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Carolyn Levally
Franklin University

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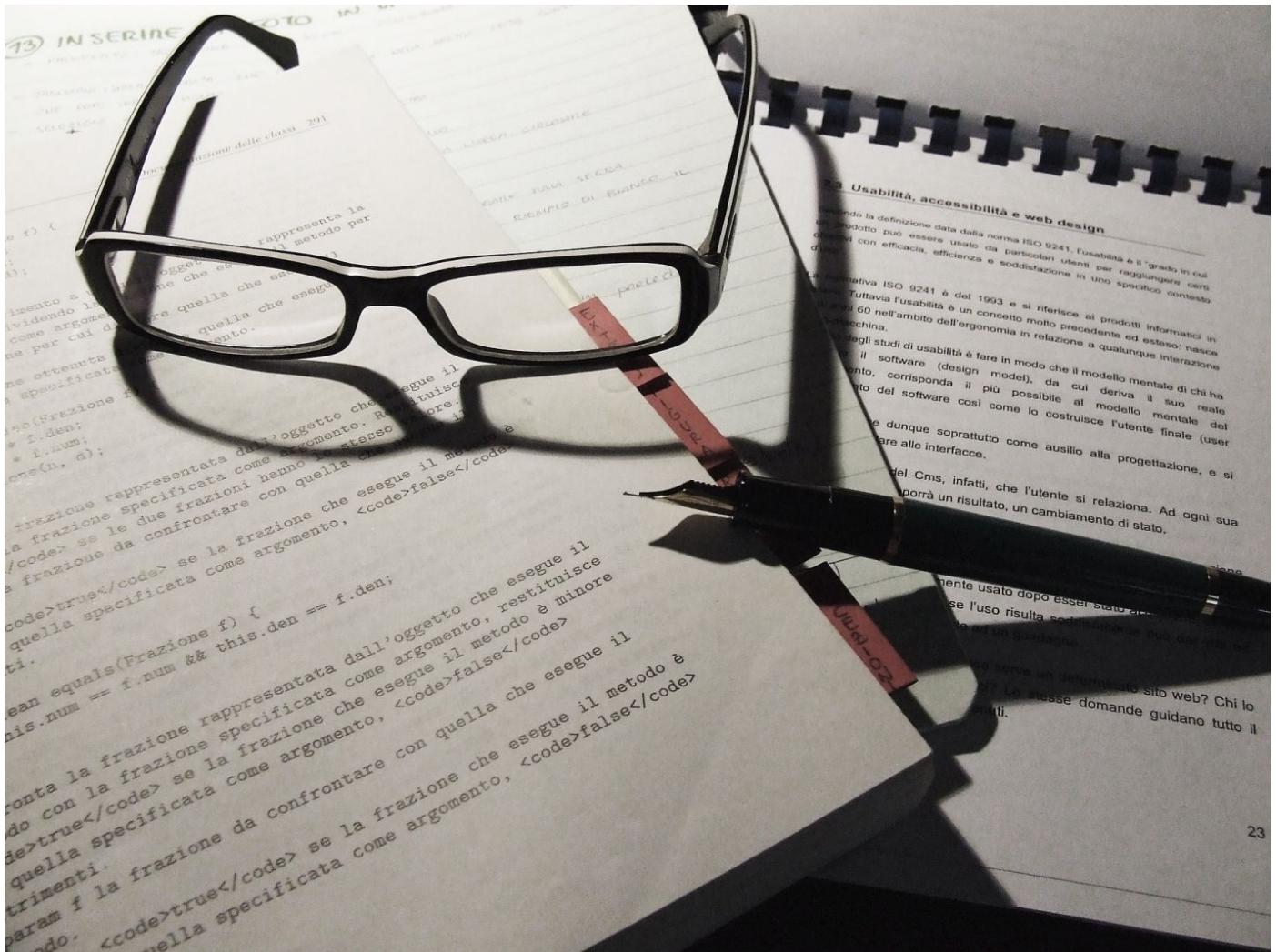


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Why Your Course Needs an Editor

May 22, 2017 | By Carolyn Levally
Educational Technology
Instructional Design

Instructional design is definitely an iterative process; we design courses, get feedback, make adjustments to the course, etc. But who is reviewing our courses and providing us with feedback? More than likely, the Subject Matter Expert (SME) or the instructor who will be teaching the course reviews the course design. Having SMEs review the design is excellent, as they know the content and the course objectives best. However, at the International Institute for Innovative Instruction, we also strongly recommend that all courses be reviewed by a content editor.

A content editor can provide incredibly valuable feedback for course designs, which could greatly enhance the course's content and function. When a content editor reviews a course, he/she generally reviews the course for items which fall into the following categories:

1. The Student's and Instructor's Perspective
2. The Course Function
3. (And of course) Spelling, Grammar & Style

The Student's and Instructor's Perspective

The most important task of a content editor is to read the course from both the student's point of view and the instructor's point of view. The editor is generally not an SME, meaning that he or she is not necessarily experienced with the course's subject. Because of this, the editor can take a step back and read the course from the students' and instructors' viewpoints instead of getting bogged down in the intricacies of the content. Editors are constantly placing themselves in the role of the student, and due to this, the editor is able to provide some crucial ideas for improvement. Maybe the instructions for an assignment are a little unclear, or perhaps some of the weekly introductory material could be revised for clarity. In the same vein, the editor also reads the course from an instructor's point of view; as the editor reads the course, they note

places where perhaps the instructor may need some additional technical support or some additional support regarding their role in a complex assignment.

Having a fresh pair of eyes review the course specifically from the perspectives of the students and the instructor will improve the course's clarity and flow for the participants.

The Course Function

Content editors also thoroughly review how your course functions, both on a content level and on a mechanical level. On a content level, the editor is looking at the course structure and content placement. For example, the editor may note that you accidentally referred to content in Week 1 that actually isn't covered until Week 8. On a mechanical level, the editor is extremely familiar with how your institution's chosen learning management system functions, as well as your institution's general guidelines for due dates, points, tools, etc. The editor will review the course in the learning management system and flag any assignments that seem to be missing points, due dates, submission buttons, or any other tools required.

Catching and correcting these functional elements before the course is made available to students will decrease confusion and allow the course to run smoothly.

Spelling, Grammar, and Style

Of course, we can't discuss the role of an editor without mentioning spelling, grammar, and style. Yes, a main part the editor will play in reviewing your course is correcting these items. However, this task is about more than adding commas and fixing verb tense; when editors look for grammatical errors in a course, they are really enhancing the course's professionalism. Editors hold the course to the same standard as to which instructors hold a student's essay. If we're asking students to provide exemplary ideas in essays with impeccable spelling, grammar, and style, then our courses should model the same standards.

By providing recommendations in the areas of spelling, grammar, and style, the editor is sending your already awesome course to the next level by increasing its professionalism.

The Editor's Main Purpose

The editor's main purpose is the same as both the instructional designer and the SME - to develop the best course possible for the student. Good editors justify their recommendations and are open to multiple solutions to any issues they identify. They communicate clearly, frequently, and kindly. Keep in mind that any recommendation you may receive from an editor was made because they believe that your course is already great, and with just a few minor alterations, they believe that your course can be excellent.

Adding a content editor to your team can greatly improve your courses; by including a content editor, your courses will increase in clarity, quality, and professionalism, which in turn, will enhance the learning experience for students and instructors alike.

About the Author

Carolyn LeVally

Carolyn LeVally is a content editor for Franklin University's International Institute for Innovative Instruction.