

Loughborough University Teaching Innovation Awards

| Name(s) | School(s)/Department(s) |
|---------------------|---|
| Dr Hilary McDermott | School of Sport, Exercise & Health Sciences |
| Dr Ashley Casey | School of Sport, Exercise & Health Sciences |
| Mr Lee Barnett | Centre for Academic Practice |
| Mr Phil Taylor | SSEHS Programme President |

| Email | Phone number |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| H.J.McDermott@lboro.ac.uk | 01509 223098 |
| A.J.B.Casey@lboro.ac.uk | 01509 226314 |
| L.Barnett@lboro.ac.uk | 01509 227469 |

Project title

Empowering students to develop a 'user friendly' framework for LEARN

N.B. Total word count should be in the range 1500-2000. Expand the text boxes as necessary.

Abstract (200-250 words)

A Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is a system for delivering learning materials to students via the internet (Oxford University Press, 2014). The success of a VLE depends largely on the extent of student acceptance and use of such a system (van Raaij & Schepers, 2008).

There is increasing research that addresses the value of a VLE from the students' perspective (see Reed and Watmough, 2015) and an understanding of the conditions under which web-based resources are or are not accepted and utilised by students is an important issue. This project aimed to enhance both the teaching and learning provision at Loughborough University through examining the perceived usefulness of the University's VLE from a student perspective.

An on-line student survey was developed in collaboration with the undergraduate programme representatives. This was administered across one of the University's Schools [the School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences (SSEHS)] to capture student understanding and engagement with the current VLE. The findings from this informed the development of a student-workshop. This was facilitated by a Higher Education Academy (HEA) expert in online learning. During the workshop, (see Appendix A), students from SSEHS were invited to complete a MoSCoW prioritization (Must have, Should have, Could have and won't have) in relation to VLE provision.

Whilst many of the students' aspirations are, as yet potentially difficult and expensive to achieve through the present university infrastructure, many of the insights from this study have allowed us to conceptualize a coherent, university wide approach to the VLE (see Appendix B). As ultimate end-users, it is vital that we consider the ways in which students use these platforms and work coherently to improve their experiences while never losing sight of the overriding aim of a University i.e. LEARNING.

Issue(s) addressed by project

We aimed to focus on the use of a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) to enhance both the teaching and learning provision at Loughborough University.

A Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is a system for delivering learning materials to students via the internet (Oxford University Press, 2014). Such systems are designed to facilitate and support independent study by allowing students to access different learning tools, such as programme information, course content, teacher assistance, discussion boards, document sharing systems and learning resources (Martins & Kellermanns, 2004). However, many end up as places to store information (Reed and Watmough, 2015). In short, they are one-way systems of delivery rather than two-way interactions.

The success of a VLE depends largely on the extent of student acceptance and use of such an e-learning system (van Raaij & Schepers, 2008). There are several theoretical models which explain

technology adoption and strong empirical support has been established for the Technology Accepted Model (TAM) (Raaij & Schepers, 2008). This theory holds that the use and adoption of technology will be significantly influenced by the perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of the said technology.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the University's Virtual Learning Environment, Learn is under-utilised by both academic staff and students alike. Indeed, a recent audit of compliance with Learn minimum presence guidelines (2013/14) demonstrated that only 60% of modules within the School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences met these minimum criteria. Some aspects of good practice were observed but there was variability across programmes. It was also noted that the majority of material was related to educational activities as opposed to educational resources.

Very few researchers address the value of a VLE from the students' perspective (Lee, Hong & Ling, 2002) and an understanding of the conditions under which web-based resources are or are not accepted and utilised by students should be considered an important issue.

Aims

The overall aim of this project was to enhance the two-way pedagogical interaction between students and staff through the development of a 'user friendly' VLE (i.e. LEARN).

Specific objectives

The specific objectives of this project were to:

- (a) examine the perceived usefulness and use of the University's VLE from a student perspective, and
- (b) begin to consider and conceptualise a 'user friendly' framework for LEARN.

Activities/methodology

A student-centric approach drove this project. Students were positioned as both partners and service users and the student voice was key in developing the research. Initially, an on-line student survey was developed in collaboration with the undergraduate programme representatives. This was administered across one of the University's Schools (the School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences) to capture student understanding and engagement with the current VLE. Over 300 students completed the survey. The findings demonstrated that 84.8% of respondents logged onto the VLE daily, however issues were reported in relation to consistency of provision on the VLE and the educational value of some resources.

