An evaluation of ELT at DMU: Executive Summary

Introduction

An evaluation of the use of technologies in the curriculum was designed to baseline our use of core DMU technologies (Blackboard, the DMU Commons, Turnitin, Campus Pack Blogs and Wikis), and where possible non-DMU, web-based technologies.

This 2012 ELT evaluation was designed:

- to evaluate and to uncover good practice;
- to enable a more focused approach to professional development;
- to iterate the model for ELT in the curriculum (see Appendix 1), in order to frame curriculum innovation;
- to develop a glossary of innovation/good practice with technologies; and
- to make the case for changes to our CARR technological model (see Appendix 1).

Discussion points

- Year-on-year DMU is witnessing an increasing use of its Core technologies to support learning and teaching. The resilience and development of the system is a critical issue for staff and students year-round.
- The majority of ELT (as far as could be assessed) is delivered via the Blackboard VLE and is achieving the agreed DMU Threshold for the use of technologies in the curriculum. Overall the system is predominantly being curated by staff either individually or in teams for information storage and retrieval. Promoting curriculum innovation and the use of social media for teaching is an issue.
- However, faculties generally had "spiky" profiles in terms of their use of Blackboard against the DMU Threshold. In many cases the approach to using technologies in the curriculum was not being addressed from a 'team' or 'programme' perspective. As such, there are considerable inconsistencies in curriculum delivery. This will be addressed by the CELT team in partnership with Heads of Department/School and Chairs of FLTCs.
- There is a large amount of hidden work going on between academic staff and students. This work is hidden in that is not explicitly a part of the recorded or designed curriculum either represented on-line or in face-to-face classes. However, it occurs in the pedagogical processes that are revealed through curriculum delivery or assessment, for instance in the use of announcements and emails at assessment time, for encouragement, reminders of timelines, explanations of how exams/assessments would be carried out etc.. It is difficult to assess the full range and impact of these types of interactions.
- The CELT team uncovered a range of professional development issues that reflect the range of staff digital literacies. These will be included in the professional development planning for 2012/13.

Recommendations

NOTE: the CELT team has a series of developmental strategies focused on: distance learning; e-assessment and feedback; OERs; supporting virtual communities of practice; inclusivity; transitions into HE; and digital literacies. These underpin the work in the following recommendations, alongside the development of a new CELT virtual hub for staff support.

1. ITPG should instigate a review of the system development of our Core technologies, in-

line with the DMU Strategic Plan, focused upon the following questions:
   a. Is the technological mix of the core system fit-for-purpose?
   b. Are any changes necessary in terms of data-flows and processes?
   c. Does the University need to consider which elements are hosted or managed in-house?
NOTE: this aligns with the ULTAS ELT challenge on developing innovative curricula.

2. Projects for mobile learning, multimedia content development, e-assessment and feedback (including anonymous marking), and synchronous interaction need to be defined by ITPG and tied to a technology roadmap, inside the broader ELT strand of the ULTAS.
NOTE: this aligns with the ULTAS ELT challenge on developing distance learning.

3. The CELT team should work with DAQ, CFLTCs and all departments to ensure that the threshold for ELT in the curriculum is being applied appropriately.

4. The CELT team should engage with academic staff to develop a range of case studies and good practice exemplars that can be disseminated in its new virtual hub.
NOTE: this aligns with the ULTAS ELT challenges on developing innovative curricula, e-assessment and distance learning.

5. The CELT team should develop and deliver a range of on-line/face-to-face professional development workshops that focus upon:
   a. DMU Core technologies for beginners (Blackboard, Campus Pack, WordPress, Turnitin);
   b. DMU Core technologies for intermediate users;
   c. content development and distribution, including copyright, licensing and OERs;
   d. low-end and high quality multimedia development;
   e. developing assessment for learning using technologies;
   f. supporting distance learning on-line; and
   g. developing a team-based strategy for ELT.
NOTE: this aligns with the ULTAS ELT challenges on developing innovative curricula, e-assessment and distance learning.

6. The CELT team should work with CLaSS and subject librarians, GSO and APDU to develop sessions and support materials: for undergraduate and research students in using social media; and, on the PGCHE and for programme leaders.

7. Faculties should consider how ELT champions are given support to enable them to work with the CELT team, in order to form an effective network of practice. This might usefully be extended to include Teacher Fellows.