



The Instructional Skills Workshop (ISW) Network Description

Prepared by ISW Network Executive Team
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www.iswnetwork.ca

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Preamble

A very successful professional development initiative for educators, the Instructional Skills Workshop (ISW) was created in British Columbia, Canada in 1979. Since then, thousands of educators have completed the ISW. Several hundred of them have also completed the Facilitator Development Workshop (FDW) to serve as ISW Facilitators in colleges, institutes, universities, polytechnics, hospitals, government departments, nonprofits, and training organizations around the world. A number of these ISW Facilitators have also completed the Trainer Development Workshop (TDW) to prepare themselves as FDW Trainers, qualified to offer the Facilitator Development Workshop (FDW).

Nomenclature around ISW can be confusing. When we refer to the ISW Program, we are including the three levels of workshops/training (ISW, FDW, TDW).

- ISW Program: this includes three levels of workshops/training (ISW, FDW, TDW)
- ISW: Instructional Skills Workshop, first level training focused on personal teaching skills
- FDW: Facilitator Development Workshop, higher level of training to be able to facilitate ISW sessions
- TDW: Trainer Development Workshop, higher level of training to be able to facilitate FDW sessions

This ISW Network Description provides clarity around what constitutes an ISW, an FDW and a TDW and describes practices related to the ISW program wherever it is offered around the world. It is hoped this document and other materials on the ISW website, such as the ISW/FDW/TDW Multi-step Model (<https://www.iswnetwork.ca/practices-policies/the-isw-fdw-tdw-multi-step-model/>) will assist those exploring and/or implementing the ISW program for their institution or organization.

The ISW Network of Facilitators and Trainers is a vibrant, generous community of colleagues engaged collaboratively in enhancing learning through workshops, reflective practice, and the scholarship of teaching and learning. This Network is supported by:

- the ISW Network Executive Team,
- Local Representatives from ISW Teams, and by
- Facilitators and Trainers who volunteer with ISW events and projects.

This document outlines key features of the ISW Network and describes ways ISW Facilitators and Trainers can participate in the growing ISW global community.

More information about the ISW Network is available at <http://iswnetwork.ca/>.

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1. The ISW Program

Description

The Instructional Skills Workshop (ISW) is designed to encourage reflective practice and to assist participants in developing their teaching and feedback skills. The underlying principles of the workshop include: participatory learning, diversity of learning, adult learning, and the building of learning communities in classrooms and institutions. A handbook of resources is provided to augment the workshop.

After successfully completing the 3 or 4 day ISW Workshop (24 hours), participants receive a certificate of completion recognized by many Canadian and international institutions. Participants also benefit from joining a network of colleagues who are committed to self-discovery and continual improvement of teaching and learning.

Interested participants may go on to become Facilitators of the Instructional Skills Workshop by successfully completing the 5 day Facilitator Development Workshop (FDW), and becoming part of a team responsible for delivering and supporting the ISW and related activities at their institution or organization. Prerequisites for participation in the FDW include completion of the ISW and selection by one's own institution or organization to serve as an ISW Facilitator.

History and Evolution

The ISW was first developed in British Columbia, Canada in 1979 as a response to an expansion of the post-secondary education system and the need for professional development programming for both new and experienced instructors. The ISW was designed initially by Doug Kerr, then of Vancouver Community College and supported by Diane Morrison then of the British Columbia Ministry of Education. The workshop has been enhanced collaboratively over time by many members of the ISW Network. The ISW has also expanded into institutions and organizations across Canada as well as into many other countries. (<https://www.iswnetwork.ca/isw-around-the-world/>).

ISW is a nonprofit initiative and is supported by ISW Facilitators and FDW Trainers who provide time and expertise to support the regional and cross-regional activities of the ISW Network. The ISW Network Executive Team coordinates projects and events for ISW Facilitators and FDW Trainers, oversees the ISW website and ISW Registry, and provides a quarterly e-Newsletter and other communication support.

2. What is the ISW?

Widely recognized as a model for peer-based experiential instructional development, the ISW is designed to strengthen instructors' skills through intensive and practical exercises in learning-centred teaching. Mixing opportunities for small and larger group interaction, the ISW engages participants in:

- planning and delivering 10 minute lessons
- developing participatory instructional techniques
- listening actively
- learning and teaching collaboratively
- modelling adult learning principles
- generating effective feedback and discussion
- reflecting on teaching and learning from the perspectives of both instructors and students

During the 24 hour workshop period, (generally offered over three or four days), each participant conducts 10 minute lessons (three in total) in a small group of four to six people, and receives oral, written and video feedback on each lesson. Everyone attending the workshop is video recorded, and feedback is constructive.

