

Five Phases of Development For New Online Programs

by Meri MacLeod

Note: Phases can overlap as a program develops. Timeframes are typical and not rigid since each institution's context will determine the time required for each phase of online program development.



The following lists are not comprehensive.

READINESS

- Identify areas in the institution critical to success that need to be strengthened
- Inform and educate, dispel myths
- Provide first hand experiences – LMS
- Review campus technology plan and identify areas of strength and weakness in light of online education plan

PLAN

- Often takes a minimum of 12 months depending on institutional resources dedicated to the work

- Many of the most strategic decisions are made at this time, such as the LMS, how faculty will be retrained for online pedagogy, and what expertise is needed for success
- Create online support systems for online students
- Plan strategies for student retention (goal of 75% or higher)
- Implement quality standard benchmarks in all areas
- Develop a service oriented culture for distance students
- Provide support and training strategies for faculty
- Establish model for online pedagogy and course design
- Address all program approval requirements
- Create a realistic budget of one-time and recurring costs, realistic tuition revenue projections
- Create new Admissions strategy for distance students

LAUNCH

- Implementation of first courses, new student preparation
- High need for responsive support for students and faculty
- Develop student's confidence in the program and the school's commitment to their success
- Monitor program for accreditation requirements

ESTABLISH

- Smooth out procedures, establish new policies to support online students
- Refine Admissions and new student preparation
- Implement recommendations from students as part of the Cycle of Continuous Improvement
- Address course needs such as upgrading media or incorporating plagiarism prevention software
- Review benchmarks of quality standards and address weak areas
- Monitor program for accreditation requirements

SUSTAIN

- Invest for online growth such as expanded programs, scale technology investment
- Solidify and update the quality standards
- Plan for course revisions, update various media, implement technology upgrade plan
- Assess and revise institutional technology plan
- Implement cycle of professional development
- Monitor progress toward full program approval