

## Assessment Plan

### *Introduction*

The Centre provides workshops to over 500 faculty, staff and graduate students per year. While the majority of workshops centrally support the institutionally wide LMS, there are some courses that generate revenue, such as Dreamweaver, PowerPoint and HTML Authoring Basics. Each workshop is initially taught in a computer lab, but they are all supported online and for some workshops there is a blended component. Every year these workshops are evaluated by the communications coordinator and the instructor designated to teach the workshop. Early within the year evaluations showed that the HTML Authoring Basics class (a blended workshop) was creating a challenge for the students and a needs analysis was suggested by the instructor to help the students “meet ... [their] personal learning goals for this workshop”. (CENTRE, 2007)

### *Assessment Method*

The assessment method that I will be using is based on a discrepancy - based model, one which lists a “five-phase approach”. (Smith & Ragan, 2005, p. 46) Using the discrepancy model is ideal because while the workshops’ learning goals, objectives and instructions are clearly identified, there have been significant performance gaps between the intended learning outcomes and the overall performance of the student. The phases identified are outlined as follows, the first phase is dedicated to “listing the goals” (Smith & Ragan, 2005, p. 46) as defined by the workshop. The second phase determines if the goals are in fact

being achieved (Smith & Ragan, 2005, p. 47), and if not, could this deficiency be coming from the instruction rather than the goals. The third phase begins to define the gaps “between what learners should ... do and what they are [doing]” (Smith & Ragan, 2005, p. 47) while the fourth proceeds to prioritize said gaps based on critical criterion. The final phase rests on determining which gaps are instructional in nature or suitable for design or development. (Smith & Ragan, 2005, p. 47)

### *Data Techniques*

The data techniques that will be used to “obtain an adequate picture of the issues” (Smith & Ragan, 2005, p. 48) will be based on previous and current evaluations, faculty trainers and students who have taken the workshop. Evaluations will be tabulated from both quantitative and qualitative data, and the results will be sent to the instructional designer for inspection. There are 5 questions within the evaluation that are relevant, they are:

1. How was the content in addressing your interests and needs?
2. How would you rate the instructor's presentation?
3. How would you rate the pace at which the instructor covered the material?
4. How would you rate the hands-on activities?
5. Were we able to meet your personal learning goals for this workshop?

There are currently 3 faculty trainers teaching this workshop and all of them have experienced revamping the instructional materials. For their input,

they will be interviewed as a group with pre-set questions given ahead of time.

Sample questions include:

- a) What types of instructional needs have you experienced with the workshop? (top three)
- b) What types of needs have your students expressed? Why do you think this is so?
- c) What are the top 5 concerns should this workshop move online?

Once the questions have been recorded the instructional designer will receive them to evaluate the responses. The last cohort is the students, and they will be asked after the next workshop (as they are ongoing) if they would like to participate in ongoing evaluations. This exercise would happen a few times throughout the redesign process which would allow for the users to “test” the workshop and give feedback when finished.

### *Instructional Need*

The instructional need for this workshop is twofold, the first involves the need for basic HTML skills and the second is within the workshop itself. This needs assessment will not address the first issue (quite possible indirectly), only the second as the instructional need is greater. The need identified is based on the gap between what the students are supposed to learn and what they actually learn. Initially, it was identified that the students did not understand basic desktop navigation, but even after this instruction the students still showed a lack of understanding in how to write HTML code. Many students experienced disconnect between what the code was supposed to look like and what it looked

like as the finished product. For many, they thought that they would be able to immediately see the results and were disappointed when they found out that there were 3 more instructions needed before they could see their results. With so much information it became very clear that the secondary instruction overrode the initial purpose and ultimately defeated the student's ability to learn HTML coding skills.

Let us begin by examining the current workshop.

HTML Authoring Basics workshop shows students how to create HTML web pages by strictly typing in "code". The interface consists of a website jam packed with instructions, menus and bulleted lists – the user clicks on the top or side menu and then proceeds to the next step. As the student progresses through the workshop units, s/he must open up 2 windows and 1 other program in order to complete the objectives and tasks. This set of instructions usually causes much confusion; the students are not prepared to "leave" the website nor are they able to locate the program that they need to use in order to create their files. All of the HTML code must be written in a small text editor called "Notepad", this program is located on all PC's within the Accessories folder hidden within the Start menu. Once the student has the editor open, they must toggle back to the instructions on the website, place the two windows adjacent to one another and then begin the lesson. The whole workshop is a battery of toggles and key strokes, after which the student will save their "file" and upload this page onto a web server that generates the output – a web page. While the objectives for the course are clearly indicated, the instructional challenge lies within the numerous

open windows, lack of basic desktop navigation skills and conflicting simultaneous instructions. (Smith & Ragan, 2005, p. 61)