Participants are sent information, in advance of the ISW, outlining the 'Six Elements of a Lesson,' a lesson planning model that is helpful as a starting point for discussions on instructional design and delivery. Participants may choose any topic that appeals to them but are encouraged to teach something not related to their disciplines or areas of instruction, at least on the first day, so the group can focus on the instructional design process rather than the content of the lesson.

On Day 1 of the ISW, the facilitators spend a considerable amount of time establishing a safe learning environment for all participants. Team building and group activities are an important part of establishing a learning community conducive to exploring one's teaching strategies.

Each teaching/feedback cycle is 40 minutes long, consisting of a 10 minute set up period, a 10 minute instructional period, 5 to 7 minutes of written feedback by the group while the participant and facilitator debrief, and a 13 to 15 minute group feedback process. These instructional cycles are interspersed with small group discussion (sometimes with larger group discussion if more than one group is running simultaneously) on teaching-related questions such as learner motivation, facilitating groups, assessment issues, accessibility and inclusivity, and other topics identified by the participants.

Each workshop participant presents a total of three 10 minute lessons, one lesson per day. Participants are encouraged to reflect on their own learning and that of others, and to incorporate new understandings into the next day's lessons.

The end of the workshop focuses on a celebration of the strengths of each of the participants. As the ISW is a developmental model, the Facilitators work hard to ensure that each member of the group is able to reflect on individual strengths, areas of opportunity for growth, and on how these skills can best be incorporated into their classroom or training context. Participants are also encouraged to explore further professional development opportunities after the Instructional Skills Workshop concludes, as continual learning is an essential feature of the ISW program.

3. What is the FDW?

The Facilitator Development Workshop (FDW) focuses on preparing participants to facilitate the ISW. While the ISW is a 24 hour event, the FDW trains Facilitators over 40 hours, generally a 5 day period, embedding the 24 hour ISW so participants can practice their facilitation skills with each other within this model.

FDW participants complete three cycles of teaching, three cycles of facilitating, and 9 to 12 cycles of feedback for the other participants on their 10-minute lessons. As well, each participant is engaged in 9 to 12 cycles providing feedback for the other participants on their facilitation skills. All these activities are guided by one or two FDW Trainers.

In addition to learning the elements that underpin the ISW, FDW participants learn to video record instructors, manage time and group processes to create effective learning environments, arrange all necessary logistical elements, and facilitate the feedback cycles.

Many FDW participants find learning how to facilitate the ISW to be the most challenging and rewarding work they have done in a workshop context. Successful completion of the Facilitator Development Workshop requires a willingness to lead by example – modeling the behaviours and attitudes that will allow their (future) ISW participants the space to develop their teaching and learning expertise.

Upon successful completion of the FDW, the participant receives an ISW Facilitator certificate signed by members of the FDW training team. New Facilitators are asked to co-facilitate their initial ISW(s) with more experienced Facilitators and to participate in ongoing developmental activities as members of a supportive ISW team at their institution or organization.

For more information on preparing individuals to be qualified as ISW Facilitators, see two other documents on the ISW website: Essential Components for the FDW (<https://www.iswnetwork.ca/practices-policies/essential-components-for-fdws/>) and Apprenticeship Guidelines for Facilitators (<https://www.iswnetwork.ca/apprenticeship-guidelines/>).

4. What is the TDW?

The third level of the tier is the Trainer Development Workshop (TDW) where individuals (Trainer-Trainees) who have completed the Facilitator Development Workshop, have led several Instructional Skills Workshops and, for those in organizations, have the support of their institution or organization to become FDW Trainers, develop their skills to offer the Facilitator Development Workshop. Such individuals may become FDW Trainers through one of two processes:

- The Trainer-Trainee works collaboratively as part of the training team running the FDW and is mentored into the role of FDW Trainer as the workshop unfolds.
- Four or five Trainer Trainees attend a 4 to 5 day (about 35-40 hours) TDW where they work with FDW Trainers to develop their facilitator training skills. In this TDW model, the lesson/feedback cycles include 10-minute lessons with opportunities each day for each Trainer-Trainee to practice facilitation and training, receiving feedback from the other participants on both the Facilitator and Trainer roles.

Upon successful completion of the TDW, the Trainer-Trainee receives an FDW Trainer certificate signed by members of the TDW training team. New FDW Trainers are asked to co-train with an experienced Trainer when first offering Facilitator Development Workshops. Please note it is general practice for all TDWs to be offered as a co-training model, either by two Trainers or by a very experienced Trainer working with a Trainer-Trainee.

