

The case for a strategy for blended e-Learning at the University of Sussex

Executive Summary:

Sussex urgently needs a strategic, co-ordinated and properly resourced approach to the development of e-Learning and support for the use of Learning Technologies in teaching and learning.

1. Introduction: The impetus for change [see p3]

" ... we have asked ... HEFCE to bring forward plans to embed e-learning in a full and sustainable way within the next ten years" [DfES, 2003, p51].

"VLEs (*virtual learning environments*) need new investment in ICT infrastructures but less investment in buildings and new multi-skilled teams engaged in teaching activities rather than single lecturers an important barrier is the lack of strategic plans for implementing VLE programmes. There can be a group of teachers that make efforts in this field but if they are not supported by a strategic plan of the institution, the innovations probably won't last. The level of investment and the implementation strategies depend heavily on the support of university management that includes clear decision making processes (sic) ... [Barajas, 2002]

2. Why do we need a strategy for e-learning at Sussex?

1. In order to remain competitive. [see p4]
2. To meet our learning and teaching strategic aims. [see p5]
3. To meet our corporate strategic aims. [see p5]
4. Because our teaching community wants it. [see p6]
5. Because our students expect it. [see p7]
6. Because it could enhance the delivery and efficiency of in-house generic training across the institution. [see p8]
7. To protect the University's intellectual property interests in the e-learning materials it is already creating. [see p8]

3. What are we currently doing at Sussex? [see p9]

A number of TLDF funded pilot projects exploring the use of a VLE were carried out in 2002/3, several more are planned for 2003/4 and these will give us valuable feedback on the support needs for e-learning development. However we currently have only an entry level version of a one stop shop VLE package running on a developmental server - although this is just about adequate for the small number of pilot projects it needs scaling up if we are to support mainstream implementation of e-learning across the university. An evolutionary approach to developmental projects in the past (see Locke et al, 1997 and

Browne et al, 1999) did not lead to wide-scale use because they were not supported at an institutional level. Our proposals aim to rectify this situation by calling for a strategic and co-ordinated approach across the university, closely linked to the Learning and Teaching Strategy.

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A more extensive version of this report was written in August 2003, it was presented to the Senior Management Group by PVC Evelyn Welch. As a result of this PVC Evelyn Welch established a project group, led by TLDU, with the remit to develop an e-Learning Strategy for the University by June 2005.

1. Introduction: The impetus for change

In this report we describe the current situation, outline a vision of the future and make recommendations for the way forward. This report has been written collaboratively by a team of specialists in consultation with individuals representing the range of interests in e-learning across the university.

1.1 E-learning is now high on the national agenda for HE

Recently the concept of e-learning has rapidly become an established part of the fabric of higher education. It is firmly on the agenda for HEIs and already permeates the consciousness of government, academics, and institutional decision makers as evidenced by, amongst other things: the recent publication of the DfES consultation paper on e-learning 'Towards a unified e-learning strategy' [DfES, 2003]; numerous government funded initiatives to support the development and adoption of Managed Learning Environments (MLEs) and Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) in higher and further education (see Appendix 2 for further details); large numbers of well-reputed national and international conferences devoted to the subject and a growing body of literature on the research and practice of the pedagogy of e-learning. Of these the recent DfES consultation paper is probably the most urgent and significant development; it states that: "For students, e-learning offers individual empowerment with greater control over their own learning. It allows improved flexibility over the time, place and mode of study, and makes learning resources, peer and tutor group interaction, and universities themselves more accessible." and " ... we have asked ... HEFCE to bring forward plans to embed e-learning in a full and sustainable way within the next ten years" [DfES, 2003 p51].

We take e-learning to mean the integral use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) to facilitate: the delivery of teaching materials/resources (this is usually web-based); one to one and group-based asynchronous discussions (eg. email and computer-mediated communication (CMC)) and online assessment (anything from electronic submission of assessed work to automatically processed multiple choice tests or surveys).

E-learning does not necessarily imply exclusive use of ICT as the medium of teaching and learning – rather it encompasses a blend of face to face and online approaches within the context of any particular course.