From this understanding, a student workshop was developed. This was facilitated by a Higher Education Academy (HEA) expert in online learning. During the workshop, students from SSEHS were invited to complete a MoSCoW prioritization (Must have, Should have, Could have and won't have) in relation to VLE provision. The components of this exercise form the basis of our VLE concept (see appendix B).

Use of award money

The Award money has been used in the following ways:

| | |
|--|------------------|
| Consultancy services to plan and deliver a workshop | £1791.00 |
| Refreshments and light lunch for workshop | £148.00 |
| Conference attendance for Dr McDermott, Dr Casey and Lee Barnett | £150.00 |
| Printing of Conference material | £100.00 |
| Conference travel | £46.71 |
| Total | £2,235.71 |

Project outcomes/findings

The key findings from the **on-line survey** are:

38.4% of respondents have no previous experience of a VLE prior to attending university

73.0% of respondents received no induction to the VLE at Loughborough University

84.8% of respondents logged onto the VLE daily

40.5% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement 'I find LEARN useful in MY learning'

24% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement 'I find LEARN has a user-friendly interface'

The **MoSCoW prioritisation** identified the relevant importance of a number of features of a Virtual Learning Environment for students. Example features are listed below but this is not the exhaustive list:

Must Have

Personalisation – students want to be able to access information about THEM (for example, previous assessment results / key information)

Consistency – educational material needs to be presented in a clear and consistent manner across all modules. The modules area is the most common used area by students and they desire a standardised format, possible in folders like ‘*my documents*’. The provision of templates would be beneficial.

Contact details – LEARN needs to be a platform to different ways of communication (for example access to Athens, the library catalogue).

Module Information – module information needs to be presented under clear headings (information such as module handbook, assessment details, lecture outline for semester)

Should have

Learning materials presented in several formats to meet personalised learning.

More online tasks such as educational quizzes, formative assessment, perception tests. Students would like to receive formative feedback through effectively engaging with materials.

Lecture review/capture

Notes/calendar area for reminders e.g. ‘coursework deadline in 5 days’

An application: for the ipad and androids.

Could have

A personalised performance dashboard

A timeline – information about key events

Important information for students e.g. taxi, medical centre, accommodation centre etc.

Won't have

A twitter feed

Long drop down menus.

Project outputs/deliverables

The deliverables for this project are largely conceptual as opposed to concrete and are as follows:

-The development of a conceptual framework for ‘user friendly’ VLE provision across the School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences and the University as a whole.

- A conference presentation at a JISC event.

- A journal paper is in development (Suggested journal - The Electronic Journal of e-Learning).

Impact on teaching and learning (including links to University strategy)

This project is grounded in innovating teaching practice and directly links to the University strategic aims in a number of ways. We have empowered students to design features of their own learning (through LEARN) and therefore we have contributed to their development and capabilities as individuals. This links to the strategic aim of ‘Educating for Success’.

While many of the students' aspirations are, as yet, impossible to achieve through the present university infrastructure, many of the insights from this study have allowed us to conceptualize a coherent, university wide approach to the VLE (see Appendix B). This project feeds directly into the current work on university IT systems and makes a valuable contribution to delivering high quality technology-enhanced learning. This contributes towards an outstanding and distinctive campus-based learning experience at Loughborough and also LUiL.

We see students as key stakeholders and by inviting them to play a central and active role in their own learning we have demonstrated our commitment to listen to students to ensure that our academic provision develops in line with their requirements. This project is a unique partnership between academic staff, professional services, current students and the Student's Union and encourages student engagement in learning and teaching.

The output from this project will eventually benefit academic staff by providing an evidence-based standardised platform for them to work with. This will allow staff to maximise their potential in delivering a high quality student learning experience.

Dissemination plans including location of resources for Loughborough colleagues to access (a link to these can be created for you from the CAP website if you wish – please ask Deena)

The dissemination plans for this project are as follows:

An internal report will be submitted to the School's Learning and Teaching Committee the School's e-Learning Committee (SSEHS).

