Needs Analysis Report: Communication in the School of Education IST Distance Program at IU

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Introduction

A needs analysis was conducted to determine if there were any gaps in the communication to and from distance master's students in the Instructional Systems Technology (IST) department at IU.

There were some initial concerns by the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies, Elizabeth Boling, that initiated the analysis, the main one being centered on the informing of and discussion of a student's program of study.
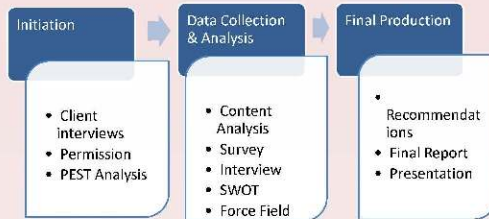
Aim and Scope

The aim of the analysis project was to identify the communication gaps and identify possible causes of those gaps.

This project looked at factors solely dealing with the informing of and discussion of a student's program of study.

These factors included, but were not limited to, communication tools, resources, and the advising process. Potential strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities were identified, and form the basis of our recommendations.

Project Methodology

Initiation

- Client interviews
- Permission
- PEST Analysis

Data Collection & Analysis

- Content Analysis
- Survey
- Interview
- SWOT
- Force Field

Final Production

- Recommendations
- Final Report
- Presentation

Initiation

In the initiation step of the project, we touched base with our client to try and define a purpose for a proposal. The team interviewed the client and main stakeholder. This was followed by the creation, submission and acceptance of a permission letter. Before moving into the data collection step, the team conducted a PEST analysis.

Data Collection & Analysis –

The beginning of the data collection phase was with a content analysis of things like the actual Program of Study form, the graduate bulletin, and the IST website.

Additionally to a content analysis of the website, the team benchmarked it to University of Columbia Teachers College Instructional Technology and Media and Florida State University Instructional Systems Program websites.

The next data source we drew from was the human side of the gap: the students via an online survey – and five faculty and two staff via face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Using the distance student distribution lists, twenty-seven students responded to the survey. From the data collected, a SWOT analysis, and then a Force Field analysis were conducted.

Final Production

After analyzing the data of this project, the team outlined five recommendations for the client to implement.

Findings

	Positive	Negative
Communication	• Email and distribution lists are main communication methods • Program of Study Form Availability	• No standard orientation process
Advising	• Easy access to advisor and staff • Advisor's positive viewpoint of advising	• Roles and responsibilities are not defined for advisors • Terminology of "outside electives" is unclear • A sense of distance between Student and advisor • New office staff
Resources	• Website is the main resource • Availability of advising tools (GEMS, OneStart Student's Center)	• Poor website functionality

Recommendations

- Standardize orientation materials and process.

- Modify the content and functionality of the website.

- Define the terminology "outside electives"

- Define an advisor's role and responsibilities.

- Use the advising tools in OneStart's Student Center