We have come to a turning point with e-learning at Sussex. While there have been many excellent examples, over the past 10 years, of innovative courses using learning technologies to enhance their delivery in some way - these have essentially been experimental small scale, one-off projects. A number of different platforms have been used. They have not translated into routine or wide scale use of new technologies in the delivery of teaching and learning, on the contrary their continuation beyond the pilot project stage has in fact been problematic. We now need to take

Web-based content delivery, discussion and online assessment complemented by course management processes (eg. student use tracking) are often characterised by the term 'virtual learning environment' (VLE). This term has popularly been attached to packages which offer all of these functions in a one stop shop approach. However there is in fact a spectrum of technical solutions available ranging from the 'one stop shop' package to individual best of breed systems providing each of these functions separately.

advantage of the benefits of new technology and move these innovative approaches to teaching and learning from the domain of enthusiasts and early adopters to the majority. Our current ad-hoc approach won't scale up and there is now an urgent need to mainstream the embedding of e-learning at an institutional level. The evolutionary approach hitherto adopted is no-longer viable because it is being outstripped by external and internal developments which are creating extreme pressure on the existing tools and resources. Why? Where has this pressure come from?

2. Why do we need a strategy for e-learning at Sussex?

2.1 In order to remain competitive:

We are already significantly behind the other 1994 Group Universities in this area and the gap is increasing rapidly. Virtually all of the 1994 Group have in place considerably more sophisticated approaches to e-learning than Sussex [see Appendix 1]:

- Several '94 Group have articulated a strategic approach to the development and support of e-learning in the form of an e-Learning Strategy document linked with their Teaching and Learning Strategy. (see especially Warwick!) – *although mentioned in our Teaching & Learning Strategy we have no separate explicit strategy for the development of e-learning at Sussex*
- All '94 Group have at least one and in some cases several VLE software systems – *we have a limited licence - entry level VLE package available in developmental project mode only*
- All but one '94 Group have an identifiable 'Learning Technology' support group/team/centre employing on average 4.5 dedicated professional 'learning technologists' – *we have no such identifiable team with a strategic remit or responsibility for university-wide e-learning support; there are no formal communication structures or coordination in this area between key departments (i.e. TLDU; the Library; C&IT; Sussex Direct; Accessibility Advisors etc).*

In addition our nearest local competitors; Surrey, Kent and Southampton are considerably further ahead in this field than Sussex.

A growing number of Universities see e-learning as a means to support flexible access to teaching and learning as a key factor in enhancing their competitive advantage in an increasingly active market place. This is reflected in the fact that most universities have put in place (and advertise its existence on their website) a technical infrastructure and specialist learning technologies group to promote and facilitate the use of e-learning tools at an institutional level. The VLE facility often features in the landscape of their web presence advertising their 'virtual architecture' in much the same way pictures of their physical buildings feature in their printed prospectus. Several universities have formalised their plans in the drawing up of an e-learning strategy document as an integral component of their institutional Teaching and Learning Strategy [Condrón, 2003; Holyfield & Smart, 2001; Visser, 2001].

2.2 To meet our Learning and Teaching Strategic aims

Blending e-learning technologies with traditional teaching and learning methods can directly support several of the aims and objectives set out in our Learning & Teaching Strategy especially with respect to retention and widening access:

L&T strategy: Innovation and Development objectives	Means by which e-learning can support this objective
3.1.3 To improve the University's ability to recruit and retain capable students from a wider variety of backgrounds who will benefit from the programmes Sussex offers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides time- and geographically- flexible access to course materials
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitates student-centred course design
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports diverse range of learning styles
3.1.5 To improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our delivery of teaching, learning and assessment particularly through:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensures more coherent course design
Making more positive use of large group teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre & post lecture mass information delivery (lecture notes) Supports large scale discussion fora
Increasing the diversity of teaching, learning and assessment methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports self paced-learning Supports collaborative learning Supports self-assessment
Reducing the assessment burden on students (and faculty), but increasing its effectiveness by improving the quality of feedback to students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports automated methods of assessment & feedback <ul style="list-style-type: none"> formative eg. Quizzes Summative eg. Multi-choice; short answer papers
Better exploiting electronic and digital resources and virtual learning environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of embedded links to library resources Direct access to WWW materials Potential for collaboration with wider HE community
5.1.9 To ensure that all students receive appropriate academic support to develop independent learning skills, especially at Level 1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports self paced-learning Supports collaborative learning Supports self-assessment

We miss a invaluable opportunity if we don't take advantage of the situations in which it can be effectively employed to help us achieve our strategic aims.

