

## A1: Systems Map - The Learning Design and Technology Graduate Program at Winthrop University

LTEC 647

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### System Description

Winthrop's [Learning Design and Technology](https://www.winthrop.edu/graduateschool/master-of-education-in-learning-design-and-technology.aspx/) graduate program, <https://www.winthrop.edu/graduateschool/master-of-education-in-learning-design-and-technology.aspx/>, is fully online and designed for working adults. Students study and learn digital audio and video, environmental scanning, learning theory, assessment, instructional design, website design, learning design, performance technology, eLearning materials, educational multimedia, graphic design, informational design, and analysis applicable for K-12, higher education, and corporate arenas. There is no GRE requirement and the program takes 22 months to complete. Cohorts consist of diverse adult learners beginning each fall semester.

The Learning Design & Technology (LDT) graduate program is an open system as it is subject to influences from the environment. Some examples of environmental factors include economic concerns in terms of state funding and student enrollment as well as overall attitudes and thoughts about online graduate education. In response to the environment, the program has been modified since its origin to better accommodate working students. The program also collaborates with educational institutions, businesses, and other organizations to offer real-world contexts and applications for students' learning. These inputs influence the program's throughput by helping keep the curriculum relevant and allowing students to gain hands-on experience. In addition to the external environment, the program collaborates internally with other departments within the College of Education, Sport, and Human Sciences, and leverages the resources provided by Winthrop University's Graduate School.

### Major Components of the System

#### 1. University President

The president of Winthrop University sets the strategic vision and direction of the university. This may include objectives related to online education as a whole, the College of Education, Graduate Programs, and program funding.

## **2. Division of Academic Affairs/Provost's Office**

The university provost is the chief executive for the division of Academic Affairs, under which the LDT program exists. The provost is responsible for ensuring academic quality, making decisions related to faculty affairs, and aids the president in setting the strategic vision for academic programs.

## **3. Graduate School**

The Graduate School sets standards, policies, and procedures for all graduate programs, including LDT. They manage graduate admissions, financial aid services, and assist with recruitment and orientation of new students. The Graduate School also coordinates with the College of Education to ensure requirements are met for the LDT program to be accredited.

## **4. College of Education**

The LDT program is housed within the College of Education and is therefore subject to their policies and priorities. All LDT faculty are members of the College of Education and the College awards all degrees to students. The College also offers financial support to students in the form of scholarships and graduate assistantships. Additionally, the College of Education coordinates with the Graduate School to ensure requirements are met for the LDT program to be accredited.

## **5. Winthrop Office of Online Learning (WOOL)**

The Office of Online Learning provides support for all online learning components of Winthrop programs, providing additional support for fully online programs such as LDT. The office also provides training and certifications to faculty in online teaching methods and tools as well as technical support to students.

## **6. Graduate Advisors/Program Director**

The LDT program director is responsible for managing the day-to-day as well as strategic growth of the program. The director works with faculty, students, and the Graduate School to ensure the program meets its educational goals.

