

LTC13D061

Title: Evaluation of Online Marking Pilot
Author: Ben Petley (ISD) & Adam Longcroft (ADTP)
Date: 14 May 2014
Circulation: LTC members
Version: Final Report
Status: Open

Issue

The report attached is a summative evaluation of the Online Marking pilot that took place between Nov 2014 and Feb 2014. This was the second pilot. The first took place in the spring semester 2012/13. The two pilots have been important in designing and testing the required elements of an institutional online marking solution. Both pilots have involved a limited number of modules, staff and students, and in both markers utilised different tools and approaches to providing feedback to their students. The summative report contains a number of recommendations and is contained in Section A of the LTC Agenda, whilst the detailed quantitative and qualitative data (e.g. qualitative feedback from staff and students) is contained on the LTC webpages. Both sets of information – the summative report and the detailed accompanying data – were considered by TPPG on 1 May 2014.

Recommendations

Members of LTC are asked to consider the summative report on the Online Marking Pilot contained in Section A and to discuss the recommendations contained therein.

Resource Implications

ISD have indicated that to carry out the further developmental work to implement online marking across the University could involve a significant additional investment. This needs to be measured or balanced against the costs of investing in an 'off-the-shelf' solution. For example, Blackboard have recently announced the release of an enhanced online marking facility. Before approving further investment in an in-house solution, LTC may wish to request that ISD (via ISD Education Board) carry-out a detailed evaluation of two or three widely-utilised 'off-the-shelf' solutions (in the same way that ISD recently facilitated an evaluation of video-streaming solutions like e-Stream/Helix). LTC may also wish to consider whether the University should invest in the provision of mobile devices (e.g. tablets/iPads) for staff to facilitate anywhere/anytime online marking. In order for appropriate levels of staff training and one-to-one support to be provided, there will be a need for additional investment in learning technologists in ISD. In the evaluative report attached Ben identifies the need for 1 additional Learning Technologist post, but in reality the level of support required to manage an institution-wide roll-out will probably require a minimum of 2 dedicated Learning Technologists.

Risk Implications

There is considerable risk involved in developing an online marking solution – the solution needs to be both cost-efficient and highly effective in terms of supporting a wide variety of marking and feedback strategies (e.g. it needs to allow for offline and online marking, annotation of scripts, video feedback clips, audio feedback clips etc). Risks are therefore focused around 'value for money' and 'functionality' – with the emphasis, in particular on the student experience. There is a real risk that our investment has little or no positive impact on either the quality, timeliness or effectiveness of feedback, or on positive student perceptions of (and satisfaction with) assessment and feedback at UEA. The pilot demonstrated that markers found the inline system user-friendly and some believed that it helped to enhance the

feedback they provided, but there was negligible impact on students' perceptions. The latter needs to be addressed in any institutional online marking 'solution'. The development of an appropriate solution is the No.1 priority of the incoming Academic Director for Learning and Teaching Enhancement and there are many potential benefits to be gained, in terms of enhancing student feedback and student perceptions of assessment, if the solution is sufficiently flexible, robust and student-focused.

Equality and Diversity

It is not envisaged that the development of an institutional online marking system or solution will have a negative impact on any protected groups – indeed, the facility to access feedback and marks online should have a positive impact on students, who currently have to physically retrieve or collect their feedback from the HUBs or from their Module tutors.

Timing of decisions

Ideally the University needs to have settled-upon an institutional online marking solution by July in order for necessary developmental work to be carried out in time for marking in the autumn term 2014.

Further Information

Additional information on the Online Marking pilots is available from ISD. Contact Ben Petley on 01603 59 3662. Or e mail Ben at: B.Petley@uea.ac.uk

Background

The provision of an Online marking and feedback facility at UEA has been identified as part of the wider institutional strategy to address weak NSS scores on 'Assessment & Feedback' in previous years. Online marking has the potential to make life much easier for students by removing the need to physically 'collect' feedback, and can have a significant qualitative impact on the perceived 'quality' of feedback by utilising PDF annotation tools, comment banks and video/audio feedback. The facility for staff to carry-out marking 'anytime, anywhere', and the removal of the need for staff to collect and physically return marked scripts also means that marking may be conducted more quickly, with potential gains in terms of prompt release of marks and feedback.

Discussion

Discussion may profitably be focused on:

- 1) The reasons why the pilot seemed to have a very limited positive impact on student perceptions.
- 2) Whether the limited impact on students should dissuade us from pursuing online marking and feedback as a key institutional 'goal'
- 3) The reasons why the pilot was so much more positively received by staff who engaged with it.
- 4) The merits of pursuing an in-house solution vs an 'off-the-shelf' solution from a major technology provider such as Blackboard.
- 5) Investment of additional resources in equipment (e.g. tablets/iPads) and Learning Technologists.
- 6) Immediate next steps – inc evaluation of 'off-the-shelf' solutions.