

JISC RSC Scotland South & West Case Study @ Clydebank College

Benefits of having a Learning Technologist

Summary

The appointment of a dedicated learning technologist in October 2008 has contributed significantly to the increased use of technology by both staff and students, evident in the widespread use of the college VLE. The benefits of having a learning technologist in place working alongside two dedicated learning and teaching advisors has had a tremendous positive impact on the development of e-learning capacity.

About Clydebank College

Clydebank College is the sixth largest college in the west of Scotland with some 11,500 annual learner enrolments and 482 staff. The college relocated to a brand new 6-acre campus on the banks of the River Clyde in August 2007. In collaboration with partner colleges and local authorities, the college offers a wide portfolio of provision and services designed to stimulate interest in learning, optimise choice and promote access and progression.

The challenge

- To increase the use of the college VLE and the development of learning materials
- To increase the engagement of staff and students with learning technologies and advocate the benefits
- To facilitate and support cultural change and practices

The activity

Starting in October 2008, Moodle was installed as the new VLE for the college. Initially all materials were externally sourced such as the NLN materials but in just one academic year the utilisation of Moodle has increased from zero to every department having some presence on the VLE, ranging from Coleg packs and

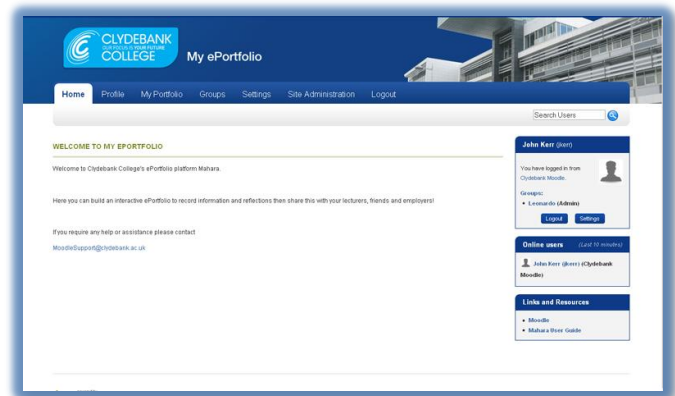


course descriptors to full course materials. The learning technologist has played a pivotal role in enabling these changes, both technologically and culturally. Facilitating the successful implementation of e-Learning is as much about people skills as technical skills. Initial steps involved the setting up course structures, logins, upload and development of materials. Complementing this was training and support for all staff both formal and informal. One of the strengths of support given is the 'open door' policy and 'just in time' support provided when staff need it. Training has included, induction to Moodle to raise awareness of it potential, such as, the creation and marking of e-assessments and the use of other tools like hot potatoes and horizon wimba.

Alongside Moodle, other technological developments have been implemented by the technologist which have streamlined processes, by integrating other college systems with Moodle, such as, CMIS and student email accounts using Windows Live.

Developments are ongoing and at a suitably incremental pace, which ensures that systems and processes are properly tested and set-up before full rollout and that staff are comfortable with the speed of developments. A key element of the success has been due to proper project planning and consultation with colleagues that has ensured successful implementation. The MrCute repository has been installed as has an online course booking system block, which has enabled simple and easy access to e-Learning courses for staff.

The installation of an e-portfolio system, Mahara has been the most recent development and is being piloted with a group of Beauty Therapy students as part of their involvement in a Leonardo Mobility Project. They will use Mahara whilst on a two-week work placement in Rimini, Italy in June 2010.



In time for the next academic year, induction to Moodle and enrollment on the system will be available to students when they enrol, made possible by current system developments. Other plans include a trial of Dimdim which is an easy, open, web conferencing system which enables collaboration and sharing of voice, video, slides, whiteboard and even your desktop.

The outcomes

As mentioned earlier, in just one academic year the utilisation of Moodle has increased from zero to every department having some presence on the VLE, ranging from Coleg packs and course

descriptors to all course materials. In particular, Beauty Therapy, Hairdressing, Sport and Construction have full course materials for all units that they teach. Materials include media in a range of formats from word documents, presentations, to video, audio, web links and e-assessments.

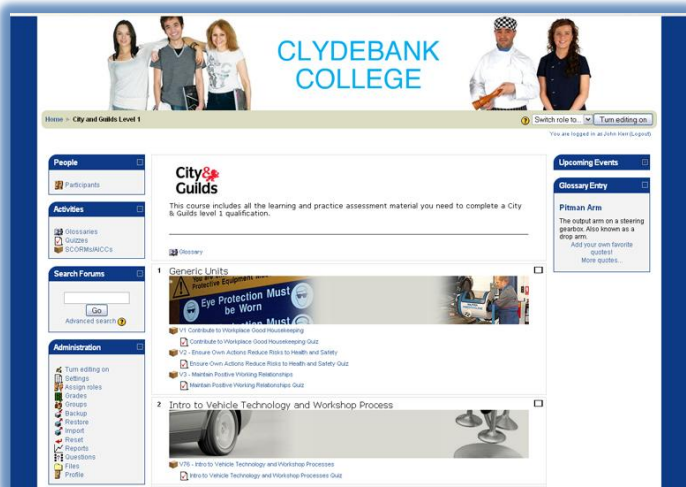
In the first four months of this academic year over 1,000 students were enrolled and actively using Moodle.

Around 90% of course materials are on Moodle. But by far one of the biggest successes has been the consistency and coherence in e-learning developments and the enthusiastic take-up by staff and students of the College VLE.



The impact

The benefits of having a learning technologist in post are clear, in terms of support for staff and students in the use of technology and improving the quality of the learner experience. The post allows the development of a cross-organisational approach by encouraging collaboration between curriculum, learning resources, technical and other staff within the college. Increasingly, learners



have access to relevant resources and course materials when and where it suits them made possible by the rapid development and conversion of learning materials to a digital format. It is evident that staff have enthusiastically engaged with the use of technology to benefit the learner and have confidence in the technology and benefit tremendously from the ongoing support from the college learning technologist.

Lessons Learnt

It seems evident that having a learning technologist, with the right mix of technical and people skills is a critical component in delivering a long-term strategy for e-Learning.

Useful Links

www.clydebank.ac.uk

www.rsc-sw-scotland.ac.uk/best_of_the_west/BoW.htm

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