

## **UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX**

### **PARTNERSHIP OFFICE**

#### **Report on Partner Network Day June 2012, Brighton and Hove Albion Amex Community Stadium**

On 21st June 2012, both academic and administrative representatives from the University's UK partner institutions gathered for a one-day conference titled 'Exploiting New Technologies to Enhance Student Learning Opportunities'.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Michael Farthing caught up with invited guests over morning coffee before PVC (Teaching and Learning) Professor Clare Mackie provided the welcome speech.

Rhona Sharpe, Head of the Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development and Deputy Director of the Directorate of Human Resources at Oxford Brookes University, was the day's key note speaker, with contributions from Dr Cherith Moses and Dr John Davies, University of Sussex; Graham Carter, Programme Leader HE Business, Highbury College; Barbara Gardner, Learning Technologies Training Co-ordinator, Bellerbys College; Meera Furtado, Lecturer, Croydon College; and a Q&A session on quality assurance from Academic Registrar Sharon Jones.

#### **Presentations**

##### **i. Keynote presentation: Dr Rhona Sharpe, Head of the Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development (OCSLD) at Oxford Brookes University.**

Rhona is one of the co-founders of ELESIG (Evaluation of Learners' Experiences of e- Learning Special Interest Group), a Fellow of the Staff and Educational Development Association and a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (HEA). She is Editor of *Brookes eJournal for Learning and Teaching* and Co-editor of *Research in Learning Technology*.

##### *Abstract:*

The field of learner experience research has progressed rapidly in recent years, and now shows that most learners will not develop sophisticated uses of technology for learning unless we help them to do so. The most sophisticated uses of technology are highly personal, may be specific to the discipline and show learners' agility in making use of emerging technologies in creative ways.

This keynote will explore two current challenges – how can we define what specific digital and information literacy we expect to see in our future graduates, and whose responsibility is it to support their development? The talk will draw on an institution wide curriculum redesign project at Oxford Brookes to contextualize digital and information literacy within the disciplines and the JISC funded SLiDA project

(Supporting Learners in a Digital Age), which created case studies of how institutions are supporting the development of their students' digital literacies.

## **ii. Dr Cherith Moses, School of Global Studies (Sussex)**

Dr Cherith Moses has recently been tackling the issue of providing effective feedback to large groups. In particular, she was looking for ways to improve feedback on exams for groups of 50-80 students. The aim was to find a method that would provide feedback that was 'prompt, detailed, student-friendly and easily accessed' whilst also being time-efficient for tutors. While acting as external examiner at Portsmouth University, Cherith met with students who were full of praise for the audio feedback they received on their coursework so she decided to try recording feedback for her students to be posted on Study Direct (SyD). With help from Paolo Oprandi (IT Services) and Evelyn Dodds (Geography), the system was piloted with a small group on a first-year course. Cherith gave feedback as tracked changes on files uploaded through the site and recorded a 'talk-through' of each essay. The audio feedback was so well received by the students in the pilot group that Cherith went on to use a similar system with her larger second year group – this time for their seen exam. She marked the exam scripts as usual, making a few notes for herself. Then, using the Geography standard feedback sheet together with the School of Global Studies generic assessment criteria, as guidance to help ensure uniformity, she made a short recording (average three minutes per question) talking through each answer.

The student response to audio feedback was very positive: 70% of the students accessed their feedback (90% of them within a week) and about 30% of them filled in a short questionnaire giving their comments. Some of the aspects of audio feedback that students appreciated were anticipated, but others were unexpected. For example:

*'It is much more personal to do it this way I think and more encouraging as well.'  
'Being recorded it felt a lot more personal and therefore has really stuck with me'.  
'It helped to go through each question saying how I could improve. Now I can apply this feedback to future essays.'*

*'This feedback method is great because.. a) It is more comfortable having oral feedback rather than face to face feedback. b) It is useful as I can listen to it multiple times and listen to the tips you have included that could generally help improve any essay in the future. c) It is no way near as time consuming as waiting outside an office during an office hour for the student before to come out'.*

*'I was surprised to find the verbal feedback so useful. I didn't think it was going to make much of a difference but I enjoyed it. It definitely does feel more personal and actually helps you to understand what the Tutor was thinking when they read your essay. Furthermore, it makes you appreciate the advice given more than if it was written feedback. It's like you've gone to ask the tutor for advice and the verbal feedback makes you really take on board any issues you may have had, and anything you need to improve on. Very clever idea indeed!'*

Cherith found it an easy and quick way of providing detailed individual feedback and has shared her experience with colleagues in Global Studies, as well as with colleagues and partners at this event.<sup>1</sup>

