

The balancing act: Managing emerging issues of elearning projects at the University of Sydney

Helen Wozniak, Karen M. Scott and Susan Atkinson
Flexible Online Learning Team
University of Sydney

Abstract

In 2004, the University of Sydney broadened its approach to information and communication technology (ICT) in learning and teaching with a widespread initiative focusing on elearning. Two of the purposes of the elearning initiative are to maintain the central ICT services which provide quality assurance for ICT-supported student learning across the whole institution, and to assist the three colleges of the University to accomplish their teaching and learning goals related to ICT through the development of strategic college-based projects. This paper focuses on the latter strategy by giving an overview of the management and implementation of the first round of college-based projects. The project managers' reflections, as well as results from surveys conducted with key stakeholders of strategic projects (both academic and general staff), are then reviewed to identify important emerging issues which need to be addressed if balance is to be achieved between change and comfort during the implementation of the new team-based working style. Issues are centred around the project management environment in universities, the changing roles and responsibilities of academic and general staff and their communities of practice, and the need for improved collaboration and communication between these merging groups.

Keywords

project management, academic and general staff, communication, collaboration

Introduction

The nature of work in higher education institutions is rapidly changing, with blurring of the work divisions between academic and general staff (Hoare, 1996; Yetton, 1997; Coaldrake & Stedman, 1998). New initiatives in the higher education sector, such as the rapid uptake of elearning, have contributed to the process of change by necessitating the development of new communication structures and working practices for staff. The effective implementation of new initiatives is likely to be enhanced if the changes in work practices experienced by the stakeholders can be identified and any associated issues addressed. This paper outlines the issues that are emerging from the inaugural phase of college-based projects that form a part of the University of Sydney's elearning initiative. In addition, the strategies that are being implemented to ensure successful management of the stakeholders and resources are described.

Background to the college-based projects and the elearning initiative

The University of Sydney (hereafter referred to as 'the University') has committed significant resources and planning to embedding elearning in its learning and teaching system through a widespread initiative. Leadership, policy development, quality assurance and resource provision for elearning is provided by the Office of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching). Resource allocation and discipline-specific strategic planning is managed through college structures in order to provide a sustainable infrastructure for the elearning needs of staff and students (University of Sydney, 2004a). The Flexible Online Learning Team (FOLT) support part of the elearning initiative at the University. Among other responsibilities, FOLT provides project management support and educational design support for strategic elearning projects, as well as central helpdesk support. It is also responsible for operationalising standards for the University's approach to quality assurance for learning management systems (University of Sydney, 2004b).

To provide support for strategic elearning projects, FOLT staff work for part of the year in college project groups located within the three colleges of the University: College of Health Sciences (CHS), College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHASS) and College of Sciences and Technology (CST). The college project groups are made up of a project manager and four educational designers who divide their time between project work and central support.

They are situated within the colleges to ensure that local knowledge is utilised and local networks are facilitated. Each college is allocated 4000 hours of staff support per annum from the group (total of 12,000 hours across the University). Each college has an elearning support group made up of a college academic director, a FOLT project manager and a representative from each faculty within the college. Their role is to identify possible strategic projects through an 'expression of interest' process, and then decide which projects should be allocated the elearning support in upcoming project periods (Applebee, Ellis, & Sheely, 2004).

Process of identifying the college-based projects

Each of the three colleges at the University carries out an expression of interest (EOI) process over a number of months each year during which possible projects are identified and prioritised. The allocation of resources for these projects is led by a college academic director or equivalent: any staff member from faculties within each of the colleges is able to put forward ideas in the form of a project proposal. Proposals are measured against a set of criteria developed by the stakeholders at the college level and include:

- extent of alignment of project outcomes with the college strategic plan and the relevant faculty learning and teaching plan
- the ability to achieve sustainability, longevity or transferability to other courses
- the potential to impact large numbers of students.

Projects that the college identifies for support undergo a period of scoping and planning by the project manager, working in collaboration with project stakeholders and the educational designers. This process results in a project description document, a scoping document that details the milestones and timeframes for the project and a letter of agreement that is signed by the key stakeholders.

