

MODULE 17

ROLES IN E-LEARNING

- Objectives
- Roles in distance learning
 - *THE TEACHER*
 - *THE TUTOR*
 - *THE TRAINING LEADER*
 - *THE SYSTEM ADMINISTRATOR*
 - *THE ADMIN OFFICE*
 - *THE STUDENT*
- Tests, quiz

17 - ROLES IN E-LEARNING



17.01 - OBJECTIVES

As in traditional classroom learning, even in distance learning, there are many players working towards the success of the training plan. And all of them must have teleworking knowledge. By the end of this unit you will learn the function of each figure and his/her role in the virtual classroom.

17.02- ROLES IN DISTANCE LEARNING

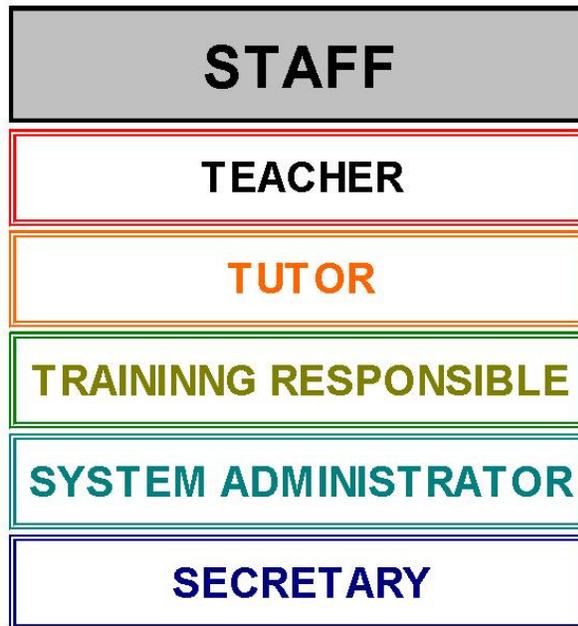
Distance learning reproduces the didactic environment of traditional learning. The student will be enrolled in the courses by the admin office and assigned to a class, will have a teacher, didactic material and fellow course students.

The difference lies in the fact that the classroom is not physical, but virtual, the teacher and student(s) are separated by distance, and technology (i.e., voice, video, data, and print), often in concert with face-to-face communication, is used to bridge the instructional gap. A set of applications make the flow of information and relations possible.

Communication is basically written (except for the case of videoconferencing) with the loss of data linked to the paraverbal sphere. But, after the initial days of virtual classroom –having overcome the initial skepticism – the barriers linked to distance are easily overcome.

The classroom becomes alive and the students learn a new way of communicating: that of the forum and chat (that oftentimes is close to that of SMS). At times the students, having completed their track on the network, make friends with the classmates encountered in the virtual classroom, friendships which at times continue by e-mail for years to come.

In this unit we have identified and summarised the roles of the figures (students aside) that in a recurring manner, are involved in a training track delivered through e-learning.



17.03. THE TEACHER

17.03. 01. Definition

The role of the teacher in e-learning training is different from that covering traditional training. The teacher is no longer the sole depository of knowledge. Each virtual class has its specific: every student has particular interest or specific knowledge in a certain ambit. This allows for debates to be started within chat and forum that go beyond the objectives of the didactic unit. In presence, the teacher can stop debates on the side, in FAD modality this is not possible. There is often an exchange: the teacher listens and learns from the student instructing him on topics not always known to all. The teacher remains in any case the reference point, he/she is the one that on the course theme has a vision of a whole, knows how to find useful information, assess them and above all organise them as a whole.

17.03.02. Activities and tasks

The teacher is the author of the e-learning course, defines content, chooses the course delivery methodology, designs the structure and chooses which communication tools to use (e-mail, forum, chat, videoconferencing, film clips or documents retrievable on the net).

Not always is the teacher required to follow the progress of the virtual classroom (in this case the tutor follows the students).

In the case in which – for the complexity of the subject matter – the presence of the teacher is also required, his task is that of maintaining the focus of the class on the topics and objectives identified, to give the necessary instructions to start the new activities, to help the students when they have doubts, to chair meeting times.

The contribution of the teacher in debates, is precious even in the converging phase of a discussion, to summarise the interventions, bringing the class to reflect on the important points surfacing.

17.03.03. Relations

The teacher relates with the class and with the tutor that joins him in the classroom.

During the design phase his/her main referent is the training leader. For technical issues he/she addresses the admin office or the system administrator in order to have

enhancements or changes made in respects to what is defined from the start. He/she answers to the training leader.

17.04. THE TUTOR

17.04.01. Definition

The **Tutor** follows the virtual classroom for the entire training period. As with the tutor of a traditional classroom the on line tutor's function is facilitating the learning processes.

He is the reference point for all the participants – not only students, but also for teachers and the training staff in general. In distance training, where the student does not see his colleagues in person the tutor's role is fundamental to keep the classroom together, avoid problems, support students always in hard times, keep them in rank when they do not stick to deadlines.

17.04.02. Activities and tasks

The tasks of this figure are many. The tutor takes charge of the participants of one or more courses, takes care of their welcoming into the virtual classroom, remaining at the complete disposal of the class for the entire duration of the course.

He/she sets up material, documents and messages. The tutor corrects tests, questionnaires and the material produced by the students. Ensures the monitoring of the activities, supports learning, evaluates the acceptance by the participants.

Facilitates meeting among students, keeps interest in the class alive, animates the forums and chats, mediating between formalism, irony and the human aspect, trying in this way to give a pedagogic significance (decisively important when the means for communication is a machine).

