

FROM POLICY TO IMPLEMENTATION: A CASE STUDY

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The Global Online Learning Development (GOLD) program was initiated by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Planning) at Monash University in 2001, in response to the Monash strategic plan, Leading the Way: Monash 2020. Major strategic objectives of the GOLD program are to provide leadership, infrastructure and academic structures to facilitate design, production and delivery of innovative high quality learning materials to students using information and communication technologies. Key aspects of the program are the development of exemplars of the use of online technologies, development of a consistent courseware development process and academic professional development and support. The exemplars demonstrate the use of online technologies in student centred flexible learning environments and cover a range of online possibilities. The development of the exemplars involved substantial input from specialists in each subject area, educational design, information technology, student support including 'language and learning' and library experts, and production units (multimedia, audio/visual, print). Seven major projects were identified for development, encompassing eighty-two units. In some cases projects proceeded through the courseware development process to achieve expected outcomes. In other cases (at a project or unit level) progress stalled. In one such project, for the Masters of Business Administration (MBA) course, analysis revealed that progress was hindered by a lack of information flow and decision making between course and unit levels, and a lack of awareness of online possibilities. A key aspect of our strategy to address these issues and refocus the project was the design and development of a template, with input at faculty, course and unit levels. The template, in WebCT, guides academics in the set-up and use of online environments. It addresses the goals of the MBA program to take a case-based student centred approach to learning, and contains examples of teaching material and software. The template assisted academics to conceptualise online developments for their units and proceed with planning. A courseware development process needs to be adaptable in order to serve and support academics and students while continuing to serve its original purpose. Stakeholders within Faculties such as Deans and program leaders need to remain involved in the iterative process of development. Templates and exemplars are an effective way to support academics in developing online courses or components from both technical and pedagogical perspectives.

Keywords

Online, courseware development process, policy implementation, exemplar, template

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