

Gilly Salmon’s Carpe Diem Learning Design Processes

Overview

Gilly Salmon’s Carpe Diem Learning Design process is a collaborative, team-based methodology for designing effective, engaging, and innovative learning experiences. Developed to address the challenges of change in accommodating new modes of learning including online. This creative but structured approach focuses on rapidly creating and embedding online and blended learning designs that are pedagogically sound and aligned with learning outcomes and goals. It promotes co-creation and the wider involvement of all stakeholders in the learning design.

Key Principles

Design thinking approaches a design ‘once and deliver many times concept’ and key design principles, not traditionally applied to education.

Learner-Centric Design

The process is centred on creating engaging learning experiences that prioritize student needs, including accessibility, relevance, and active participation.

Collaboration

Carpe Diem brings together educators, instructional designers, alumni, and many other stakeholders, perhaps even ‘a wild card’ in a highly interactive workshop setting, ensuring diverse perspectives and expertise inform the learning design.

Rapid Prototyping

The process encourages participants to create a buildable prototype course or module in just a few days, enabling quick iteration and refinement.

Alignment with Institutional Goals

By involving teams in strategic discussions, Carpe Diem ensures that learning designs align with institutional priorities and desired learning outcomes.

Benefits

Start with the End in mind!

- Accelerated Design: The process enables the rapid development of well-structured courses, saving time and resources.
- Collaborative Ownership: Engaging all stakeholders fosters a sense of shared ownership over the learning design, without
- Pedagogically Sound Outcomes: Designs are based on proven pedagogical principles, including constructivist and social learning theories.

Carpe Diem summary – benefits and process., written for OEB24 ‘Golden Eggs’ participants

- Flexibility: The process is adaptable to a range of disciplines, formats (online, blended, face-to-face), and educational levels.

The Carpe Diem Process

The Carpe Diem Module process typically unfolds in six steps, which can be done online or on location. Some carpe diems first develop a programme and then the modules- often in a ‘mass carpe diem’ event. Here is the ‘Module’ process.

1. Write a Blueprint: Define the vision, intended outcomes, and broad structure of the learning experience. This step clarifies goals and aligns the team. The ‘knowledge’ owner needs to be present.
2. Storyboard the Learning Journey: Ensure there is a learning scaffold and use the 5-stage model to ensure individual and group development. Map out the learner’s journey, incorporating activities, assessments, and resources. The visual approach ensures the design is cohesive, sustainable, and importantly- buildable.
3. Build a Prototype: Develop a tangible prototype of key activities, typically using the ‘e-tivity framework’ using the tools and platforms available. This enables rapid feedback and iteration.
4. Review and Refine: Collaboratively critique and improve the prototype, ensuring alignment with learning goals and addressing practical challenges and aspirations.
5. Check Alignment and Accessibility: Ensure the design aligns with institutional policies, learning outcomes, and accessibility standards.
6. Action Plan for Implementation: Create a clear plan for finalizing, launching, and supporting the learning experience.

Applications

The Carpe Diem process has been successfully applied across diverse educational settings, from higher education to corporate training, and supports the development of online, blended, and hybrid learning formats.

It has been particularly effective in:

- Enhancing team collaboration and reducing siloed course development.
- Addressing challenges in transitioning face-to-face courses to online formats.
- Designing innovative courses that integrate technology effectively to foster active learning.

And – is noted for providing confidence to transform thinking and action.

Role of the Facilitator

The Carpe Diem facilitator plays a critical role in guiding teams, maintaining focus on pedagogy, and encouraging creative problem-solving. The facilitator ensures that the team remains learner-focused and that the final designs are both practical and impactful. Gilly Salmon often leads the first Carpe Diem for a group herself and then trains others.

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Evidence of Impact

Studies highlight the process’s effectiveness in improving course quality, increasing staff confidence in using digital tools, and fostering innovation in learning design.

References

Salmon, G. (2013). *E-tivities: The Key to Active Online Learning* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Salmon, G. (2011). *E-moderating: The Key to Teaching and Learning Online* (3rd ed.). Routledge.

An example of application:

A ‘Watershed’ for Educational Transformation: Deployment of Carpe Diem Learning Design Methods in a South African Context

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<https://www.gillysalmon.com/journal-articles.html>