The tutor's job is that of helping and motivating the students that risk moving away from the training track and not complying with the intermediate verification routes envisaged by the programme.

He must also answer within a limited amount of time, to e-mails, and the messages to that the students send and quickly verify the results of the tests or verifications envisaged.

The tools at the tutor's disposal are e-mail, forum, chat.

17.04.03. Relations

In their activity the tutor holds relations with students, teachers, admin office, and other tutors. Answers to the training leader

17.05. THE TRAINING LEADER

17.04.01. Definition

The training leader is the merging and synthesis point among all the organs involved in distance training tutor, teachers, system administrator, the students.

17.05.02. Activities and tasks

The Training leader defines with the teachers the objectives and contents of the training courseware.

Sets up, supervises and monitors all the phases of the training activity.

Decides on the type of teaching method and technical support.

Constitutes virtual classes assigning them to the tutor.

May take part in the forums.

Sets up – when requested by the client - reports on classroom progress.

17.05.03. Relations

The training leader acts directly in the virtual classroom on opening and closing of the course or in the event of problems deemed to be important. Talks with teachers in defining the

courses, with tutors to monitor the virtual classrooms, with the final client that requests the training.

17.06. THE SYSTEM ADMINISTRATOR

17.06.01. Definition

The system administrator is an expert computer technician that performs a range of technical operations on the server that houses the e-learning platform: from general configuration to controlling of the different times of activities.

17.06.02. Activities and tasks

The system administrator has an overall picture of the environment, administers the communication channels, updates the courseware catalogue, takes care of monitoring the activities carried out by the system users, checking the number of pages read and the documentation downloaded from the web. If required, can provide technical assistance.

17.06.03. Relations

The system administrator talks directly with the tutor for all needs pertaining to the class and with the admin office for activating the courses.
He answers to the training leader.

17.07. THE ADMIN OFFICE

17.07.01. Definition

The “virtual” admin office has the same tasks and functions as a traditional admin office, that is it takes care of providing information to students, teachers and tutors on the type of training tracks and how to access the courses.

17.07.02. Activities and tasks

The admin office arranges, based on the needs of the users, the virtual classes, the various training tracks, monitoring course development and progress of the didactic activities. Verifies the effectiveness of the learning processes with the study of evaluation tests.

17.07.03. Relations

The admin office is the starting and arrival point for every course and for this reason talks with all the figures involved in the training intervention: students, tutors, teachers and system administrators. Answers to the training leader.

17.08. THE STUDENT

17.08.01. Definition

Regardless of the educational context, the role of the student is to learn. This is a daunting task under the best of circumstances, requiring motivation, planning, and an ability to analyze and apply the instructional content being taught. When instruction is delivered at a distance, additional challenges result because students are often separated from others sharing their backgrounds and interests, have few if any opportunities to interact with teachers outside of class, and must rely on technical linkages to bridge the gap separating class participants.

17.08.02. Activities and tasks

Taking into consideration the profile of the distance student, and his characteristics, they have several activities beyond the learning process, that require their attention. They must coordinate the different areas of their lives which influence each other — their families, jobs, spare time, and studies. As many distance-education students are older, have jobs, and families. They have to cope with the isolation. The motivational factors arising from the

contact or competition with other student is poor. The student also lacks the immediate support of a teacher who is present and able to motivate and, if necessary, give attention to actual needs and difficulties that crop up during study. Distant students and their teachers often have little in common in terms of background and day-to-day experiences and therefore, it takes longer for learner-teacher rapport to develop.

17.08.03. Relations

The distant student relates mainly with the tutor, but also with the teacher and the training leader. This is vertical relationship. In order to maximize the learning effects, students should be encouraged to relate to the other colleagues in the virtual class, and do collaborative works. Students often learn most effectively when they have the opportunity to interact with other students. Interaction among students typically leads to group problem solving. When students are unable to meet together, appropriate interactive technology such as E-mail should be provided to encourage small group and individual communication. Assignments in which students work together and then report back or present to the class as a whole, encourage student-to-student interaction. Ensure clear directions and realistic goals for group assignments

17.09. TEST- QUIZ

17.09.01. Please match the right column to the right answer in the left one, matching each role to the specific activity.

The tutor	He is the author of the e-learning course, defines content, chooses the course delivery methodology, designs the structure and chooses which communication tools to use (e-mail, forum, chat, videoconferencing, film clips or documents retrievable on the net).
The teacher	He follows the virtual classroom for the entire training period. He is the reference point for all the participants – not only students, but also for teachers and the training staff in general.
The admin office	He is the expert computer technician that performs a range of technical operations on the server that houses the e-learning platform
The training leader	His main concern is to acquire knowledge and to collaborate to all other actors involved.
The system administrator	He sets up, supervises and monitors all the phases of the training activity. Decides on the type of teaching method and technical support.
The student	He arranges, based on the needs of the users, the virtual classes, the various training tracks, monitoring course development and progress of the didactic activities.

17.09.02. Students enrolled in distance learning must face and overcome a number of challenges before learning takes place including: becoming and staying responsible for themselves; "owning" their strengths, desires, skills, and needs; maintaining and increasing self-esteem; relating to others; clarifying what is learned; redefining what legitimate knowledge is; and dealing with content.

Please explain shortly how do you intend to cope with some of these challenges:

- Maintaining and increasing self-esteem.
- Owning your strengths, desires, skills, needs
- Clarifying what is learned

17.09.03. List a set of collaborative topics that you could set out with your class colleagues.