

SYDNEY INSTITUTE



Ambition in Action

eLearning @ Sydney Institute

This project sought to identify the best eLearning solutions to enable Sydney Institute to move forward and to position itself in the constantly changing vocational education and training environment and the new era of teaching and learning.

The eLearning project

The project began in the late 1990's with Sydney Institute exploring the use of a learning management system for online learning. The new century brought a radical change to the use of the Internet with the 'read write web' and social networking tools such as blogs, wikis, podcasting and virtual worlds. Web conferencing made it possible to connect with voice, chat and application sharing. Teachers also began to develop and modify 'just in time' resources.

The project includes online, virtual, distributed, networked and web-based learning. These processes utilise information and communications technology to mediate learning and teaching activities. This approach incorporates all educational activities that are carried out by individuals or groups working online or offline, and synchronously or asynchronously via networked or standalone computers and other electronic devices.

Objectives

The objective of the project was to embed eLearning at Sydney Institute. eLearning that is more than just the use of technology but the use of networked information and communications technology in teaching and learning. This was accomplished by:

- / Embedding the use of learning management systems
- / Exploring the use of Web 2.0 tools including podcasting, wikis, blogs, and virtual worlds
- / Using web-conferencing (Adobe Connect) for educational delivery and staff communication
- / Making available resource development kits that consist of the equipment staff need to develop 'just in time' teaching and learning resources such as audio and video recordings, digital stories and so on
- / Implementing an Institute wide mentoring program to support staff on the ground to embed eLearning.

Project outcomes

The result is a new era in educational delivery at Sydney Institute: To date the project has resulted in:

- / Over 18,000 students studying online.
- / Users (teachers and students) using two learning management systems (Moodle and Janison), approximately 10,000 since January 2008.
- / Moodle has grown exponentially due to its ease of use and flexibility and continues to attract teachers with its new features in more recent versions.
- / 119 Sydney Institute branded and tagged wikispaces (so that we can track how these wikis are being used and build a body of knowledge on the use of collaborative learning) and 20 branded blogs in October 2008. Five active podcasting sites: Rosa Ochoa (teacher), Sydney Institute Libraries, Learning Technology Mentors and myLearning (Workforce Development Unit) podcasting blog.
- / myLearning mediaWiki: 11902 hits (19/08/08), this wiki is used extensively by the project team for collaboration on capability development program delivery. There is also a mediaWiki trial by Flexible Learning Network and Customer Support Directorate.
- / Second Life (virtual world) being used by staff and students at Enmore Design Centre, also used to showcase student work.
- / The Resource Development Kits are being utilised across the Institute with the feedback being that they have made developing and modifying existing resources easier. Managing the security of the kits has been positive through placement in libraries.
- / 12 mentors are working at each campus with up to 40 teachers each. Each mentee is required to embed a new technology with at least 20 students. This project is still ongoing and to date there has been considerable success across the Institute.
- / Adobe Connect is used by many teachers and staff. For example Hot Topic Conversations (a 1 hour professional development activity delivered each week via Adobe Connect that is also recorded and podcast for those who cannot attend). There have been 41 sessions delivered from 9/5/07 to 20/8/08. 392 staff has attended the online sessions and there have been 5553 hits on the site (to July 2008).

We now have 150 staff using Adobe Connect with the number of meetings increasing from 74 in 2007 to 147 in 2008.

Many teachers are now combining technologies, George Whitehouse, a teacher of refrigeration explains how this is enhancing delivery:

"...Within the group of 65 students, I have students residing in locations including London, Cairns, Coffs Harbour, Newcastle, Canberra, Dubbo and Melbourne. Circa fifty students reside within the metropolitan area. Our lessons are webcast live to students and recorded for later viewing for all students. All course materials and assessments are housed in a learning management system that I use in my practice."