

CMU's ProfEd

Articulation of the Faculty Role



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The Faculty Project was initiated in support of a college-wide strategic planning effort, focused in part, on the needs and concerns of CMU's ProfEd faculty. Identification of primary issues was achieved through national focus group discussions involving over eighty ProfEd faculty,

academic department chairs and ProfEd administrators. Results of these discussions were shared with participants and reviewed by the Academic Advisory Council, who in turn set priorities for addressing the most pressing needs. The top priority was defined as follows:

Articulation / communication of teaching and learning standards

1. Articulate ProfEd academic standards and expectations
2. Enhance the Faculty Handbook to address issues of teaching quality including strategies for teaching in flexible delivery formats and teaching pedagogy/ androgogy
3. Involve ProfEd instructors and students in a discussion of academic expectations
4. Take a public stand on quality by clearly communicating academic expectations and putting them into practice

The model

Articulation of the expectations and responsibilities of faculty and students in CMU's Off-Campus Programs programs serves several important organizational functions:

- Establishment of consistent standards
- Creation of improved systems for the recruitment, selection and re-approval of faculty
- Identification of faculty development needs to guide the faculty mentoring process
- Clarification of the roles and responsibilities of faculty and students in the academic process
- Establishment of priorities for development of faculty support systems
- Articulation of criteria for the evaluation of faculty performance and recognition of outstanding faculty

The faculty project task force

The Faculty Project Task Force was appointed by the leadership of ProfEd and consists of directors of ProfEd's academic programs, regional directors and other Academic Advisory Council members. The Task Force was charged with completion of the following assignments:

- Establish expectations for ProfEd faculty and define job responsibilities
- Establish expectations for ProfEd students
- Involve ProfEd faculty in the discussion of expectations for faculty and students
- Inform faculty and students of each other's expectations

Together with Task Force Coordinators – Megan Goodwin, Terry Rawls, and Lana Ivanitskaya – task force members defined a process for meeting goals and reported outcomes to Larry Smiley, Associate Dean of ProfEd. The following steps were particularly instrumental in articulating the roles of faculty and students in the academic process.

1. Review of existing resources, including adult learning literature and literature on indicators of teaching effectiveness, the ProfEd faculty contract and handbook, and CMU bulletin
2. Definition of responsibilities and expectations for faculty/ students in behavioral terms
3. A university-wide discussion of the drafted documents
4. Revision of drafts and review of appropriate ProfEd documentation for consistency of language
5. Identification of opportunities for distribution of the completed documents consistent with the college-wide promotion of enhanced learning outcomes and best practices in adult learning and flexible delivery formats

At the conclusion of their analysis, the Task Force drafted and approved two primary documents; *“Maximizing Learning: ProfEd's Expectations for the Faculty Role and Definition of Faculty Responsibilities”* and *“Maximize Your Learning: CMU's Off-Campus Programs Expectations for Students.”* These documents were distributed to focus group participants and senior staff in Fall 2000, along with surveys requesting reader reactions to the drafts. Appropriate changes to the documents have been completed and are reflected in the following materials.

Maximizing learning:

ProfEd's expectations for the faculty role and definition of faculty responsibilities

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to specify behaviors essential to the effectiveness of ProfEd instructors. A ProfEd instructor is defined as an individual assigned to teach for Central Michigan University through the College of Extended Learning.

The role of a ProfEd instructor

ProfEd's overarching goal is to provide its learners with quality educational experiences that promote lifelong learning and achieve measurable learning outcomes. The following document specifies observable instructor behaviors, teaching practices and underlying pedagogical principles widely associated with *teaching effectiveness*. The document also specifies essential means by which instructors indirectly enhance the learning environment and improve academic outcomes, including regular participation in professional development activities and consistent alignment with ProfEd's procedures and policies.

How this document was created

ProfEd's requirements for its faculty were derived from existing documentation on the role of ProfEd faculty and faculty contracts. Essential instructor behaviors were inferred from state-of-the-art research literature on best practices in adult learning and indicators of teaching effectiveness dating from the 1960s to the present (see References). Literature reviews targeted principles and instructor behaviors demonstrating empirical relationships with desirable student outcomes, primarily measured as achievement on classroom and standardized tests of academic performance.