2.3 To meet our Corporate Strategic aims:

E-learning could contribute to the attainment of corporate strategy in a number of areas. With specific reference to the University Corporate Strategy Document of 2001:

Student recruitment

'Part-time: we will build on the success of the Centre for Continuing Education with increased provision in new patterns of degree-level work, to attract diverse groups of high-calibre students'.

- The flexibility offered by e-Learning materials and services is particularly attractive in this context.

'Postgraduate: programme design driven by market research and increased collaboration with employers will lead to increases in activity especially in continuing professional development, supported by excellent remote communications.....Facilities for post-graduate students will be enhanced'.

- Off-campus access to learning materials and remote communication with lecturers will be invaluable for mature students studying part-time with job commitments
- Support for independent, self-paced learning will be attractive for post-graduates

Learning and teaching Support:

.... 'A web-based managed learning environment will be developed, with the Library and Computing Service services playing a major role'.

- A natural extension to an MLE is the development of a VLE extending web-based access to learning materials, group discussions and assessment

The student experience

Educational and social facilities: ...'The development of a managed learning environment will enhance the educational experience of our students'.

- This will raise their expectations in terms of access to learning technologies in general

2.4 Because our teaching community wants it:

There is a groundswell of demand from our own academics to provide them with the tools and support to integrate e-learning in their courses that outstrips our current provision. There is evidence from the increasing numbers of TLDF bids that are focussing on using online methods in the delivery of teaching, learning and assessment that academics are increasingly aware of the potential benefits of online methods for information delivery, discussion and assessment.

Vincent Quinn English Lecturer:

"Given the economic need to move away from small-group teaching and towards lecture-delivery, I would be sorry if the university didn't see that new technologies offer ways of enhancing, rather than replacing, traditional teaching methods. Having come to the subject from a position of ignorance and scepticism, I'm now very excited by the possibilities offered by a VLE; however I wouldn't have been able to reach this position if I hadn't had guidance. That's why I think it would be a mistake to confine web resources to people who already have the enthusiasm and the know-how to use them. In fact, the sooner the university invests in this area, the better - not just so that people like me have new ways of building our courses, but also so that the faculty as a whole can keep pace with the expectations and expertise of an increasingly literate student population. And anyway, aren't we supposed to be giving them transferable skills?"

A prime driver here is the need to find ways to maintain the quality of the student learning experience here at Sussex, while dealing with substantial increases in student numbers on some courses as a direct result of the reorganisation. (eg. English, Psychology).

Dan Wright: Convenor of Taught Postgraduate Programme in Psychology

" With increases in postgraduate student numbers and their diversity in previous methods training, it is clear that postgraduate methods teaching must embrace new technologies to ensure all students have access to the appropriate material. This is particularly important now that the ESRC have provided detailed guidelines about the minimum provision. It appears that other research councils will follow the ESRC's lead.

Against this backdrop, a VLE like WebCT can provide many valuable facets. These include tracking students use, having weekly "quizzes" to allow students to make sure that they have learned the main points from the lectures, discussion groups for exercises, and the usual access to web pages (many of which were produced during a TLDF grant in 2002-2003 for psychology, and many will be created for the other social sciences during a TLDF grant for 2003-2004 to John Holmwood and Lesley McMillan). In addition, postgraduate statistics training is weak in the UK in social science. A VLE has the capabilities to allow some sharing of resources across universities. This should led to clear efficiencies. Further, we (Dan Wright & Rose Luckin) have a grant proposal under review that would allow Sussex to act as a hub for this training.