Whereas the ISW is a developmental activity, the FDW and TDW are skill-based and generally require considerable practice and feedback. Experienced Trainers work with new Facilitators and with new Trainers to identify readiness to offer these second (FDW) and third (TDW) tiers of the ISW program.

5. Other ISW-related Models

Members of the ISW community have also developed virtual and blended options of ISW, focusing on delivering portions of the ISW online and/or developing skills for

teaching with educational technologies. In 2020/2021, the need for physical distancing resulted in the development of many virtual ISWs, in which the teaching and feedback circles were offered synchronously. During that time, the ISW Executive Team created a document to clarify the essential components of ISW in face-to-face and virtual modalities. See <https://www.iswnetwork.ca/essential-components-for-isws/>

Over the years, other workshops related to the ISW have been offered to serve specific purposes. For example, some institutions have offered a Presentation Skills Workshop (PSW), focused on the delivery of information (such as in conference presentations) rather than on design of lessons. Another variation was the Narrative Skills Workshop (NSW), which explored the role of storytelling and narrative in teaching and learning.

6. ISW and Further Education

In Canada, participants who have successfully completed an ISW are eligible for advanced placement, transfer credit, or prior learning assessment and recognition (prior learning assessment recognition, PLAR) in several certificate, diploma and degree programs. Some ISW Facilitators who have completed the Facilitator Development Workshop (FDW) and Trainer Development Workshop (TDW) have negotiated transfer credit on a case-by-case basis into advanced post-secondary educational programs (e.g., Masters degree programs) in such fields as education and leadership. For more information, see <https://www.iswnetwork.ca/isw-and-further-education/>.

7. ISW Network Members

The ISW Network is an informally linked international affiliation of Facilitators and Trainers who have completed initial training (FDW and TDW) and who participate in ongoing development to offer the ISW model and processes for the enhancement of teaching and learning. Most of these Facilitators and Trainers are members of a local team offering ISWs at their own institution or organization. Some continue as independent Facilitators and Trainers after moving to another institution or organization that doesn't offer the ISW program, becoming independent consultants, and/or retiring but remaining interested in ISW Network activities.

8. Supporting the Network: Executive Team, Sustainability Plan, Local Representatives, PD Events, Newsletter, Website and Registry

The **ISW Network Executive Team** provides support, guidance, and leadership to help members of the global ISW Network achieve the ISW vision through

collaborative action. The Executive Team is currently comprised of six individuals: Co-chairs Jill Grose and Janice Johnson and members Deb Chen, Cheri McLeod, Diane Morrison and Nancy Sly.

In late 2019 we introduced the **ISW Sustainability Plan**, which outlines ways to develop greater capacity and participation amongst members of the Network.

The **Local Representative (LR) Initiative** is an essential component of the Sustainability Plan based on each ISW site identifying Local Reps. Local Representatives liaise with the Executive Team members and with other Local Reps to enhance communication across the global ISW Network. The Local Reps also provide supporting, coordinating or participating roles in professional development events offered at a local or regional level. Local Representatives are identified by institutions or organizations and are asked to register using the LR Registry form on the website. For more information about the ISW Sustainability Plan and the Local Representative Initiative see <https://iswnetwork.ca/isw-sustainability-plan/>.

The ISW Network Executive Team coordinates **virtual professional development events** open to those who are on the ISW Registry and initiates projects to support members. Events are offered in collaboration with Network members and provide opportunities for discussion of shared practices and emergent themes related to their work as Facilitators and Trainers.

These and other Network events for ISW Facilitators from sites around the world are promoted through the ISW website, the electronic ISW Newsletter, and by other email communications with Trainers and/or Local Representatives.

The **quarterly e-newsletter (ISW Network News)** is available for all ISW Facilitators and FDW Trainers through an [online subscription process](#).

The **ISW website** provides information on ISW policies, practices, projects and events across the Network. Considerable information about the ISW Program and Network is available for public access. The website also houses ISW-related resources in a password-protected area that can be accessed by members.

To gain access to these resources, Facilitators who have completed the FDW register with the ISW Network by completing the **ISW Facilitator Registry** form. Those who become Trainers need to complete the **FDW Trainer Registry** form. Both forms can be found at: <https://www.iswnetwork.ca/isw-facilitators-and-fdw-trainer-registry/>.

Qualified Facilitators have an ISW website account, are added to the Listserv and have the option to be on the web list of ISW Facilitators. Qualified Trainers are updated from Facilitator to Trainer on our network records.

