INFORMATION SYSTEMS EDUCATION JOURNAL

Volume 24, No. 5
September 2026
ISSN: 1545-679X

In this issue:

4. **Revisiting Course Coordination in Instructional Contexts: A Flexible, Instructor-Centered Approach**
Wenqi Zhou, Duquesne University
Carlos Salazar-Betancourth, University of Rhode Island

14. **Student Engagement in IT Programs: What NSSE Captures and What It Misses**
James Wolf, Illinois State University
Pruthikrai Mahatanankoon, Illinois State University

29. **Human - AI Collaboration in Knowledge Transfer: A Research Agenda Integrating Knowledge Management**
Abraham Abby Sen, West Texas A&M University
Jeen Mariam Joy, West Texas A&M University
Kareem Dana, West Texas A&M University
Murray Jennex, West Texas A&M University
Jeffry Babb, West Texas A&M University

49. **Digital Twins as Integrative Learning Artifacts in Systems Education**
Biju Bajracharya, East Tennessee State University
Mohammad Moin Uddin, East Tennessee State University

61. ***Teaching Case***
Operational Analytics in Excel: A Transaction-Level Car Wash Case for Introductory Data Literacy
Kevin Mentzer, Nichols College
Robert Russo, Nichols College
Nathaniel Lawshe, Nichols College
Elizabeth Mullen, Nichols College

iscap
Information Systems & Computing Academic Professionals

The **Information Systems Education Journal** (ISEDJ) is a double-blind peer-reviewed academic journal published by **ISCAP** (Information Systems and Computing Academic Professionals). Publishing frequency is five times per year. The first year of publication was 2003.

ISEDJ is published online (https://isedj.org). Our sister publication, the Proceedings of the ISCAP Conference (https://iscap.us/proceedings) features all papers, abstracts, panels, workshops, and presentations from the conference.

The journal acceptance review process involves a minimum of three double-blind peer reviews, where both the reviewer is not aware of the identities of the authors and the authors are not aware of the identities of the reviewers. The initial reviews happen before the ISCAP conference. All papers, whether award-winners or not, are invited to resubmit for journal consideration after applying feedback from the Conference presentation. Award winning papers are assured of a publication slot; however, all re-submitted papers including award winners are subjected to a second round of three blind peer reviews to improve quality and make final accept/reject decisions. Those papers that are deemed of sufficient quality are accepted for publication in the ISEDJ journal. Currently the target acceptance rate for the journal is under 35%.

Information Systems Education Journal is pleased to be listed in the Cabell's Directory of Publishing Opportunities in Educational Technology and Library Science, in both the electronic and printed editions. Questions should be addressed to the editor at editor@isedj.org or the publisher at publisher@isedj.org. Special thanks to volunteer members of ISCAP who perform the editorial and review processes for ISEDJ.

2026 ISCAP Board of Directors

Amy Connolly James Madison University President	Michael Smith Georgia Institute of Technology Vice President	Jeff Cummings Univ of NC Wilmington Past President
David Firth University of Montana Director	Mark Frydenberg Bentley University Director/Secretary	Leigh Mutchler James Madison University Director
RJ Podeschi Millikin University Director/Treasurer	Bryan Reinicke Rochester Institute of Technology / Director	Jeffry Babb West Texas A&M University Director/Curricular Matters
Eric Breimer Siena University Director/2026 Conf Chair	Thomas Janicki Univ of NC Wilmington Director/Meeting Planner	Xihui "Paul" Zhang University of North Alabama Director/JISE Editor

Copyright © 2026 by Information Systems and Computing Academic Professionals (ISCAP). Permission to make digital or hard copies of all or part of this journal for personal or classroom use is granted without fee provided that the copies are not made or distributed for profit or commercial use. All copies must bear this notice and full citation. Permission from the Editor is required to post to servers, redistribute to lists, or utilize in a for-profit or commercial use. Permission requests should be sent to Kevin Mentzer, Editor, editor@isedj.org.

INFORMATION SYSTEMS EDUCATION JOURNAL

Editors

Kevin Mentzer
Editor
Nichols College

Ira Goldman
Associate Editor
Siena University

David Yates
Associate Editor
Bentley University

Michelle Louch
Teaching Cases & Exercises
Editor
University of Pittsburgh - Greensburg

Mark Pisano
Teaching Cases & Exercises
Associate Editor
Southern Connecticut
State University

Thomas Janicki
Publisher
Univ of NC Wilmington

David Woods
Assistant Publisher
Miami University
Regionals

Paul Witman
Emeritus Editor
(2021-2026)
California Lutheran
University

Jeffry Babb
Emeritus Editor
(2016-2021)
West Texas A&M
University

Donald Colton
Emeritus Editor
(2003-2010)
Brigham Young University
Hawaii

Revisiting Course Coordination in Instructional Contexts: A Flexible, Instructor-Centered Approach

