

TELC18D001 / TELC18A001



Title: Online Training Provision for PGR

Author: Florence Dujardin (CSED), Jean McNeil (LDC), Matthew Sillence (HUM), Simon Watts (SSF)

Date: 21 August 2018

Circulation: Technology Enhanced Learning Committee

Status: Open

Issue

To report on the key priorities for postgraduate research online training across the University and inform the development on this work.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to consider this report and respond to four recommendations concerning staff training, best practice sharing, software and hardware support and policy development for staff CPD and practice.

Resource implications

Considerable work has been already been done through existing staff resource and investment in site-wide or localized licences for e-learning platforms, and the University media server. However, to encourage more academic colleagues to develop and run online training for postgraduate research students will involve creating time for staff training and development, as well as work to recognize non-standard practices, such as teaching outside core working hours.

Risk implications

Risk issues relate to:

- a) inability to deliver personal and professional development to a diverse and distributed PGR community, impacting on the quality of research degree experience
- b) potential loss of staff time through duplicated online content relevant to many PGRs
- c) inability to provide a robust training provision at distance severely limits the development of distance research degree programmes and
- d) the University may lose a share of the national and international market for distance learning

Equality and diversity

The most significant issue concerns equality of access to high quality training provision for PGRs unable to attend campus-based activities during core teaching hours.

Discussion

Over the last three years, the University's Personal and Professional Development (PPD) programmes have undergone significant change with the introduction of live (synchronous), online classrooms led by Faculty training coordinators using two platforms: Electa Live (<https://www.e-lecta.com/Default.asp>) and Blackboard Collaborate (<https://www.blackboard.com/online-collaborative-learning/blackboard-collaborate.html>). At the same time, we have witnessed the creation of more multimedia resources aimed at postgraduate research students and staff (asynchronous) to support Faculty inductions and continuing professional development.

In the wider higher education sector, online training for postgraduate research students has emerged as an option for institutions seeking large-scale training deployment, where market leaders such as Epigeum (<https://www.epigeum.com/>) provide high-quality, self-directed learning experiences. Developed in collaboration with academics, such platforms are often research-informed and thoroughly tested, but often lack the specificity of resources designed for our own students' needs, and the requirements of our doctoral training partnerships. They are also very expensive.

The Faculties of Social Science and the Arts and Humanities have both developed synchronous and asynchronous training in recent years, and are exploring the creation of distance postgraduate research degrees. A workshop was held on 30 May 2018 with three presentations on recent online training initiatives and experiences of running webinars. A cross-Faculty discussion was held to explore the priorities for the development of our own online training.

This paper provides a summary of those priorities and recommendations for the Technology Enhanced Learning Committee.

Priorities

1. To develop academic staff interest and capability in creating and managing online content and sessions for postgraduate researchers
2. To contribute to an experienced-based learning and e-pedagogy, identifying potential issues and examples of best practice and asynchronous resources
3. To ensure that there is a campus-wide standard of access and IT support for e-learning platforms and equipment
4. To establish and promote a baseline of audio-visual quality to ensure accessibility for all staff and students (e.g. closed captioning, high-quality audio)
5. To develop time allocations to encourage academic staff to take up teaching online and to deliver it
6. To identify and secure revenue streams to incentivize online training and development

Recommendations

1. To work with CSED to develop training sessions for staff members about how the technology works and how to employ it in teaching at PGR level
2. Create events for sharing techniques and practices on PGR training online via CSED or CTEL

3. TELC to make a recommendation to ISD to support E-lecta on application catalogue so that it can be used as an alternative to Blackboard Collaborate where required
4. TELC to advise on and inform policy development for:
 - a. teaching workloads
 - b. encouraging CPD and scholarship
 - c. the impact of teaching activity outside core working hours
 - d. remuneration and promotions criteria

Support from TELC on these recommendations will be invaluable. It may be that issues that are raised in this paper have also emerged in discussions concerning the development of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and on continuing professional development (CPD). Rather than individual Faculties exploring these issues separately, a unified approach to a common set of expectations around the quality and accessibility of online training would be productive.

Such an approach could improve the inclusivity of our postgraduate research degree offer and allow the University to build on its reputation for excellence in class-based teaching by expanding into online training activities and resources.