The project managers work full-time within the college-based structure and are responsible for the planning and management of the strategic projects. The project groups convene twice yearly for periods of three and five months to work on college projects, and the educational designers continue their central helpdesk support during this time. Project downtime coincides with the quality assurance process for learning management systems. The project group (all of whom are general staff) work closely with a range of academic and general staff stakeholders to form the full project team. This has represented a change in the work practices of all involved, including the development of new patterns of communication and collaboration between members of these groups.

Inaugural college-based strategic projects (6 months 2004–2005)

During the inaugural project phase of the college-based projects (September 2004 – February 2005), the projects fell broadly into three categories:

- **Projects that gathered information to feed the strategic process:** CHS developed a showcase web site of health sciences elearning examples, CST and CHS ran focus groups to gauge the use of still images online and identify needs, and all three colleges conducted a survey of ICT use.
- **Projects with University/college-wide application:** CHASS developed an academic writing skills web site to help students and assist academic staff give feedback on writing problems, and CST and CHS created a 'Using still images in online teaching and learning' web site, with staff training.
- **Faculty-based projects:** Online units of study were created for Psychology and the Project Management Graduate Programme.

Many of the project methods and procedures, including the letters of agreement, project descriptions and project scoping documents, were set in place prior to the first round of projects. They were trialled during the inaugural phase and are still evolving. At the conclusion of this phase, the project managers met to review them and from this dialogue a procedural framework for the development of strategic elearning projects was designed to apply broadly across the three colleges.

In addition to the refinement of project management processes, the project managers noted that issues for which the college-based projects had the least formal strategies to address were:

- shared goals in project teams
- collaboration
- the ability to break down the barriers between work roles and departments.

As a result the authors of this paper, the project managers decided to investigate the perceptions of these areas among staff who worked on the projects.

The survey

Academic and general staff involved in the inaugural phase of the project were surveyed to obtain qualitative and quantitative data. We were interested in their understanding of both their own roles and those of others in the project work, as well as their experiences of teamwork, communication and collaboration. A total of 33 staff who were involved in the first project phase were sent an email survey consisting of ten closed questions, which were rated on a five point Likert scale, as well as four open-ended questions from which we could obtain qualitative data (see appendix showing the survey sent to academic staff). We received eleven responses (a 33% response rate); six from academic staff, three from faculty-based general staff and two from FOLT educational designers. This response rate is comparable to that found by others (Sheehan, 2001) and gives a preliminary data set. The following section draws upon the data gathered, the experiences of the three project managers who came to the projects with differing backgrounds (former academic, educational designer, project manager at another university), and related literature. This enabled us to derive strategies to assist the college-based elearning projects to more directly address any emerging issues, and to direct our future studies in this area.

Issues emerging from the survey and the inaugural college-based projects

The survey data presented trends that highlighted three emerging issues that need greater attention to enable us to successfully manage future strategic elearning projects. These are: the impact of project-based work on staff, the roles and responsibilities of staff, and communication and collaboration between staff.

Working in a project environment

The results of the survey questions that focus on working in a project environment are shown in Table 1. They show that academic staff reported no problems working within the structured timeline of project work: only FOLT educational designers revealed they had some problems. This was in contrast to our own perceptions, as well as those of John Kenny (2002), who researched project management in higher education institutions and found that many academic staff encounter difficulties working within strict project timeframes. Possible reasons are that academic staff often have many competing commitments that hamper their ability to meet project deadlines and also have a tradition of working autonomously (Coaldrake & Stedman, 1998; Bates, 2000; Kenny, 2002; 2004), and these do not facilitate working as part of a project team with a set schedule.

A possible explanation for the FOLT educational designers acknowledging difficulties in meeting project deadlines is that the elearning projects are central to their identity and form the core of their work. As such, they feel personal responsibility for the delivery of projects on time. On the other hand, because academic staff have competing commitments, the projects are often less focal to their work and the expectation that strict deadlines need to be met is less intense.