Wenqi Zhou
zhouw@duq.edu
Duquesne University
Pittsburgh, PA 15282

Carlos Salazar
carlos.salazar@uri.edu
University of Rhode Island
Kinston, RI 02881

Abstract

Coordinating large, multi-section courses presents a persistent challenge in higher education, creating a tension between the need for standardization for quality assurance and the desire for pedagogical flexibility to foster instructor engagement. This paper addresses this challenge by proposing and evaluating a replicable, instructor-centered coordination model of "flexible standardization." Developed and implemented in a required undergraduate Information Systems course at a private U.S. college, the model integrates shared learning goals and common assessments within a framework that empowers instructors with the autonomy to adapt and innovate their teaching materials and methods. The model's effectiveness was assessed over six academic years (2019–2025) using student performance data from standardized Assurance of Learning (AoL) exam questions. The findings demonstrate that this flexible approach successfully maintains curricular coherence and meets accreditation benchmarks, with student performance consistently exceeding goals and showing low variability across sections. By fostering a culture of collaboration, professional trust, and shared ownership, the model provides a scalable, evidence-based alternative to rigid standardization that allows instructor agency while ensuring the integrity of student learning outcomes.

Keywords: Course Coordination, Flexible Standardization, Assurance of Learning (AoL), Instructor Agency, Accreditation.

Recommended Citation: Zhou, W., Salazar-Betancourth, C., (2026). Revisiting Course Coordination in Instructional Contexts: A Flexible, Instructor-Centered Approach. *Information Systems Education Journal*, v24(n5) pp 4-13. DOI# https://doi.org/10.62273/LKDD2674

©2026 ISCAP (Information Systems and Computing Academic Professionals)

Revisiting Course Coordination in Instructional Contexts: A Flexible, Instructor-Centered Approach

Wenqi Zhou and Carlos Salazar-Betancourth

1. INTRODUCTION

Coordinating large, multi-section college courses is challenging in higher education, particularly when those sections are taught by instructors with diverse academic backgrounds, teaching philosophies, and employment statuses. Balancing the competing demands of quality assurance, pedagogical consistency, and faculty autonomy becomes crucial in foundational courses that are vital for student success. This paper addresses this challenge by presenting a replicable, instructor-centered model of course coordination that supports consistency in student learning outcomes without compromising instructional flexibility and creativity.

In today's higher education landscape, flexibility is increasingly recognized as a necessary feature of both student-centered and faculty-driven pedagogical design to improve accessibility for the students, adaptability to different learning styles, and creativity from the instructors (Barua & Lockee, 2024; Brekke & Zhang, 2024; Lübke et al., 2021). However, large-scale coordination efforts often lean toward rigid standardization to ensure fairness and accountability, inadvertently undermining the instructor engagement and innovation that contribute to meaningful learning. Moreover, resistance to top-down Assurance of Learning (AoL) systems, often seen as organizational compliance, complicates the development of effective, scalable course coordination frameworks (Bennett et al., 2017; Tham et al., 2023). Assurance of learning (AoL) refers to "*demonstrating, through assessment processes, that students achieve learning expectations for the programs in which they participate.*"

This study is best characterized as a longitudinal evaluation and case study of a course coordination model implemented over six academic years which addresses the debate on flexibility vs. standardization. This study proposes an alternative to more rigid approaches: a flexible standardization model built on the principles of collaboration, transparency, and shared governance. Developed through the lens of a course coordinator at a private U.S. college, the model incorporates curated teaching materials, shared assessments, and clearly defined yet adaptable structures. At its core, the system emphasizes faculty empowerment through well-supported autonomy and structured collaboration, anchored by common learning goals and assessment practices aligned with AACSB accreditation standards.

Drawing on literature related to pedagogy, assessment, and change management, this work situates such a model within a broader conversation about faculty agency, curriculum coherence, and institutional accountability. It then demonstrates how the model has been implemented, refined, and evaluated over multiple academic cycles in an introductory Information Systems course. Through student performance data, documented improvements in instructional engagement, and sustainable administrative practices, the model illustrates how academic rigor and pedagogical flexibility can coexist, producing a high-quality, inclusive learning experience across course sections.

By offering a practical framework grounded in both theory and practice, this paper contributes to efforts to reimagine course coordination as a participatory, faculty-led process. It provides institutions with a scalable, evidence-based alternative to rigid standardization—one that honors the professional judgment of instructors while preserving the integrity of student learning and accreditation standards.

