Web-based lecture technologies: Guidelines to support learning and teaching

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Web-based lecture technologies (WBLT), designed to digitally record lectures for delivery over the web, are just one of a range of information and communication technologies that have been introduced in response to the changing context of higher education in the past decade. Lectopia (formerly known as iLecture) is one such technology being adopted by Australian universities.

There has been a rapid uptake of WBLT in recent years. Their popularity with students is well recognised. However, from an institutional perspective, they are having a disruptive influence; challenging long held traditions of university teaching, students' attendance patterns and ways of learning.

A recently completed project, *The Impact of Web-based Lecture Technologies on Current and Future Practices in Learning and Teaching* set about to explore the nature of their influence on learning and teaching issues and gain a better understanding of the implications for curriculum design; academics and their teaching; students and their learning and academic policies including professional development.

The project, funded by the Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (now known as the Australian Learning and Teaching Council) adopted a multi-level research plan entailing surveys of staff and students to establish broad trends. A series of vignettes and case studies were conducted to provide a more detailed exploration of the educational issues arising from specific curriculum contexts. The four universities involved were Macquarie University, Murdoch University, Flinders University and the University of Newcastle.

Overall, the findings indicated that regardless of age, gender, enrolment mode or attendance pattern, the majority of students had positive experiences with WBLT and perceived they made it easier to learn and, to a slightly lesser extent, helped them to achieve better results. Staff experiences, on the other hand, were more varied and overall their experiences were far less positive.

This mismatch between student and staff perceptions was one of several key themes that have emerged. Other themes were:

- While students appreciated the flexibility in access and support for learning, staff had concerns, particularly where on-campus students chose not to attend lectures as a result of using the technologies. This was perceived as having a negative impact on their learning.

- WBLT have contributed to a blurring of the boundaries between internal and external students. Internal students exhibited strong similarities to their external counterparts in the way they used WBLT as a study tool.

- Introducing WBLT has changed lecture attendance patterns in many cases and has raised questions about the role of lectures and whether there are more effective ways of achieving the functions traditionally assigned to lectures

- Using WBLT changes the way students learn and teachers teach and while students have capitalised on the opportunities it provides for supporting their learning, staff have been slow to change their teaching.

- Introducing WBLT is more than a teaching issue – it will affect the design of the whole curriculum. Rather than focussing on the lecture alone, a shift is needed for staff to consider the whole environment, taking into account the needs of students and the full range of activities and technologies that can be employed to achieve the stated aims and outcomes.

Based on the findings of this research a Toolkit of resources has been developed for use by the higher education sector. The Toolkit comprises guidelines for staff and students on how to make the best use of web-based lecture technologies, a compilation of frequently asked questions about using WBLT, a series of vignettes which provide snapshots of the experiences of staff and students; and a series of case studies exploring the use of WBLT in different curriculum contexts. Information about the project is available on the Project Web site at http://www.cpd.mq.edu.au/teaching/wblt/overview.htm

This poster is designed to overview the major findings from the research and to disseminate the Toolkit resources.

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