With the continuing growth of the ISW Program and Network, we ask that each FDW Trainer submit information about all FDW or TDW training they offer including:

- where and when the FDW or TDW was offered,
- names and affiliation of the Trainers, and
- names and affiliations of each new Facilitator and/or Trainer.

Information can be submitted using the Contact Us Form on the website.

It is the responsibility of individuals on the ISW Registry to alert us of any changes in their contact information and affiliation. This can be done using the Contact Us Form on the website (<https://www.iswnetwork.ca/contact/>).

9. Local Representatives and their support of Regional Activities

The ISW is built upon the philosophy of shared collaborative input. Anyone who has become an ISW Facilitator can participate in activities to support the Network. As mentioned earlier, Local Representatives (LRs) from local ISW teams assist with communication about ISW across the expanding ISW global community. Independent ISW Facilitators and FDW Trainers are encouraged to connect with LR's in their geographical area. In some areas, independent facilitators and trainers may decide to create small informal groups and select their own Local Representatives for communication purposes.

As part of this comprehensive approach to community-building across the ISW Network, the Executive Team encourages Local Representatives to collaborate with other ISW teams at sites within their general geographic region. The ISW Sustainability Plan also encourages the offering of virtual PD activities for ISW Facilitators regardless of their geographical location across the globe.

The Executive Team encourages Local Representatives to facilitate the participation of their ISW team members in the occasional offering of virtual ISW events and projects, whether coordinated at the network or regional level. More information about the roles and responsibilities of the Local Representatives (LRs), including a link to the Local Representative Registry form, can be found at <https://www.iswnetwork.ca/contact/local-representatives/>.

10. ISWs Around the World

Since the inception of the program in British Columbia in the late 1970s, the ISW has been introduced into most provinces and territories in Canada and into numerous countries beyond Canada. The Executive Team regularly discusses international initiatives and ways to promote sharing of the ISW model in countries around the world. The Executive Team continually seeks ways to encourage members of the ISW

Network to foster respect for cultural traditions and approaches in teaching and learning across the ISW global community while upholding the values of learning-centred teaching at the heart of the ISW program.

Countries where Instructional Skills Workshops have been offered are listed on the website alphabetically within geographical clusters. Although the ISW has been offered in many countries, it is not necessarily currently offered in each of the places listed on the 'ISW Around the World' webpage (<https://www.iswnetwork.ca/isw-around-the-world/>).

We continue to build the database of ISW offerings whether in Canada or beyond. Any ISW Facilitator or FDW Trainer who offers ISW, FDW or TDW at an institution or organization that is new (or returning after some time) to the ISW Network, is asked to provide information about the workshops offered (what, where, when, by whom) using the Contact Us form on the ISW website (<https://www.iswnetwork.ca/contact/>).

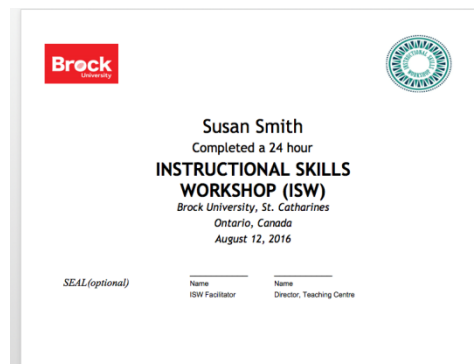
11. Using Certificates and Logos

ISW Certificates

Institutions and organizations are able to offer ISWs and issue certificates with the ISW logo once they have an established team of recognized ISW Facilitators. Each team that offers ISWs at their own institution or organization is responsible for the design and issuance of its own certificate. The certificate should be signed by a member of the ISW team at the local institution or organization.

Facilitators can access the ISW logo for inclusion on their local team's certificates through the password-protected section of the ISW website. Facilitators must be on the ISW Facilitator Registry and have an ISW website account to access these resources.

The following sample certificate has been used at Brock University:



When certified facilitators offer ISWs at other institutions (e.g., where the ISW is not yet an established program), the certificate can show both the ISW logo and the logo of the institution where the ISW is being offered. The ISW Facilitators offering these workshops sign the certificates. A representative of the institution offering the ISW can also sign the certificates if that is desired by the host institution.

In some cases, an Independent Facilitator or Trainer is contracted by an institution or organization to lead or co-lead one or more of the ISW Program workshops. In those cases, the institutional or organizational Logo would be the second logo on the certificate along with the ISW Network logo.

The ISW, FDW or TDW may also be offered by an Independent Facilitator or Trainer without an affiliation with another organization. In those cases, the Independent Facilitator or Trainer might provide their own Logo on the Certificate, in addition to the ISW Network logo.