The proposed model includes five key components: (1) forming a collaborative instructor team to share pedagogical ownership; (Couch et al., 2023; Moore et al., 2025) (2) distributing baseline materials to ensure consistency while avoiding redundancy; (Bennett et al., 2017; Brown et al., 2017) (3) administering shared assessments across all sections with centralized reporting; (Gibson et al., 2013; Miller et al., 2024; Tham et al., 2023) (4) offering weekly teaching plans as scaffolding tools; (Aga, 2023; Fortes & Tchantchane, 2010) and (5) allowing instructors to propose and integrate new teaching materials through a faculty-led process (Barua & Lockee, 2025; Brekke & Zhang, 2024; Lübke et al., 2021) .

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Coordinating large courses remains a persistent challenge in higher education with most instructors still making key decisions independently and departments struggling to balance shared standards with instructor autonomy.(Couch et al., 2023; Fortes & Tchantchane, 2010; Miller et al., 2024). This situation persists even when these courses are divided into smaller sections for tutoring. While splitting a large class into sections—each led by a different instructor—reduces the number of students per group, it introduces the complex challenge of ensuring consistency in instructional quality and equitable learning outcomes across all sessions. A fundamental tension arises between the need for standardization, which supports fairness and facilitates accreditation processes, and the desire to preserve pedagogical flexibility, which fosters instructor engagement and enhances student learning (Barua & Lockee, 2025, 2024).

Prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019, recent shifts in course design have emphasized the value of flexibility to improve learning outcomes. Models such as HyFlex (i.e., Hybrid + Flexible so that students can choose to attend classes in-person, live online, or asynchronously) and modular formats allow instructors to tailor content delivery to student needs and teaching preferences, promoting critical thinking and learner engagement (Barua & Lockee, 2024; Koumpis et al., 2020). However, without guardrails, such autonomy can lead to inconsistent student experiences across sections, undermining curriculum coherence and assessment validity.

To address this, institutions rely on AoL systems, particularly in accredited programs. AoL provides a structured framework to define learning outcomes, collect assessment data, and use findings to improve curriculum (Tarnoff, 2023; Tham et al., 2023). Effective AoL practices emphasize "closing the loop" or completing the cycle of evaluation and improvement, using assessment evidence to implement meaningful instructional changes (Bennett et al., 2017; Borschbach & Mescon, 2021). Yet, faculty often view these processes as administratively burdensome and disconnected from teaching, particularly when imposed top-down (Brown et al., 2017; Harvey, 2024). Resistance is common when assessment efforts are perceived as surveillance rather than tools for improvement (Moore et al., 2025).

Research suggests that AoL systems are more successful when they engage faculty as collaborators rather than as passive data providers. (Moore et al., 2025; Tarnoff, 2023) Building assessment literacy, streamlining reporting, and integrating assessment into professional learning communities can transform AoL from a compliance exercise into a shared improvement process (Bennett et al., 2017; Moore et al., 2025). This shift is fundamental in large courses where alignment across instructors is critical, and the risk of fragmentation is high.

Consistency in evaluation is another key concern in multi-section environments. Institutions such as Capella and Nova Southeastern University (NSU) have shown that using shared rubrics and standardized exam questions can ensure comparability in student outcomes while supporting transparency and fairness (Gibson et al., 2013). These tools, when developed collaboratively, not only promote equity but also enhance trust among instructors. (Couch et al., 2023; Miller et al., 2024; Tham et al., 2023).

Crucially, the literature highlights that flexibility and standardization are not mutually exclusive. Structured autonomy, where faculty work within a shared framework while retaining the ability to customize instruction, has been linked to improved student outcomes and higher instructor satisfaction (Brekke & Zhang, 2024; Cardona et al., 2022). In this context, clearly defined roles, open communication, and strong leadership are essential. Moore et al. (2025) recommend providing professional development, time support, and resources to help faculty view assessment as a meaningful activity rather than mere compliance. When these efforts are supported by digital tools that reduce workload and enhance coordination, institutions are better positioned to scale quality instruction (Borschbach & Mescon, 2021).

Importantly, shared responsibility for AoL processes, such as rubric development, assessment alignment, and data review, must be formalized as part of faculty roles. Gibson et al. (2013) demonstrate how assigning these responsibilities to "Course Academic Leaders" improves coherence across sections and meets accreditation standards. Moreover, institutional alignment across departments, administration, and faculty enables adaptive teaching practices without sacrificing strategic objectives (Aga, 2023; Brekke & Zhang, 2024).

Despite widespread agreement on these principles, literature tends to treat faculty

agency, bureaucratic burden, and instructional consistency in isolation. Our work responds by offering an integrated coordination model that directly addresses these intersecting issues. Developed from the perspective of a course designer managing a foundational business course at a private college, the model embeds assessment practices within a flexible yet structured framework that promotes faculty engagement and instructional relevance.

