

EDUCATION AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE BOARD

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Originating Committee/Name: E-Learning Team
Title: Kent Union and UCU Surveys: An Action Plan for the E-Learning Team
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Purpose of Paper: For information
Executive Summary: A short update highlighting work undertaken by the E-Learning Team in response to feedback received in both the Kent Union and UCU surveys. It includes an action plan for the E-Learning team to focus their activities at the beginning of the Spring term.
Recommendation/Action (if any): None - for information

Kent Union and UCU Surveys: An Action Plan for the E-Learning Team Education and Student Experience Board

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This short paper forms a written update submitted to the Education and Student Experience Board and highlights work undertaken by the E-Learning Team in response to feedback received in both the Kent Union and UCU surveys.

In response to the Kent Union survey, the E-Learning Team produced an action plan (attached) to focus their activities at the beginning of the spring term. The bulk of the work undertaken so far has been to further support academic colleagues in the use and application of digital technologies in teaching. The highly successful [Digitally Enhanced Education](#) module in Moodle has been updated to include new resources that specifically address issues highlighted in the student feedback; namely the creation of smaller and more interactive video resources and enhanced guidance on expected behaviours online.

In addition to this, the team have launched the Digitally Enhanced Education [webinar series](#); a set of webinars delivered by academic colleagues at Kent showcasing practice that has developed over the autumn term. The launch of the webinars was in direct response to the need to showcase and disseminate interesting practice and, to date, there have been over four hundred virtual attendees in total.

Resources have been made available to support staff in using hardware, such as microphones and webcams. Students have noted some concerns around sound quality in teaching resources and so a series of simple guides have been produced to highlight important steps to be followed in this area.

The quality of, and expectation to edit, closed captions was raised in both the Kent Union and UCU surveys respectively. In the updated resources, every effort has been made to draw a direct link between the quality of recorded audio and the quality of the resulting caption transcription. Nevertheless, work is currently being undertaken to explore innovative ways to crowdsource the editing of captions within the student cohort, perhaps in exchange for Employability Points.

Related to captions, the accessibility of learning resources was highlighted as an area of concern in the Kent Union survey. As a result, the E-Learning Team have worked closely with Student Support and Wellbeing to provide additional support in the creation of accessible resources and more informed use of tools such as Blackboard Ally in Moodle.

The team continue to work closely with Information Services to provide enhanced support for Microsoft 365 tools such as Teams. New resources have been created to support the use of breakout rooms and further drop-in sessions will be run throughout the spring term. Information Services have introduced a staff-managed laptop project (P1548) - it is hoped this will provide staff with enhanced access to the technology required to deliver teaching remotely.

Kent Union Student Survey: An Action Plan for the E-Learning Team

	Recommendation	What we're currently doing	What we can do better
1	Collect and disseminate guidance and examples of best practice to staff on facilitating interactivity, participation and student engagement in online teaching delivery.	<p>The Digitally Enhanced Education (DEE) course was set up for staff in the summer; all staff are enrolled. The material is arranged in bite-sized chunks, separated by theme, topic or technology, with options to take things further.</p> <p>Although the discussion forum in the module has been lively with staff exchanging initial concerns and ideas, the module is largely static.</p> <p>The E-Learning Team introduced the Digitally Enhanced Education (DEE) webinar series in November, with over 140 people participating in the inaugural session. Speakers from around the University shared practice and discussed how they're engaging students online. Subsequent sessions are planned for December, February and April.</p> <p>In addition to the above, we've regularly updated our blog and co-delivered drop-in sessions with Information Services.</p>	<p>Despite excellent engagement with both the DEE course and webinars, we need to increase our reach to academic colleagues and GTAs.</p> <p>There are a number of easy steps to increase our reach, including working more closely with the Directors of Education to help promote such activities and to ensure that our activities are addressing the needs of the Schools.</p> <p>In addition to this, we will work more closely with the Graduate and Researcher College to ensure that GTAs are aware of, and have access to, these activities.</p> <p>The DEE course could be used to encourage academic staff to informally share their practice and to further promote the webinars.</p> <p>The KU survey indicates a variance of practice <i>within</i> Schools and so the learning technologists will work with their Divisions to encourage and foster more localised sharing of practice (e.g. by creating Divisional teams and Divisional spaces within the DEE course).</p> <p>Lastly, we're keen to showcase practice from outside of Kent and intend to utilise guest speakers in the webinar series. The team blog will be used to informally highlight good practice elsewhere and should be promoted more widely to staff.</p>
2	Establish clearer guidance and more standardised expectations for staff and students on the behaviours to adopt in online teaching sessions (i.e. use of cameras and microphones)	This recommendation is broadly covered by two elements; in the technical guidance within the DEE course and in the <i>netiquette</i> section of the Online Learning at Kent course .	<p>There is work to be done in this area and it would appear that the various elements of our guidance are too scattered and needs be specifically drawn together.</p> <p>For academic staff, there needs to be a singular resource offering clearer guidance on elements such as webcam positioning, microphone</p>

