Technology enhanced learning in the creative arts and humanities

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Pre-Phase

Sep-Oct 2012

Investigating prior work

- Literature review institutional blockages
- Literature review auditing VLE
- Survey to STLC chairs and LTA

Phase 1 [Aim 1]

Oct-Dec 2012

Analysis level & type of e-learning

- Content analysis of UniLearn module areas
- Draft questionnaire for academic staff
- Conclude findings

Phase 2 [Aim 2]

Jan-Mar 2013

Explore predicted use of E/M learning tools

- Staff questionnaire
- Identify sample for focus group from UniLearn findings

Dissemination: School T&L conference

Phase 3 [Aim 2]

Mar-Apr 2013

Identify examples of good practice E/M learning

- Focus groups
- Analyse staff questionnaires
- Evaluate findings

Dissemination: National Conference

Phase 4 [Aim 3]

May-Aug 2013

Develop a strategy to close gaps

- Action research planning stage
- Develop resources
- Devise training
- Disseminate good practice

Dissemination: Journal paper

Phase 5 [Aim 3]

Sep-Dec 2013

Implement and evaluate strategy

- Action research: first action cycle

Dissemination: U T&L Conference *and* Journal paper

Project background

In recent years there have been large investments made by universities to support technology enhanced learning and the development of virtual learning environments (VLE) (Knight, 2011; Sharpe, 2010; Holley, 2009; Evans, 2008). Technology offers many opportunities to transform the student learning experience. In order to maximise the benefits, mechanisms needs to be explored regarding how to effectively engage staff and embed technology within the curriculum. It is widely acknowledged that e-learning should be integrated with more traditional methods of teaching and learning to optimise the students' experience (Wilkinson, 2011; Sharpe, 2010; Evans, 2008).

E/M-learning offers significant opportunities to prepare students for future employment if combined and supported with effective andragogy and metacognition (Knight, 2011; Wilkinson, 2011; Garrison and Anderson, 2003). Various reports cite digital literacy as the biggest challenge that organisations face (Johnson, et al.. 2011; Knight, 2011; Arabasz, et al., 2003). It is essential that instructors must possess the technical skills to use e-learning tools and tutors/course teams must redesign their courses to effectively embed technology (Knight, 2011; Arabasz, et al., 2003). This project through gap analysis strategies will identify gaps in digital literacy within creative arts and humanities and develop strategies to close them.

In Higher Education there is a general trend to move to an anywhere anytime learning model in which the VLE must be developed to support the diverse needs of the learner. Digital literacy amongst staff in terms of embedding E and M learning is varied. The VLE thematic review (University Teaching and Learning Committee, 2010) is of the view that a multifaceted approach is needed, to ensure technology enhances the student learning.

Aims and objectives

To identify knowledge gaps in digital literacy within creative arts and humanities and establish suitable strategies to close them.

1. Analyse the level and type of e-learning opportunities provided across a range of undergraduate courses in creative arts and humanities.
2. Identify examples of good practice in relation to blending technology to enhance teaching and learning within the VLE.
3. Develop, implement and evaluate a strategy to support technology enhanced blended learning in creative arts and humanities.

Methodology

An action research approach will be used within the project.

1. The first step will consist of three phases.
   a) The first phase will quantify the current use of the VLE across a selection of courses within creative arts and humanities. This will be achieved through structured content analysis of the 2011-2012 VLE archive.
   b) The second phase will be to distribute an online questionnaire to all staff within creative arts to determine current and predicted use of E and M learning tools and training needs.
   c) The final phase will identify examples of good practice in relation to embedding E and M technology into the VLE, and establish knowledge gaps in relation to engagement and usage. Focus groups will be conducted to explore the wider themes and to establish mechanisms for embedding and enhancing e-learning. This gap analysis strategy will be implemented during the Autumn term 2013.
2. The second step of the action research will evaluate, compare and reflect on the implemented action in terms of improvement in digital literacy in creative arts and humanities.

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