This project and the resulting conceptual framework of VLE provision will be showcased at a JISC Change agents' network national meet-up at Lincoln University (2nd June 2016). JISC is a not-for-profit organisation offering digital services to the UK higher education, further education and skills sectors.

An academic journal paper will be prepared and submitted for peer review (Suggested journal - The Electronic Journal of e-Learning).

Please submit the completed form to:

Deena Ingham, *Teaching Innovation Awards Panel Chair*
Centre for Academic Practice

d.ingham@lboro.ac.uk

Appendix A: Student Workshop



Introduction

A Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is a system for delivering learning materials to students via the internet (Oxford University Press, 2014).

Henderson et al (2015) identified that university student engagement with a VLE occurred in two ways (i.e. student logistics and student learning) and argued that students predominantly rely on a VLE for both administrative information and learning resources.

There is little research that addresses the value of a VLE from the students' perspective. This project examined the perceived usefulness and use of Loughborough University's VLE from a student perspective and conceptualised a 'user friendly' framework for LEARN.

Student Logistics refers to the administrative aspects of the students' studies. This is represented in our concept through the 'My Learn' page (Poster 1). This acts as a portal to the university information systems and the information contained therein.

Student Learning refers to the educational resources and activities delivered on a course by course basis. This is represented in our concept through the example 'Module Page' (Poster 2). This is a gateway to the information relevant to a specific module and the associated academic requirements. For example, using a consistent grid format on every module would aid student navigation of learning resources.

Findings

Empowering students to develop a 'user friendly' framework for LEARN (1)

Hilary McDermott, Ashley Casey, Lee Barnett and Phil Taylor



- **The success of a VLE depends on the extent of student acceptance** (van Raaij & Schepers 2008)
- **A recent audit of compliance suggested that the Loughborough VLE was under utilised**

- **A student centric approach drove this project**
- **A student workshop was developed and facilitated by a HEA expert**



- **A 'Must have' was access to academic progress in real time**
- **Student do not prioritise information in the side bars and these are intentionally blank**

- **This project addressed the value of a VLE from the students' perspective**
- **The insights allowed us to conceptualise a university wide approach to the VLE**

References

• Henderson, M., Selwyn, N., Fingar, G. & Aston, R. (2015). Students' everyday engagement with digital technology in university: exploring patterns of use and 'usefulness'. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 37(3), 308-319.
 • Oxford University Press (2014). *Learn about Virtual Learning Environment Course Management System content*. Accessed from <http://global.oup.com/uk/voce/learn/er/> on 21.5.2015.
 • van Raaij, E.M. & Schepers, J.J.L. (2008). The acceptance and use of a virtual learning environment in China. *Computers & Education*, 50, 835-842.

Method

Students were positioned as both partners and service users in developing the research.

An online student survey was developed and administered across one of the University's Schools to capture student understanding and engagement with the current VLE. 84.8% of respondents logged onto the VLE daily, yet reported issues relating to consistency of provision and the educational value of resources.

A workshop was developed whereby students were invited to complete a MoSCoW prioritization (Must have, Should have, Could have and Won't have) in relation to VLE provision. The components of this form the basis of our VLE concept.

By positioning the 'student voice' as the central vehicle for discussion, this project did not rely on assumptions about what students would want. It focused instead on their Must haves, Should haves, Could haves and Won't haves for a VLE.

Many of the students' aspirations are, as yet, impossible to achieve through the present university infrastructure. However the insights from this study have allowed us to conceptualise a coherent, university wide approach to the VLE.

It is vital that we consider ways in which students use these platforms and work coherently to improve their experiences while never losing sight of the overriding aim of a University i.e. LEARNING.

Conclusion

Introduction

A Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is a system for delivering learning materials to students via the internet (Oxford University Press, 2014).

Henderson et al (2015) identified that university student engagement with a VLE occurred in two ways (i.e. student logistics and student learning) and argued that students predominantly rely on a VLE for both administrative information and learning resources.

There is little research that addresses the value of a VLE from the students' perspective. This project examined the perceived usefulness and use of Loughborough University's VLE from a student perspective and conceptualised a 'user friendly' framework for LEARN.

Student Logistics refers to the administrative aspects of the students' studies. This is represented in our concept through the 'My Learn' page (Poster 1). This acts as a portal to the university information systems and the information contained therein.

