Unravelling student expectations: the use of early student data and module feedback to inform implementation

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Short paper for the ALT-C Conference, Manchester, 11 September 2012.

Managing student expectations has become a significant element in the design and delivery of higher education courses. Expectations of the role of technology enhanced learning and staff engagement with ICT are particularly prominent in national agendas on the student experience (NUS/HEFCE 2010). However, in addressing expectations, within institutions we must be cautious about relying on our own assumptions and generational expectations of students' technical competence and willingness to engage with ICT (Bennett, et al 2008).

This paper details how early-capture survey data and continuous student feedback has informed practice within a social science department at the University of York. It will show how results from a survey of first year students at the very start of their degree course, loosely based on the ECAR studies in the US (Smith and Caruso 2010), have fed into departmental teaching strategy and provided a solid knowledge-base for academic staff to understand the way students engage with ICT and their expectations of how technology-enhanced learning should be included within degree programmes. This increase in understanding is hypothesised to be a contributory factor to the high buy-in from academic staff in the use of learning technologies within this department.

The paper draws upon three cases in particular where an informed decision has been made based upon early-capture survey data, to minimise the risk associated with novel learning technologies and to better meet student expectations: the use of Facebook as a teaching aid, the development of pre-arrival online 'welcome' sites, the development of extra-curricular skills in social media.

Drawing on the conference theme of problem solving, this paper proposes a framework for creating an evidence base that can be used to support the implementation and development of technology enhanced learning within an academic department. It also outlines the importance of early-capture survey data leading to proactive, positive engagement with technology-enhanced learning. The session will be particularly relevant to delegates who champion learning technologies within academic departments, or who have a role in creating strategies for the development of learning technology as part of degree curricula.

Slides available at http://www.mattcornock.co.uk/sites/default/files/Matt-Cornock_ALT-C-2012_Unravelling-Student-Expectations.pdf

References

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