

Minutes of the CAS Online Faculty Discussion Group
October 25, 2007
3:00 PM

Attendees:

Eric Blazek, Patrice Brink, Karen Cozart, Agymah Kamau, Betsy Martens (*via video-conferencing from Tulsa*), Tammara Williams-Dias, Amanda York.

I. Introductions. Attendees introduced themselves. Williams-Dias hosted the meeting.

II. Group Work in Online Courses

A. Williams-Dias asked the group about current or past experiences with group work in an online course. Martens volunteered that she currently uses group work in two of her online courses, one in which the class members already know one another and one in which they do not. She said that in her experience it seems to work better when the class members already know each other.

B. Williams-Dias outlined some Best Practices associated with group work in an online course.

- Create situations or assignments that encourage the equitable distribution of the workload.
- Specify and define the roles available with groups. This clarifies for students exactly what their responsibilities will be as group members. Examples might be “researcher” or “communicator.”
- Assign students to roles within their groups. Assignments can be based on individual student interests or characteristics. This information might be gleaned from introductory comments from students solicited at the beginning of the semester.
- Take care to monitor group progress and intervene if necessary so that naturally dominant students do not exercise undue influence over the project and that ‘less motivated’ students are not shirking their responsibilities.
- Assign a grade for the project that takes into consideration both project quality/completion as well as group participation including peer evaluations.
- Groups should generally be no larger than five members, and odd numbers work better than even for the purposes of group decision-making.

III. The Use of Media in Online Instruction

- A. TEACH Act checklist: Williams-Dias presented a checklist and website for assisting instructors in following copyright laws and restrictions and in deciding when and how to use media resources in instruction:
http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/scc/legislative/teachkit/expanded_checklist.html
- B. Kamau asked a question about the usability of publishers' websites in online instruction. Williams-Dias answered that they should only be used if they can be linked to and navigated freely by students. Copy-protected items of any type cannot be used without proper permission. Items or pages from publishers' websites cannot be copied and pasted into D2L or any course management system. Cozart noted that sometime publishers will "unbundle" access to instructional sections of their websites for a small fee or just registration of the user. If an instructor wishes to make use of something like this, it must be spelled-out in the syllabus for the students.
- C. Kamau also asked about the usability of recorded public performances. Williams-Dias responded that the TEACH Act specifically mentions the copyright restrictions associated with use of free public performances of non-dramatic literary and musical works, as long as they are lawfully made and/or acquired. Williams-Dias suggested any instructor who is interested in using such materials, in the absence of an official policy from OU Legal Services, should consult the language of the TEACH Act for clarification.

IV. Online Course Design and Development

- A. Williams-Dias asked for questions or comments regarding course development or design. Martens mentioned that though she misses the pager tool in D2L 8.1, she has worked around the lack by establishing discussion boards specifically for student questions and by encouraging more email communication.
- B. Cozart noted that OU will be moving to D2L 8.2 next year and that IT is purchasing a server for the new version and will be setting up test courses and university-wide training this spring or summer.

V. Wrap Up

- A. The next scheduled Discussion Group meeting is Thursday, November 29, 2007, at 3:00 pm.
- B. The meeting adjourned at about 4:00 pm.