



eLearning Governance Group

9.00a.m. – 10.00a.m.
Wednesday 26th April 2006
Main Quad Meeting Room

Membership:

Prof. Judyth Sachs (Chair), Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning)	Mr Robert Mackinnon Chief Information Officer
Dr Rob Ellis, ICT in Teaching & Learning Coordinator	Assoc Prof Mary Peat, CST Academic Director, ICT in T&L
Ms Anne Forster, Manager Special Projects	Mr John Shipp University Librarian
Dr Nerida Jarkey, CHASS Academic Director, ICT in T&L	Assoc Prof Bruce Sutton Chair Academic Board

Apologies:

Assoc Prof Mary Peat

In Attendance:

Prof Peter Goodyear, Prof Peter Reimann, and Dr Mary Jan Mahony

Minutes

1. Minutes of the Meeting of 1st September 2005 Adopted

2. Progress Report on eLearning Review

Prof Goodyear tabled and spoke to a Progress Report on the Review of USyd eLearning. He noted the challenge to complete the Report given the dramatic change in the environment due to the recent University restructure which dis-established the Colleges and implied a reduction in the number of faculties or clusters.

The eLearning Review has incorporated a wide consultation, including Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching), members of the FOLT Team and their clients. There is a consistent view that USyd eLearning has not been a mistake, however the initial issues remain: eLearning still requires “mainstreaming” as a part of the role of every academic, including a culture of competence and engagement.

It is not possible to quantify the cost benefit of elearning on the University ‘bottom line’; however the University’s capabilities have changed in the last few years. In comparison with other universities, Sydney is behind with I.T. provision on campus (we don’t have streaming), ahead in level of support and ahead in diffusion into units of study taught. The regional universities invest more in this area; Sydney needs to compare itself with the larger research-intensive, campus-based universities. Sydney invests about 50% of what Melbourne (\$2mill) and Queensland invest and about the same with UNSW (\$800,000). N.B. it is impossible to quantify the real HR

investment in elearning, as it is hidden in the faculties. In comparison with the really big players internationally (e.g. MIT) we are really behind. These universities use open source and view elearning as a community project.

The eLearning Review found:

- As part of the continued need to mainstream elearning, there is a need for stable funding from the centre.
- Mainstreaming also requires articulation of a vision of how technology is used in academia. This vision must be holistic and include learning and teaching, research and administration, due to the current convergence of learning and knowledge work. There is a danger that silos will continue and widen between learning and teaching and research, if work on the vision of how technology is used in academia is not undertaken in the near future.
- The pressure of RQF and academic workload impacts on the academic's capacity to work with the new technology in the area of teaching – rather than competencies
- The FOLT Team is a precious resource for the University, and career development, including higher level strategic work, will provide an institutional return. Help Desk demand peaks at the same time as the Application to Activate (quality assurance mechanism) – casualisation could overcome this
- The current focus on units of study is too granular – program level would provide a better return for the University.

The Chair asked the members of the Review Team as to their opinion of where the eLearning Initiative should be located. As the Library plays a key role in knowledge production, distribution and recording, the Review Team had no problems with siting the eLearning Initiative within the Library.

The Report will be completed and sent to the PVC (L&T) on Friday 5th May. It will be circulated to the eLearning Governance Group, and as there will be financial implications, it will also go to SEG.

3. 2005 Progress Report on USyd eLearning Dr Ellis

Tabled and to be circulated to members of the Governance Group.

4. Report from Academic Directors Dr Jarkey

Dr Jarkey provided a general overview, including:

- The continuing need for staff development in order to mainstream elearning and blended learning – academics are currently using the technology in a minimal way
- Academic culture enables risk taking in research; but expects perfection in teaching – teaching as performance. They will not volunteer to attend group training but will participate in one-on-one – extremely resource-intensive
- The biggest support to staff would be resource development acknowledgement in workload formulae
- When introducing a new technology, start with the elements that make an immediate difference e.g. Item Pool; rather than a WebCT page which duplicates what is available on paper

5 Proposal to recognise good practice in blended & online learning

Dr Jarkey

Is there an opportunity to recognise best practice in blended learning through some mechanism such as the Vice-Chancellor's Awards? An annual showcase publication? Display in Fisher Library? Something like the CHS eLearning Resource?

6. Any other business

All

Prof Sachs tabled the eLearning Discussion Paper developed with John Shipp. She informed the Governance Group that this Paper had both educative and political impetus. The emphasis will be on the way forward. The Paper will be placed on the Agenda of the Learning and Teaching Committee and she would appreciate feedback from members of the Governance Group, including members of the eLearning Review.

7. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the eLearning Governance Group is scheduled for Thursday 18th May from 1.00-2.00p.m. in the Main Quad Meeting Room.