There are several ways to use blended teaching methods, combining traditional approaches with virtual learning environments. Web CT is one VLE program. While arguments can be made for particular packages, it is important for my teaching to have some VLE facility provided swiftly and properly supported and funded so that Sussex does not get left behind."

Many academics across the university already recognise the value to students of making their lecture notes and handouts available on the web. In the absence of a VLE many individuals have taken a pragmatic approach and made such materials available on their own personal web servers or departmental web-pages. While laudable as a pragmatic solution there are a number of problems with this ad hoc approach including:

- from the students point of view the lack of consistency and predictability of urls
- lack of support for staff and students
- the web pages are open to the world
- complementary facilities such as conferencing and online assessment are not available
- it's not linked into to any course management system

Having heard of the VLE pilot project several people have approached us keen to put their materials in an officially sanctioned structured environment.

2.5 Because our students expect it:

For certain groups of students, notably part-time mature students accessing continuing professional development – flexible access to learning as made possible by ICT technologies is a core expectation and there is a danger that we will lose them to local competitors who provide that if we do not. We already have three pilot projects exploring the potential use of new technologies for supporting flexible learning in CCE, USIE and Social Work. It is also pertinent to note here that their recent Periodic Review shows that CCE contributes 20% of the total student body (in student numbers not FTEs).

Because of the way new information and communication technologies now permeate social and leisure activities it is reasonable to assume that an online dimension to their learning experience will be a basic expectation and comparator of school leavers when choosing degree courses in the next decade.

Students coming to us from FE institutions are very likely to have already had experience of using VLEs because of the heavy JISC investment in this sector.

Nick Goldberg Education Officer Student's Union (2002/3)

"students are increasingly holistic in their approach to using ICTs - for example they may access our web-pages from an Internet Cafe, a campus PC or their own (or a friend's) desktop PC ... and we already routinely inform them of our events via SMS text messages direct to their mobile phones. Student are very aware of the need for these skills just to survive in the competitive job-market when they graduate and that goes for graduates in all subjects. They are expecting opportunities to develop ICT skills regardless of their subject area and are frustrated by assumptions about their background experience.

Graduates will increasingly need to be competent and comfortable working and learning in an online environment. If we don't provide access to this experience and develop these skills for all our students then we fail to prepare them adequately for working in the modern world.

2.6 Because it could enhance the delivery and efficiency of in-house generic training across the institution.

As an institution we now have a legal obligation to provide basic Health and Safety training for all staff and in the future for all students. The Health and Safety department are currently exploring the use of WebCT as a means to deal with this increased training requirement and are planning to trial it for induction with all new staff. E-Learning offers the opportunity for training to be delivered at any time and in the staff members' work place. The course management facility in a VLE allows a learner's progress through the resources to be tracked - a discussion area can also be used to provide direct contact with H&S experts to answer questions without them having to leave their desk.

Computing Service User Support staff are exploring WebCT as a means to provide online generic software training for staff and students. An online course would be available any time and allow users to dip in as and when they need to; work at their own pace and select the specific tasks they wanted rather than all those which necessarily have to be covered in a face to face session. Lessons can be interactive - allowing time out for practising skills on the live package and include self-assessment tests/quizzes so the learner can build their confidence by regular feedback on their progress.

2.7 To protect the University's intellectual property interests in the e-learning materials it is already creating.

As the interest in the creation and use of e-learning materials grows across the University, so does the need to manage those learning materials as an increasingly significant and valuable University asset. Delivering such materials via the Internet raises issues relating to their security and integrity with respect to copyright and intellectual property issues. A virtual learning environment, such as WebCT, is a secure environment which can only be accessed by University staff and students with the necessary access entitlements. Such access entitlements can be derived and managed from the central staff and student record systems. If such a secure environment is not provided for and managed centrally, there is a real danger that e-learning materials will be made available in an insecure fashion - potentially compromising the University's

intellectual property rights and those of any third parties whose materials are being legitimately used in the course of University teaching.

