

Report from the Academic Directors of CHASS and CST March 2006

We would like to thank Professor Sachs for giving us this opportunity to present our final report to the Governance Group.

General comments

- Staff Development (with respect to eLearning) has been an issue discussed in many fora during 2005. We know from working with groups of staff, and in particular with the faculty reps, that there is still much needed to be done in the area of understanding how to use eLearning strategies effectively, as well as helping staff to develop an appreciation of what *WebCT* is capable of delivering. We note that both CHASS and CST have staff development programs planned for 2006 (see Appendices).
- Improvements to the general teaching venues are helping to support our teaching staff in their use of eLearning but we hope that the ongoing replacements and upgrades are accelerated during 2006, especially access to wireless, to meet the expectations of staff and students.
- We applaud the ITL Working Party on eLearning's vision for 2006, and have already started to answer the questions "How is eLearning adding to the quality of student learning; what/where is the evidence?".

CHASS – some recent achievements and future vision

- Completion of all three modules of the Write Site – Grammar, Sources and Structure – allowing academics to direct students to specific aspects of the site for targeted assistance with development of academic writing skills (<http://writesite.chass.usyd.edu.au>).
- Outcomes of our 'Snapshot' project, monitoring ICT use and intentions in CHASS, (Stage One: 'Snapshot' of UoS websites and Stage Two: staff and student focus groups) will contribute to the data needed to support a response to the question "How is eLearning adding to the quality of student learning?" raised by the ITL Working Party.
- Quality assurance process developed in the Faculty of Economics and Business as a result of cooperation between the Faculty and USyd eLearning. The process has been trialled on a voluntary basis over the last three sessions, and it will be an expectation that all sites undergo a QA check from S2 2006.
- Dramatic steps in move to use of elearning in the Sydney College of the Arts, under the leadership of the Faculty Representative, Andrew Speirs. The Faculty now has its first ever WebCT site online, and has a further 18 sites submitted for testing and approval to go online later in 2006. 60% of SCA academics now have basic or above WebCT training and 75% have basic or above Photoshop & Powerpoint skills. 50% will have basic video conferencing, video, editing and digital tutorial development skills by 2007.

CST – some recent achievements and future vision

- Development of online formative assessment resources across the College is increasing the opportunities for students to self-assess. Examples include automated practice activities in Civil Engineering and virtual dissections in biological science. The ability to self-assess is an essential for life long learning.
- Development of a web site to showcase best practice examples of online learning and teaching. The first theme – featuring examples of online practice activities – has been completed.
- Development of resources to provide support for problem-based, case-based learning scenarios.
- Evidence of cultural change towards the use of eLearning, with the development of a road map for the implementation of three tiers of development (see Appendix 2).
- Expansion of a Life Long Earning web site for undergraduate students to hone their employability skills.
- Current research projects investigating how eLearning is adding to the quality of student learning (see Appendix 2)
- Conference presentations and accepted refereed journal articles on research stemming from eLearning initiatives (previously reported for 2005).

Appendix 1 – CHASS

Completed Projects Semester 2 2005

- Support with the development of flexible online postgraduate units of study for the Masters of Special Education, the Graduate Certificate in Applied Linguistics, and the Masters of Ancient World Studies
- Development of the Write Site, Module 3 (Structure) - Resource to assist students with academic writing skills in relation to structuring a persuasive argument in an essay in the Humanities and Social Sciences. This module has five units: Planning your essay; Structuring paragraphs; Introductions and conclusions; Writing persuasively; Writing cohesively
- ‘Snapshot’ and ongoing monitoring of ICT use and intentions – Stage Two: staff and student focus groups

Projects being undertaken in 2006

- Development of flexible online postgraduate units of study (for the Online Graduate Certificate in Applied Linguistics) and ongoing support for all UoS Coordinators teaching units developed in S2 2005
- Developing elearning capabilities at the Conservatorium: support for blended learning sites in Musicology
- Support for the Teaching Improvement Fund Project giving ‘at-elbow’, ‘just-in-time’ assistance to academics developing websites in all CHASS faculties, in particular, support with staff development
- Redesign of Module 1 of the Write Site, Grammar, using a combination of Flash and html (rather than Authorware), so that it is equivalent to Modules 2 and 3 in terms of accessibility and look & feel
- Development of training materials (online and face-to-face) for staff in using the Write Site.