Teaching as a creative and innovative process

ProfEd recognizes that teaching is a creative and innovative process combining both the essential behaviors required of all university faculty and the less concrete techniques and approaches instructors should emphasize to enhance students' learning. In recognition of these two contributory elements, the attached document contains two separate sections: Part One: ProfEd's requirements for the faculty role and Part Two: ProfEd's expectations for its faculty role.

Part One describes those instructor behaviors that are considered required elements of ProfEd's faculty job description. Part Two describes in greater detail eight instructional principles essential to teaching effectiveness and required of all ProfEd faculty. Several behavioral examples of each instructional principle were included to help all faculty, particularly those new to the profession, to successfully integrate these best practices into their existing teaching styles. Strategies were selected in accordance with their strong empirical relationships to enhanced learning outcomes among adult students in flexible delivery formats.

Part one: ProfEd's requirements for the faculty role

I. Plan teaching sessions

1. Understand the goals and objectives of the overarching academic program
2. Construct a syllabus (course outline)¹, including a course description, goals and objectives as they appear in the Master Course Syllabus¹ and CMU Bulletin
3. Design teaching sessions from the course syllabus or a Master Course Outline¹

II. Integrate principles for effective adult learning in flexible delivery format instruction

1. See eight *Teaching and Learning Principles* listed in Part Two of this document

III. Assess student learning using reliable and valid measures²

1. At the start of the course, explain the criteria for evaluating each graded course requirement and the weight of each requirement in determining the student's final grade
2. Require multiple class assignments, including pre-course assignments
3. Design multiple assessments of learner performance that link to the course goals and objectives

IV. Monitor and evaluate teaching

1. Maintain awareness of verbal and non-verbal communication (e.g., voice pitch and volume, alertness, eye contact, body language, animated facial expressions) to show energy, give positive encouragement to students and convey enthusiasm for the subject
2. Seek and use self, peer and student feedback

V. Prioritize professional development

1. Complete an orientation for new faculty before the first class meeting
2. Conduct regular reviews of current research in the field to add to and/or update class materials
3. Participate in at least one formal faculty development activity every year
4. Participate in at least one regional ProfEd faculty development seminar every two to three years
5. Seek support and advice from colleagues (mentors, instructors, ProfEd staff) and provide the same for fellow faculty and staff

VI. Follow CMU/ProfEd procedures

1. Submit a course outline that is in compliance with the course outline guide
2. Meet with students for the required contact hours
3. Honor class dates and locations
4. Maintain compliance with copyrights
5. Maintain compliance with procedural deadlines (e.g., deadlines for submitting class materials and grades)
6. Retain assignments used for determining student grades for one year *or* give graded assignments back to students

¹ Underlined items appear in the Glossary of Terms.

² The importance of learning outcomes assessment is further underscored in Principle 4.8, 7.1 – 7.5, 8.4

Part two: ProfEd's expectations for its faculty

Behaviors consistent with enhanced teaching effectiveness

Engage in behaviors consistent with the following principles for effective adult learning in flexible delivery format classes:

Principle 1. Understand and respect individual differences

- 1.1 Show respect for students by calling them by their names
- 1.2 Discover students' learning styles¹, interests, assumptions about learning and backgrounds at the beginning of a course
- 1.3 Incorporate class activities that recognize and address varied learning styles¹
- 1.4 Capitalize on learners' backgrounds by adding relevant learning materials and activities
- 1.5 Examine students' motives to learn class material
- 1.6 Determine learners' understanding of prerequisite material
- 1.7 Provide additional materials/exercises, as needed, to improve the understanding of less knowledgeable students and challenge the abilities of more knowledgeable students
- 1.8 Assess student knowledge using more than one type of evaluation (e.g., multiple choice, essay questions, projects)
- 1.9 Respect minority opinion and keep disagreements civil

