Designing an Online Graduate Addictions Nursing Curriculum: Lessons Learned about Accessibility and Engagement

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Overview
Development of the Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Substance Use and Addictions Nursing (SUAN), a distance education program
Collaboration: Faculty and instructional learning technologist
Online Courses and Modules: Faculty developed, using national standards for continuous quality improvement

Purpose and Learning Objectives
Purpose: Develop online addictions nursing courses using optimal design to address diverse student learning needs.
Learning Objective: Describe evidence-based strategies for online course design to promote accessibility and engagement.

Background
Course Design: Most important aspect of distance learning, except for instructor-related variables (Adair and Shattuck, 2015)
Online/Distance Learning principles:
• Fully interactive: Synchronous and asynchronous
• Accessibility: Ease of use, readability, images and media accessible
• Technology: supports accessibility, engagement, and interactivity
National Standards sources:
• Quality Matters course design standards
• World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) Standards
SUAN Graduate Certificate:
• Four 3-credit courses
• Can be completed in one year (two semesters)
• Three can be stand-alone electives
• Two courses can be applied toward degree programs
Addictions Nursing Certificate Courses:
• I – Foundations
• II – Special Topics
• III – Clinical Aspects (with 90 clinical hours)
• Motivational Interviewing

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Theoretical Framework: Online Learning & Equity
Online teaching increases access to college: Equitable course design aids learners with diverse abilities & backgrounds
• Humanized – Addresses needs through instructor-student relationships and community
• Culturally Responsive – Recognizes importance of students’ cultural references
• Universal Design for Learning – Provides equal opportunities to learn for all

Accessible Designs
Inclusive practices: Equal access to information and functionality
Examples of web accessibility:
• Technology: For those with differing abilities (auditory, cognitive, neurologic, physical, speech, visual)
• Devices: Phones, smart watches, TVs, different input modes
• Situations: Sunlight, environments with inaudible audio
• Limited Internet Access: Slow connections, limited bandwidth

Engagement & Interactivity
Building Student Engagement: “Psychological involvement in, effort toward learning, understanding, or mastering knowledge, skills” (Newmann, Wehlage & Lombaro, 1992)
Types of Engagement & Supportive Techniques
• Learner–Content ➔ Interactive materials; real-world applications
• Learner–Instructor ➔ Multiple communication channels; frequent interactions; instructor feedback; active discussions
• Learner–Learner ➔ Networking; sense of community, peer feedback; multimedia applications for sharing ideas

Student feedback, new course: Overall evaluation: 4.94 on 5-point scale.
• Navigation easily executed (4.95)
• Effective teaching strategies used (4.5)
• Learning activities consistent with content (5.0)
• Content logically followed objectives (5.0)

Conclusions
• Attention to accessibility and engagement benefits diverse student learners.
• Compliance with national quality and accessibility standards leads to high quality online learning experiences.

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