combination of both synchronous and asynchronous delivery. The instructor may have a set lecture time during which all students log into the system to listen and interact with the class. The remainder of the week's instruction may then be conducted asynchronously by having students post additional discussions and questions to a specific location within the learning system.

All three models have strengths and weaknesses. Course designers, instructors, and other stakeholders have to choose the best model for their specific situation. Course management and communication needs are two of the factors decision-makers have to keep in mind when choosing the best distance education model for their class.

First, regardless of the delivery method, all distance-learning systems include course management. Within the course management system, instructional designers, course authors, and instructors have the ability to edit content, administer assign[...] interact with learners. The course management features of a distar[...] the key elements in the successful delivery of a distance education[...] include accessing course materials, following a calendar, location of assignment dropboxes, use of discussion threads, and other features within the chosen learning management system. Students' success is often related to their experience with the course technology (Caplow, 2006). If students are to be successful in learning at a distance, they must be comfortable with the media used to transmit the content of the course. Ultimately, the course management system should enhance the learner's experience.

> The main idea of this paragraph is "course management." The student sticks to this main idea throughout the paragraph. Having **one idea per paragraph** creates focus and organization.

An effective synchronous delivery, or course management, system motivates the learner,

provides sufficient time for learner and facilitator interaction, and operates the course at a steady

rate, allowing the learners time to reflect and ask questions. Synchronous delivery requires use of

some sort of meeting software. If choosing this model of instruction, course developers must

consider the ease and compatibility of accessing and using that software (Caplow, 2006). For

example, if students are geographically diverse, synchronous instruction may be difficult due to

varying time zones. Also, if students are international, they may not have the same access to

software. These could make the synchronous model difficult to use. On the other hand, this

model may be preferable for students as synchronous models often provide students with a

streamlined course without the bulk of asynchronous features.

Course management for asynchronous models is more com...

many different course features including discussion threads, cours...

modules, and other widgets. The distance education boom has led...

a management system capable of delivering courses and sharing information, while managing

the varied and often complex learning tools. As discussed by Caplow (2006), the most

significant aspects of the course management system include the ability to provide course

materials in a web-based format, access to online exams, and links to course materials in addition

to a system that supports student and faculty interaction in discussions and evaluation. Given the

increasing number of options available in distance education, the task of finding a course

management system that offers the necessary options, along with the ability to interact with other

technology solutions, can be daunting. The decision to implement a courseware management

system cannot be pieced together. All distance learning systems, from blended learning systems

to content

> Here, the student is providing an example. **Examples** help to show the reader details about the main idea.
>
> If a writer makes a claim, it can help to give an example to illustrate what that looks like. Examples can come from real life, research, or even hypothetical situations.

management, must have the capability and the resources necessary to interact with the course

management system.

Blended learning is in the unique situation of having to consider course management

options from both the synchronous and asynchronous point of view. While asynchronous and

synchronous learning systems each offer a specialized approach to distance learning, a blended

learning system can combine the tools of both systems to present an effective and convenient

learning experience. According to Watson (2010), "…blended learning combines online delivery

of educational content with the best features of classroom interaction and live instruction…" (p.

4). For example, training for supervisors may be divided into various sections. One section's

content may be taught via CD-ROM with the learners interacting through a newsgroup or

discussion board. The next section may be taught in the classroom setting. Fundamentally,

current blended learning models represent a transfer in instructional strategies, similar to the way

in which online learning demonstrated a change in the delivery and instructional mode

The **key words** in this topic sentence not only state the main idea of the paragraph, but they also connect back to the key words of the thesis.

learning at a distance (Watson, 2010).

The next major point to consider when choosing a distance education model is

communication. Communication is key to education. Historically, distance learning involved

only the student and instructor. Learners did not have the opportunity to communicate with one

another. Fortunately, technological advancements have brought much to the field of distance

learning. In the teaching arena of online learning today, asynchronous communication can be

accomplished by way of email, newsgroups for discussions, streaming video, and audio.

According to Witt and Mossler (2010), "Online classes also make it possible for students to learn

from working professionals in their fields who may be scattered across the country or around the

world," (para 1). In a synchronous setting, this communication takes place in "real time" which

most closely mimics the traditional classroom setting. Online synchronous course delivery offers

students and instructors a fo[...] instructor and students are n[...] at the same time. Within the[...] communication and transmission of course content. In *Transforming Learning Methods through Online Teaching* (Bach, Haynes, and Lewis Smith, 2006) the authors address the role of technology in improving academics, including the benefits of synchronous learning, particularly for younger students due to their familiarity with "chat room" technology. Bach, Haynes, and Lewis Smith (2006) state, "Synchronous communication develops its own curios and quite different type of narrative when compared with face-to-face discussion, and there is often a text based 'stream of consciousness'" (p. 135). Synchronous delivery of course instruction also allows for imm[...]ate feedback.

[...] hand, asynchronous communications allow learners to select the time and [...]ipation. Through emails and other asynchronous learning tools, students [...]rning community, set goals, and complete course work. In the workplace, [...]eract without concern for time differences or the high cost of international phone calls. With the asynchronous model, the user has greater control over the acquisition of information and the ability to set a convenient time for completing coursework, training, or job-related activities (Watson, 2010). In the asynchronous delivery model, learners must often wait for feedback or answers to questions.

> Although there are many ways to integrate and introduce research, one way to do this is to name the article or book, as the student does here.
>
> Naming the authors is another way to introduce research. Sometimes students can include a summary or paraphrase without this type of introduction.

> Here, the student has supported her point by including **evidence** from a source.
>
> She has also correctly **cited** this information by using the In-Text Citation Helper.

> Within each paragraph, the student is integrating research. Strong academic writing is research-based. When possible, any ideas or claims that are made should be backed up with proof from the research. On this page, we can see a few different methods for including research. It is important to note that all research, whether quoted or paraphrased, is cited. Research is also used inside the paragraph, and not to begin or end it. The writer has control over the paragraph that way, as they are able to state the main idea in the topic sentence and wrap up the paragraph in their own words.

Blended learning must again consider both the considerations of asynchronous and synchronous models. However, blended learning is able to tap into the strengths of both, while possibly avoiding the downsides, provided students have the flexibility to choose which communication channels to use (Picciano, 2001). Communication is an important factor to consider for each possible model.

Learning technologies have opened the doors to a wide variety of options for distance education delivery, and each learning model has benefits and limitations. The Internet and learning technologies provide the means for transmitting content, managing courses, and promoting the interaction of the instructor and learners. When selecting technology for a distance-learning program, the system that provides the best learning approach should be utilized. Around the world, students can join the same class, share information, and learn together. The field of distance education and the various learning systems are continually being revised and improved. Ideally, the most effective distance learning system is one that provides students with the resources to be successful distance learners.

> Writers can choose to name the author as part of the sentence, and then follow the name with a citation, or they can choose to cite the end of the sentence, without having named the author previously.

> A conclusion restates the main ideas of the essay. A strong conclusion will also state what is important or interesting about the research and topic. Including the significance of the topic leaves the reader with something to think about.

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> A reference page lists all of the sources used in the essay.
>
> This student has followed APA guidelines for formatting the sources.