

Recommendation for Review of EPIC30

Lodge McCammon

Background

The EPIC30 course is an online teaching certification, created and offered by the eLearning Support and Instructional Design team at Wake Tech. Registration is open to both Wake Tech instructors and the general public, though all instructors who wish to teach online at Wake Tech are required to complete this course. The primary objective is to ensure a minimum standard is met for online courses offered at Wake Tech.

In response to a conversation about change management and the courses the team offers, Mary Walton, Director of eLearning Support and Instructional Design at Wake Tech, shared the following: “As many of you may have already heard, the data we are getting from EPIC shows that instructor certification has made no significant impact on student success. Data also shows that there has been little or inconsistent implementation of the EPIC standards and practices.” Given this, the EPIC30 course warrants review from an instructional/process design approach, which I am prepared to facilitate and execute.

Options for Review

The background provides an incomplete picture of the data associated with EPIC30 and begs more questions than it answers. In particular, we know the implementation of the EPIC standards and practices are inconsistent, but we do not fully understand why this is the case. Below are a few options for how to move forward with getting a better understanding of the disconnect between training and implementation; I can help execute any/all of the following options:

- A. **Find a link between content presentation and implementation.** Look at the data to determine what standards are more/less likely to be implemented. Then look at the course(s) and see how those standards are taught to determine if there is a correlation between how content is presented and likelihood of implementation.
- B. **Rank order the standards.** Use the available data/research to organize the standards based on their impact on student success. For example, providing a standardized format for all lessons from week to week is likely to have a more positive impact on student success than ensuring all resources and materials used in the course are appropriately cited. Use these findings to ensure the courses strategically prioritize those standards that have the greatest impact on students.
- C. **Standardize the instruction for EPIC30.** Without a standardized approach to teaching the course, it's impossible to determine why the inconsistent implementation of the standards exists. For example, team members differ in how they use the Capstone Rubric to assess the Capstone Project. These kinds of instructional inconsistencies could explain the inconsistent

implementation. To solve this, create a training on how to facilitate EPIC30 and standardize the instruction.

- D. **Align the evaluation to the course content.** Make sure what we are requiring in the course(s) is what we are evaluating. For example, in EPIC30 we require faculty members to build one complete lesson. However, in the Module 7 checklist and rubric, we are supposed to assess course-level items (e.g., Course calendar or schedule has a clear breakdown based on the structure of the course). However, we are not able to assess course-level standards because we only see one sample lesson. If faculty members are only required to build one lesson during the training, but we evaluate whether they implemented course-level standards, that means the training and evaluation are not aligned. This misalignment could explain the inconsistent implementation after course completion. To solve this, either ensure that all the standards are taught in the training or limit the evaluation to only look for only those activities/expectations that were included in the training.
- E. **Enhance the instructional practices used in EPIC30.** There is an opportunity to improve the outcomes from EPIC30. A proposal for this option as well data from a recent pilot study follows.

Enhancement of EPIC30 Instructional Practices

Proposal

A review of the available research suggests that to achieve improved outcomes in online programs, we need to focus on enhancing key aspects of the learning experience in the EPIC30 course. I believe this can be achieved through the integration of video walkthroughs.

- **Increase Instructor Presence:** We can achieve this by creating video walkthroughs for each task, embedding the instructor in the course. These overviews will be emailed directly to the course participants and will function outside the current structure of the course.
- **Improve Clarity:** The video walkthroughs will allow course participants to see exactly what they need to do and why. This will help us avoid giving faculty members failing grades on assignments and/or requiring them to re-submit their work.
- **Increase Engagement:** The video walkthroughs will remove barriers and slowdowns present in the current task completion regiment. Fewer barriers and slowdowns will result in increased learning flow and engagement.
- **Improve Relevance:** We will use what we know about what is working in Wake Tech online courses to include the most relevant and compelling examples in the video walkthroughs.
- **Increase Efficiency:** The video walkthroughs will allow students to efficiently move through and process all tasks.
- **Create Personalized Learning:** When faculty members finish Module 6, they receive two customized videos. The first video will be created by an instructional designer and will provide tips on how to streamline and clarify lessons. The second video will be created by an accessibility specialist and will provide tips on how to address accessibility issues. These videos provide a custom overview of what changes/additions need to be made to meet some of the additional standards outlined in the Module 7 checklist and rubric.

Pilot

This summer, I recorded this [series of video walkthroughs](#) for my EPIC30 participants (10 faculty members in total). I sent these videos via email, external to the official workings of the course. The video walkthroughs turned the course into more of a structured “mastery” experience, providing opportunities for faculty to share different ways they would customize their courses and allowing them to deviate from the structure I presented. I also recorded a personalized video for each faculty member before they started Module 7, providing some instructional design tips for their respective courses (Two examples: [Narasimhan Sujatha](#) and [Riann Hammond Shackett](#).) Each faculty member made all the changes included in these custom videos before turning in their final EPIC30 assignment.

Preliminary Findings

There were a variety of benefits in using the aforementioned videos, including:

- I received a very small number of questions from participants asking for clarification about the tasks.
- Grading submissions was easy and quick because most were standardized/uniform.
- The majority of participants received grades of 100% on their submissions, meaning that virtually no one had to re-submit their work due to missing/incorrect tasks.
- Participants seemed to appreciate the videos, based on some of the responses I received:
 - “I am happy to say that my course instructor, Lodge McCammon, has modeled for me what instructor presence can do to students. Very timely feedback on discussions in the forum, regular emails reminding us about what we are doing and what we will be doing, including tips for assignments via video, and making me feel comfortable to reach out for help even when I have the simplest of questions, have made a big difference. I hope to include many of these methods when I will be teaching purely online for the first time in the Fall.”
 - “Hello. I just wanted to touch base with you and see if you have done the video for module 5 yet and if so could you send it to me? I have taken a break from EPIC for about a week but am wanting to start back again. I find your videos so helpful as I am doing the modules.”
 - “Thank you for helping me with EPIC this semester. It hasn't been quite as stressful as I thought it would be! I find the videos you have made for the different modules VERY helpful when I am working on the module instructor tasks. I have finished module 3 and am starting module 4. I was wondering if you have made videos for module 4 and after, where you are completing the tasks. If so, would you mind emailing them to me. My father is having surgery soon and I am going to be helping him and I was hoping to get ahead.”
 - “I look forward in getting your videos on Mod 6 & 7. I'm wanting to get those completed soon as I can. I might have to get back to northern Indiana as soon as I get the call about my Mother's health. I don't want to leave with things unfinished.”

Recommendation

Based on the results of the pilot, the next step would be an expansion. Integrating the video walkthroughs into the next iteration of EPIC30, as an expansion to the pilot, would allow us to determine whether the findings from the initial pilot would scale to a larger group of participants. I have a few suggestions for how to move forward with a pilot expansion:

1. Collect feedback from the team on the content in the video walkthroughs, ensuring that the videos are accurate and comprehensive. Re-record any videos that need to be updated.
2. Collect feedback from the team on the content of the personalized videos, aligning on what will be included in those presentations.
3. Identify a lead instructional designer and a lead accessibility specialist who will create these personalized videos for use with all participants in the next iteration of EPIC30.

Research Questions

If we move forward with this pilot expansion, there are a few research questions we can consider.

Do the above strategies...

1. result in increased implementation of the EPIC standards and practices?
2. allow faculty to move through the training with greater efficiency?
3. increase participant satisfaction with the training?
4. decrease the amount of grading required by the EPIC30 instructors?