Principle 2. Set expectations and establish purpose

- 2.1 Establish ground rules for class management and conduct; tell students what is expected of them and what can be expected of the instructor
- 2.2 Prior to the start of instruction, review (as stated in the syllabus/course outline¹)
 - 2.2.1 Objectives for the class
 - 2.2.2 Policies regarding class participation, attendance, overdue assignments and re-taking examinations
 - 2.2.3 Instructor's physical or electronic office hours, contact information and routine response turn-around time
- 2.3 Minimize negotiation of expectations by treating the class outline as if it were a contract; changes to the class outline should be communicated to students in writing
- 2.4 Explain how the course relates to other courses in the program
- 2.5 Prior to each class meeting, provide learners with an advance organizer¹ (e.g., learning objectives, connection to previous classes, broader context for class material)
- 2.6 Explain why specific topics are being taught and how they relate to professional opportunities
- 2.7 Clearly state the amount and level of in-class and out-of-class work expected of students
- 2.8 Explain that students may be expected to know and understand things that may not be directly addressed in the classroom
- 2.9 Explain that the classroom environment is but one source of student learning; course objectives can be accomplished through other means (e.g., independent learning or practice)

Principle 3. Application

- 3.1 Design learning activities that reinforce the acquisition of course content (content-oriented activities) and its application (problem-centered activities)
- 3.2 Use focused application to integrate new material and existing knowledge
- 3.3 Relate outside events/activities to the subject of study
- 3.4 Discuss course material within the context of concrete, real-life situations
- 3.5 Provide opportunities for reflection on the application of new learning (e.g., ask learners to summarize how new knowledge can be applied to their jobs)

Principle 4. Variety

- 4.1 Use attention-gaining devices (e.g., begin with a challenging question, visual or example)
- 4.2 Achieve class objectives by using a variety of instructional techniques¹ (e.g., literature reviews, demonstrations, field trips, structured discussions, panel discussions) and instructional aids (overhead transparencies, videotapes, handouts and Internet)
- 4.3 Design learning activities (e.g., data gathering and analysis) that develop higher-order cognitive skills such as summarizing, synthesizing, analyzing, and applying
- 4.4 Design learning activities to stimulate as many sensory modalities¹ (e.g., vision and hearing) as possible
- 4.5 Organize instruction to allow for demonstration (explanation, discussion) and guided practice
- 4.6 Use different question types¹ (e.g., fact and process questions, convergent and divergent questions, questions of policy and/or value)
- 4.7 Assign work to small and large groups
- 4.8 Assess student learning using different kinds of evaluations (e.g., papers, projects, tests, case studies) and test types¹ (e.g., multiple choice, essay, short answer, true/false)

Principle 5. Maximize and optimize learners' "time on task"

- 5.1 Guide students to set challenging goals for their own learning
- 5.2 Establish and communicate systematic milestones (e.g., paper drafts, quizzes, review) to keep students on schedule and moving toward a clearly defined goal
- 5.3 Communicate the importance of scheduling frequent, self-paced study sessions
- 5.4 Organize instruction around learning outcomes specified in the syllabus (course outline)¹
- 5.5 Organize clerical tasks before the class and establish procedures for dealing with unexpected interruptions
- 5.6 Communicate the minimum amount of time students should spend preparing for a class
- 5.7 Balance highly and moderately challenging tasks¹ for optimal student learning
- 5.8 Use direct instruction¹ for teaching facts, rules, and action sequences; and indirect instruction¹ for teaching concepts, patterns, abstractions
- 5.9 Provide periodic reviews or summaries of previously covered content
- 5.10 If a student misses a class, require him or her to make up lost work
- 5.11 Require that students use libraries and other information resources appropriate for accomplishing course objectives (e.g., OCLS¹, Internet)
- 5.12 Give pre- and/or post-class assignments

Principle 6. Communication and cooperation

- 6.1 Present classroom material in a clear and interpretable manner consistent with high degrees of cognitive, oral and written clarity¹
- 6.2 Encourage students to ask questions
- 6.3 Ask open-ended questions that draw out relevant learner knowledge and experience
- 6.4 Ask learners to tell each other about their interests and backgrounds
- 6.5 Encourage classroom cooperation; create student project teams within a course
- 6.6 Fulfill the terms of the syllabus (course outline)¹ regarding instructor availability, accessibility and response turn-around (see Principle 2.2.3)