## Proposal

### *Addressing the Problems*

The HTML Authoring Basics workshop is not a new course. The issues that have arisen are from within the course rather than from the lack of one. The structure of the workshop is based on 3 modules that hold approximately 5 lessons in each for a total of 15 units of instruction. Each of those units is in continuation of the previous, but the students are allowed to move around from one unit to another. Each unit can be viewed including all of the assignments, tasks and extra appendices located at the bottom. While *visually* appealing, this format has actually little structure and many students have stated that the workshop “looks” too complicated, thereby giving up before they have even begun. (Personal communication, 2006)

In order for the students to gain a good understanding of the procedures and tagging protocols used in creating HTML web pages, the following instructional objectives must be met:

- a) Clearly accessible within an online focus
- b) instruction to be “chunked” into manageable informational pieces;
- c) the use of advance organizers to help build upon previous knowledge; and
- d) the ability to immediately see the results

With the instructional objectives clearly outlined, the first phase will begin by taking the existing site and placing it within a Learning Management System (Moodle). This will allow the units to be housed within their own learning modules including the use of additional functions such as quizzes, tests, assignments and a “widget” called the HTML Converter that will work as a functioning HTML editor. The first module will provide instruction on how to build basic HTML pages, including concepts, tags, functions and their conventions. The second module continues on with graphics, tables and links, while the third shows the student how to save, transfer and view your HTML files on the web.

Within the first and second modules the major activities will be going through the modules, quizzes and working within the HTML Converter as the student begins to address the assignments. The HTML Converter (see Fig. 1) is a small but effective application that allows code to be viewed immediately; the student types in tags and after clicking on “see results”, views their page. This eliminates the student from having to open up 2 windows and the additional program in order to save their file, upload and view their new web page from within a browser. There are 4 assignments in module 1 and 6 assignments in module 2.

The third module also uses the HTML Converter, but at this point the student will be shown how to download a File Transfer Protocol (FTP) program and upload their files to a real web server (which are provided) to view their completed and finished creations “live” on the web. This new task though late in the process is intentional; the students must first learn the HTML tags, see their

results and then move onto transferring their files. To do this step any earlier would create anxiety for the students. This module will also include a small video that will capture how to transfer their files from the local drive to the remote site. Once they have viewed the video they can then proceed to download the program and move their files over. There are 4 assignments in module 3.

The assignments will be housed within the HTML Converter and have (externally) small videos and text instructions to necessitate learning.

A note on the HTML Converter, while this tool does allow the students to work through all of the assignments (including access to previous assignment code) it is only meant to be a learning aid. For many students, seeing “how” the code looks like after they have typed it really helps them and has been shown to increase familiarity. (Personal communication, 2006)

### *Context of Workshop*

Currently the workshop is held both in-class and online, but after this major revision it will be based fully online using Moodle, a Learning Management System (LMS) that tracks and sequences information. Since the workshop will now be browser based, as long as the user has an Internet connection, the material will be readily available and easily accessed.

As mentioned earlier this workshop is also offered to first year History students that have to create a web site that shows off their projects. The LMS is attached to a system that populates students into courses via their unique ID, which for the History class will give them automatic access. Since the workshop is non-credit and moving to an online format, other departments may also wish to

incorporate this workshop into their program and have it become a regular course component.

A few instructors have already asked to incorporate this workshop into their core curriculum. They are very accepting to the fact that computers and online use have become main stream, and do not take offense to their “role of disseminator” (Smith & Ragan, 2005, p. 48) becoming less principal especially when it comes to technology.

#### *Unit of Instruction*

The unit of instruction that will be revised is called the Basics of Web Design – Part 1; it is found within the HTML Authoring Basics Series. Included in this module will be the basics of HTML preparation, small quizzes, assignments, videos, and the incorporation of a learning object called the HTML Converter. All of the materials developed will be digital in nature, including a downloadable PDF that contains all of the assignments should the student wish to print off a copy. The nature of the unit will be “self-instructional and designed to be delivered at a distance.” (Athabasca, 2008) The workshop will be delivered via Moodle, a Learning Management System and should take the student approximately 1 to 1.5 hours to complete for each module.