Rather than enforcing uniformity, this approach supports instructional innovation within clearly defined boundaries. It fosters a culture where faculty are trusted to experiment, students benefit from consistent learning outcomes, and institutions can meet accreditation requirements without overburdening instructors. As demonstrated in our implementation, this model not only improves student performance but also contributes to a sustainable and inclusive academic environment.

3. METHOD

Context

The course examined in this study is a core requirement within the undergraduate business curriculum at a four-year private college in the Northeastern United States. Typically taken by first-year students, many of whom have yet to declare a major, the course introduces fundamental concepts in Information Systems, with an emphasis on the strategic role of technology in contemporary business environments. Designed to establish baseline digital literacy and critical thinking about information systems, it serves as an entry point into more advanced coursework across business disciplines.

The course is offered in over ten sections each year, with approximately 35 students enrolled per section. Instruction is provided by a mix of full-time faculty members and adjunct instructors, most of whom hold advanced degrees and possess substantial professional experience in relevant fields. Adjunct faculty typically teach one or two sections, while full-time instructors teach the remaining classes. All courses are delivered in-person each semester. This instructional diversity enriches classroom perspectives but also introduces the challenge of maintaining consistency in learning outcomes and instructional quality across sections.

In addition, this course is embedded in the institution's AoL framework, as required by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). It contributes directly to the school's formal assessment cycle and is subject to annual data collection, rubric-based evaluation, and continuous improvement reporting. Because of this strategic role, the course functions as both a pedagogical and administrative touchpoint, where faculty engagement, instructional design, and accreditation goals intersect.

Within this context, the development of a scalable, instructor-centered coordination model became a practical necessity. The model described in this paper emerged in response to these institutional demands, with the dual goals of enhancing instructional coherence and preserving faculty autonomy. It represents an effort to balance structured accountability with pedagogical flexibility in a way that aligns with both faculty values and accreditation expectations.

Constraints of the Standardized Model

Prior to 2019, the course had adopted a rigid standardized coordination model for nearly a decade. An extensive literature review and a reflective analysis of the limitations inherent in the previous rigid coordination model informed the development of the new coordination system. Prior studies, as referenced earlier, emphasize the importance of maintaining instructional flexibility and preserving instructor autonomy (Barua & Lockee, 2025, 2024; Brekke & Zhang, 2024; Cardona et al., 2022; Lübke et al., 2021). They are shown to contribute significantly to educator engagement and course effectiveness. However, the practical implementation of these principles in large, multi-section courses remains uneven and often constrained by rigid coordination models that prioritize standardization at the expense of innovation.

Our proposed framework directly addresses this gap by offering a faculty-driven model of course coordination that integrates assessment, planning, and instructional support within a shared but adaptable structure. By formalizing collaboration, distributing baseline materials, and streamlining evaluation practices, the model fosters both curricular coherence and individual teaching agency. In doing so, it reframes coordination not as a mechanism of control, but as a scaffold that enables instructors to teach more creatively, confidently, and consistently—all while meeting institutional standards for quality and accountability.

This aligns with the feedback collected from instructors who have collectively taught the

coordinated freshman-year course over the past decade. According to their experiences, the previous system's rigid standardization—originally designed to ensure equity across multiple sessions—ultimately stifled innovation and discouraged pedagogical personalization tailored to each classroom's needs.

Under the earlier model, all course sections were required to adhere strictly to unified instructional materials, including identical lecture slides, in-class activities, assignments, deadlines, and grading rubrics. While this uniformity aimed to prevent perceived inequities among students enrolled in different sessions, it inadvertently introduced several systemic challenges:

1) Detachment from Grading and Student Assessment

Instructors were not directly involved in grading, as this responsibility was delegated to graduate student graders. Although instructors could review graded submissions, they often had to invest significant time deciphering grading rationale, such as interpreting rubrics and justifying point deductions, instead of focusing on identifying learning gaps or patterns in student understanding.

2) Inconsistent Grading Quality

While graduate graders received basic training from course coordinators, their relative inexperience compared to seasoned instructors resulted in variability in grading quality. This inconsistency was especially evident when comparing feedback and scores across different graders or sessions.

3) Delays and Tensions in Grade Dispute Resolution

When students contested their grades, instructors had to act as intermediaries, relaying concerns to the course coordinator, who in turn consulted the graders. This multilayered process not only delayed resolution but also created friction among students, instructors, and course administrators, undermining trust and collaboration.

4) Limited Instructional Autonomy

The uniform structure prevented instructors from designing original assignments, adjusting deadlines, or modifying content to suit the pace and dynamics of their specific sessions. This was particularly problematic in cases where students, even within the same instructor's multiple sessions, demonstrated varied learning progressions.

5) Erosion of Instructor Motivation and Ownership

Over time, the inability to shape course content or respond dynamically to classroom needs led many instructors to disengage from course development processes. Lacking a sense of ownership, instructors were less inclined to contribute new ideas or engage in continuous course improvement.