Principle 7. Feedback

- 7.1 Provide opportunities for informal, non-evaluative feedback on the acquisition and application of new course material (e.g., solicit group responses, provide handouts with correct answers for self-checking)
- 7.2 Distribute performance evaluations throughout the course to provide ongoing feedback on the quality of each student's performance
- 7.3 Include written comments specifying the strengths and weaknesses of each student's performance on a given assignment
- 7.4 Provide classroom exercises and problems which give learners immediate feedback about their performance
- 7.5 Solicit student feedback about class at multiple points in the course
- 7.6 Use a mix of rewards and reinforcers (e.g., meaningful verbal praise, starting a class strictly on time to reward punctual students) to facilitate a positive learning environment
- 7.7 Return graded assignments within the time frame established in Principle 2.2.3
- 7.8 Assign final grades according to each student's individual achievement and contribution (e.g., to group projects)

Principle 8. Encourage metacognitive learning

- 8.1 Facilitate learners' *reflection* on how they think and learn (e.g., ask learners to reflect on prior experiences, keep learning diaries, review drafts of work, complete learning-style inventories and examine assumptions and diverse perspectives)
- 8.2 Facilitate learners' *regulation* of how they think and learn (e.g., ask learners to challenge personal assumptions, determine the order of steps to be taken to complete a learning task, evaluate task difficulty, engage in meaning-making logic, create knowledge maps, share learning experiences)
- 8.3 Use teaching strategies¹ that model desirable learning behaviors (i.e., *processes* such as note taking, outlining and concept mapping) and outcomes (i.e., *products* such as summaries, project reports, knowledge maps)
- 8.4 Encourage and guide student self assessment (e.g., ask learners to evaluate their progress toward a learning goal)
- 8.5 Provide opportunities for *integration* of new learning (e.g., ask learners to analyze how new information relates to their existing knowledge).

¹ Underlined items appear in the Glossary of Terms.

Glossary of Terms

Advance organizer – A bridging strategy that assists learners in connecting prior knowledge and new knowledge. Advance organizers are different from overviews and summaries which simply emphasize key ideas. An advance organizer establishes a transition between what the student already knows and new learning and acts as a logical framework for the learner to make sense out of the new material. It could be a model, a brief explanation of what is to be learned or a rich and powerful transition statement that assists a learner in understanding how the information to be learned “fits in” with what is already known. An advance organizer is a practical implication of Ausubel’s subsumption theory of meaningful verbal learning (Ausubel, 1963). In subsumption theory, meaningful learning is determined by the logical organization of the learner’s prior knowledge to incorporate the new knowledge. Research has revealed that logical organization is facilitated through the advance organizer operating as a framework which organizes knowledge to induce long-term retention and transfer of general concepts (Kraiger, Salas, & Cannon-Bowers, 1995; Mayer, 1979; Mayer, 1989).

Challenging tasks – Researchers have found that learners who spent from 60-70% of their time on tasks that afford the opportunity for moderate to high levels of success had higher achievement scores and better retention of learned material. Success rates are high when learners understand the task and make only occasional careless errors. Success rate is medium when learners have partial understanding but make some substantive errors and low when learners do not understand material at all. Organizing and planning instruction that yields moderate to high success rates but at the same time is not repetitive or time wasting have been shown to be a key behavior for effective teaching (Brophy & Everston, 1976; Fisher, Filby, Marliave, Cahen, Dishaw, Moore, & Berliner, 1978).

Clarity – This quality refers to the clearness and interpretability of an instructor’s class presentation. Research indicates that instructors who teach with high degrees of clarity can allocate more time to course instruction and less time to going over previously taught material or answering repetitive questions (e.g., Smith & Land, 1981). Instructional clarity has two components: cognitive clarity (e.g., are the points made by the instructor understandable) and oral clarity (e.g., is the instructor’s oral delivery clear, audible, intelligible and free of distracting mannerisms). The cognitive and oral clarity of an instructor’s presentation varies substantially among teachers and may produce significant differences in student performance on cognitive tests of achievement.

Direct / indirect instruction – Researchers (e.g., Borich, 1989) suggest that the acquisition of facts, rules, and actions sequences is best facilitated through direct instruction (drill and practice). Conversely, concepts, patterns, and abstractions are best taught by indirect instruction techniques (discussion and inquiry). Though both types of techniques can be applied to meet both desired learning outcomes, tailoring the instructional approach to the type of information being taught can heighten the effectiveness of learning.

