

SUPPORTING OFF-CAMPUS STUDENTS USING WEB-CT: AN EXAMPLE IN MEDICAL ULTRASOUND

Peter Wells

School of Physics and Materials Engineering
Monash University, AUSTRALIA
Peter.wells@spme.monash.edu.au

and

Debbi Weaver

Higher Education Development Unit
Centre for Learning & Teaching Support
Monash University, AUSTRALIA
Debbi.weaver@celts.monash.edu.au

Abstract

Off-campus distance learning (DL) students are required to study under far less favourable conditions than their on-campus colleagues. They miss the social and educational advantages of mixing with both their fellow students and their lecturers/tutors. In order to compensate for this lack of personal interaction, academic staff involved in the conduct of DL courses need to find ways to encourage other forms of effective and efficient communication.

In this paper we will describe the manner in which communication with these DL students is maintained, specifically in one unit, SON4000: Physics of Ultrasound and Instrumentation. It was decided for 2003 to use WebCT to encourage lecturer-student and student-student communication and provide support generally. We briefly describe the available WebCT tools that we have specifically chosen to use to support SON4000. We discuss the initial cost to staff in setting WebCT up for a subject like SON4000, the perceived long term benefits to the teaching staff, and most importantly, the reactions and responses of the students in accessing the WebCT site and contributing to the various communication options. A summary of the WebCT student-tracking data and the use of the mid-semester evaluation survey is presented.