FDW and TDW Certificates

Those ISW institutions and organizations with qualified FDW Trainers are also able to offer FDWs and TDWs. However these second and third tier workshops are only held on an occasional basis and may involve inviting Trainers from other areas to lead or co-lead an FDW or TDW.

When certified Trainers offer FDWs or TDWs at their own or other institutions, the certificate should have the ISW logo and the logo of the host institution. The certificate should state the training that the individual is completing (i.e., the ISW Facilitator Development Workshop or the ISW Trainer Development Workshop).

ISW, FDW and TDW certificates are recognized by the ISW Network Executive Team when they are signed by recognized Facilitators (for ISW) or Trainers (for FDW or TDW).

12. Events Sponsored by the ISW Network

The ISW Network Executive Team coordinates professional development events open to those who are on the ISW Registry as an ISW Facilitator or FDW Trainer. These events are co-facilitated by members of the ISW Network and provide opportunities for discussion of shared practices and emergent themes related to their work as Facilitators and Trainers. These events are generally held online with participation of up to 100 individuals from across the globe.

These and other Network events for ISW Facilitators from sites around the world are promoted through the ISW website, the electronic ISW Network Newsletter, and occasional emails sent to Trainers and/or Local Representatives.

13. Quality Assurance: Who is responsible for ISW/FDW/TDW?

The ISW is a grass-roots, informal network of peers devoted to the development of sound instructional practices in the post-secondary educational environment and in various training programs in other types of organizations. Many Facilitators and Trainers offer ISW and related activities in collaboration with post-secondary teaching and learning centres, continuing education and/or international education departments. Some Facilitators and Trainers are individuals who work in human resource development introducing instructional training programs in a variety of public, nonprofit, business, and industry sectors.

The ISW is a nonprofit organization and, as such, those who offer it cannot use it to generate revenue, other than the fees that may be levied by Facilitators and Trainers to account for their time and to cover workshop expenses. Fees or other forms of recognition for the ISW Facilitator or FDW Trainer are usually set by the individuals or by the institution. Facilitators may simply receive honorariums or another form of recognition to acknowledge the time demands of offering these workshops.

ISW Facilitators and Trainers are responsible for oversight of how ISW is conducted and supported at the institution or organization. For example, Trainers sign the certificates of new ISW Facilitators or FDW Trainers so there is accountability to the larger Network for mentoring those new to offering ISWs or FDWs. ISW Facilitators and Trainers also ensure that records are kept at the institution or organization for those who successfully complete the ISW, FDW and/or TDW.

14. Handbooks and Toolkits

The delivery of each ISW and FDW is supported by a Handbook written by members of the Network and made available under a specific Creative Commons license identified on the Handbook. The ISW and FDW Handbooks are meant as a supplementary resource to the workshops and are usually distributed at the workshops, not before, so the contents can be contextualized with respect to the experiences of the participants.

ISW Facilitators and FDW Trainers must request permission from the ISW Network Executive Team prior to undertaking any translation of Handbooks or other materials (<https://www.iswnetwork.ca/translation-guidelines/>).

The current Handbooks, as well as previous versions in various languages, are available on the password-protected section of the ISW website that can be accessed by Facilitators who are on the ISW Facilitator Registry.

An earlier version of the ISW Handbook was translated into various languages including French, Mandarin, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese. An earlier version of the FDW Handbook also has some translations available.

Members of the ISW Network have also created a Virtual ISW Toolkit, with both text and video resources, to assist ISW Facilitators with the offering of virtual as well as face to face Instructional Skills Workshops and to help ISW participants with their virtual teaching assignments. The Virtual ISW Toolkit resources are available on the public ISW website (<https://www.iswnetwork.ca/resources/virtual-isw-toolkit-resources/>).

There is also a New Facilitator Toolkit posted on the password-protected area of the website. This Toolkit is designed to be of particular interest for New ISW Facilitators but has been found to be a valuable resource for any Facilitator or Trainer in the program.

15. References and Literature on ISW

Much of the literature pertaining to ISW has been shared in an informal way amongst members of the ISW community. However, the number of resources and research studies related to the delivery of ISW and its impact on teaching and learning is growing. For a list of some of these references, see <https://www.iswnetwork.ca/isw-literature/>.

16. Contacting Us

We are happy to answer any questions you might have about the ISW Program and the ISW Network. Please contact any member of the ISW Network Executive Team by using the Contact Us form on the ISW website at <https://www.iswnetwork.ca/contact/>.