

9 Design Evaluation

Use this Instrument as a basis for discussion among course developers and evaluators to help determine more specific evaluation criteria.

Design evaluations are conducted during course development, often in the form of a pilot program. The purpose of this evaluation is to ensure that a course works in the way it was designed before participants are enrolled. As with any evaluation, it is important that the purpose and focus of the evaluation are clearly defined at the outset. Establishing clear criteria is the first step in this direction.

Criteria for these evaluations often emerge from the primary challenges involved in ODL, namely attrition, quality, and cost. Criteria generally reflect these basic challenges and can be determined more specifically by course developers and evaluators. The following questions, reflecting the major challenges of ODL, may be examples of some of the questions posed for design evaluation.

✓ Challenge 1: Attrition.

- Is the course designed to motivate learners and keep their interest?
- Do the course materials look interesting and attractive? Are they easy to use and understand?
- Are they written in a clear and concise way? Is the tone friendly and encouraging and appropriate to the targeted group of participants?
- Are different examples and alternatives offered to encourage different learning styles and degrees of accessibility to resources and technologies?
- Are there opportunities for participants to engage in school-based activities?

✓ Challenge 2: Quality.

- Is the course designed to meet current standards of teaching and content?
- Are the materials durable? Will they last for the duration of a course and for reference afterward?

- Do the instructional methods reflect, support, and encourage current, more active approaches to learning?
 - Do the instructional methods allow learners to engage in the materials in ways that are appropriate to their learning?
 - Do school-based activities take account of real settings in which learners work, and are they relevant to contemporary classroom practices?
-

✓ **Challenge 1: Cost.**

- Is the course cost-effective, both for the individual participant and for the program?
 - What is the price of the materials for the learner, and how does it compare to the cost of materials in other courses?
 - Is the requisite equipment (if any) easily accessible and inexpensive to purchase or use?
 - How does the total cost of the course compare to other, similar courses?
 - What is the breakdown in costs for the different elements of the course? Are there ways to eliminate or modify some of the more expensive elements?
-