3. What are we currently doing at Sussex?

3.1 VLE Pilot projects:

The setting up of the MLE project Sussex Direct provided an appropriate context within which the VLE initiative could launch six pilot projects in 2002/3, using WebCT which had been identified in a previous evaluation phase. Wrapped around each of these projects is a substantial programme of evaluation, involving one-to-one conversations with both staff and students, focus groups and a detailed questionnaire and a report on the results will be produced in due course. The pilot courses were carefully chosen to maximise the amount of information that can be extrapolated across the University. Six further pilot projects funded by TLDF will run in 2003/4.

Pilot projects using WebCT 2002/3

2002/3	Course	Cohort details	Tutor/contact	Value to Sussex	T&L Strategy
Innovator	Introduction to Coastal Processes	Spring? 3 rd yr? u/g	Uwe Dornbusch	Wide availability and access to suite of Images	3.1.5.iv
Early Adopters	Introduction to GIS Geography SG	Spring 2 nd yr u/g	Tom Browne	Bridges arts and science	3.1.5.ii 3.1.5.iv
	Educational Prof. Doctorate, USIE	p/g ongoing course in CPD	John Pryor / Barbara Crossouard	Part time blended learning for graduates engaged in CPD	3.1.5.iv
Early Majority	IT and Society CCE	Autumn 1 st yr u/g p/t	Kate O'Riordan	Part time campus based teaching u/g. Embedding with all-Unit perspective	3.1.3
	Approaches to English English SG	Summer 1 st year u/g	Vicky Lebeau	Campus based teaching - arts u/g.	3.1.5.i
	Introduction to Physics Physics SG	Spring 1 st yr u/g	Ed Copeland	applied science u/g. Use third party e-pack	3.1.5.ii 3.1.5.iv
	Data Handling BIOLS	Autumn / Spring 1 st yr u/g	Ben Adams	Assessment of range of competencies	3.1.5.iii
	Developmental Biology BIOLS	Summer 1 st yr u/g	Chris Ford	Assessment of range of competencies (**Check**)	3.1.5.iii

Pilot projects using WebCT VLE 2003/4

Early Adopters	MSc in Social Research Methods [Hums, SocCul]	p/g All 3 terms	Lesley McMillan / John Holmwood	Improving competitive edge - assisting recruitment, esp. from overseas, by making all modules available online, enabling students to work part residential/part distance	3.1.3
	Social Policy and Social Work [Sussex Institute]	Placement students	Sue Orton / Cath Holmstrom	Working with numerous external agencies Use by students on practice placement Raise skills base in Department with little previous experience	3.1.5.iv
	Library	4 1st or 2nd level pilots	Benn Wynne	Information Literacy - efficiently locating resources and being discerning in use	3.1.5.iv
	Design of Machines [SciTech]	3rd yr u/g	Richard Stobart / Peter Childs	Transform current lecture delivery by developing problem and resource-based approach to learning	3.1.5.ii

Early Majority	English courses - many [Hums]	most u/g and some p/g	Vicky Lebeau / Vincent Quinn	Develop suite of 'model' tutorials Develop an image suite evaluate asynchronous discussion to complement context of f2f seminars raise skills base in Department with little previous awareness	3.1.5.i 3.1.5.iv
	Dev. Psychology (LifeSci)	2nd yr u/g	Alison Pike / Robin Banerjee	assistance in large group teaching formative multiple choice quizzes	3.1.5.i 3.1.5.iii
	Health and Safety [MIS]	All staff	Clive Parkinson	Health and Safety Induction - complementary use with traditional training programme	3.1.5.i
	Legal Method, Law in Context [Sussex Institute]	1st yr u/g	Charlotte Skeet	Formative assessment, with feedback, to assist in exam revision Assistance in large group teaching	3.1.5.i 3.1.5.iii
	ECDL Computing Service	Staff	Sandy Radford / Jason Bailey	Complementary training environment for European Driving Licence (ECDL)	3.1.5.i

3.2 Current Software and Hardware for e-learning at Sussex

We currently have only an **entry level edition** of the proprietary VLE package WebCT Campus, which is running on a developmental server. The license permits a maximum of only 3000 student-courses and standard **routine links with campus-wide services** such as LDAP user-authentication, library reading lists etc are **not supported** by this edition – this means for example cumbersome manual procedures for registration of tutors and students. A recent JISC/UCISA survey show that the market leaders in VLEs are Blackboard and WebCT; WebCT has the largest market share in pre-91 HE, although it comes second to Blackboard for HE overall.

