



Supporting a Research Culture with Blackboard

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1. ABSTRACT

With the implementation of Blackboard as a teaching support tool in the institute, teaching staff have taken the opportunity to use the tool to support their research programme. The use of a Blackboard™ course as a place for researchers to pool knowledge and resources has been valuable when they are not co-located, find it difficult to communicate due to conflicting teaching timetables, and are researching in related topic areas.

Keywords

Blackboard, research support

2. PURPOSE

Blackboard is an e-learning software platform installed in the institute in early 2003 to provide support for on-line learning. For students who attend classes, it enables communication with classmates both individually, as sub-groups, and with teachers. Students can download material supplied by the teacher wherever and whenever they can access the Internet. Our teaching staff have taken the opportunity to adapt a Blackboard ‘course’ to support their research programme so that these benefits are available for the emergent researcher group. Communication amongst the group is hampered by conflicting timetables and geographic distance. We work in related research areas and this web-based tool has proved very useful in enabling us to pool knowledge and resources.

3. PROCESS

In 2000, the institute introduced into the faculty a Bachelor of Information Technology and in 2003, a Bachelor of Business Studies, making research outputs a necessity. One strategy to support the emergent researchers has been to pool knowledge in a web-based resource centre implemented as a

Blackboard course. All researchers have supervisor access and site content is developed by the researchers for the researchers. Researchers use the site to store their own research and resources, which are then available to other members of the group. The site contains research support material such as web links to journals, conferences, funding agencies, libraries, theses, books, examples of good practice and copies of published works. It also provides a place for researchers to declare their research interests and to discuss research ideas.

As the site has grown, the benefits have become apparent. The site requires minimal system and content administration by any one staff member. Researchers have a visible place to store their resources encouraging collaboration across the faculty. Evidence of a ‘research culture’ is visible within the faculty, and emergent researchers are provided with a ready source of peer-reviewed material suitable for both IT and IS research studies.