Table 1: Survey responses to questions related to working in a project environment

Related survey question	Academic staff	General staff
Q1: I believe the projects will make a constructive contribution to elearning at the University.	100% agree*	80% agree* 20% partially agree
Q7: I felt my contribution to the project work was appreciated by FOLT/academic staff.	83% agree 17% NA	80% agree 20% partially agree
Q 9: Generally, I worked easily within the structured timeline of the project work.	83% agree 17% NA	20% agree 60% partially agree 20% NA
Qualitative comments related to open-ended questions about changes to project work processes.	"The process worked very efficiently." "I thought the team worked well together with both parties willing to go the extra mile to produce a good outcome."	"Would not recommend any other change apart from normal due care in the drawing up of project frameworks to ensure that the deliverables are really deliverable."

Italics: Term used varied depending on whether staff surveyed was an academic or general staff member

* Likert scale response choices: agree / partially agree / partially disagree / disagree / not applicable.

Understanding the roles of general and academic staff

The survey was designed to gauge staff awareness of roles and responsibilities in project work. Participants were asked if they understood the role of other staff working on the projects and conversely whether they felt that their role was understood. As Table 2 (below) demonstrates, there was almost unanimous agreement amongst both general and academic staff that each understood the others' role in project work. In addition, all the academic staff surveyed (except one) felt sure that general staff members understood their role.

Although a seemingly positive response, after we analysed the responses to the open-ended question: 'What do you believe your role is in working as part of a team on college-based ICT in T&L projects?', we saw the potential for misunderstanding. Some academics clearly saw their role in the project as one which would normally be claimed at least partly by an educational designer, that is 'coming up with ideas to put online', 'showing the best way to teach content in my discipline' and 'fostering creativity in the team'. Perhaps as a result of these views, the general staff felt less sure that their role was understood. This may partially reflect the difficulties in defining the role of an educational designer, as noted by Campbell, Schwier and Kenny (2005) who studied the identity of educational designers in universities in Canada.

This confusion about roles, as well as increasingly indistinct boundaries between academic and general staff, has been identified in much of the Australian higher education literature. The Hoare Report (1996) highlighted an increasing overlap and blurring of the boundaries between academic and general staff. Yetton (1997) confirms this, noting that both academic and general staff roles are currently being transformed. Coaldrake and Stedman (1998, p. 155) consider that there has been a general lack of recognition given to the contributions made to learning and teaching by general staff, calling them the 'forgotten groups' in the university.

In terms of creating cohesive, collaborative project teams, it is important that the roles of team members are made explicit. Lockett and Strand (2004) examined the use of a team approach to the development of online learning materials involving a number of different staff at the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand and concluded that 'unless roles are clearly stated, understood and agreed upon by all members of the team, there is a risk of double-ups of task, confusion and even conflict' (p. 547).

Table 2: Survey responses to questions related to roles and responsibilities

Related survey question	Academic staff	General staff
Q5: I understood the roles of the <i>FOLT educational designers and project manager/academics</i> in the project work.	83% agree 17% partially agree	20% agree 60% partially agree 20% partially disagree
Q6: I felt the <i>FOLT/academic</i> staff understood my role in the project work.	83% agree 17% partially agree	100% agree
Qualitative comments related to open-ended questions about current roles in project work, and changes in roles since being involved in project work.	Roles and project had "some blurriness about what was wanted". Role is: "to foster creativity in the team", "provision of specialized knowledge", "best way to teach content". Changes include: "role has broadened", "working with more people which has necessitated getting to know more about each faculty and how it functions", "greater responsibility for reporting activities", "more structured", "more focus on work boundaries & organizational hierarchies".	Roles were "not clear", "not clear what expertise there was". Role is "to provide specific information and content", "provide good examples", "ensure that project outcomes are met", "provide technical and educational expertise", "agent of change by promoting new ways of looking at old problems". Changes include: "more creativity involved", "opportunities for a longer term focus", "dealing with problems of substance in depth", "closer collaboration with the grass roots".