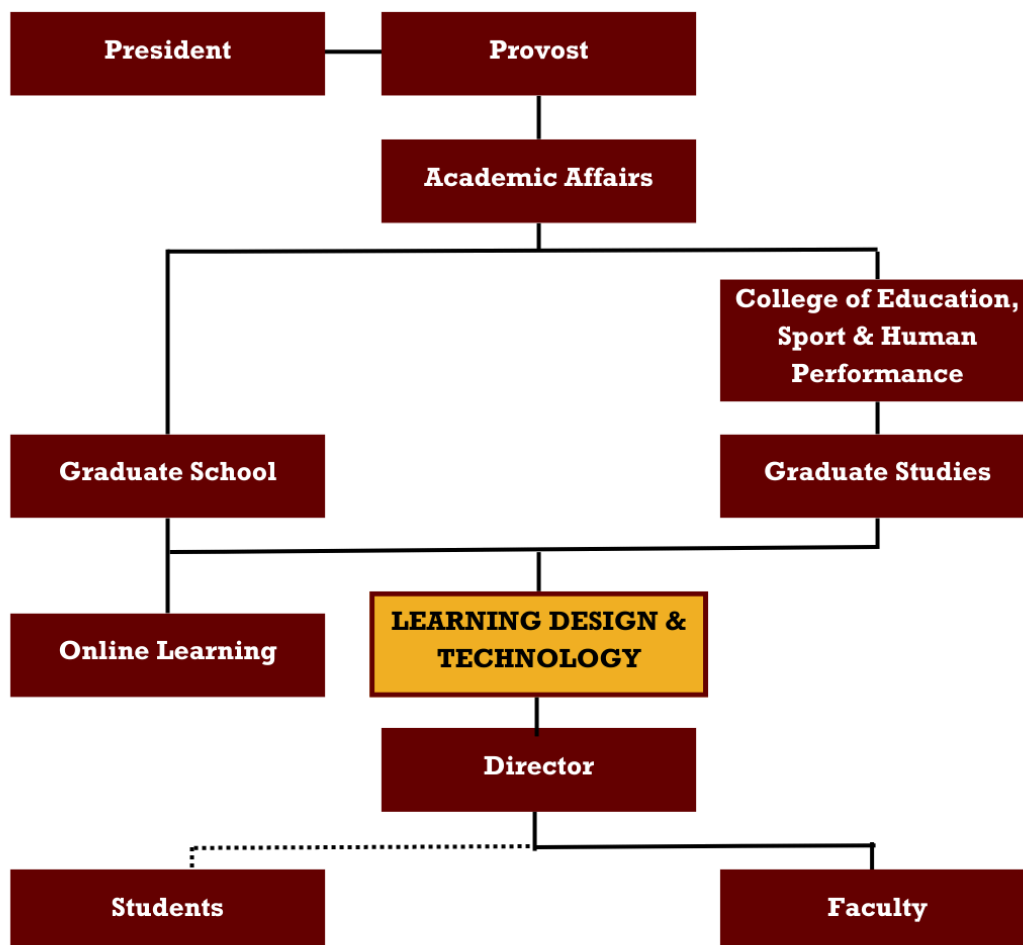
## 7. Faculty

Faculty in the LDT program report to both the College of Education and the LDT program director. They are responsible for creating and delivering valuable educational experiences for students.

## 8. Students

Students are the main recipients in the LDT system. They receive the learning from the program and are essential stakeholders. Students financially support the system through tuition and are essential players in recruitment, both through testimonials and direct referral. Without students, the LDT program would not exist.

### Learning Design & Technology System Components



*\*students do not report to the program director as employees*

# Inputs and Outputs

## *Inputs*

1. **Student Enrollment:** the amount of students who enroll, or remain enrolled, in the program each semester or cohort.
2. **Faculty Expertise:** the amount of skills, research, and knowledge the professors invest in their courses and programs.
3. **Curriculum Development & Research:** the time professors invest in learning new skills, knowledge, technology, and innovations for their programs and courses.
4. **Student Tuition:** this refers to the amount of money each student pays to attend the university, including fees for campus and courses.
5. **University Funding:** the amount and types of money the university brings in each year, including grants, loans, tuition, and state or federal funds.
6. **Online Learning Technology:** this could include learning management systems, open educational resources, textbooks, articles, and videos.
7. **Time:** the amount of time students and faculty actively invest in their courses and programs to achieve their goals.

## **Throughputs**

The LDT program takes the multiple inputs from its environment and processes them to create the desired outputs. Within itself, the LDT program provides enrolled students with well-researched and designed coursework to support their understanding of learning, design, technology, and educational concepts. Through readings, assignments, projects, advising, and collaboration with their colleagues, students add this new learning to their existing knowledge base. Faculty may adjust their teaching methods or work with students individually throughout the program to support student success based on immediate, internal feedback loops. These can manifest in advising conversations with faculty and students, direct questions from students, and grades on individual assignments. Ultimately, these throughputs within the LDT program aim to produce intended positive outputs from the system.

