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DESIGNING EFFECTIVE LINKS-BASED COURSES: REQUIRED, RECOMMENDED, AND OPTIONAL ELEMENTS

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"The secret of getting started is breaking your complex, overwhelming tasks into small manageable tasks, and then starting on the first one." – Mark Twain

Required (essential), recommended, and optional elements in designing effective LINKS-based courses are cataloged in this LINKS White Paper. More detail is accessible in the Instructor Resources section¹ of the LINKS Simulations website (<http://www.LINKS-simulations.com>).

LINKS-related course syllabi for 7- and 14-week courses are provided below.² Then, required, recommended, and optional LINKS-related course elements are cataloged.

7-WEEK LINKS SYLLABUS

For a 7-week course, a **small or mid-size** LINKS simulation would normally be used with a LINKS event schedule including 5 (or perhaps 6) rounds. The following syllabus (course schedule) shows the LINKS simulation activities for a 5-round event.

Week	In-Class Activities	Outside-of-Class Activities	Estimated Time
1			
2			
3	LINKS Introduction	Read LINKS Manual 1 st Decision Round Team Work	2-3 hours 45 minutes 2-3 hours
4		2 nd Decision Round Team Work	2-3 hours
5	Private Presidential Reviews	3 rd Decision Round Team Work	30 min./team 2-3 hours
6	LINKS Final Report Briefing	4 th Decision Round Team Work 5 th Decision Round Team Work	2 hours 15 minutes 2 hours
7	LINKS Debriefing	Prepare LINKS Final Report	3-4 hours 45 minutes

¹ The Instructor Resources on the LINKS Simulations website includes a wide range of PPTs and related materials to support LINKS instructors throughout their courses.

² Many complete course syllabi from LINKS instructors are provided within the Instructor Resources on the LINKS Simulations website.

In a 7-week course, these course evaluation (grading) elements might account for 50% of the total course grade:

- Within-Simulation Performance (team-based), 10% of course grade.
- LINKS Final Report (team-based), 40% of course grade: Recommended topic is “A Strategic Challenge Facing Your Firm” (assuming the firm continues on in this LINKS industry). Further details about this and other final report topics are accessible within the LINKS Instructor Resources.

The rest of the course grade (50%) would be based on non-LINKS course elements.

14-WEEK LINKS SYLLABUS

Here’s an example of how a **larger** LINKS simulation might be included within a 14-week semester-long course.³ The following syllabus (course schedule) shows the LINKS simulation activities for an 8-round event.

Week	In-Class Activities	Outside-of-Class Activities	Estimated Time
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6	LINKS Introduction	Read LINKS Manual	2-3 hours 45 minutes
7		1 st Decision Round Team Work	2-3 hours
8		2 nd Decision Round Team Work	2-3 hours
9	Private Presidential Reviews	3 rd Decision Round Team Work	30 min./team 2-3 hours
10		4 th Decision Round Team Work Mid-Event Business Review	2-3 hours 2-3 hours
11		5 th Decision Round Team Work	2-3 hours
12		6 th Decision Round Team Work 7 th Decision Round Team Work	2 hours 2 hours
13	LINKS Final Report Briefing	8 th Decision Round Team Work Advice-To-My-Successor Memo	2 hours 2-3 hours 15 minutes
14	LINKS Debriefing	Prepare LINKS Final Report	4-6 hours 45 minutes

In a 14-week course, these course evaluation (grading) elements might account for 60% of the total course grade:

- Within-Simulation Performance (team-based), 10% of course grade.
- Mid-Event Business Review (team-based), 10% of course grade: “What are the three biggest problems your LINKS firm faces? Why are these important problems now? What are you planning to do about these problems?”

³ An alternative 14-week syllabus might include a mid-size LINKS simulation, in a 6-round event, and be scheduled over the second-half of the course in much the same way as shown above in the 7-week LINKS course syllabus.

- Advice-To-My-Successor Memo (individual), 10% of course grade: Specific, detailed, well-justified advice to your successor about a particular LINKS topic in a maximum 5-page (including all text/tables/charts/exhibits) single-spaced memo.
- LINKS Final Report (team-based), 30% of course grade: Recommended topic is “A Strategic Challenge Facing Your Firm” (assuming the firm continues on in this LINKS industry). Further details about this and other final report topics are accessible within the LINKS Instructor Resources.

The rest of the course grade (40%) would be based on non-LINKS elements.

SUGGESTIONS FOR OTHER LINKS-RELATED ACTIVITIES

The following table provides a time-sequenced roadmap to LINKS activities, exercises, and reports from “before LINKS begins” through to “after LINKS ends.”

Required elements are essential. Recommended/optional elements may be used at the LINKS instructor’s discretion. No LINKS event includes all recommended/optional elements, but the complete list provides a “buffet” of possibilities.

<p>Before LINKS Begins</p>	<p>Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign LINKS Manual for pre-reading <p>Recommended</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ungraded LINKS Quiz (after reading LINKS participant’s manual) [LINKS website] • Tutorial #1: P&L Statements [LINKS website] • Forecaster Simulation [LINKS website] <p>Optional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LINKS Signup Form [to provide background information for the instructor to form LINKS teams] • Channel-Specific Profitability Analysis [LINKS variants with multiple channels] • Short In-Class Multiple-Choice Test (using multiple-choice test questions from LINKS Simulations Test Questions) to Assess Each Individual Student’s Initial Reading of the LINKS Manual <p>Optional [all LINKS marketing variants]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LINKS Case: Firm BAD2
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<p>Throughout LINKS Events</p>	<p>Recommended</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presidential Review Meetings (30-minute private meetings with each LINKS firm) <p>Optional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After-Action Reviews • Short Multiple-Choice Tests (using multiple-choice test questions from LINKS Simulations Test Questions) • Written Assignments and Examinations
<p>Early In LINKS Events</p>	<p>Recommended in Degree-Granting Academic Programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firing Memo <p>Optional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classic LINKS Questions • Tutorial #3: Balance Sheets [LINKS website] <p>Optional [all LINKS products variants with product development decisions]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tutorial #6: Reconfiguration [LINKS website] <p>Optional [LINKS Enterprise Management Simulation, LINKS Marketing Strategy Simulation, and LINKS Supply Chain Management Simulation]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tutorial #5: Inventory or Emergency Production [LINKS website] <p>Optional [supply chain management variants]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tutorial #2: Inventory Tracking [LINKS website] • Tutorial #7: Distribution Alternatives [LINKS website] • Tutorial #8: Postponed Production [LINKS website]
<p>Mid-Stream During LINKS Events</p>	<p>Recommended</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SWOT Analysis or Strategy Audit (includes SWOT Analysis) <p>Optional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Plan (For Second-Half of LINKS) • Marketing Management In-Basket Exercise [LINKS Marketing Strategy Simulation]
<p>After LINKS Ends</p>	<p>Recommended in Degree-Granting Academic Programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual LINKS Memo • Peer Evaluation: Special LINKS Management Bonus <p>Recommended [Final Presentation/Report Possibilities]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible Focus: Forward-Looking Business Plan, Best Management/Business Practices, or Strategic Challenges (in the recent past or in the near future based on where their LINKS firm is “now” ... at the end of the LINKS exercise, assuming that the LINKS exercise was continuing on for the indefinite future)