

## HOW TO REDESIGN A COLLEGE COURSE USING NCAT'S METHODOLOGY

### XIII. Developing a Written Redesign Plan: Why It's Important

It would be hard to overstate the importance of having a written, specific course redesign plan. Writing things down ensures that you have addressed each issue. Writing things down ensures that everyone involved in the redesign knows what has been agreed to. A written plan can be referenced and revised when necessary throughout the process, serving as a roadmap to keep everyone on track.

In a written redesign plan, you should address the following:

- Select a redesign model and explain why you chose it and how you intend to embody the Eight Essential Elements of Course Redesign within it.

We describe the Eight Essential Elements of Course Redesign in Chapter I. You need to describe specifically how you will embody those elements within your redesign implementation.

WHY: As we said in Chapter I, if any of these elements are absent, it is unlikely that student success will improve at a reduced instructional cost. If all of these elements are present and you select an appropriate cost reduction strategy, we guarantee that student success will improve and costs will be reduced. We call these elements *essential* because they are. You need to be sure you have addressed each one of them in your plan.

- Describe specifically the changes to the traditional course structure that will result from the redesign (i.e., number and kinds of class meetings, number and kinds of sections including size(s), staffing plans, student requirements, testing, attendance management and other relevant logistics).

Course redesign involves a lot of change and a lot of moving parts (and people). You need to think through and make decisions about all of the specific changes you intend to make and be able to describe them for multiple audiences.

WHY: Being specific about your course redesign prior to its initiation will ensure that the number of issues and problems you'll need to deal with during the start-up phase will be minimized.

- Name and describe the learning materials/software you intend to use.

You need to make a decision about what software you will use. That decision should be made prior to beginning your redesign implementation.

WHY: Redesign is not a software-centered process. It focuses on pedagogy and course structure and organization. Choosing a software package upfront will allow you to focus on the more important and more difficult elements of redesign. In addition, you cannot begin to implement your redesign without having made a software choice. This should be done early in the planning process.

- Describe the assessment method you will use. Complete the two Assessment Forms for the pilot and full implementation of your redesign project.

We discuss the choices of assessment methods in Chapter VII. You need to capture your plan for assessing student learning in the traditional and redesigned formats on the Assessment Forms, which are included in Appendix A.

WHY: Because you will face skepticism about implementing your course redesign (because it represents change, and lots of people do not like change), you will want to be able to “prove” that it works. Having valid and reliable student learning outcomes data that demonstrate improvement will address that skepticism and assure you that you are on the right track. Data trump subjective judgment.

- Complete the two Course Completion Forms for the pilot and full implementation of your redesign project.

As we discuss in Chapter VIII, comparing course completion rates between the traditional and redesigned formats can be a complex issue due to prior grade inflation. You need to investigate your particular situation. Capture your plan for measuring comparative course completion on the Completion Forms, which are included in Appendix B.

WHY: If all students who take the final exam score more than 90, but only 50 percent of students take the final exam, you have a problem. An important goal of course redesign is to improve completion rates. You need to measure completion rates for the same reasons that you need to measure student learning outcomes: data trump subjective judgment.

- Describe the cost reduction strategy you intend to use. Complete the Cost Planning Tool.

We discuss cost reduction strategies in Chapter V. You need to capture your plan for reducing instructional costs on the Cost Planning Tool (CPT), which is included in Appendix C. You need to provide a brief narrative that explains the entries in the CPT when necessary. You also need to explain why you chose a particular strategy and what you intend to do with the savings.

WHY: Course redesign has two goals: improving learning and reducing costs. Our purpose here is not to convince you of the value of reducing costs; it is to help you understand how to accomplish it and how to document it.

- Describe how you will build and maintain ongoing consensus about the redesign.

We discuss the need to build and maintain ongoing consensus among all stakeholders about the redesign in Chapter XIV. You need to describe specifically how you will address each of the relevant stakeholders in the pilot, during the first term of full implementation and on an ongoing basis.

WHY: The best-laid plans of mice and men often go astray. Even though it is impossible to anticipate all of the problems you may encounter in your redesign implementation, you should at minimum prepare for those that hundreds of others have faced.

- Include a brief timeline for your redesign project.

We describe the four phases of planning and implementing your redesign in Chapter XII.

WHY: Thorough planning is essential to ensuring a successful redesign implementation, but moving to implementation of your redesign as quickly as possible is equally important. Practice makes perfect!

- Develop a project budget that describes the support needed for your redesign effort and a budget narrative that explains each expenditure category.

WHY: As described in Chapter II, the budget may include funding for (1) building, rehabbing, or repurposing computer labs/classrooms; (2) equipment purchases; and (3) released time for faculty team leaders. The total dollar amount will vary from institution to institution depending on what is already in place and what will need to be purchased.