## *Outputs*

1. **Grades & Student Knowledge:** the tangible and intangible results of growth for students in relation to program completion, knowledge and skills.
2. **Degrees:** the documentation that graduates can use to apply to jobs in their related fields.
3. **Referrals and Testimonials:** the feedback alumni can provide regarding their successes and advice for prospective students.
4. **Professional Advancement Opportunities for Graduates:** the ability for students to attain more lucrative opportunities, promotions, or new career paths.
5. **Course Evaluation Data:** the accumulation of data provided by students assessing the relevance and effectiveness of the courses and programs, the skills they attained (or did not attain), and the skills, knowledge, and attitudes of their instructors.
6. **Enhanced Learning Experience:** the sense of accomplishment and overall effectiveness of the program.

## Feedback Loops

### *Negative Feedback Loops*

#### 1. **Low Graduation Rates/High Dropout Rates**

A high number of students not persisting through the entirety of the program indicates a serious issue with the program itself or with student support systems. While factors outside of the program's control may affect individual students, consistent dropouts represent potentially deep-rooted issues in both the LDT program and the larger institutional system. High dropout rates damage the university's reputation, thus making it harder for the program to attract new students. This impact on enrollment increases the likelihood of financial issues for the program. Resolving dropout rates is vital for students to succeed and for the program to be successful.

#### 2. **Low Application Numbers**

This is a number of students who apply to the program any given semester. When fewer people apply to the program, it could be a sign of

marketing deficiencies that should be addressed. Low application numbers could also be a sign that potential students are aware of the program, but either do not see the value of the program or are experiencing barriers to applying. These barriers could be financial restrictions, time limitations, or intrinsic insecurities about being a graduate student. A low number of applications means that fewer students will be admitted to the program, thus limiting the financial fuel to the system via tuition. Consistently low application numbers may also cause the university to consider if the program is worth offering at all.

### **3. Negative Course Evaluations**

Course evaluations are opportunities for students to provide feedback to administration regarding their courses material, environment, and instructor attitude or skill. Feedback from evaluations may be used to help improve these components in future course offerings. Negative evaluations may show that a course did not meet student expectations or that students did not enjoy the course for various reasons.

### **4. Low Student Grades**

Low or failing student grades in program courses could indicate that students struggled to understand the material thoroughly. This could stem from various factors such as a lack of understanding, inadequate support resources, or external circumstances affecting their ability to study or manage their time effectively. It's important to analyze these issues to pinpoint specific areas of difficulty and provide the necessary support to help students overcome these challenges and succeed.

## ***Positive Feedback Loops***

### **1. High Graduation Rates**

A high percentage of students completing the program and graduating indicates that students understood the value of the program and had the support needed to complete the coursework. The caliber and quantity of graduates joining the workforce can boost the university's reputation. Competent and professional Winthrop alumni elevate the school's standing, attracting future students. Moreover, successful graduates often

give back through contributions and mentorship, fostering a supportive cycle for the University.

## **2. Progression Rates**

When more students are able to move forward and graduate from their programs, it shows that the university provides support for students while also providing rigorous courses that prepare their students for new careers. This makes the university look good to prospective students. Also, when more students graduate, they become part of a strong group of alumni who support and promote the university. This makes the university even better known and respected, which can help attract more talented students and resources.

## **3. High Application Numbers**

A large number of applications to the program indicates that prospective students are aware of the program's existence and they value what the program can offer them. High application numbers may be a result of effective marketing techniques, positive perception of graduate education in general, growing LDT industry needs, effective alumni referrals, or other factors. Applications may stem from positive system outputs and go on to feed the program as system inputs.

## **4. Positive Course Evaluations**

These show that the students gained something from the course. Course evaluations analyze the course material, environment, and instructor. The evaluation feedback is used to improve the course material, learning environment, and possibly attitude and skills of the instructor. The purpose of the evaluations is to receive feedback from students to help improve the course's value.

## **5. High Student Grades**

Grades are used to quantify whether students developed a solid grasp of the material. High grades could be attributed to several factors such as a thorough understanding of the content, sufficient resources, and effective management skills.