

Miami University Review: Masters of Learning Technologies – The Ohio State University

1. Academic Quality

(a.) Academic Quality Assessment

The *Ohio State University* is proposing a new alternative/online/hybrid *Masters in Learning Technology* (MLT) graduate program. The field of learning design/instructional design is predominately offered at graduate study, so there is little chance of a graduate program such as the proposed MLT program overlapping with any undergraduate program. The proposed MLT program provides a good theoretical foundation for the enculturating learners into the various fields of learning design and technology as evidenced in the *Learning, Culture and Technology* course. Learning design is a domain in which critical analysis, problem-solving and the application of various modes of inquiry is fundamental to the practice. The MLT program includes a suitable variety of design related courses to foster these skills for learners (e.g. *Introduction to Instructional Design, Applied Instructional Design, Designing Multi-media for Instruction, and Formative Evaluation*). These are common courses for the field of learning design. The proposed program also includes courses that address the major issues, trends (*Issues and Practices in Educational Technology*) and technologies, although some of the course titles seem a bit dated (*Designing Multi-media for Instruction and Educational Videography*). Without course syllabi, it is difficult to determine the extent to which the program emphasizes professional decision making and critical analysis, however, as previously stated, the field of learning design, by nature, is a field of critical analysis and decision-making. The course, *Applied Instructional Design*, seems to focus on projects, which would allow students the application of critical analysis and decision making within a real-world context. The culminating experience is very much in keeping with current practices of providing practicum experiences for students. Given the range of courses and the culminating practicum experience, the program would likely provide students with foundational knowledge for professional experience, particularly for those K12 and higher education. This program does not provide any professional accreditation; however, it appears as though the department already offers a K12 Computer Technology endorsement. It would be helpful if course syllabi and faculty vitae were included in the proposal. It is somewhat difficult to determine the strength and content of a program with short course descriptions and limited faculty information beyond “tenure track” faculty, adjunct instructors and lecturers.

(b.) Adequacy of Responses

The admission criteria for the proposed program are fairly consistent with the conventions of the field. Transcripts, letters of recommendation and TOEFL/MELAB/IELTS scores provide both qualitative and quantitative data about the suitability of a prospective student for the program. The inclusion of a personal statement might help provide additional information about an applicant. The amount of credit hours and number of courses is consistent with conventions in the field. The clinical/field experiences are also consistent with the conventions of the field. Typically applicants to learning design programs are already practitioners within a field (e.g. K12 teachers and faculty and staff in higher education, corporate training) or peripheral to the field. The program includes suitable mechanisms for oversight of the clinical/field experience in the culminating practicum.

One weakness of this proposal is that is very limited information about faculty qualifications. Merely stating “tenure track faculty” does not provide much information. There is little information about the qualifications of the tenure-track faculty, adjunct instructors or lecturers. This proposed program is supposed to serve K12, higher education, corporate, military and government. Granted the foundations of learning extend beyond these diverse fields, but the practical application is very different in these different settings. The populations that will ultimately be served are very different. The needs and demands of designing for a corporate or industrial setting focusing on adults can vary greatly from the needs and demands on a K12 teacher designing standards-based instruction for children. While the foundations may be the same, the terms, conventions, motivation, resources and execution may be very different. Without course syllabi and/or more information, it is difficult to determine the extent that both theory and practice are integrated for the entire population of students to be served by this program. With that stated, both the *Applied Instructional Design* course and the culminating practicum (*Practicum in Educational Technology*) appear to provide an integrated experience.

As previously stated, this program does not offer any professional accreditation; however, it appears as though the department also offers a Computer Technology endorsement for K12 teachers. It is unclear how this program may overlap with the Computer Technology endorsement program.

The proposal for the MLT program states there are two full-time faculty members and one affiliate for the program. The current course demand and the anticipated addition of the MLT program exceed the current staffing. A number of courses will be staffed with lecturers. This may impact the academic quality of the proposed graduate program.

2. Need

There appears to be adequate student interest and local interest in this program. There are other online programs within the state; however, the proposed MLT program does plans to offer each course in both online format and in traditional classroom-based format. This option would likely

serve the needs of students who prefer the traditional format and/or those required to complete coursework in the traditional format (international students with VISA restrictions). There appears to be an institutional need within The Ohio State University as stated in the proposal for this hybrid program. Due to the location of The Ohio State University (Columbus) the program would likely serve the local needs of companies within central Ohio for educating learning designers.

3. Access and Retention of Underrepresented Groups

The access, recruitment and retention plans outlined in the proposal are sufficient for insuring all students' success. The demographics based on existing programs indicates that the department values, recruits and attracts students from underrepresented groups.

4. Statewide Alternatives

It should be noted that the information listed in the MLT proposal about existing programs at other universities in Ohio is incomplete. Miami University offers two online masters programs in learning design: an online *M.Ed. in Educational Technology* and an *M.A. in Instructional Design and Technology*. The M.Ed. program is for those in K12 professions and the M.A. is for those in higher education, corporate, industry, military, government, etc. The MLT program proposed by The Ohio State University in many aspects duplicates the existing programs at Miami University. Both the MEd and the MA programs Miami University current serve students in central Ohio. With that stated, there may be opportunities for inter-institutional collaboration, particularly given the fact that the MLT may have to rely on lecturers. Inter-institutional collaboration might greatly enhance programs at both universities.

The resources and support provided by The Ohio State University seem sufficient to initiate this program.

5. External Support

This proposed program does not appear to rely upon or solicit external funding.