		<p>Advice and guidance on microphone choice and positioning is included in our KentPlayer training and documentation for academic staff.</p>	<p>use and the use of the physical space. Ideally, this would be a video-based resource in which common pitfalls could be actively demonstrated (thereby highlighting <i>bad</i> practice).</p> <p>For students, with the assistance of KU, there needs to be an enhanced set of guidance around <i>netiquette</i> and expectations when engaging with online teaching sessions. There would be added traction if such a resource was co-delivered with KU.</p>
3	<p>Encourage greater use of short, regular breaks during online teaching sessions.</p>	<p>The E-Learning Team and Information Services ran a series of <i>Teaching with Teams</i> sessions throughout August and September. These live sessions were backed up by our Teaching with Microsoft 365 online training course.</p>	<p>Much of our guidance focusses on the creation of asynchronous teaching materials (such as pre-recorded video) and any guidance on synchronous teaching tends to focus on the technical requirements, rather than practical tips on cadence, pace and the like.</p> <p>The School of Physical Sciences delivered a presentation at the first DEE webinar which specifically made reference to the timing and delivery style of synchronous online sessions. It would be useful to showcase this practice more widely in the DEE course, perhaps alongside a list of practical recommendations for staff to follow.</p> <p>Overall, there needs to be more resources on the practicalities of what synchronous online delivery looks like and how it differs from traditional face-to-face teaching.</p>
4	<p>Greater consideration of accessibility needs and Inclusive Learning Plans when delivery online learning opportunities (including ensuring sessions are recorded for students if required, and improve use and quality of captioning).</p>	<p>There are a range of dedicated resources in the DEE course addressing digital accessibility, in particular, the use of Blackboard Ally for creating accessible resources.</p> <p>In addition to this, we produced a practical guide introducing closed-captions in KentPlayer, which were introduced for all KentPlayer recordings in September 2020.</p> <p>Notwithstanding, both the Kent Digital Accessibility Working Group (KDAWG) and the OPERA project have worked closely with academic Schools to promote best practice</p>	<p>Digital accessibility needs to be an embedded practice at Kent and despite the introduction of tools such as Blackboard Ally and automated captioning, there is a risk that in the move to online delivery, accessibility is considered as an afterthought.</p> <p>The third DEE webinar specifically addresses Technology for Accessibility and this session will focus primarily on embedding accessible practice and mainstreaming accessibility.</p> <p>The comments surrounding caption quality are being addressed by two ongoing factors; a) we have worked closely with Panopto to address some initial quality problems – this has greatly improved the accuracy of captions across all recordings, b) notwithstanding this work, transcription quality is heavily determined by the quality of the recorded audio and so any</p>

		<p>around digital accessibility. In the summer, the University hosted a conference on digital accessibility, with guest speakers from inside and outside the University.</p>	<p>good practice promoted in this area (recommendation 2) will have a positive impact on the overall caption quality.</p> <p>There still remains the question relating to the <i>correction</i> of automatically-generated captions and where this responsibility lies. The Moodle and Learning Technologies Group (MaLT) is currently looking at options around this area and is keen to explore innovative approaches, such as having students correct captions in return for Employability Points, for example.</p> <p>Lastly, recent improvements to Blackboard Ally's reporting functionality have enabled richer School-level accessibility reports to be generated, meaning that the E-Learning Team and Student Support and Wellbeing can adopt a more targeted approach and work with Schools more closely.</p>
5	<p>Increase the use of drop-in hours, ensuring students are able to easily and promptly contact their lecturers or supervisors for support.</p>	<p>Virtual drop-in hours have been actively promoted in the DEE course and by the learning technologists in their interactions with their Schools and Divisions.</p> <p>Microsoft Teams has been widely promoted as an appropriate tool through which to host such drop-in hours.</p>	<p>Whilst the technology to <i>host</i> such drop-in hours is available, it has not been made clear how to <i>manage</i> and <i>administer</i> such bookings effectively. Recently, the E-Learning Team and Information Services have been jointly promoting the newly introduced Microsoft Bookings app. This app can be used to define availability slots which can then automatically be added to a user's calendar, thereby making the process of scheduling and managing virtual office hours or drop-in sessions much easier.</p> <p>Some academic staff may still be unaware of this functionality and so promotion through the DEE course, alongside examples of how it can be used, would be beneficial ahead of the spring term.</p>
6 & 7	<p>Ensure lecture release times are more consistent and consider timetabling the release of asynchronous content, to ensure students can receive learning materials in advance with plenty of time to prepare for seminars, workshop, labs, etc.</p> <p>Ensure links to online teaching sessions (MS Teams/Zoom) are more clearly and easily accessible,</p>	<p>Whilst the E-Learning Team are not responsible for the creation of the teaching timetable and the scheduling of events, they have consistently promoted good practice relating to the timeliness of teaching materials, largely through the DEE course and through interactions with the Schools and Divisions.</p> <p>Academic staff have been encouraged to release teaching materials at least a week in advance of any synchronous sessions so that students are able to fully prepare for their</p>	<p>Academic Schools need to take a responsibility for ensuring that their staff make teaching materials available in good time. The E-Learning Team can mirror this guidance in their support materials and can reinforce this message through the DEE course and in subsequent sessions.</p> <p>In addition to this, and as discussed previously, the School of Physical Sciences delivered a presentation at the first DEE webinar which specifically made reference to the timed release of teaching materials. It would be useful to showcase this practice more widely in the DEE course, perhaps alongside a list of practical recommendations for staff to follow.</p>

