

# **TRANSFERRING A GRADUATE COURSE ON-LINE WITHOUT REDUCTION IN QUALITY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

On-line communication classes are difficult to develop so that they include the same kind of assignments and interaction found in a face-to-face class. To overcome these difficulties, we rely on extensive written comments to students, shared rubrics for grading, quick e-mail responses to questions, and assignments with clear learning objectives.

In the ten-week course, each unit begins on Monday and ends Sunday. Students are encouraged to read text and linked readings over the weekend, then answer posted discussion questions on the Discussion Board several times during the week. Every week, we complete one unit.

### **How Two Important Assignments Were Retained**

We were able to retain the in-class case exam component by having a timed writing posted on the given date. The final presentation was handled by a combination of visual review (students submit a PowerPoint presentation on the due date) and then a teleconference for students to walk the instructor and a small peer group of reviewers through their slides.

### **Success Factors in Our Favor**

1. Students are working professionals who are improving their writing and presentation skills, not undergraduates with little work experience.
2. Assignments build on one another to help students improve in specific ways.
3. Course design limits some on-line course pitfalls, such as having to be “on” and available 24/7; perfunctory responses on Discussion Boards just to build individual response stats; and poor work caused by letting the work go until the last week.

## **CONCLUSION**

While not the same as an on-campus course, the on-line class provides practice and evaluation in both writing and speaking, and enables us to have more quality control than allowing students to substitute a wide variety of local courses. We can cover professionally related topics and formats. In 1999, 14 students were in the Regulatory Affairs program; all lived in the county. By 2006, of the 63 students in the program, three-fourths were located elsewhere.

In a perfect world, we would rather see our students and get to know them, but the course we designed is a worthy replacement for this contact, given the dispersed student body in the program.