The development of new communities of practice

Housego (2002) noted that educational designers are now required to work in new ways within universities. Many of these new ways cross the traditional power and status boundaries of organisations, an issue which is closely linked to understanding the ‘communities of practice’ within large organisations. This term, originally coined by Wenger (1998), uses a very broad description of a community of practice: ‘groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly’ (Wenger (n.d.), p. 1).

Riel and Polin (2004) relate this concept to learning organisations such as universities by describing three types of learning communities: task-based, practice-based and knowledge-based. A task-based learning community best describes the college-based project teams as it refers to ‘groups of people organised around a task who work intently together for a specified period of time to produce a product’ (p. 20). In relation to our discussion above on roles and responsibilities, Riel and Polin note that: ‘where the community is newly formed, with little history to guide activity, there may be much ambiguity about roles and activities’ (p. 19).

Other authors have considered the concept of communities of practice when examining the interplay between educational designers and other staff in the development of elearning projects in higher education institutions (Housego, 2002; Schwier, Campbell, & Kenny, 2004). They conclude that educational designers are well placed to facilitate organisational change and negotiate meanings across the many overlapping boundaries of university communities. Interestingly, in the survey one FOLT educational designer and one college academic director described their role in the elearning initiative as a change agent for the institution, assisting it in the move towards elearning (Schwier, Campbell, & Kenny, 2004).

The gestation of the task-based communities involved in the initiative’s project work involves the formation of identities and the development of shared purpose, but the project managers have found that this places challenges on the FOLT members. This is because their role as educational designers is essentially one of facilitation, so it follows that they bear a greater share of the burden of any friction between overlapping communities of practice across the organisation. Additionally, the short duration of the projects, and consequently the project teams, means that the FOLT educational designers are working within and across ever-changing communities of practice.

Communication and collaboration and their role in fostering teamwork

Lack of communication and poor collaboration has been cited as problems for teams composed of different groups within a university (Robinson, 2001; Lockett & Strand, 2004). For this reason, our survey also attempted to gauge staff feeling about collaboration and communication during the projects.

Whilst all survey respondents appreciated working in a multi-skilled team, general staff were less confident than academic staff about the communication and collaboration that occurred. As shown in Table 3, all academic staff agreed unequivocally that there was adequate communication and collaboration to complete the projects, but the response from general staff was mixed.

This suggests that while academic staff welcomed the increased opportunity for communication and collaboration with colleagues on projects, they may still be thinking in terms of their individual contribution to the projects rather than viewing themselves in community terms. This may account for the mixed reaction of FOLT general staff, who value working as part of teams with high levels of communication and collaboration.

Table 3: Survey responses to questions related to communication and collaboration

Related survey question	Academic staff	General staff
Q2: FOLT/academic staff communicated adequately to complete the project.	100% agree	40% agree 40% partially agree 20% partially disagree
Q3: FOLT/academic staff collaborated adequately to complete the project.	100% agree	20% agree 60% partially agree 20% partially disagree
Q4: Any misunderstandings with FOLT/academic staff were easily resolved.	66% agree 17% partially agree 17% N/A	40% agree 20% partially agree 20% partially disagree 20% N/A
Q8: I appreciated the opportunity to work on a project with a multiskilled team.	100% agree	60% agree 20% partially agree 20% NA
Q10: The project work strengthened relationships between the academic and FOLT staff involved.	66% agree 17% partially agree 17% N/A	60% agree 40% partially agree
Qualitative comments related to open-ended questions about recommended changes to project processes to facilitate communication and collaboration.	<p>"There was a real sense of sharing knowledge and experience ... and providing encouragement and support."</p> <p>"The online availability of the project results [outcomes] opened up the lines of communication by providing access to the many."</p> <p>Recommended changes: "More meetings (or online communication)", "more e-mail support from FOLT staff during non-project period".</p>	<p>"Time pressures unavoidably impact upon communication and collaboration."</p> <p>"... communication difficulties with other FOLT members have been no less serious than difficulties with academic staff ..."</p> <p>Recommended change: "... more time for settling in during the early stage without heavy intrusions from helpdesk ..."</p>

One comment in the open-ended survey questions mentioned that collaboration amongst the FOLT staff was also an issue. FOLT staff have been forced to become accustomed to moving back and forth between their central helpdesk role and their project role each week. This has led to a need for new patterns of communication, as project members within the FOLT are often working remotely from each other. In addition, as the college project teams form for a relatively short time and change from one project phase to another, the constituents of the teams are constantly shifting and staff are required to work closely with an ever-changing set of team members. Moreover, reporting lines change and consequently the hierarchies are not permanently set (Baker, 2003).