The shortcomings of the previous model underscored the need for a more balanced approach, i.e., one that preserves consistency where necessary but empowers instructors to adapt their teaching to evolving classroom realities. The new coordination system, grounded in empirical research and years of practical feedback, embodies this shift. It aims to foster a culture of instructional ownership, professional trust, and pedagogical innovation, which are essential components for creating a more equitable and enriching learning experience for students.

4. RESULTS

The New Flexible Model for Consistent Quality

Implemented in 2019, the new coordination system was designed to place instructor agency and pedagogical personalization at its core, while maintaining the consistency and accountability expected of a multi-section foundational course. Rather than enforcing rigid uniformity, the system offers a structured yet adaptable framework that supports instructional innovation without compromising quality standards.

At the core of the model is a centralized collection of sample teaching materials accompanied by clearly defined requirements and an approval process for customized alternatives. Curated by the course coordinator, these resources include lecture slides, in-class activities, assignments, syllabus templates, and sample course calendars. Rather than imposing restrictions, these materials function as a flexible instructional framework, supporting faculty while allowing room for creativity and adaptation. Each resource specifies essential requirements, including intended learning outcomes, topic coverage, relevant technical competencies, and software usage.

Instructors are encouraged to tailor or replace materials to suit their teaching styles and the

needs of their student cohorts, as long as the core requirements are fulfilled. To adopt alternative materials, faculty members simply submit their proposed content along with a brief rationale demonstrating alignment with the required learning objectives. Each semester, approximately half of the instructors contact the coordinator to request customized approaches, such as new tools or assignments. These instructors typically seek approval once or twice per term.

To ensure standardization for quality assurance and accreditation compliance, the system incorporates several institutional safeguards:

1) Assessment Alignment

A set of common final exam questions is administered across all sessions. Instructors are required to report student performance on these standardized items to the course coordinator, providing the primary dataset for annual AoL reporting.

2) Faculty Collaboration and Feedback Loops

The academic year begins with a kick-off meeting and concludes with a reflection session, both of which are structured to foster shared understanding of course expectations, exchange best practices, and collect feedback for continuous improvement. These forums help instructors remain aligned while also encouraging dialogue about pedagogical strategies, course content, and student engagement.

3) Defined Flexibility with Guardrails

While final exam items are standardized and selected learning outcomes are fixed for AoL reporting, instructors retain substantial control over most elements of the course. This includes the design and sequencing of instructional materials, formative assessments, deadlines, and weekly pacing. Importantly, instructors are actively encouraged to adapt their course content and delivery methods to reflect the specific learning profiles of their students.

This "flexible standardization" model offers a thoughtful compromise between consistency and autonomy. It enables diverse instructional approaches while supporting curricular coherence and data-driven quality assurance. As a result, instructors are more empowered, student learning is better contextualized, and accreditation requirements are more meaningfully addressed.

Student Performance & Faculty Feedback

In Fall 2019, this introductory Information Systems course was relaunched with a new textbook, revised master syllabus, and a redesigned coordination framework emphasizing instructor autonomy and pedagogical flexibility. The course continued to participate in the institution's AoL assessment, which provides the appropriate setting for assessing the effectiveness of this new coordination model, particularly in supporting student learning outcomes while maintaining consistency.

Each academic term, instructors reported AoL data based on a shared set of standardized exam questions embedded within the course's final assessment. These common questions were designed to align with core course learning objectives across all sessions, which are mapped to the learning goals of the undergraduate business program. Instructors submitted performance data at the session level, reporting (1) the total number of students enrolled and (2) the number who correctly answered each AoL question. These measures provided a consistent and comparative snapshot of student learning across all sections and instructional formats, summarized by the following Figure 1. We analyzed aggregated, de-identified AoL data, ensuring no student-level identifiers were used. This analysis was conducted after all grades were posted, so no intervention could have affected student grades.

The institutional AoL benchmark targets at least 75% correctness per program learning goal as a threshold for adequate mastery. As shown in Figure 1, the data from Academic Years (AY) 2019 through 2025 demonstrate consistent achievement of this benchmark across nearly all sessions and assessment items.

In AY 2019–2020, the initial year of implementation, performance fell slightly below the AoL target, which was expected given the transition to new course materials and coordination procedures. Following this baseline year, faculty engaged in targeted course refinements, including revisions to in-class activities, assignment designs, and wording of assessment questions. These adjustments were informed by feedback gathered during end-of-year reflection meetings and individual instructor reports.