### **iii. Graham Carter, Programme Leader and Advanced Practitioner, Highbury College, Portsmouth**

Graham Carter shared how he has used the Virtual Learning Environment (MyCourse, the College's Moodle), Twitter and blogs with HE Business students at Highbury College. In order to get the business students thinking critically and engaged Graham considered it important that staff use a variety of technology to share information, discuss ideas with and engage students. Six key themes were identified as vital for student skills development and academic success at HE level - clarity, networking, stimulating, challenging, engaging and motivating – and examples were provided to illustrate how the VLE, Twitter and blogging have been used with students in relation to these key themes. This included the creation of “how to” screencast video tutorials for students to refer to when submitting assignments online, using Twitter and posting a blog. Students have blogged about business issues as diverse as the London 2012 Olympics, job cuts at BAE and product placement and marketing in public toilets. Twitter use has included sharing articles with students for discussion, engaging with entrepreneurs and conducting Skype video calls as a result, plus getting students to share ideas and contribute to discussions on a given theme outside of the classroom. All of these tools have helped engage students and encourage them to think about business issues from many different perspectives and improve their ability to apply business concepts to the real world.

### **iv. Dr John Davies, Teaching and Learning Development Unit, University of Sussex**

Dr Davies's presentation was titled: 'Creating Short Videos to Support Student Learning'.

*Summary:* Screen capture software can be installed on a computer and can record the screen display plus audio of the presenter. It can also include a webcam video of the presenter. A team from the Teaching and Learning Development Unit at the University of Sussex worked with academic staff to explore the diverse ways in which one such piece of screen capture software - Echo360 personal capture (PCAP) – could be used to create short videos (screencasts) to support student learning.

#### *Key findings:*

- Screencasts increased student understanding of course material and helped them feel better prepared for assessments.
- Screencasts that explained key concepts were rated most highly by students. Screencasts that prepared students for assessment were accessed most frequently.

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<sup>1</sup> This report on Dr Moses's project was first published in the University's RUSTLE publication, February 2012: <http://rustleblog.wordpress.com/2012/02/27/moving-forward-with-feedback/>

- Accessing recordings improved the assessment performance of some students.
- Students liked resources in different formats and accessed both screencast and text-based versions of the same material.
- Students and staff valued the integration of screencasts alongside other resources within the virtual learning environment.
- Lecturers required minimal support in using PCAP and found making recordings straightforward.
- All staff who participated in the project would recommend the tool to colleagues.
- Using an institutionally-owned system to create short screencasts reduced the barriers for staff.
- Lecturers did not have to think about file formats or storage of recordings. This enabled them to focus on the role of the screencast in supporting student learning.

**v. Barbara Gardner, Study Group UK, From Book to Web: Meaningful task design on the VLE, English Language Preparation for university**

The Study Group (Bellerbys College) Foundation programme benefits from creation of online course templates for all teachers to use on the VLE (Moodle, branded study Smart). The e-learning team was tasked with creating a similarly beneficial template for teachers and students following our ELP programme. We identified a new course book with a task-based approach to language teaching and then built a course on Study Smart to extend and enrich the T&L experience for both the teachers and the learners.

A team of three teachers and e-learning practitioners built the online course:

Barbara Gardner      Learning Technologies Training Coordinator

Rui Da Silva            Media and English teacher and Advanced Practitioner

Joanna Baxter         English teacher and AP

Aims:

- Support the ELP Programme with course templates
- Offer more opportunity for students to build EAP skills and competencies
- Model VLE course design (for teachers)
  - Increased student participation facilitated by exploitation of activities
  - Focus on development of independent vocabulary learning through use of collaborative glossaries and plug-in activities
  - Scroll 'avoidance' design (order of units and button links)
  - teacher materials in hidden folders (including IWB slides, IELTS ,materials mapped to learning outcomes of each unit)
  - Audio files supplied by publisher (Garnet Education)
  - Use of media and quizzes
  - Use of Web tools to provide meaningful tasks

The PND presentation provided an overview of the simple but effective course design features, demonstrated four of the most popular activities (from feedback), outline what the team learned from the pilot study and how they will improve the course and future courses.

#### **vi. Meera Furtado, Croydon College**

Meera Furtado's presentation, titled 'Submission of Assessment Using Moodle', set out the advantages and challenges of electronic student submission of work.

Benefits included:

- Moodle is a very secure system and data is stored on campus
- Moodle will store the files– Course specific
- Only one copy in one place to keep track of - Simple. Easy.
- Moodle lets you see when assignments have been submitted and which ones are late
- Moodle can be accessed by external examiners and moderators – If permitted

Challenges:

- Have you provided clear guidance on e-submission?
- Is there e-submission policy?
- Who will act as admin for the e-Submission process?
- Dedicated member of staff, or individual instructors?
- How can you ensure that students submit ALL necessary work?
- What problems might arise? – course/module specific problems
- How will files be distributed to different markers?
- Ensure that annotated documents and marks are saved regularly, to ensure recoverability in the event of technical failure.
- Will students know how to view annotations?

All presentations in full were made available to attendees and interested parties who were unable to attend on the day.