

The



*Technology Enhanced Learning
in Research-led Institutions*

Project

CASE STUDY

Theatre, Teaching & IT

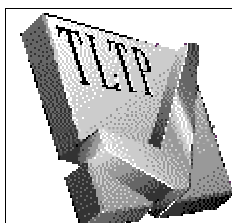
Evaluation from implementation in courses

The TELRI Project

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CASE STUDY

THEATRE STUDIES

Title	
THEATRE, TEACHING AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	
Department	School of Theatre Studies
Institution	University of Warwick
Description of the course	Course details
<p>The course is a research-based course. This makes it different in aims and structure from the traditional lecture/seminar-based teaching approach. The key difference is that the course content is primarily produced by the students, rather than by a lecturer. The objective is to provide students with an opportunity to conduct original research drawing upon guidance and feedback from each other, as well as from the course tutor.</p> <p>The course is divided up into ten units, most of which take a fortnight to complete. Each unit may contain required reading of primary and secondary texts &/ video viewing, tutor presentations (which introduce some of the core questions which the students need to address as well as outline further reading, tasks and assignments for that unit).</p>	<p>(e.g. level, core/option, length of course, student numbers, time span, learning hours supported)</p> <p>Undergraduate BA option course: Ancient Theatre on the Modern Stage (ATOMS)</p> <p>Runs over two terms</p> <p>8 students</p> <p>Approx. 80 learning hours supported.</p>
Details of the TELRI intervention and how it aimed to enhance the learning and course activities?	Other teaching methods used to support activity (e.g. tutorials, lectures, oral presentations, lab classes)
<p>The aims of the TELRI intervention were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To explore how best to structure a course so that it may be delivered on a distance-taught basis. ▪ To explore how student presentations can exploit IT technologies. ▪ To explore how best to facilitate contact between students and tutors using IT techniques. <p>A basic web page was set up for the course with an integrated email package and student feedback pages. In order to complete and publish their weekly assignments and term research projects, to give feedback on each others' other, and to engage in discussions</p>	<p>Module units and assignment instructions are released by the tutor every two weeks. Fortnightly tutor presentations respond closely to work being produced by the students. Although the class meets only every two weeks, individual students are encouraged to discuss regularly their research project and general progress with the course tutor.</p> <p>In each term, students are required to complete a substantial research project.</p> <p>Other technologies used to support activity (e.g. CD-ROM, web resources, lecture notes, references, online tests)</p>

<p>online, students author their own web pages using Netscape Communicator and using Netscape's email facility. The student web pages are then viewed and commented on by their peers and tutor.</p>	<p>At present, scanning facilities which would allow students to import images/text from analogue sources are unsatisfactory. Consultations with IT Services have been initiated in order to agree an approach to resolving the problem. Issues of copyright guidance in research will then be part of the course learning.</p> <p>The course makes use of existing subject-based courseware on the Theatre Studies web site.</p>						
<p>How the course was previously run (if applicable)</p> <p>Largely face-to-face lectures and seminars with some internet training and web-related assignments.</p>	<p>Problems with previous teaching methods</p> <p>Restricted opportunities for personal research and time for discussion and debate of each others' work.</p> <p>Inflexible for teaching distant students.</p>						
<p>Intended capabilities to be developed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Skills in research study and research management appropriate to the field of study ▪ A range of IT research and communication skills which can be used in the field of study and more widely ▪ Ability to apply the above skills to the investigation of a new research area in the field of study. 	<p>Methods of assessment</p> <p>The research projects are the core of the course and form the basis of assessment. Most units contain two assignments, one for each week of that unit's fortnight. These form part of student assessment for the course. Through this hands-on approach, students encounter, in an immediate way, some of the core processes involved in putting ancient tragedy on the modern stage.</p> <p>In most cases, each assignment is completed and 'published' within one week of being set.</p> <p>The course is assessed as follows:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Assignments</td> <td>10 %*</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Exam</td> <td>50 %</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Research projects</td> <td>40 % (20% each)</td> </tr> </table>	Assignments	10 %*	Exam	50 %	Research projects	40 % (20% each)
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<p>Problems in setting up the course or technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing software was not appropriate or too expensive and required new solutions. ▪ Installation and configuration of workstations. ▪ Preparation of user interface. ▪ Some minor growing pains with student use. 	<p>How these were solved</p> <p>The TELRI project provided the technical support services of Dr. Mick Roach to solve all of the technical problems listed.</p> <p>The interface also underwent a considerable amount of functional and cosmetic design alternations during the initial stages of the course in response to student feedback and an on-going assessment of the efficiency of the software in delivering the course aims.</p>						