Flexible delivery format – ProfEd uses multiple delivery formats to accommodate the needs of working adult students. ProfEd’s flexible delivery formats include, but are not limited to on-site open enrollment, cohorts, distance learning (Web-based, learning package, telelearning, audio course, etc.), face-to-face, synchronous, asynchronous, and mixed modality formats. In addition, ProfEd offers course formats across a variety of schedules (e.g., 12-week, 8-week, 3 weekends) and educational models (interdisciplinary and traditional).

Instructional technique – Boyle (1981, p. 213) defined technique as the form used to present material to be learned. It is as a manner of accomplishing teaching objectives, such as lectures, readings, demonstrations, skits, field trips, note-taking, programmed instruction, panel discussion, structured discussions, panel discussions by students, topical discussions, question-answer panels, open-forum discussions, behavior modeling, interactive demonstrations, performance try-outs, brainstorming, case studies, action mazes, incident process, team tasks, role-plays, simulations, games, clinics, critical incident, hot role-plays and data gathering (Knowles, 1980, p. 129-168; Laird, 1985, p. 239). In “Effective Strategies for Teaching Adults,” Seaman and Fellenz (1989, p. 25-145) discussed and categorized the techniques into techniques for presentation, action and interaction. The presentation techniques included lecture, symposium, panel, dialogue, debate, demonstration and interview; the action techniques computerized in-basket exercises, simulation games, role plays and case studies; and finally the interaction techniques included fishbowl, expanding groups, buzz groups, brainstorming – including delphi and nominal group technique, listening teams, audience reaction teams, colloquy, forum, committee and committee hearing.

Learning styles – The characteristic cognitive, affective and psychological behaviors that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with and respond to the learning environment. Survey instruments and related literature can be obtained from the Center for Research on Adult Learning at CRAL@cmich.edu, (800) 950-1144, ext. 2534 or by writing to CRAL, Off-Campus Programs, Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant, MI 48859.

Mentor – An experienced ProfEd faculty member who provides academic support to other ProfEd instructors.

Metacognitive knowledge – Knowledge of one’s knowledge, processes and cognitive and affective states; ability to consciously and deliberately monitor and regulate one’s knowledge, processes and cognitive and affective states (Hacker, Dunlosky, & Graesser, 1998). Gourgey (1998) noted, “whereas cognitive strategies enable one to make progress – to build knowledge – metacognitive strategies enable one to monitor and improve one’s progress – to evaluate understanding and apply knowledge to new situations.”

Master Course Syllabus (Model Course Outline) – An exemplar syllabus for the course. Master Course Syllabus is used by ProfEd faculty to develop a syllabus for each course section. A Master Course Syllabus is approved through the curricular process each time a course is approved or revised. Master Course Syllabus is synonymous with Model Course Outline, which is a term used for MSA designator courses.

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OCLS – Off-Campus Library Services.

Question types – *Convergent* questions usually have a single right answer and are usually used in the teaching of facts, rules and sequences. *Divergent* questions may have any right answers and are usually used in teaching of problem solving, inquiry and discovery learning.

Sensory modalities – Main avenues of physical sensation (as vision, touch, smell, taste and hearing).

Syllabus (course outline) – A document that is based on a Master Course Syllabus (or a Model Course Outline) and contains additional detail about the specific section of the course. The course outline is prepared with the help of a Course Outline Guide.

Teaching strategies – Strategies used by instructors to facilitate learners’ knowledge acquisition (as opposed to learning strategies that are used by learners to acquire new knowledge).

Test types – The most common types of tests used in university courses are multiple choice, essay, short answer, oral, true/false and recall (Greive, 1995). Recall tests (e.g., fill in the blank) require simple recall rather than guessing and rationalization. All test types should reflect the objectives for the course.

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Jamie Slater, Director
Organizational Research & Assessment
CMU's Off-Campus Programs
Mount Pleasant, Michigan 48859
(989) 774-2534
E-mail: cral@cmich.edu

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