Collaboration with the members of the project team who were faculty-based was also challenging because, as outlined above, they often had competing demands and the project work was not as central to their working lives. Additionally, ensuring the alignment of expectations between faculty-based members of the project team and the educational designers was sometimes difficult, perhaps partly due to the difficulties in defining clear roles.

Martin (1999) has made useful suggestions regarding the development of 'team learning' within educational organisations. She describes good team work as a 'process of aligning and developing the capacity of a team to work towards a common purpose and to create the results its members truly desire', whereby 'they generate knowledge and insights that address immediate problems and provide an environment in which members learn how to address future problems' (p. 66). Martin suggests that collaboration can be made more effective by having agreed and defined goals engendering respect and tolerance, and regular communication. She also reminds us that consensus amongst all team members is not essential; all that is often needed is to put a range of options forward and move to an agreed position.

Outcomes and future strategies

Although the data for this study was gathered at the completion of the first round of projects at the University, when problems due to cultural change and new work practices were at their strongest, there is reason to be optimistic about the results. They indicate a strong commitment to the new way of working, pride in the outcomes and a relatively high rate of overall satisfaction with the projects to-date.

Nevertheless, this preliminary research and our observations enabled us to identify three key areas related to the implementation of project work in elearning which were at the heart of difficulties that arose, namely:

- Working within the project environment.
- Roles and responsibilities of project group members.
- Communication, collaboration and teamwork skills.

It is our aim to observe these closely during the ongoing rounds of college projects, and we are currently developing and trialling management processes to improve participant interactions in these areas.

The survey responses relating to working in the project environment highlighted the need for more detailed project planning to ensure that outcomes are achievable and project group members have the appropriate skills. To address this, we have increased the amount of detail in the formal Letters of Agreement that are signed by stakeholders, leading to more explicit expression of project objectives, outcomes, timelines and expectations. A distinction has also appeared in our planning between those projects which are less innovative, with low levels of uncertainty, that can be thoroughly scoped at the outset and closely monitored against that scope throughout the project; and more innovative projects, with high levels of uncertainty, which require more flexible schedules and an iterative development style (Bates, 2000; Kenny, 2002; 2004; Highsmith, 2003).

We are aware that project timelines present a particular difficulty for academic staff, due to their competing commitments to many strands of work, both research- and teaching-focused pursuits. In addition, the tradition amongst academic staff of working autonomously (Coaldrake & Stedman, 1998; Bates, 2000; Kenny, 2002; 2004) makes their involvement in collaborative projects potentially more demanding in terms of the extent of cultural change that they experience. Consequently, we are aware of the need to make realistic allowances for the current structure of the academic project members' working lives. We have undertaken risk analysis for upcoming projects, with contingency plans that can be employed should the need arise.

Although responses to the initial questions in the survey indicated that staff felt clear about their own roles as well as those of other members of the project team, the discursive responses demonstrated that this was not the reality. In future project phases we intend to spend more time on clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the wide range of staff comprising the project teams, and making explicit the way in which these integrate and how they influence the project outcomes.

Finally, survey responses showed that there is a need for more regular and open communication in the projects and improved collaboration, both within the college-based educational design teams, and between the various FOLT, academic and faculty-based general staff that comprise the larger project group. We are currently working on various management strategies to facilitate team skills and an increased sense of team identity. One of these is the introduction of communication plans into future projects as part of our general project management practice. It is hoped that their implementation will lead to more structured communication with stakeholders, creating benefits such as increased trust and a more cohesive project team. It is also anticipated that improved communication will have flow-on benefits to the other areas we have identified as problematic and assist in clarifying roles, responsibilities and the requirements of project work.