From AY 2020–2021 onward, the course consistently exceeded the AoL benchmark in both aggregate and session-level performance during most semesters, reflecting stronger alignment

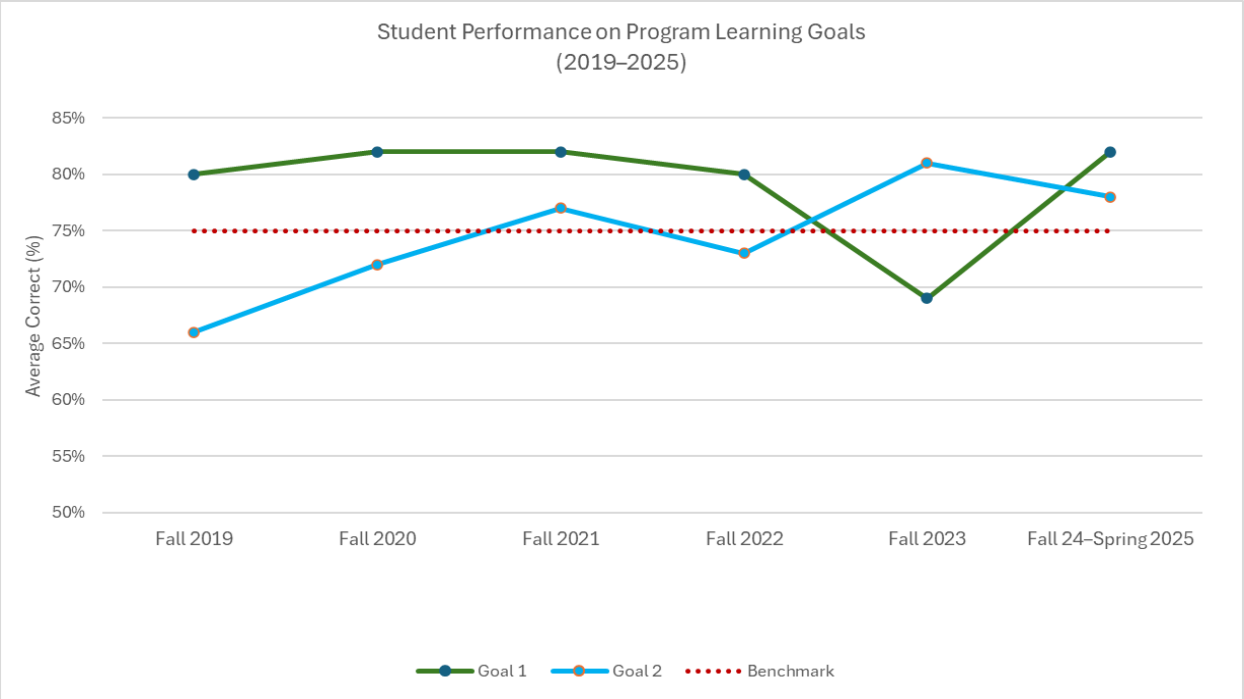


Figure 1 Student Performance Assessment under the New Coordination Model

between instruction, course objectives, and assessment instruments. In addition, the variability among course sections was minimal. In Academic Year 2024–2025, a total of 10 course sessions were delivered. The standard deviation of student performance was relatively low showing strong consistency across sections, 7.3% for Goal 1 (Business Functional Knowledge) and 3.7% for Goal 2 (Analytical & Critical Business Thinking), indicating a high level of uniformity in learning outcomes across instructors and formats.

During annual feedback sessions, the instructo team consistently praise the flexibility to tailor their sessions. They note that unlike the previous tightly controlled model, this approach fosters a sense of ownership that encourages both creativity and engagement.

To summarize, in a "flexible standardization" model, this study demonstrates a successful balance between instructor autonomy and consistent student outcomes. Furthermore, this model's emphasis on instructor agency has had a tangible, positive impact on overall student performance. Following an initial transition period, student scores on AoL assessments consistently surpassed the 75% benchmark from Academic Year 2020 onward. This finding suggests that a shift away from rigid uniformity and towards a more adaptable framework did not compromise educational quality.

5. DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study demonstrates that a structured, yet adaptable course coordination model can effectively balance autonomy for instructors with institutional accountability for learning outcomes. Consistent with Barua and Lockee (2025), the redesigned coordination system anchors the course in shared objectives, standardized assessment tools, and a curated suite of exemplary materials. However, it departs from rigid standardization by deliberately encouraging faculty to modify and build upon the base materials in a way that reflects their own pedagogical approaches and the unique needs of their student cohorts, which is supported by Brekke & Zhang (2024). This blend of structure and flexibility allows the course to maintain curricular coherence across multiple sections while fostering instructor ownership and creativity.

After implementing a new flexible teaching model in 2019, our study found that it successfully balances instructional autonomy with consistent learning outcomes. While instructors were empowered to personalize their teaching methods, the model's institutional safeguards, such as common final exam questions and faculty

collaboration, ensured that all sections remained aligned with core learning goals. The student performance data confirms this success, showing a consistent achievement of the AoL benchmark and minimal variability in outcomes across different course sections. This demonstrates that empowering faculty through a "flexible standardization" framework can lead to measurable gains in student performance while ensuring curricular coherence and compliance with accreditation standards.

