



# INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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## Developing Online Physical Education Courses

Today, community college instructors all over the world are transitioning to teaching online, many for the first time. Instructors who teach courses that depend on in-person instruction and assessment, such as physical education, struggle to translate in-person coursework to virtual delivery. Online physical education courses present several unique challenges compared to online courses in other disciplines. These challenges must be taken into consideration and addressed in order to create a meaningful and authentic online physical education learning experience.

### Unique Challenges

The primary challenge in developing an online physical education course is determining how to verify student exercise completion. How can instructors prove that students are correctly completing their workout or exercise requirements? Since online physical education instructors do not have the ability to witness a workout in person, alternative solutions are needed.

Another unique challenge for online physical education instructors is properly assessing learning objectives. Traditional physical education classes typically have learning objectives that are best and most easily assessed through observation. For instance, if a learning objective addresses the biomechanical form of an exercise, how will an instructor be able to view and verify the accuracy of student performance in an online course format?

### Integrating Technology

The primary solution to these problems is to identify and integrate technology that assists with issues of verification, accountability, and assessment of student learning objectives. There are a variety of cell phone applications that can help an online physical education instructor address these critical areas. Several apps can be used to qualitatively measure exercise and workout sessions by tracking distance, time, and intensity. These measures not only help verify completion of workouts, but provide valuable and specific feedback to the instructor related to student performance.

**MapMyFitness:** This app is used to track the distance, time, location, and route of workouts in online physical education courses such as Cardiovascular Fitness, Fitness Walking, Hiking, Jogging, and Mountain Biking. MapMyFitness is a free app that can be used on all

smart phones. It is critical that students use their school-provided email address when setting up an account for any fitness tracking app to help verify their identity.

**Camera App:** The camera that comes as a default on all cell phones is another app that can be used to address concerns of verification, accountability, and assessment. Students can take a selfie or video and submit it in conjunction with a MapMyFitness workout link to allow an instructor to match up time, date, and location information to ensure that an exercise was completed. In addition to identity verification, the camera app also provides a way for students to demonstrate achievement of student learning objectives. Students can submit a video that provides evidence that they performed a specific exercise or technique correctly, despite the instructor not being physically present to witness it. This can prove beneficial in a variety of online physical education courses, including dance, yoga, or fitness. The evidence and artifacts that students create can be submitted through any student learning management system, making them easily accessible to the instructor.

### Other Factors to Consider

In addition to the considerations of workout verification and learning objectives, there are several other factors that need to be addressed when developing an online physical education course. Deciding whether or not to allow students to be location optional is one. Being location optional means students can complete their workout in any suitable location as long as it fits the parameters needed for the workout itself. This increases accessibility for students and allows them to complete workouts indoors or outdoors. The increased accessibility and flexibility also benefit instructors by eliminating excuses students may have about being unable to complete exercise assignments.

Another factor that should be considered when developing an online physical education course is the concept of workout scheduling. In a typical face-face physical education class, students would meet two to three times a week with a day off in between classes or workouts. Allowing proper recovery time is key for safe and effective exercise. Online physical education instructors must establish and communicate clear parameters and expectations of acceptable workout completion, including the frequency and duration of each workout session. At Harford Community College, this is addressed through a concept called smart scheduling. Smart scheduling guides students to complete workouts on their own schedule while adhering to critical exercise

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principles. For instance, students are instructed that they cannot complete multiple workout sessions in the same day. Time stamp verification provided in the camera and fitness tracking apps can be used to monitor student practice in relation to proper exercise scheduling.

### **Conclusion**

Online physical education classes present several unique challenges when compared to traditional, face-to-face physical education classes or online classes in other disciplines. Integrating fitness tracking technology through apps like MapMyFitness and the camera app helps instructors verify distance, time, and intensity as it relates to exercise completion. Though there are challenges in creating an online physical education class, these resources and strategies help create an authentic and meaningful physical education experience, even in an online environment.

Cindy Kelley, Assistant Professor, Behavioral and Social Sciences

For more information, contact the author at Harford Community College, Ckelley@harford.edu