

The



*Technology Enhanced Learning
in Research-led Institutions*

Project

CASE STUDY

Law

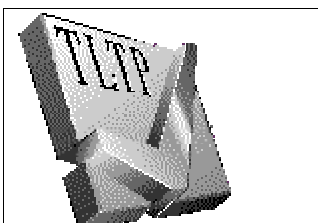
Evaluation from implementation in courses

The TELRI Project

Centre for Academic Practice
University of Warwick
Coventry CV4 7AL

Email: telri@warwick.ac.uk

Web site: www.telri.ac.uk



The TELRI Project is a three year project funded under phase 3 of the Teaching and Learning Technology Programme (TLTP).



CASE STUDY

Law

<p>Title LAW IN DEVELOPMENT DISSERTATIONS</p>	
<p>Department</p>	Law
<p>Institution</p>	Warwick
<p>Description of the course (Aims, objectives, structure, methods etc.)</p> <p>A postgraduate masters course. The relevant course component is the research based 15,000 word dissertation.</p>	<p>Course details (e.g. level, core/option, length of course, student numbers, time span, learning hours supported)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ LLM in Law in Development. ▪ Taught Masters. ▪ Dissertation. ▪ One year. ▪ 32 students. ▪ Undertaken during entire 3rd term.
<p>Details of the TELRI intervention and how it aimed to enhance the learning and course activities?</p> <p>The aim of the work was to establish how students and staff could use a technology-based information and communication system in the preparation and supervision of dissertations.</p> <p>The main educational objective was to increase the quality of student's thinking processes and therefore their research work. An assignment and assessment scheme was developed based on making those working and study practices leading to high quality work more transparent to the students. This allows students to approach future assignments and finally dissertations with greater success and originality.</p> <p>The process, not accidentally, reflects the research process practised by experienced academics. TELRI approaches enable a learning process development to be incorporated into the course without the need for additional tutor support. Nevertheless, feedback on the student contributions may provide a valuable focus for tutorial work or email discussion during the process.</p>	<p>Other teaching methods used to support activity (e.g. tutorials, lectures, oral presentations, lab classes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Individual tutorials ▪ Written instructions ▪ Large class discussion <p>Other technologies used to support activity (e.g. CD-ROM, web resources, lecture notes, references, online tests)</p> <p>Email.</p>

<p>A simple and easy-to-use web facility was established for students to publish their dissertation outlines, comment on each other's approaches and receive feedback from tutors before submitting a final version.</p>	
<p>How the course was previously run (if applicable)</p> <p>Using non-IT-based techniques, but with growing use of email communication to avoid the problematic delay of getting feedback to students on their work in progress.</p>	<p>Problems with previous teaching methods</p> <p>Too heavy reliance on individual supervision.</p> <p>The main failing of a student's approach is often a superficial interpretation of the course information and assignment meaning and depth. This often underlies the inability to design cohesive and effective strategies to allow them to define clearly and tackle each of the individual assignment components.</p>
<p>Intended capabilities to be developed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ability to conduct original research ▪ Ability to reflect on own approaches and those of others ▪ Ability to evaluate ideas critically ▪ Ability to communicate ideas effectively ▪ IT skills <p>It is anticipated that the web publishing approach will encourage students to share their work as a way of participating in a forum for discussing research approaches.</p>	<p>Methods of assessment</p> <p>No specific assessment of IT-based component.</p> <p>The dissertation is examined in the normal way.</p> <p>One idea for subsequent run of the course is that alongside their dissertation preparation, students prepare a reflective log of their ideas. Submission of this learning process log is then conducted after the piece of assessed work is submitted. The full process and associated best examples is then published (anonymously) to a course web site. The students benefit from clear examples of best practice and best work for subsequent work.</p>
<p>Problems in setting up the course or technology</p> <p>Minor problems with the technology affected its effective use as some supervisors found it difficult to enter comments to student work.</p>	<p>How these were solved</p> <p>The TELRI project provided technical assistance with the use of the web publishing facility to assist with the resolution.</p> <p>Some problems were resolved. Other problems required slight reprogramming of the CGI script as the specific needs for the course evolved.</p> <p>The lower than expected use of the system by the tutors was traced to a specific ability to view and comment on work simultaneously which was remedied in a modified version of the web publishing facility.</p>