Figure Caption

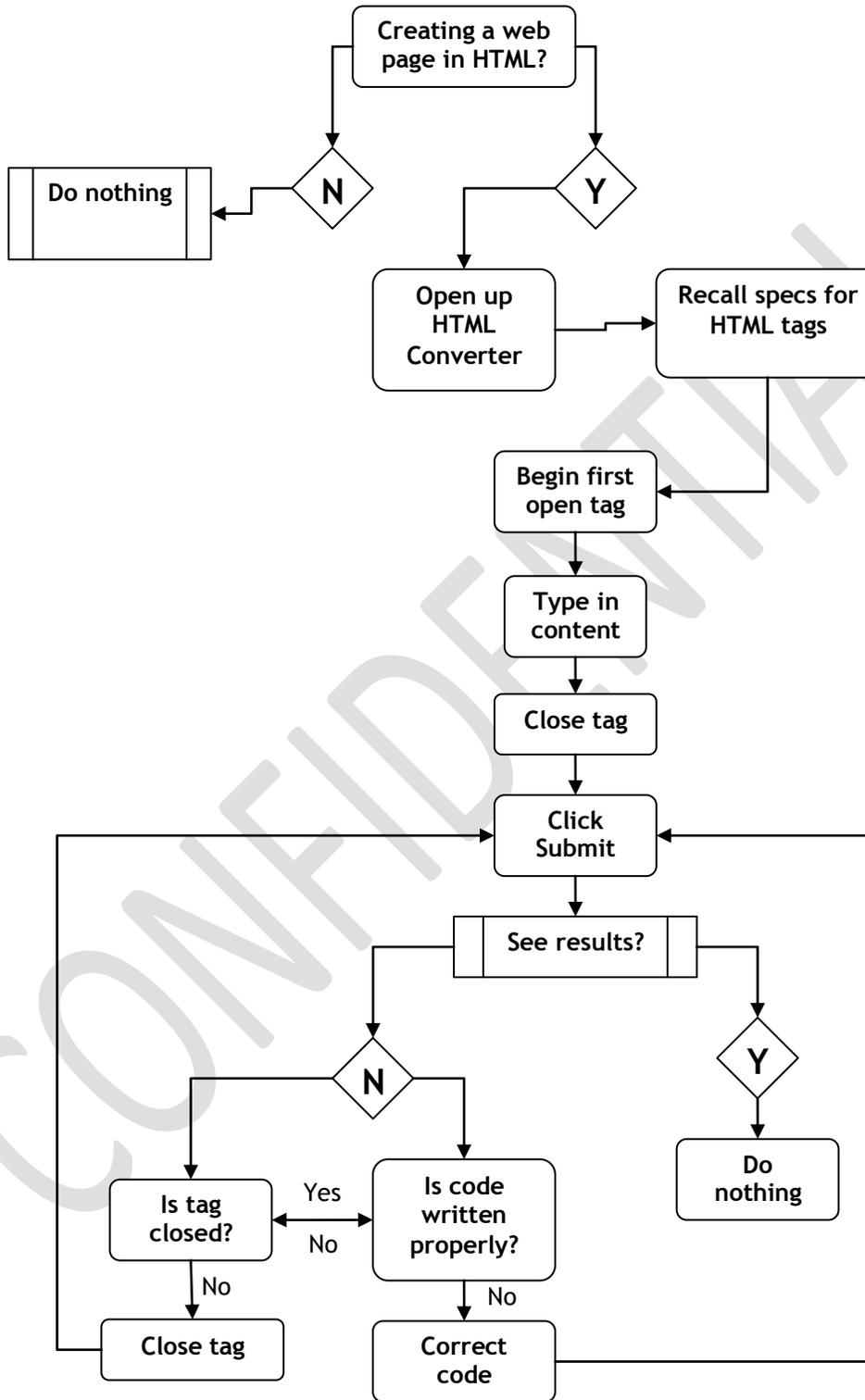


Figure 1. Process of using HTML Converter.

## References

Smith, P. L. & Ragan, T. J. (2005). Instructional design (3rd ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Jossey-Bass Education.

Online Student Guide. [http://jws-edcv.wiley.com/college/bcs/redesign/student/0,12264,\\_0471393533\\_BKS\\_2113\\_\\_\\_\\_\\_,00.html](http://jws-edcv.wiley.com/college/bcs/redesign/student/0,12264,_0471393533_BKS_2113_____,00.html)

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