	in a standardised location for all online teaching (i.e. module pages on Moodle).	<p>sessions and so that individual needs and learning styles can be catered for.</p> <p>Alongside this, the E-Learning Team produced specific guidance on communicating and sharing links to teaching sessions with their Teaching with Microsoft 365 online training course.</p>	<p>More work needs to be done to ensure that a consistent approach is adopted when communicating and sharing links to teaching sessions as it is clear that academic staff still find this problematic.</p> <p>It would be sensible for the E-Learning Team to produce some dedicated guidance around this.</p>
8	Ensure pre-recorded lecture content is broken down into shorter videos and uploaded instead of hour plus long recordings.	<p>This is a practice that has been widely promoted throughout the DEE course, the DEE webinars and in interactions with academic Schools and Divisions.</p> <p>In the recent DEE webinar, good practice in this area was highlighted and the practicalities of creating such resources was demonstrated in the subsequent breakout session.</p>	<p>Whilst there are pockets of excellent practice in this area, the majority of pre-recorded material is lengthy and based around a 'traditional' lecture structure.</p> <p>The E-Learning Team will build on existing good practice and will produce dedicated guidance to support academic staff in this area ahead of the spring term, however, there needs to be the support of the academic Schools and Divisions to advance this practice.</p> <p>Alongside this, in readiness for the spring term, it is proposed that an informal peer-review process is set up enabling colleagues in Schools to informally review and comment on each other's' practice.</p>
9	Improve quality of pre-recorded lecture content by ensuring lecturers have access to adequate video and audio recording equipment.	<p>In addition to guidance on creating and sharing pre-recorded lecture content, the E-Learning Team produced a list of minimum specifications to support this.</p>	<p>Whilst some of these issues can be addressed in line with recommendations 2 and 4 by providing enhanced and practical guidance on microphone and camera techniques, there is an underlying concern that some academic still do not have sufficient access to appropriate technologies.</p> <p>Whilst the E-Learning Team have produced a list of minimum technical specifications, there is no guidance on what academic colleagues should do if they do not meet the minimum specifications.</p> <p>Ahead of the spring term, the E-Learning Team, backed up by the results of this survey, will encourage academic staff to review the appropriateness of their equipment, however, the University needs to consider how it responds to staff whose equipment is deemed inadequate. There are interesting examples from other institutions where equipment in teaching spaces is being repurposed and loaned to academic colleagues.</p>

10	<p>Consider the recording of seminars (where appropriate) to ensure students are not disadvantaged if their internet connection is bad, or if they are unable to attend because of tech issues.</p>	<p>The E-Learning Team have produced guidance on recording and sharing teaching sessions. Much of this guidance is surfaced in the DEE course, on the team's website and in interactions with the academic Schools and Divisions.</p>	<p>There are two clear areas of concern relating to the recording of seminars. Firstly, there are technical considerations relating to the practicalities of simultaneously recording and live-streaming content, and secondly, there are ethical considerations relating to the capture of student dialogue and input.</p> <p>Regarding the former, the E-Learning Team have set up a working group with Information Services with the specific intention of supporting dual/blended delivery. This group has already begun to make practical recommendations to support staff and, ahead of the spring term, reconfigure a subset of teaching spaces at both Canterbury and Medway to better facilitate the delivery of seminars.</p> <p>For the latter, the E-Learning Team are in the process of highlighting good practice for handling the ethical considerations of seminar recordings, including the use of short summary videos for those unable to attend.</p> <p>More broadly, the KentPlayer user agreement will need to be reviewed in that it specifically addresses the recording of <i>lectures</i> and not seminars. The E-Learning Manager is currently undertaking this work.</p>
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