<p>Extent of development of intended outcomes</p> <p>TELRI evaluation</p> <p>The course leader made comments that the availability of this kind of IT facility (web publishing) has caused a cultural shift in the School of Law in the way that tutors and students interact across the process of dissertation work.</p> <p>The approaches are far more transparent and students learn a great deal from each other as well as from the tutors comments on all the work rather than just their own.</p> <p>In terms of the technical objectives, the team felt that the simplicity of the web publishing facility was a key player in getting the students to use IT for sharing their ideas. The staff found it a useful means of providing feedback to students at the time it was needed.</p> <p>An advantage was the ability to comment directly on the work in question, rather than conduct a discussion in a different window or application than the one where the work is displayed. Whilst the text was often long, an uploaded a Word document would not have achieved the same effect.</p> <p>The technical difficulties resulted mainly from the "developmental" aspects in this pilot of what we were trying to do educationally.</p> <p>The case study suggests that the level of tutor support required on courses can be reduced without a reduction and indeed a possible increase in support quality.</p>	<p>Academic tutor evaluation</p> <p>The approach assisted in enabling students to understand the problems involved in writing dissertation outlines. Their research capabilities were enhanced by the opportunities offered in sharing and commenting on work in progress.</p> <p>The system was simple to use.</p> <p>The web publishing approach was used extensively by students although not as much as one would have wished by course teachers.</p> <p>The use of the system meant that there was some reduction (unquantified) in the need for tutor support.</p> <p>Students evaluation</p> <p>Student feedback was positive on the value of the system.</p> <p>However, there were issues raised by students in relation to some technical problems and the involvement of staff.</p> <p>Significantly, as the submissions were not assessed, the students were voluntarily reducing tutor contact time due to the work sharing and discussion approach.</p>
<p>Unintended benefits or costs</p> <p>TELRI evaluation (e.g. leading to changes in course design model or tool design)</p> <p>Working alongside the academic tutors and the students meant the team was able to be responsive to the specific ways in which tutors and students wished to interact. In this way, the technology was always fit for purpose to suit the planning, preparation and feedback processes of dissertation work. This fed into</p>	<p>Academic tutor evaluation (e.g. leading to changes in teaching practice)</p> <p>The benefits were seen in increased social and intellectual collaboration among students during a term in which they did not have much formal teaching.</p> <p>There were no unintended costs other than the fact that the tutor administering the system had additional burdens to those which he would normally have had. These were partly compensated by students requiring less</p>

<p>the development of the web publishing facility for other courses. Since the tool is a simple CGI script that works on a forms-based system to display submissions in particular ways, it was fairly minor to make the appropriate alterations.</p> <p>The desirability for file upload for submission of first chapters was also investigated and has proved useful in some courses. The use of document editing, tracking and marking software may provide added value to such a facility.</p> <p>An additional cost to the team was the further development required of the CGI script for web publishing tool to accommodate the needs of the course.</p> <p>Tutors were very specific about how they wanted the technology to work, how the submissions should be presented and the schedule of submission, discussion and assessment. The use of a simple scripting facility could accommodate these requests. While the availability of a more sophisticated learning environment tool may assist with management of learners and administration of students and courses, such integrated packages are not always flexible in the way they can be used.</p> <p>The understanding and vision that the academic brings to the course are major factors in the success of research courses and the introduction of IT. Opposition to many integrated IT systems (or virtual learning environments) is often based on a feeling or insight of the academic that the environment is inherently false. This resistance stems from the pedagogical subtleties of each subject discipline and is far more likely to be the cause of failure to implement than an academic's IT phobia or traditional concepts of learning.</p>	<p>support and would be minimised in subsequent runs of the course.</p> <p>Students evaluation (e.g. leading to changes in learning practice)</p> <p>Students mentioned the benefit of learning from one another and the increased lack of isolation in dissertation work that this approach lent.</p>
<p>Cost-effectiveness analysis</p> <p>During its first year of use there were significant additional costs in developing and learning to use the system, negotiation with TELRI staff, discussion of software changes, teaching the students and other staff how to use the system.</p> <p>These costs can be significantly reduced over subsequent years. The use of this approach to support higher numbers of students or its use</p>	<p>To what extent can the course design approach support higher student numbers?</p> <p>The course design is intended to enable support for higher number of students, as ultimately it would reduce the supervisors' load with students learning from one another and benefiting from general electronic support.</p>

<p>on other courses also justifies the initial outlay of staff time.</p> <p>This case study does indicate that IT can not only support learning but also enhance learning and with favourable cost-benefits. This is premised on the understanding that the course design on which the choice of IT is based is appropriate. Use of a generic group of functions, such as provided in a virtual learning environment, brings a danger of not accounting for the subtle subject specific working practices and preferences, particularly those used in research processes.</p>	
<p>Further developments planned for this or other courses</p> <p>The course will continue this year with a revised system.</p> <p>Similar electronic communications systems are being used in two other courses, but for electronic negotiation exercises.</p>	

Law in Development course web publishing and discussion

(Above)
Area for submitted work
Each student has a submission entry and there are also sections posted by the tutor for Dissertation Instructions, Frequently Asked Questions and Notice Board as well as a Student Café section for social chat (circled at bottom of above window).

(Right)
An individual student submission and comments section with edit and print facilities.
Comments can be made directly against the work and points in question.