Developing and delivering online courses for students at distance

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Background

- eLanguages – eLearning research and development unit in Modern Languages, University of Southampton
- Create online resources and online courses
- Explore web 2.0 technologies for language teaching and learning
- Make toolkits in EAP and Study Skills (commercial)
- Create open web-hosted resources: Prepare for Success
Our tools and technologies for online course creation

- Platform: customised Moodle for online distance learning
- Communication: email; discussion forums; chat room; web 2.0 tools (social walls; web-hosted video and audio recordings)
- Pre-prepared content: activity-based Learning Objects (LOs); podcasts, videos, links
- LOC authoring tool for teachers for content creation
- Assessment: assignment tasks and templates; Word comment /track changes function for tutor feedback; Moodle quizzes (formative tests)
Case study 1: Online Pre-sessional Course

- A blended Pre-sessional Course in EAP - 5 weeks online and pre-arrival (followed by 11 weeks f2f at University of Southampton)
- With focus on academic writing and reading; study skills, vocabulary and grammar review/development
- Online, tutored and assessed
- In 2013 - 105 students
Course Learning Design

Week 1

Course orientation

Weeks 1-5

Tutor-facilitated Discussion Forum activities

Tutor: students or student: student chat sessions

Academic writing

Reading and critical thinking

Grammar

Vocabulary

Study skills

Weekly writing or reading assignment

Weekly grammar and vocabulary review test

Learning activities

Tutor marked or reviewed tasks

Online course completion

Progression to face-to-face Presessional Course
Tutor’s role

- Different from a face-to-face tutor
- Guiding students through course (introduce and explain course elements; highlight key functions / requirements; motivate and encourage participation; announce events / deadlines)
- Discussion activities (asynchronous); weekly chat sessions (synchronous)
- Linking LO content and assignments through discussion
- Monitoring student participation and recording grades
- Providing feedback on assignments
Student comments

- The course showed me a lot of basic knowledge of the language, and taught me the study skills to improve my learning ability.

- This course is very useful to me. I developed writing and reading skills by weekly study and assignment. And if I have some problem I can chat with my classmate.

- I gain knowledge about writing, reading and studying skills which are useful for my main course. Moreover, I went over grammar and vocabulary through a weekly test. That's helping me avoid doing mistakes.

- I think (an) online course is a good way to prepare the international students before arrival in the UK. This course made me confident to communicate with many people and I made friends.
Student comments about the tutoring

- *(The) teacher gave us many appropriate suggestions, and his feedback helped us to recognize and solve our problem more easily.*

- *(Tutor) taught us with great patience, whenever we had any kind of questions.*

- *(The teacher) gave us very good studying directions and suggestions and the learning course materials are pretty useful to me, which let my English abilities get a great improvement.*

- *In addition, I can practice by doing assignments and review (the) tutor's feedback.*
Case study 2: Get Ready for Southampton

- Online course focusing on acculturation - practical aspects of living in Britain + preparation for study at the University + UK academic culture and study skills
- Not tutored or assessed (in 2012 – 2100 students)
- Study pace and length of use decided by individual student
- **Broad focus:** Automated course invitation, sign up process and account creation through a single entry point
- Self-access *learning content with feedback* (activity-based LOs)
- Community-building/personal contact through Social Wall and other social software
Welcome to Get Ready for Southampton, a free online course that is designed to introduce international students to living and studying in the UK and at the University of Southampton. Whether you have a confirmed place at the University, are awaiting an offer or are just interested in finding out more about studying at a UK university, this course will help you.

Already created your account? Log in below:

Username: 
Password: 

Login

Forgotten your username or password?
Topic 2: Arriving at the University of Southampton

In this topic you can find out about the University of Southampton and aspects of daily life on campus.

- About the University of Southampton
- Finding your way around campus
- A place to live
- Money matters
- Dealing with the change in culture
- The University's structure and your subject area
- Student social life

Topic 3: Academic culture in the UK

In this topic you can explore aspects of British academic culture which may be different for you.

- Understanding course assignments
- Ways of being taught on your course
- Differences in university study
- Managing your course work
- Academic writing at university
- Studying independently
- Listening to lectures
Social Walls

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Pinterest

Social Walls
(virtual cork boards)
Student use of social wall vs. discussion forum

- **Social wall**
  - introducing self and greeting others
  - exchanging contact details (email, facebook, MSN, QQ, weibo etc) for ‘off course’ communication

- **Discussion forum**
  - questions and answers - e.g. travel or visa arrangements
  - seeking other students - same course of study, same home country, to travel with, to share a house
Student comments

- *I was surprised by the size of the site. It really helps you to prepare for every dimension of living and studying in Southampton. Well done!!*

- *... it's helpful and informative especially for those who are coming to the UK for the first time. It gives a whole picture of what university life is like in Southampton.*

- *It helps International students on what to expect when they plan to study in the UK.*

- *Get ready for Southampton has been an eye opener to me. I hope if provided an opportunity to study there, the hints about Southampton which I have acquired will simplify my stay within and outside the lecture room.*

- *I found it very useful and reassuring and give me self confidence and sense of ease*
Summary of overall approach to design

- embrace a range of established and new technologies
- relatively low-tech to ensure ease of student access
- practical development approach involving repurposing of content
- flexible tutoring model; varied roles
- low cost delivery and maintenance
- model offering scalability (small to large size cohorts)


Thank you

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