

DEVELOPING AN ONLINE TEACHING ENVIRONMENT

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The desire to deliver teaching materials online was recognised within the Faculty a number of years ago. In the initial stages, adoption and deployment was small-scale and grew simply by the availability of enthusiastic staff and the need to be up to date in a competitive market place. Users tended to explore the technology in a largely self-managed way and were supported by a very small team of staff who managed a high workload of support, training and administration.

As the number of online units increased, the Faculty moved to incorporate online teaching into a standardised framework. We redeveloped existing inadequate communications to use a range of direct and online pathways between key stakeholders. Formal Faculty structures to make key decisions at different administrative and pedagogical levels were established. We also moved to a specialised student/staff support and training using a split Faculty/University provider model and integrated quality control initiatives through the use of training, templates, branding and review processes.

Although not all staff have adopted the technology, there has been a rapid and complex evolution of online teaching and learning, moving from the informality of early adoption, through a growing awareness of the diversity of perspectives and issues, into a more comprehensive understanding of requirements. From here, the development of well-informed strategic plans and an increasingly integrated systems approach has helped to build an environment where educational objectives can be supported rather than frustrated by technology.

This presentation will identify key problem areas affecting online delivery and address solutions in terms of communication channels for the project team with the staff and students and with Faculty administration, integration with central systems and services and effective systems management. It will also stress the importance of developing a common approach to supporting technology in teaching and therefore provide a roadmap for those moving into increased use of online learning.

Keywords

*flexible online delivery WebCT systems change management application support
communication strategies integrated systems faculty development administration
strategic teaching training students*

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