TEL US MORE 2009:
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOOD PRACTICE

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TEL Us More 2009: Recommendations for good practice

In 2009 the Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) team at Leeds Met ran, for the second time, a competition to find examples of good practice in the use of technology to support student learning. Each Faculty was invited to submit modules that were considered to show good practice. Students were also invited to nominate modules, together with the reason why they thought the modules were particularly supportive.

Seven modules were selected from the competition entries, one from each Faculty and one from among those nominated by students. All of the winning modules showed some aspect of good practice in the use of technology to support learning. Each module leader was then interviewed showing and explaining the features of the module. The interviews were recorded as 5-minute videos.

After reviewing all the competition entries, the TEL team put together a list of simple, basic recommendations for good practice in using TEL. These are shown below under five headings. The team also created a demonstration module in X-stream, together with a series of videos based around it, to illustrate how these recommendations could be carried out.

The videos of the competition winners and of the demonstration module are available as a DVD and also on the TEL website at www.leedsmet.ac.uk/tel/. The references to videos in the recommendations below are to the short videos based on the demonstration module, but the winning modules are well worth watching for a fuller picture of good practice in real situations.

How your module looks

- Custom icons, banners and backgrounds can add interest and motivation
- Some consistency in screen layout, icons and colour scheme is desirable
- Animated icons can be distracting and some backgrounds can affect the readability of the display, so consider carefully before using them.

Videos: Welcome, X-stream homepage

Ease of use

- Consider having an 'Introduction to the module' or 'Start here' icon as the first on the homepage, especially for an online course
- Check that Course Menu tools visible to students are restricted to the ones you really want them to see and use
- Module content from external websites should generally open in a new browser window, and web links need to be checked regularly to ensure that they are still active.

Videos: Tool Selection, Content Web Links

Module content

- Consider making key information available through the Syllabus Tool in addition to having it in the Module Handbook

- The use of Learning Modules or a hierarchical structure of web pages can make things clearer for students

- Consider how best to present the content of Word and PowerPoint files. Content can be provided in additional alternative forms, for example as HTML (to view) or PDF (to print).

Videos: Content – Syllabus, Content – Learning Module

Communication

- Use of the Announcements tool can help you avoid filling the homepage with messages that are no longer relevant

- Use of the Calendar tool and Announcements can be especially helpful for assignment deadlines

- If a Discussion is set up for students to ask questions of the module tutors, ensure that answers are provided promptly.

Videos: Communication – Announcements, Calendar, Discussion

Assessment

- Consider using X-stream for summative assignment submission and subsequent feedback

- It is good practice to follow the recognised guidelines for quizzes, even formative ones – for example avoiding nonsense answers and obvious answers

- Formative exercises for students enable self-assessment of their own progress.

Videos: Formative assessment, Summative assessment

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