

Embedding e-Learning in Delivery to Large Groups: Principles of Marketing (Level 1)

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Introduction

Principles of Marketing is a core undergraduate level one marketing module delivered on a range of programmes, including marketing and business, sciences, humanities, computing and technology. The student cohort is geographically spread over ten sites (partner institutions, including overseas). The module is delivered to approximately 1,000 students each academic year. The cohort is large and diverse in nature, with a similarly diverse range of expectations for delivery (part-time, evening/day, full-time, business related/non-related, working, etc). There are approximately 20 academics involved in the annual delivery of the module.

The role of e-Learning

E-Learning has been used to support all students on the module as well as the teaching team. It is integrated into traditional modes of delivery (lectures, tutorials, surgery). A key issue identified was the differences in student experience, depending on study location and contact modes. E-Learning has, therefore, enhanced the parity of experience for the student cohort. This additional mode has enabled development of bespoke support mechanisms, including formative assessment, computer-aided assessment, interactive study guides and discussion fora related directly to module outcomes. It has also provided dedicated support mechanisms for academic staff, including teaching materials and discussion fora aiding the exchange of ideas on teaching techniques.

Material was written by the module leader and includes links to the university's support mechanisms (Examnet, Focus On Guides, Library, etc) and external organisations related to the learning outcomes. Study materials have been drawn from publishers of the module's core textbook including lecture packs,

tutor guides, case studies and, latterly, a bespoke text which includes material written by the teaching team aimed at developing students' academic skills. The e-Learning resource includes –

- Students – the module guide, assessment guide, FAQs, staff contact details, lecture notes, tutorial guides, discussion groups, formative assessment (self-diagnosing), computer-aided (summative) assessment
- Academics – annotated module template, assessment guide, discussion groups, pre-released assessment materials and post-assessment analysis reports

Outcomes

There is 100% (retained) cohort usage, given that in-course summative assessment (MCQs) is managed on-line (last four semesters). Both student (module evaluation and qualitative research) and academic staff (module evaluation) feedback has remained consistently supportive of e-Learning – it has been integrated into delivery for three consecutive years (six semesters).

Evaluation of student achievement and e-Learning resource usage indicates a strong link with success, albeit variable by programme cohort. This was evident from the early days of its usage. The elements of formative and summative assessment are clearly primary contributors to this but it is also considered to be a function of preferred study modes, given the flexibility of access it offers.

Analysis of usage shows that students choose to engage with the resource 24/7/365 but some elements of the resource are used more than others e.g., discussions remain unused by a significant minority.

Recommendations

Based on the Principles of Marketing experience, we recommend that colleagues:

- do not let technology dictate pedagogy;
- ensure each element of the resource is relevant and 'fit for purpose';
- ensure students are trained to use the materials and the technology;
- integrate the e-Learning mode fully into module delivery (ensure it is referred to in classes and includes formative assessment, where appropriate);
- give students ample opportunity for feedback during the module delivery, and respond to concerns during its life-cycle;

- ensure academic users are also trained;
- stage developments to gain experience and confidence;
- discuss with more experienced colleagues on potential developments; and
- ensure computer support and technical advice is easily accessible.