

Title: VLEs and meeting student expectations

Presenter: Maria Tannant
University for the Creative Arts

Abstract:

Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- Learn more about methods of evaluating VLEs
- Realise the importance of parity and consistency in all VLE study areas
- Provide a basic unit framework to guide and support staff
- Implement measures to tackle resistance to VLEs

Session Outline

This interactive workshop focuses on the innovative approaches UCA has taken in getting staff to use its VLE and how this can then lead to better management of student expectations. The session will give participants the opportunity to engage in shared practice and discussion around student expectations of VLEs. This will be facilitated through four key themes:

Evaluating how the VLE is used and by whom

We look at how UCA evaluated its VLE for usage across five locations covering over 4000 units/modules in the last academic year. It will provide a picture of varied use ranging from high to very low. As a consequence, students across the university had very contrasting experiences of the VLE and its offerings.

Parity and consistency

Here we will map the path of a degree student across 20 units (360 credits) and examine the user experience in terms of parity and consistency. Findings reveal that the differences in terms of presentation and content are found to be disorientating and fall below expectation.

Using a basic unit framework to guide and support staff

In order to address this disparity, UCA devised and introduced a minimum requirement for the unit. These minimum requirements were adapted from the unit handbook and endorsed by Quality & Standards. The workshop looks at how the handbook adaptation transfers across to the VLE environment and works to provide a framework of practice.

Changing the culture from apathy to advocacy

As an Arts University, pockets of resistance against the VLE still exist which is normally attributed to lack of technical knowhow or time. Alternatively, some staff prefer external platforms in the belief that the VLE it is too cumbersome and time consuming. This final part

of the workshop looks at the measures UCA has put in place to reverse this resistance and by doing so sets in motion a change in culture and practice.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

The workshop begins with a presentation by the main speaker (10 minutes) to introduce theme. and will then spend 7 minutes on each key areas inviting discussion about shared practice. A scribe will capture the group’s contributions on screen (avoiding flipchart) and disseminate the collective outcome to the group via email.

Introduction to theme by facilitator The workshop will begin by a presentation of the challenges each theme addresses and some of the approaches UCA has taken	10 min
Group 1 – Evaluation <i>identify and discuss</i> - How the VLE is used and by whom? - What methods of evaluating the VLE are used?	10 min
Group 2 - Parity and consistency <i>identify and discuss</i> - Parity and consistency in the VLE – does it exist in your institution? - What are the advantages and disadvantages of inconsistency?	
Spokesperson from each group shares findings (facilitator scribes)	7 min
Group 1 – Using a Framework for guidance <i>identify and discuss</i> - How minimum requirements are employed in the sector and their impact - What other methods are used of evaluating the VLE are used?	10 min
Group 2 – Changing the Culture <i>identify and discuss</i> - Changing the culture from apathy to advocacy - Looking at motivators for change	
Spokesperson from each group shares findings (facilitator scribes and rounds up findings)	8 min

References

Frank, C., S. Kassarke and L. Suhl (2002). “Meeting Students Expectations and Realizing Pedagogical Goals within the Development of a Virtual Learning Environment”. Proceedings of the EdMedia 2002. AACE, Denver.

Stiles, M. (2007), “Death of the VLE?: A challenge to a new orthodoxy”, *Serials*, Vol. 20, No. 1 available from:

<http://www.wspace.info/blog/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/Death-of-the-VLE.pdf>
accessed 27th April 2011

Browne, T. Hewitt, R. Jenkins, M. Voce, J. Walker, R and Yip, H. “2010 Survey of Technology Enhanced Learning for higher education in the UK” UCISA available from:

<http://www.ucisa.ac.uk/groups/ssg/surveys.aspx>
accessed 27th April 2011