

Technology enhanced learning at Oxford Brookes University: Objectives 2012-15

This proposal is a result of discussions in early 2012 by the four faculty Associate Deans Student Experience and OCSLD educational developers. We extracted from the Strategy for Enhancing the Student Experience (SESE) those clauses that articulate aspirations for the development of the digital learning environment (see Appendix) and synthesised them into five key objectives (see box below).

We propose that meeting these objectives should be the basis of the next phase of the Moodle project.

The five objectives for technology-enhanced learning at Brookes are evidence-based. They draw on national research into how students use technology in their learning, especially projects we have played a key role in. These include a Higher Education Academy-funded review of the undergraduate experience of blended learning in the UK (Sharpe, Benfield et al. 2006), the JISC Learner Experiences of e-Learning programme (Sharpe, Beetham et al. 2009), a large scale investigation of undergraduate experiences of e-learning at Brookes (Benfield, Ramanau et al. 2009), and leading the JISC Supporting Learners in a Digital Age (SLiDA) project (Benfield and Sharpe 2011; Sharpe and Benfield 2011).

The Strategy for Enhancing the Student Experience (Oxford Brookes University 2010, p 3) includes an overall aspirational statement:

The University will provide physical learning environments, both formal and informal, that are accessible to all and afford opportunities for a variety of learning styles and approaches. It will also provide appropriate contemporary technologies, which facilitate learning and support virtual learning communities. The University will seek to promote effective social learning through, among other things, the inclusion of collaborative learning tasks in the curriculum and the provision of high-quality social learning spaces.

Accordingly, we recommend that our objectives for the development of our digital learning environments in the period 2012-15 are that the Brookes student experience includes:

1. 24/7 access via the Internet to key course information, documents and learning activities
2. Active use of a wide range of digital media and learning tools and choice of preferred technologies, in order to develop confidence and agility with existing and emerging digital technologies
3. Electronic submission and return of coursework and frequent opportunities for formative feedback involving digital technologies
4. The opportunity to record and share learning and achievements using digital media, including an electronic portfolio
5. Frequent and regular opportunities to use of a range of digital authoring tools and social media to support networking and engagement in a range of communities, formal and informal, in and beyond Brookes

References

- Benfield, G., Ramanau, R. and Sharpe, R. (2009). "Student learning technology use: preferences for study and contact." *Brookes eJournal of Learning and Teaching* 2(4).
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Appendix: SESE aspirational statements for technology-enhanced learning

Digital and information literacy

The functional access, skills and practices necessary to become a confident, agile adopter of a range of technologies for personal, academic and professional use. To be able to use appropriate technology to search for high-quality information; critically to evaluate and engage with the information obtained; reflect on and record learning, and professional and personal development; and engage productively in relevant online communities.

3.2.2 Students will have the opportunity to practise habits of learning that will be useful throughout their lives and will help them to be responsive in a rapidly changing world. This includes being able to use technology to shape their own learning environment and interactions.

3.3.1 Students will be expected to take responsibility for their own learning, to actively engage with feedback and assessment, and to develop their own justifiable ways of thinking about and constructing their view of the world.

3.4.5 The curriculum will be enriched by technologies that empower students' development as self-regulating, digitally literate learners, able to shape their own learning interactions and author their own digital artefacts.

3.4.6 The curriculum and support services will provide students with frameworks to support reflection about their lives after graduation and their preparations for making that transition.

3.5.2 All staff who support learning will participate annually in high quality professional development to ensure that their practice is evidence-based, informed by the scholarship of learning and teaching, and employs up-to-date learning tools and technologies.

3.6.2 A fundamental purpose of assessment will be to help students learn by providing formative feedback. Students will be given supportive, constructive and timely feedback as an essential part of learning. Such feedback will enable students to build on their positive achievements and have a clear sense of what they need to do to improve.

3.7.1 The University will provide physical learning environments, both formal and informal, that are accessible to all and afford opportunities for a variety of learning styles and approaches. It will also provide appropriate contemporary technologies, which facilitate learning and support virtual learning communities. The University will seek to promote effective social learning through, among other things, the inclusion of collaborative learning tasks in the curriculum and the provision of high-quality social learning spaces.

3.7.2 The physical environment will be augmented by digital environments and technologies in ways which support a distinctive Brookes learning experience as described in this document.

3.7.3 Learners will have the opportunity to engage in formal and informal learning environments which support students' autonomy and flexibility in managing their personal learning and promote their ability to engage actively and creatively in learning, research and professional communities both within and beyond the institution.

3.7.4 Learners will be provided with choices over information tools and assistive software to enable them to access the University through their preferred mode and location, i.e. at home or on campus, wired or wireless, mobile or fixed, using their own or a university-provided pooled device; and make use of other freely available tools in ways that support their learning.

4.3.6 We will provide the digital environments and technologies that enable students to easily create and support their own groups and networks comprising Brookes students and staff and relevant groups and individuals.