The role of instructor agency proved to be a central force in the success of the model. Teacher flexibility is crucial for addressing diverse student needs in inclusive settings. Flexible teachers are more likely to adapt to varied classroom situations and support both academic and social skill development in students (Lübke et al., 2021). Empowering faculty to revise course materials, contribute new resources, and shape in-class strategies cultivated a climate of continuous instructional innovation. Rather than enforcing uniformity, the coordination model created an environment in which faculty felt empowered to take initiative, experiment with delivery approaches, and iterate on their classroom practices. As a result, the course evolved organically based on insights from those directly involved in teaching, rather than through top-down mandates. This participatory model reinforces the idea that sustainable improvement in undergraduate education hinges on respecting and leveraging faculty expertise.

In terms of outcomes, the performance data strongly supports the effectiveness of this flexible model. Across six academic cycles, students consistently met or exceeded the AoL benchmark of 75% accuracy on standardized questions mapped to key learning goals. Importantly, this trend persisted despite notable variation in instructors, delivery modes, and classroom formats, underscoring the model's resilience and adaptability. The coexistence of strong student performance with pedagogical diversity suggests that coherence does not require conformity. When paired with thoughtful scaffolding and clear expectations, instructional freedom can be an asset rather than a liability.

Faculty collaboration was another emergent strength of the model. Scheduled kickoff meetings before each term and post-semester reflection sessions enabled faculty to align on expectations, share classroom insights, and iterate collaboratively on teaching strategies. These gatherings cultivated a culture of professional development in which teaching quality was not left to individual effort alone but enhanced by collegial discourse and shared stewardship of the course. This sense of community is especially valuable in large multi-section courses where instructors often operate in silos.

Moreover, the coordination system offers potential for scaling across disciplines and programs. Its key strengths, including standardized assessment anchors, curated yet modifiable resources, and transparent approval structures, make it well-suited for foundational or core courses that require consistency without sacrificing instructional relevance. The ability to disaggregate student performance by learning goals, section, and instructional strategy also enables data-driven refinement. Program leaders are now better positioned to identify performance gaps, test pedagogical interventions, and provide targeted faculty support based on real-time feedback.

While the findings of this study are grounded in a single institutional context, the proposed coordination model demonstrates strong potential for generalization across similar educational settings. Its successful implementation relies on several key conditions, including institutional support for shared governance, a structured Assurance of Learning (AoL) framework, and a culture that values faculty collaboration and instructional autonomy. Although the model was developed in a private college environment with moderate class sizes, its core principles—such as standardized assessment anchors, flexible instructional design, and faculty-led innovation—are adaptable to larger and more complex institutions. In particular, the role of leadership in facilitating coordination, maintaining alignment, and fostering trust among instructors is critical to successful replication. Future research should explore the implementation of this model in diverse institutional contexts, including large public universities and fully online programs, to further assess its scalability and external validity.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This study affirms the pedagogical and operational value of a flexible, instructor-centered coordination model in large, multi-section courses. By allowing instructors to exercise agency within a structured framework of shared goals and assessments, the system successfully navigates the tension between consistency and customization. The sustained achievement of learning benchmarks, paired with

minimal variation across sessions, illustrates the model's capacity to maintain quality while honoring instructional diversity.

The implications of this model extend beyond the immediate context of a single course or program. For institutions operating in decentralized teaching environments, particularly those under pressure to demonstrate AoL compliance, this approach offers a compelling alternative to rigid standardization. The hybrid design facilitates alignment with institutional goals while supporting instructors' professional judgment and instructional creativity.

Moreover, the model's emphasis on autonomy has potential ripple effects on faculty engagement and retention. Allowing instructors to tailor content according to their pedagogical style and student demographics not only fosters greater investment in teaching but may also mitigate burnout and turnover, especially in high-enrollment or high-demand course areas. Future research should focus on systematically gathering faculty feedback about their experiences with the coordination model. From the student perspective, the flexibility inherent in this model contributes to more responsive and inclusive instruction. Instructors can better align course content with the modalities, backgrounds, and expectations of diverse student populations, whether teaching in-person, online, hybrid, or across varying regional contexts.

Importantly, the model also strengthens institutional positioning in accreditation and curriculum review cycles. By pairing structured learning objectives with standardized assessment items and transparent reporting, programs are better equipped to present clear, evidence-based narratives about student learning, curricular coherence, and continuous improvement.
Finally, while the system requires initial investments in coordination labor, shared content development, and instructor onboarding, these costs can be amortized over time through improved instructional alignment and more efficient assessment management. As institutions seek scalable solutions to meet evolving pedagogical and accreditation demands, this model presents a sustainable, adaptable framework with broad potential for replication.

