

## *Course Redesign Collaboration and Scaffolding*

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The IAFOR International Conference on Education in Hawaii 2022  
Official Conference Proceedings

### **Abstract**

Designing courses that engage online learners to achieve the highest level of mastery of course learning outcomes is at the forefront of online course development at The University of Arizona Global Campus. In Spring 2021, full-time faculty in the Department of Education and Liberal Arts had the opportunity to redesign one of their core courses, ECD315: Curriculum Planning and Design for Early Learners. Throughout this paper, we will explore this process and highlight specific examples of how scaffolding and collaboration allowed for redeveloping a course that would increase student mastery of learning outcomes. Similarly, the co-construction of content by fulltime and adjunct instructors alike sought to deepen the partnership between these groups while increasing the self-efficacy and sense of connection to the university for the participating adjunct instructors.

Keywords: Online Learning, Scaffolding, Student Engagement

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## **Introduction**

At the University of Arizona Global Campus (UAGC), faculty strive to include best-practice and increase student mastery of course learning objectives. In Spring of 2021, full-time faculty in the Department of Education and Liberal Arts (DEL) had the opportunity to redesign ECD315: Curriculum Planning and Design for Early Learners. This high-enrollment class has approximately 850 students each year.

Throughout the redesign, the developers sought to present material in multiple formats, including lecture, interactives, videos, and discussions. Scaffolding began in the first week of the course, leading up to the final summative project in the final week. The scaffolding allows for students to master smaller portions of the context while receiving instructor feedback. These concepts are then built upon for higher-level learning.

Adjunct faculty are an important part of UAGC, and the course designers asked for their input in the redesign. Adjunct faculty reported that while lesson planning is an important element of the current course, students have difficulty effectively creating those lesson plans. With this in mind, the course designers created a scaffolded approach to teaching lesson plans. Students work on one section at a time, rather than completing an entire lesson plan before receiving feedback. Each assignment builds on itself with the final project being a thematic unit with three full lessons. Additionally, learning material was altered to include videos, interactives, and multimodal means of representation.

## **Research Questions**

This ongoing research project aims to find how the scaffolded course design using different modalities of learning contributes to student success and faculty satisfaction. Specifically, the research addresses the following:

1. How does presenting information through different modalities in an online asynchronous classroom impact student retention?
2. How does intentional scaffolding of content impact performance on course learning outcomes?
3. How do course tools that provide guided practice, reteaching, and scaffolding impact faculty's satisfaction when teaching?
4. How does intentional scaffolding of content impact faculty's ability to support student success?
5. How do students perceive their own learning was impacted from the intentional scaffolding of the course content?
6. How do students perceive the presentation of content in this course in relation to presentation of content in their other courses?

## **Methods**

The faculty survey will be distributed to those who taught the course both before and after the redesign. The student survey will be sent to all students who took the class between July 6, 2021 and January 31, 2022. No identifiable data will be asked of any participant and there are no foreseeable at-risk populations. Data will be collected and analyzed using Qualtrics. IRB approval was received before the study began. Additionally, the proposal was submitted to the Office of Research and Creative Scholarship (ORCS) for its approval to use institutional data. Informed consent was received by all students and faculty who completed the survey.

## **Results**

This study is still in the data collection phase. Preliminary results show favorable responses from both faculty and students. Faculty reports that the scaffolded nature of the course, where assignments build on each other, allows them to provide more support to the students through providing feedback each week on smaller portions of a lesson plan. One faculty states, “Students who were not familiar with lesson planning were able to check comprehension along the way, instead of creating an entire lesson plan incorrectly.” There is a faculty preference for the new design with its multimodal scaffolding.

Preliminary student data demonstrates a high preference for learning from a course that offers material in different ways (such as reading, videos, interactives, etc.) over a course that relies solely on reading. When asked which elements of the newly designed ECD315 best supported their understanding of the content, the top three answers were instructor feedback, interactives/learning activities, and the way the assignments built on each other. Students were asked, “In what ways did the larger Thematic Unit Assignment being completed over multiple weeks in the course support your student success?” The responses were positive, and students appreciated being able to space out the work throughout the course and fix errors based on instructor feedback. One student noted, “It helped me to design a more detailed and thorough lesson plan for my students which I use in the classrooms for training.” Overall, the vast majority of students believed that the scaffolding had a positive impact on their learning in the course. They report understanding the course material well.

## **Summary and Conclusions**

Although data is still being collected, both faculty and students are responding in a positive manner. We will continue to collect data until saturation is reached. In light of our preliminary findings, we believe that more UAGC courses should include scaffolded learning and multimodal means of content presentation.