

Initial Reflective Essay

As a freelance instructional designer, I work mostly with small companies looking to convert their on-the-ground workplace or compliance training into an asynchronous e-learning format. I enjoy the flexibility of working with different types of businesses with diverse training needs -be it general workplace training, soft skills development, compliance requirements, or professional development/continuing education- and the challenge of designing and implementing e-learning solutions to meet the specific needs of the business. For this reason, I see my general career goal as the ongoing development of my freelance instructional design business. My specific goals as I go through this program are:

- stabilize my still very shaky instructional design knowledge and skills foundation
- push myself to explore different directions within the field
- meet, interact and collaborate with, and, especially, learn from others working in other areas of the LDT field
- obtain a higher qualification (MSEd) to enhance my prospects in the LDT field

I consider my freelance instructional design business to be successful insofar as I have several clients for whom I truly enjoy creating, delivering and administering e-learning training on an ongoing basis. However, by completing this LDT program, I feel I will gain a much needed awareness and understanding of the different theoretical concepts and practical considerations underpinning what I've already learned in this first week is a very deep and diverse field. With the knowledge I expect to develop (and hopefully share) through this extended "community of practice" of colleagues and professors in the program, I have no doubt that I will be able to develop more impactful training for my clients.

Final Reflective Essay

It has been more than twenty years since I took a course in a degree program. One thing I immediately found challenging upon my return to school was having to write a research-based, literature review using materials sourced online. The last time I wrote a critical essay, the internet was in its infancy, book titles were located using a card catalog, journals were tucked away in the dusty stacks of the campus library, and I used the MLA format to document my sources. Because of my complete unfamiliarity with online library resources and the APA format, I found modules 3 and 5 to be immediately indispensable. Specifically, in Module 3, the link to the library guide and the tutorials on how to search the journal databases were instrumental in orienting me to the tools with which I would be doing most of my research.

Likewise, in the same library guide section, the tutorials on the APA were a welcome introduction to the formatting issues that I tried to be conscious of as I was writing my paper so that I wouldn't have to go back later and wrestle with what is a very particular format while racing to meet a deadline. In Module 5, the information literacy document was a great heuristic to focus me on the types of arguments the paper I would be writing. The "Evaluating Information Sources" was also invaluable since the LDT field has so many trade periodicals and academic

journals; the sheer variety can sometimes make it difficult to distinguish between the two types and appropriateness of selecting articles to cite in a research paper. I have no doubt that these tutorials, as well as the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL), will continue to be go-to resources for me for the duration of the program.

At the beginning of the course, I listed my goals as the following:

- stabilize my still very shaky instructional design knowledge and skills foundation
- push myself to explore different directions within the field
- meet, interact and collaborate with, and, especially, learn from others working in other areas of the LDT field
- obtain a higher qualification (MSEd) to enhance my prospects in the LDT field

After the first 8 weeks of the program, I can say that I've already made great progress in three of my four goals. Specifically, the "Foundations of Learning Design and Technology" course has been a great introduction to the field, not only in terms of introducing us to foundational concepts and theories, but also in getting us to think reflexively about the definition and nature of educational technology.

In terms of exploring other areas within the field, the readings in the "Foundations of Learning Design and Technology" course opened my eyes to the idea of performance, as well as other types of learning that I wasn't aware of, such as informal and situational learning. I knew that I would meet, interact and collaborate with others, but underestimated just how much I would learn from working with others in group projects and from reading and responding to discussion posts.

For my fourth goal, I'm still a long way away from achieving that, but as far as I'm concerned, the degree is almost secondary to what I've already learned from the amazing community of inquiry and practice we have here and from which I plan to learn so much more over the next year and a half.