Conclusion

Universities are complex organisations undergoing rapid change in the way elearning is being embedded in the culture of work. Our experiences with the introduction of elearning projects to the University, and the responses from project participants, demonstrates that a careful balancing act is required. When implementing change to enable good project outcomes to be delivered, it is equally important to remain within the comfort levels of staff and not damage their motivation and identity. It is early days in this process, and we look forward to the challenges that lie ahead in managing the way future projects are identified, planned, developed and implemented.

References

- Applebee, A. C., Ellis, R. A., & Sheely, S. D. (2004). Developing a blended learning community at the University of Sydney: Broadening the comfort zone. In R. Atkinson, C. McBeath, D. Jonas-Dwyer, & R. Phillips (Eds.), *Beyond the comfort zone: Proceedings of the 21st ascilite conference* (pp. 58–66). Retrieved from <http://www.ascilite.org.au/conferences/perth04/procs/applebee.html>
- Baker, S., Baker, K., & Campbell, G. M. (2003). *The complete idiot's guide to project management*. New York: Alpha Books.
- Bates, A. W. (2000). *Managing technological change: Strategies for college and university leaders*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Campbell, K., Schwier, R. A., & Kenny, R. F. (2005). Agency of the instructional designer: Moral coherence and transformative social practice. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 21(2), 242–262.
- Coaldrake, O. P., & Stedman, L. (1998). *On the brink: Australia's universities confronting their future*. Brisbane: University of Queensland Press.
- Highsmith, J. (2003). *Agile project management: Principles and tools*. Agile Project Management Advisory Service Executive Report. Arlington, MA: Cutter Consortium.
- Hoare, D. (1996). *Higher education management review: Report of the committee of inquiry*. Canberra: Higher Education Management Review Committee, Department of Employment, Education and Training. Retrieved June 21, 2005, from <http://www.dest.gov.au/archive/highered/otherpub/hoare/hoareidx.htm>
- Housego, S. (2002). Boundary crossing in a community of communities of practice. In *Winds of change in a sea of learning: Charting the course of digital education: Proceedings of the 19th ascilite conference*. Auckland: Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education. Retrieved June 21, 2005, from <http://www.ascilite.org.au/conferences/auckland02/proceedings/programme.html>
- Kenny, J. (2002). Managing innovation in educational institutions. *Australian Journal of Educational Technology*, 18(3), 359–376. Retrieved from <http://www.ascilite.org.au/ajet/ajet18/kenny.html>
- Kenny, J. (2004). A study of educational technology project management in Australian universities. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 20(3), 388–404. Retrieved from <http://www.ascilite.org.au/ajet/ajet20/kenny.html>
- Lockett, K., & Strand, M. (2004). Project teams go the distance. In R. Atkinson, C. McBeath, D. Jonas-Dwyer, & R. Phillips (Eds.), *Beyond the comfort zone: Proceedings of the 21st ascilite conference*. Retrieved June 21, 2005, from <http://www.ascilite.org.au/conferences/perth04/procs/lockett-poster.html>
- Martin, E. (1999). *Changing academic work: Developing the learning university*. Buckingham, PA: Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press.
- Riel, M., & Polin, L. (2004). Online learning communities: Common ground and critical differences in designing technical environments. In S. A. Barab, R. Kling, & J. H. Gray (Eds.), *Designing for virtual communities in the service of learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Robinson, B. (2001). Innovation in open and distance learning: Some lessons from experience and research. In F. Lockwood & A. Gooley (Eds.), *Innovation in open and distance learning: Successful development of online and web-based learning* (pp. 15–26). London: Kogan Page.
- Schwier, R., Campbell, K., & Kenny, R. (2004). Instructional designers' observations about identity, communities of practice and change agency. *Australian Journal of Educational Technology*, 20(1), 69–100.
- Sheehan, K. (2001). E-mail survey response rates: A review. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 6(2), 1–19. Retrieved June 21, 2005, from <http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol6/issue2/sheehan.html>
- University of Sydney. (2004a). *elearning initiative*. Retrieved June 21, 2005, from <http://www.usyd.edu.au/quality/teaching/eLearning.shtml#planning>
- University of Sydney. (2004b). *Academic board resolutions: Quality assurance and learning management systems*. Retrieved July 20, 2005, from http://www.usyd.edu.au/ab/policies/QA&Learning_Mangt_Systems.pdf