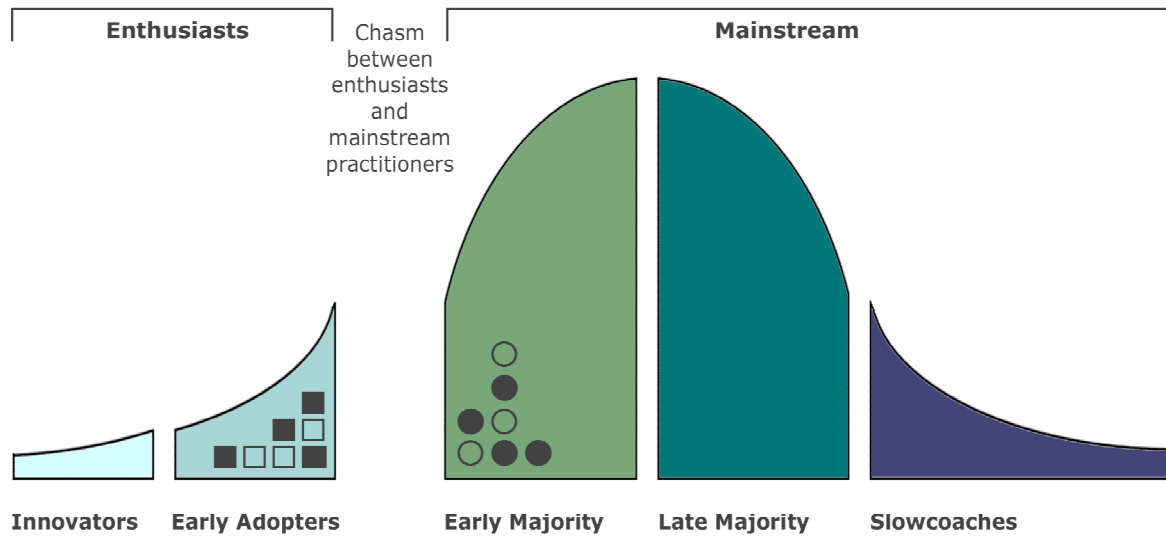
In order to develop web-based learning materials lecturers need access to web-authoring tools; at the moment Computing Service make three such tools available: Arachnaphillia, FrontPage and DreamWeaver however all of these are currently designated '**unsupported**'. While enthusiasts are willing to spend time and energy grappling with a new package and developing skills on their own, the majority of lecturers do not have the time or the inclination to become technical experts - they rightly see themselves as subject specialists not web-developers. A better approach may be to provide a tailored content management system for course developers – such a system could provide templates for commonly used pages and a simpler means of constructing pages from a collective set of pre-defined sub-page elements. Such systems are now available, both commercially and open source, which produce output ready for direct import into WebCT (as well as other VLE packages) and these should be urgently reviewed.

3.3 E-learning skills in our Teaching Community

As a result of the evolutionary approach outlined above our academic community is a very heterogeneous population when it comes to the knowledge, skills and experience associated with online approaches to teaching and learning. The skills required include both technical skills (eg. in creating web-pages) and awareness of the pedagogy of online learning and new teaching techniques (eg. how to set up and moderate asynchronous group discussions). Our teaching community encompasses individuals at several points along the various learning curves including:

- A small number of **innovators** with considerable expertise and experience in using e-learning (eg. COGS and BIOLS)
- some **early adopters** with initial experience of using WebCT on pilot projects who are now in a more informed position but still relatively inexperienced
- those who have not yet begun at all and who represent the **larger majority** needing comprehensive support in order to develop the new skills required to enter into this field