Extent of development of intended outcomes	
<p>TELRI evaluation</p> <p>Students are motivated to maintain a steady flow of work from week to week. They acquire a wider perspective of the topic by seeing several different responses to the same assignment and their powers of reflection on their own critical practices is enhanced by subjecting the work of their peers to such reflection.</p> <p>The increased motivation and enthusiasm of the students was highly apparent. Moreover, it was clear this had a positive effect on the students' learning and therefore the quality of the course. The intended capabilities appeared to be developing through this approach and the tutor was keen to implement this method into other courses.</p> <p>In general, the implementation has produced for the department a curricular structure in keeping with their own research-led culture. This has proven in practice to be pedagogically and technically successful, yielding an enhanced quality of research-based learning and generating enthusiasm among students, tutors and assessor alike.</p>	<p>Academic tutor evaluation</p> <p>There appeared a necessity to produce content on an on-going basis in response to the work of the students. The result, however, is a highly interactive and collaborative guided research environment, which allows students scope to investigate their own interests and to draw upon their different areas of expertise while ensuring that they also engage with core concepts in the field.</p> <p>The quality of the students' work is easily comparable to that produced within traditionally taught courses, and encourages students to take greater responsibility for their own learning. Through regular assignments, a more dynamic synergy is created between the acquisition of historical and theoretical knowledge and the development of applied skills.</p> <p>Students evaluation</p> <p>The students expressed a high level of enthusiasm for the course approaches. They particularly mentioned the educational value of participating in the course in comparison with other, traditionally-taught courses.</p> <p>The students were happy with the balance of self-directed work in the web-based environment with the intervention of some face-to-face "live" discussions. Some felt that this prevented a demotivation or depersonalisation of the learning process.</p>
Unintended benefits or costs	
<p>TELRI evaluation (e.g. leading to changes in course design model or tool design)</p> <p>The staff expertise and the customised software interface acquired will provide a strong basis for the proposed distance-taught MA between Kent and Warwick. It also offers a viable and attractive option for provision of technology-enhanced modules in other courses.</p> <p>The course has also led to increased use of existing web-based subject materials on the Theatre Studies web site (the development of which was funded by an internal teaching fund).</p>	<p>Academic tutor evaluation (e.g. leading to changes in teaching practice)</p> <p>This first experience of implementing this approach were problematic, both in terms of feeling confident the students would enjoy it and benefit from it, but also with respect to technical issues. However, the tutor now feels comfortable and is enthusiastic to use similar approaches in other courses.</p> <p>With this approach, the tutor found the interactions with his students generally more rewarding since the quality of the debates and discussions was higher.</p> <p>The tutor and departmental Chair strongly felt the potential of these approaches was much</p>

<p>There were a number of teething problems with the software. These were circumvented, but not fully resolved, by a combination of creative use of email and continuing liaison between the course tutor and technical support staff. A problem with the existing 'Feedback' facility may be resolved by integrating conferencing software (not currently available) or embedding a Newsgroup.</p>	<p>wider than delivery and support in 'taught' courses. It could, for instance, facilitate the inclusion of remote experts to enrich the course with their differing perspectives. In addition, the web publishing and discussion environment could greatly enhance the supervision of postgraduate research students by generating a vehicle for their support and development through the creation of a virtual 'research community' of peers and supervisors. The benefits of such a model, in particular, for the supervision of part-time students or students conducting field work away from their supervisor is obvious.</p> <p>Students evaluation (e.g. leading to changes in learning practice)</p> <p>Generally enjoyed being part of the process of developing the subject content, particularly since the work remained on the web pages as a record of their effort.</p>
<p>Cost-effectiveness analysis (e.g. factors such as learning quality, staff time, ease of transfer to other courses)</p> <p>Since generally, project work is costly to support, this approach proved highly efficient, particularly for if used for larger student groups or across a number of courses. There were costs associated with the large amount of staff time required to establish the methodology. This will be reduced in subsequent runs of the course and by implementation in other courses. The educational and technical experience gained by the tutor can be passed on to others in the department.</p> <p>The increased use of existing resources means that there were benefits from costs incurred in previous developments.</p> <p>The use of Netscape web tools may be replaced by a more robust software product and this will no doubt be expensive. However, given that this will be used in the new joint MA planned with Kent, the benefits will still outweigh the overall costs.</p>	<p>To what extent can the course design approach support higher student numbers?</p> <p>Generally, there is no problem in scaling up the approaches. In larger courses, students could be divided into smaller groups of 5-6 and the assignment carried out through discussion and publishing as before. However, the face-to-face sessions would be less feasible and might be replaced by lectures. Perhaps having both with the eight students on this course was quite a luxury.</p>
<p>Further developments planned for this or other courses</p>	
<p>A further module has been successfully designed and implemented for a third year course taught by the same tutor.</p>	<p>The results of this pilot exercise have been incorporated in the planning of a new MA programme to be taught jointly by Warwick and Kent.</p>

Theatre Studies ATOMS course web site: home page (top) and student feedback area (bottom)