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wenger, E. (n.d.). *Communities of practice: A brief introduction*. Retrieved June 21, 2005, from <http://www.ewenger.com/theory/index.htm>

Yetton, P. (1997). *Managing the introduction of technology in the delivery and administration of higher education*. Canberra: Evaluations and Investigations Program Higher Education Division, Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs. Retrieved June 21, 2005, from <http://www.dest.gov.au/archive/highered/eippubs/eip9703/front.htm>

Acknowledgment

We would like to acknowledge the collaborative support of the Offices of the PVC Colleges and PVC Learning & Teaching in the management of these strategic projects.

Author contact details

Helen Wozniak

Project Manager for the College of Health Sciences, Flexible Online Learning Team, c/- Education Connections, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Sydney PO Box 170 Lidcombe 2141 NSW Australia; hwozniak@usyd.edu.au

Karen M. Scott

Project Manager for the College of Sciences and Technology, Flexible Online Learning Team, F07 — Carlsaw, University of Sydney, NSW 2006 Australia; karen.scott@usyd.edu.au

Susan Atkinson

Project Manager for the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Flexible Online Learning Team, Office of the PVC Learning and Teaching; satk0541@usyd.edu.au

Appendix: Academic staff questionnaire

New communities of practice at the University of Sydney: Academic staff survey

Definitions:

ICT in T&L: Information and Communication Technology in Teaching and Learning: see the following link for more information on this strategy at the University of Sydney. http://www.usyd.edu.au/quality/teaching/docs/ict_in_tandl_strategy_2004_ver2.pdf

Project: These were the college/faculty/departmental-based projects that occurred between Sept. 2004 and Feb. 2005 co-ordinated by a team including a college based project manager, members of FOLT and academics or content providers in each of the colleges of the University of Sydney.

FOLT: Flexible Online Learning Team: the educational designers and project managers who worked on the projects

Instructions:

You have the option of either printing out this survey and completing it by hand, or completing it using MS Word and then printing it out.

Part A: For each of the following statements please tick one column which best summarises your responses:

	agree	partially agree	partially disagree	disagree	not applicable
1. I believe ICT in T&L projects will make a constructive contribution to elearning at the University.					
2. FOLT staff and I <i>communicated</i> adequately to complete the project.					
3. FOLT staff and I <i>collaborated</i> adequately to complete the project.					
4. Any misunderstandings with FOLT staff were easily resolved.					
5. I understood the roles of the FOLT educational designers and project manager in the project work.					
6. I felt the FOLT staff understood my role in the project work.					
7. I felt that my contribution to the project work was appreciated by FOLT staff.					
8. I appreciated the opportunity to work on a project with a multiskilled team.					
9. Generally, I worked easily within the structured timeline of the project work.					
10. The project work strengthened relationships between the academic and FOLT staff involved.					

11. Would you like to comment on any of the above statements in more detail?

Please continue to Part B on the next page:

Part B: Please answer the following questions:

12. What do you believe is your role in working as part of a team on college-based ICT in T&L projects?

13. Describe any changes to your role as an academic working on college-based projects, compared with your work prior to the commencement of the college projects.

14. Can you recommend any changes to the processes involved in project work which would facilitate communication and collaboration between staff?

Copyright © 2005 Helen Wozniak, Karen M. Scott and Susan Atkinson

The author(s) assign to ascilite and educational non-profit institutions a non-exclusive licence to use this document for personal use and in courses of instruction provided that the article is used in full and this copyright statement is reproduced. The author(s) also grant a non-exclusive licence to ascilite to publish this document on the ascilite web site (including any mirror or archival sites that may be developed) and in printed form within the ascilite 2005 conference proceedings. Any other usage is prohibited without the express permission of the author(s).