Appendix 2 – CST

Completed Projects Semester 2 2005

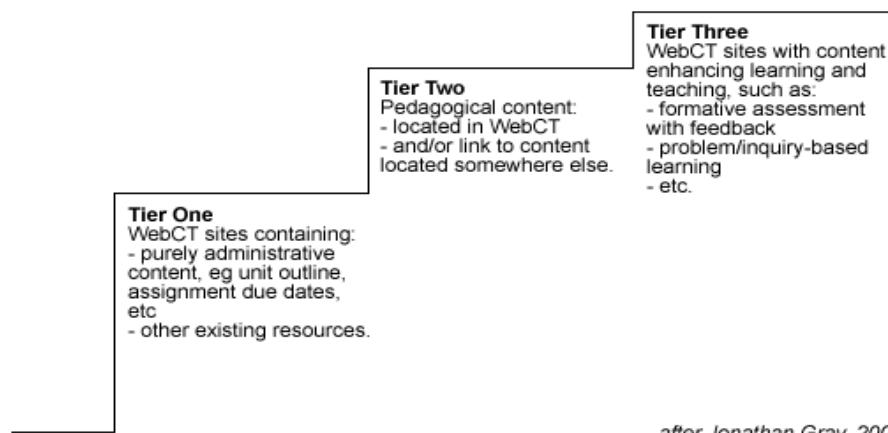
- ELearning model for engineering students' self learning (Civil Engineering)
- Life Long Earning collaboration between five faculties to extend the Science site for all students (College)
- Development of an Internet framework for the placement of teaching aids in electronic format (Civil Engineering)
- Redevelopment of Postgraduate Project Management Program elective online units (Engineering)
- Development of online components for third year Psychology units of study (Psychology)
- Spotlight on online practice activities (College)

Projects being undertaken in 2006

- Web-based visualization tool (Astrophysics)
- Conversion of online legacy materials into WebCT to provide large first year classes with more user-friendly pre-lab work (Chemistry)
- Improving delivery of problem-based learning materials by providing an intergrated framework for improved coherence (Civil Engineering).
- Provision of a field trip web site that will house information about the theory and practice of data collection for the training of biologists (Biological Sciences).
- Provision of educational design advice and technical development for a postgraduate animal health economics course (Veterinary Science).
- Developing a framework for a role-based training program covering eLearning skills for teaching and support staff; aims to connect eLearning roles with eLearning skills and eLearning training (College).

Road Map for eLearning (after Gray, 2006)

Faculty of Science eLearning Roadmap: 2006 - 2008



Tier One – to be completed in 2006, will ensure that students have access to information about all units of study (managed by the Faculties of Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources, Engineering, Science and Veterinary Science) in their degree programs. This information will be delivered through WebCT.

Tier Two – will ensure that there is some pedagogical content either in the WebCT site or linked to this site.

Tier Three – will see the development of learning-enhancing content eg. Formative assessments with feedback; use of problem-based learning scenarios.

Current research projects and research output

- HBOnline – (Lilje, O. & Peat, M.) – ethics approval 2005 .
- Life Long Earning - how are students using this site (Scott, K. M., Peat, M. Taylor, C. E. & Bartimote, K.) – ongoing reflections and evaluation project.
- The effect of automated practice calculations on intermediate level Engineering students (Scott, K. M., Ward, M-H. & Wood, G.) – ethics approval received.
- An evaluation of student experiences of integrating WebCT into undergraduate Psychology (White, F., Scott, K. M., Charles, M. & Owens, C.) – ethics approval received.
- Staff reflections on their involvement in USyd eLearning projects (Scott, K. M., Peat, M. & Mahony, M. J.)

Output (since end of 2005)

Lilje, O. & Peat, M. Use and perceptions of use of a blended learning resource: are students engaging with the materials? Submitted to the First Year in Higher Education Annual Conference.

Scott, K. M., Peat, M., Taylor, C. E. & Bartimote, K. Perceptions of usefulness of an online resource designed to increase student awareness of the needs of employers. Paper in preparation.

Ward, M-H., Wood, G. & Deacon, D. Practising complex calculations: Automated spreadsheets with built-in feedback. Paper in preparation.

White, F., Scott, K. M & Daly, M. – paper for conference presentation (ASCILITE) in preparation.