7. REFERENCES

Aga, K. (2023). Challenges and motivation for teachers transitioning to active learning spaces. *European Journal of Engineering Education*, *48*(4), 724–746. https://doi.org/10.1080/03043797.2023.2193552

Barua, L., & Lockee, B. (2025). Flexible Assessment in Higher Education: A Comprehensive Review of Strategies and Implications. *TechTrends*, *69*, 301–309. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11528-025-01039-3

Barua, L., & Lockee, B. B. (2024). A review of strategies to incorporate flexibility in higher education course designs. In *Discover Education* (Vol. 3, Issue 1). Discover. https://doi.org/10.1007/s44217-024-00213-8

Bennett, M. M., Smart, K. L., & Kumar, A. (2017). Assurance of Learning: Moving from a Compliance to an Improvement Culture. *American Journal of Business*, *32*(3–4), 152–170. https://doi.org/10.1108/AJB-12-2016-0038

Borschbach, A., & Mescon, T. (2021). *Transforming Assurance of Learning for Lasting Impact*. https://www.aacsb.edu/insights/articles/2021/05/transforming-assurance-of-learning-for-lasting-impact

Brekke, M., & Zhang, T. (2024). *Flexible Learning and Teaching: Thematic Peer Group Report* (Issue Learning & Teaching Paper #21). https://www.eua.eu/downloads/publications/eua%20tpg%20report_flexible%20learning%20and%20teaching.pdf

Brown, J., Kurzweil, M., & Pritchett, W. (2017). *Quality Assurance in U.S. Higher Education: The Current Landscape and Principles for Reform*. https://doi.org/10.18665/sr.303620

Cardona, Ma. C., Buan, A. T., & Inutan, E. D. (2022). Teachers' Perspective of Science Flexible Learning. *Asia Research Network Journal of Education*, *2*(1), 1–16. https://so05.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/arnje/article/view/257219

Couch, B. A., Prevost, L. B., Stains, M., Whitt, B., Marcy, A. E., Apkarian, N., Dancy, M. H., Henderson, C., Johnson, E., Raker, J. R., Yik, B. J., Earl, B., Shadle, S. E., Skvoretz, J., & Ziker, J. P. (2023). Examining whether and how instructional coordination occurs within introductory undergraduate STEM courses. *Frontiers in Education*, *8*. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2023.1156781

Fortes, P. C., & Tchantchane, A. (2010). Dealing with Large Classes: A Real Challenge. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *8*, 272–280. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.12.037

Gibson, J. W., Greenwood, R. A., Mujtaba, B. G., Robbins, S. R., Teahen, J. A., & Tesone, D. V. (2013). Meeting the Challenge of Assurance of Learning: Perspectives from Four Business Schools. *Rosen Faculty Scholarship and Creative Works*, *145*. https://stars.library.ucf.edu/rosenscholar/145

Harvey, L. (2024). What Have We Learned from 30 Years of Quality in Higher Education: Academics' Views of Quality Assurance. *Quality in Higher Education*, *30*(3), 360–375. https://doi.org/10.1080/13538322.2024.2385793

Koumpis, A., Hofstetter, M., Gees, T., & Riedl, R. (2020). Teaching Business Information Systems in 2020s: Pitfalls, Challenges and Some Methodological Ideas for Testing. *Proceedings of the 12th International Conference on Computer Supported Education (CSEDU 2020)*, *1*. https://doi.org/10.24451/arbor.11667

Lübke, L., Pinquart, M., & Schwinger, M. (2021). The Role of Flexibility in the Realization of Inclusive Education. *Sustainability*, *13*(8), 4452. https://doi.org/10.3390/su13084452

Miller, E., Fowler, J., Johnson, J., Miller, J., Ramsey, B., Talamo, J., & Johns, C. (2024). Innovations and Evolution of Large-Enrollment Calculus in Response to the Pandemic. *PRIMUS*. https://doi.org/10.1080/10511970.2024.2352866

Moore, D., Perry, C., & Kovacs, K. (2025). *Faculty as Partners in Assurance of Learning*. https://www.aacsb.edu/insights/articles/2025/05/faculty-as-partners-in-assurance-of-learning

Tarnoff, K. (2023). *How to Make Sure an AoL System Is Working*. https://www.aacsb.edu/insights/articles/2023/06/how-to-make-sure-an-aol-system-is-working

Tham, A., de Villiers Scheepers, M., Grace, A., & Ashton, A. S. (2023). Assurance of learning in business education – what exactly are we assuring, and whose business should it be? In *Quality Assurance in Education* (Vol. 31, Issue 4, pp. 616–636). Emerald Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1108/QAE-03-2023-0051