Technology Adoption Life Cycle (adapted from Moore, 1999)



Examples of these categories at Sussex

Innovators	Early Adopters	Early Majority
<p>Rose Luckin</p> <p>Teaches educational technology</p> <p>Intrigued by any fundamental advance</p> <p>Pursues new technology</p> <p>Explores new working practice</p>	<p>Peter Childs</p> <p>Teaches engineering</p> <p>Skilled technology user</p> <p>Looks for technology to change the way they teach</p> <p>Needs little support, willing to experiment</p>	<p>Vicky Lebeau</p> <p>Teaches English</p> <p>Competent but unconfident use of technology</p> <p>Wants specific evidence of potential use in teaching</p> <p>Looks for technology to help support current way of teaching</p>

Sample Projects

Early Adopters

- Social Policy and Social Work [Sussex Institute]
- Information Literacy [Library]
- Design of Machines [SciTech]
- MSc in Social Research Methods [Hums, SocCul]

Early Majority

- Approaches to English [Hums]
- Developmental Psychology [LifeSci]
- Legal Method, Law in Context [Sussex Institute]
- Health & Safety [MIS]

Moore, G 1991 argues that there is a wide chasm between the early adopters of new technology and the early majority. This chasm is evident in very different goals, expectations and support needs of the two groups. Early adopters are prepared to experiment with new technologies and look for ways in which technology can **change how they do what they do**. The early majority on the otherhand seek reassurance from their peers regarding reliability, and reinforcement as to the benefits - that **new technology will help them to do what they already do better or more efficiently**. Because of this the early majority are not swayed by references from early adopters. This has implications for the nature and level of support provided which must be scaled up and formalised to meet the needs of the larger majority of academics.

3.4 Pedagogic and Technical Support

There are a number of individuals currently supporting the development of learning technology within the university, however, these professionals are not formally constituted as a team. They are spread across a number of units and have no formal communication channels or organised means for planning in this area. The authors of this report have come together through a consensual awareness of the urgency for a planned and strategic approach to the future development of e-learning at Sussex and because there is currently no other formally constituted group which has a strategic remit or responsibility for university-wide development of e-learning.

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Sussex people who have been consulted in the writing of this report:

In addition to conversations with our colleagues in: TLDU, Computing Service and the Library we have discussed various aspects of the proposals in this report with the following:

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APPENDIX 1: Survey of Educational Technology provision at other 1994-Group Universities.

The survey was carried out in May 2003 – the information was gained by visiting the main web-site of each university and following links from there or searching on 'Educational Technology' to locate the specific web-pages of the relevant support unit for this area.

University	Educational Technology responsibility of:	Department is located in	Staff	VLE?
Bath	Centre for the Development of New Technologies	Division of Access and Continuing Studies	6	Blackboard
Birkbeck	Learning Technology Team	Central Computing Services?	4	WebCT
Durham	Learning Technologies Team	IT Services	4	DUO (inhouse)
East Anglia	Learning Technology Group	Joint initiative of: Library & Centre for Staff and Educational Development	4	Blackboard
Essex	Online Learning Group	Teaching Services Unit (but located near computing Service)	3	WebCT
Exeter	Learning and Teaching Support Centre (LaTIS)	Set up by grant from central University resources	?/20	WebCT
Goldsmiths	Centre for Excellence in Learning Technologies	Information Services	4	Non-specified but lots of Mac based web authoring resources
Lancaster	Learning Technology Group	Centre for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching	4	Lotus Notes and Lotus Domino
LSE	Centre for Learning Technology	Joint initiative by: Learning and Teaching Development Office, Library and IT Services	5	WebCT
Reading	Centre for Development of Teaching and Learning	Registrar's Division	3	Blackboard
Royal Holloway	Educational Development Centre	Physically located in Library	3/6	Non-specified
St Andrews	IT Services	IT Services	?	WebCT & Blackboard
Surrey	CLD (Learning technology)	Centre for Learning Development	6	Lotus Learning space
UMIST	Web & e-Learning Team	Information Services Department	8	WebCT
Warwick	Educational Technology	Centre for Academic Practice	5	Inhouse?
	eLab	IT Services	?	
York	No information			

Appendix 2: National Initiatives in e-learning.

