

C5 - Program sites (Moodle)

Informing principles

This project will establish enduring program based online learning communities for USQ students to promote “whole of program” integration of students, staff and courses. In addition some communities will be created to serve specific groups of students, staff and courses e.g. the first year community in the BEEC. These communities will also promote connectedness, support, social presence and networking between students. The creation and use of these communities recognises and enacts the key principal that "learning is seen by students as a fundamentally social process" (The Student Learning Journey, p. 6) and the University's aspiration to create "an environment that is caring, nurturing and supportive of students achieving their own educational, personal and development goals" (USQ Strategic directions 2005-2009, p10). It is known that online communities can foster high levels of connectedness and social presence and trust and that these factors can markedly increase resilience and student retention.

The community will be available throughout their program and subsequent university study.

The value of such communities is demonstrated by:

Literature pointing to the importance of informal student connections as a way to increasing student retention

Success of the knowledgeGarden learning community within Education as evidenced by student comments and SET, SEC, and SELT.

The global trend to group forming networks e.g. Face book or MySpace

Goals

In 2008 and 2009 these program sites will address two main goals

1. Promote a whole of program approach to integration of students, staff and courses

Reduce the need to reinvent and republish program based information multiple courses e.g. currently staff need to republish some procedural issues every time a course is offered, and in parallel versions of the same course and in every course they teach

- Promote the creation of links between different courses within a program
- Promote links between students in different courses within a program and foster peer support and mentoring
- Provide a space where program staff can place resources used across the program rather than needing to repeat the information in each course
- Lowered "transaction cost" or "friction" for providing detailed and useful program based information

2. Establishment of a connected program based community of learners:
 - Allow students to create rich profiles (text, blogs, images) and build overlapping friendship networks
 - Provide online presence indicator and instant messaging and links to web conferencing.
 - Reduce attrition and increase retention and progression rates
 - Tap into, and capitalise on, existing ways of connecting and other web 2.0 tools

Strategic alignment

- USQ Teaching and Learning plan
- USQ Strategic Plan 2005-2009.
- The Student Learning Journey: A Framework for Quality Assurance and Decision Making at USQ
- USQ Strategic directions

Details of Faculty support for an 18 month period

The following strategies are being used:

- Raise awareness of the value of such sites
- Identify pilot sites for implementation in S2 2000

Tasks, timelines & budgets

Tasks	Timeline
Preparing a pilot program using the “Tertiary Preparation Program (TPP)” project funded by the USQ Equity Incentives Project	Nov 2008
Establishment of the infrastructure for a program based community (a Moodle meta course) within the TPP	Feb 2008
Working with TPP staff and students to create and facilitate the community	Mar 2008 >
Building awareness of the possibilities for program based communities	
In conjunction with Associate Deans from each faculty identify programs and people	May 2008

who can pilot program communities in s2	
Create further pilot program sites for use in S2 2008	June 2008
Evaluation of the S2 Program based Moodle sites	Dec 2008
Rollout Program based Moodle sites for interested programs across the university	Jan 2008

Total Resources/ Budget Required

Level B academic (.2)

Required documentation and policy rewriting

Infrastructure for creation of program based Moodle sites

- DICT
- LTSU
- Library
- Other support services

Supporting students and lecturers

Professional development requirements

Training for faculty based staff (academic and general)

Training for LTSU, Library, Outreach staff

Scholarship opportunities

Papers in the following areas

- Community building and community facilitation
- Student retention and attrition
- Whole of program integration and program approaches to student attributes and skills

Communication plan

What we communicate	Who we communicate to	How we communicate	When we communicate
Project reports	SLC / LTEC / ICT Strategy	Email Status Report attached	Prior to meetings
Guidelines & project updates	Associate Deans L&T Dean of Students & ICT L&T Adviser Student Guild & Student Services	Email update via 'PRP Info' newsletter.	Monthly
General developments	Other USQ staff	Program based communities users group	As needed

Evaluation strategies

- Usage statistics
- Surveys

Feedback from Program Based Communities Users Group