Student Learning refers to the educational resources and activities delivered on a course by course basis. This is represented in our concept through the example 'Module Page' (Poster 2). This is a gateway to the information relevant to a specific module and the associated academic requirements. For example, using a consistent grid format on every module would aid student navigation of learning resources.

Findings

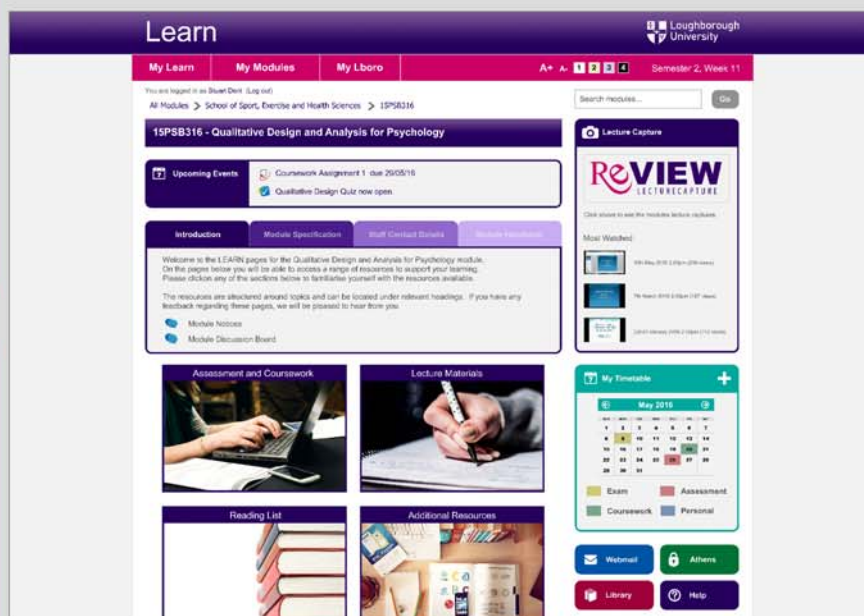
Empowering students to develop a 'user friendly' framework for LEARN (2)

Hilary McDermott, Ashley Casey, Lee Barnett and Phil Taylor



- **The success of a VLE depends on the extent of student acceptance** (van Raaij & Schepers 2008)
- **A recent audit of compliance suggested that the Loughborough VLE was under utilised**

- **A student centric approach drove this project**
- **A student workshop was developed and facilitated by a HEA expert**



- **A 'Must have' was access to academic progress in real time**
- **Student do not prioritise information in the side bars and these are intentionally blank**

- **This project addressed the value of a VLE from the students' perspective**
- **The insights allowed us to conceptualise a university wide approach to the VLE**

References

- Henderson, M., Selwyn, N., Finger, G. & Aston, R. (2015). Students' everyday engagement with digital technology in university: exploring patterns of use and 'usefulness'. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 37(3), 308-319.
- Oxford University Press (2014). *Learn about Virtual Learning Environment/Course Management System content*. Accessed from <http://global.oup.com/uk/orc/learn/vle/> on 21.5.2015.
- van Raaij, E.M. & Schepers, J.J.L. (2008). The acceptance and use of a virtual learning environment in China. *Computers & Education*, 50, 838-852.

Method

Students were positioned as both partners and service users in developing the research.

An online student survey was developed and administered across one of the University's Schools to capture student understanding and engagement with the current VLE. 84.8% of respondents logged onto the VLE daily, yet reported issues relating to consistency of provision and the educational value of resources.

A workshop was developed whereby students were invited to complete a MoSCoW prioritization (Must have, Should have, Could have and Won't have) in relation to VLE provision. The components of this form the basis of our VLE concept.

By positioning the 'student voice' as the central vehicle for discussion, this project did not rely on assumptions about what students would want. It focused instead on their Must haves, Should haves, Could haves and Won't haves for a VLE.

Many of the students' aspirations are, as yet, impossible to achieve through the present university infrastructure. However the insights from this study have allowed us to conceptualise a coherent, university wide approach to the VLE.

It is vital that we consider ways in which students use these platforms and work coherently to improve their experiences while never losing sight of the overriding aim of a University i.e. LEARNING.

Conclusion