JISC

In the UK, the Joint Information Systems Council (JISC) has been particularly influential in driving much of the debate and in taking innumerable initiatives with regard to VLEs (see: <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/mle>). Its remit is to support 'further and higher education by providing strategic guidance, advice and opportunities to use Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to support teaching, learning, research and administration.' JISC is funded by all the UK post-16 and higher education funding councils.

They have also funded a wide range of projects and sponsor many workshops and conferences throughout HE and FE. They have produced a considerable volume of literature; (note in particular the package of 22 briefing papers at: http://www.jisc.ac.uk/index.cfm?name=mle_briefingpack). Guidance given covers e.g. choosing a VLE, standards, pedagogic, organisational, technical, legal, copyright, security, accessibility and staff issues, targeted at senior University manager and practitioners. Recently, they have established a national service, one component of which (<http://www.learninfonet.ac.uk/>) 'collates and analyses existing knowledge and experience in managed and virtual learning environments and provides a forum to increase awareness about how new technologies can assist learning and teaching.' Much of this work is in collaboration with the subject-specialist LTSNs ([Learning and Teaching Support Network \(LTSN\)](#)).

But VLEs are just a particular and current focus; the role of the JISC is much broader. With regard to embedding learning technologies institutionally, note in particular:

What role can information and communications technology play in your learning and teaching? http://www.jisc.ac.uk/index.cfm?name=topic_landt 'inform the process of embedding learning technologies, assist in developing institutional structures, culture and expertise and to encourage cross boundary collaboration and groupings'

Learning Technology Career Development Scoping Study

<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/careers>

The study investigated the roles, skills and activities of learning technology staff in the UK and the impact of learning technologies are having on institutions.

Embedding Learning and Teaching Institutionally <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/elti>

'There is growing recognition that Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has a considerable amount to offer as a tool to support many areas of learning and teaching from its administration, through to face-to-face or remote delivery. Possibilities include: providing access to a wealth of resources, assisting in self-paced learning and assessment; and bringing groups together virtually to promote discussion – all in an environment that can potentially overcome the traditional boundaries of time and physical location or ability.'

Current preoccupations include identifying the most appropriate relationship between a VLE and other components of an MLE and linking them together (esp.

MIS and Libraries) and sponsoring research into identifying the pedagogic benefits of eLearning in general.

From March 2004, the JISC Learning and Teaching Committee (of which Tom Browne is a member) are embarking upon an ambitious 3-year 'e-Learning and Pedagogy' programme (see: http://www.jisc.ac.uk/index.cfm?name=elearning_pedagogy).

The overarching aim is to identify how e-learning approaches might be used to facilitate learning and to advise on how these approaches might be effectively implemented and to ensure that e-learning as practised in UK post-16 sector is "pedagogically sound, learner-focused and accessible

Becta

Becta <http://www.becta.org.uk/> is another organisation that is active in this field. Focussing primarily on schools, colleges and Lifelong Learning, it has produced some invaluable evidence on use of VLEs and C&IT education in general for a community of users, many of whom will of course become our students. Noted (quote ref) Internet now all -pervasive. Reached high level of acceptability with general public. Web used more at home than in School. Survey in 1999 & 2002. 60 schools in England. Out of school = informal learning. Supports leisure. Home use biggest discriminator in confidence of use at school. Web has low learning curve.

Also note FERL <http://ferl.becta.org.uk/display.cfm?page=76> Ferl is 'an information service for all staff working within the Post Compulsory Education sector. It aims to support individuals and organisations in making effective use of ILT (Information Learning Technologies). Ferl does this through a web based information service, conferences, publications and other events. Ferl is funded by the Learning and Skills Council and managed by [Becta](#).'

See 'Intranet or VLE' <http://ferl.becta.org.uk/display.cfm?page=249C>