

Blended Delivery: A Model for Foundation Level Computing

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Abstract

In 2005, the Universal College of Learning (UCOL) launched the delivery of the National Certificate in Computing Level 2 through distance/blended resource based delivery. Students numbers in the first year grew to around 700 followed by a similar pattern in year two.

Different enrolment package options were offered to students including the option of a loan computer and internet access for the duration of the programme. The programme is 26 weeks, part time and run off campus with optional face to face support run from each UCOL campus – PN, Wanganui, Masterton, and Levin. Each campus also ran compulsory face to face observation assessment sessions. 2006 saw the addition of the National Certificate in Computing Level 3 and May 2007 launched the National Certificate in Computing Level 4.

This poster will outline the delivery model used for the successful implementation of these programmes along with current and future challenges.

1 Overview

The aim of the programme is to reach regionally based learners who otherwise may not engage in face-to-face on-campus tertiary education. New fixed cohort dates for each level start every two months, with students being able to enrol and collect resources within one month of each start date – providing a flexible enrolment and resource collection period. Three enrolment packages are available: the first to loan a PC for the duration of the programme along with internet access and workbooks, the second with internet access and workbooks only, and the third with workbooks only. Each intake has shown an even split between those who loan a PC and those that do not. Engagement in the programme is encouragingly sitting around an average of 56%.

2 Learning Support

Learning support is offered in three modes, phone, email and face to face. Two full time learning support tutors are available on the phones from 8-.30 – 6.30pm, Monday to Friday. Five other lecturing staff teaching on other programmes from within the team are responsible for the majority of the marking load. Face to face support is available on the PN campus utilising the Free & Easy class times. This same model was also used in Wanganui, Masterton & Levin until the closure of Free & Easy at these sites at the beginning of 2007. Upon enrolment, resources are collected by each student who can begin their learning, guided by a course map with an associated individualised assessment schedule. Lecturing staff are very flexible

with these assessment due dates. Tracking of engagement is carefully planned with each cohort having a schedule for contact with both engaging and non-engaging students. Attendance at a UCOL facility in order to undertake observation assessments is also a requirement of each programme. This can also provide support staff with a mechanism to monitor progression and achievement during the course of the programme.

3 Administration Support

With the programme being run from multiple sites, support and coordination from numerous departments on each campus has been essential. Staff in the library on the PN and Masterton campus issue the PC's, with Information centre staff in Wanganui taking on this role. Student resource and information centres issue workbooks and ID cards. Academic registry ensure each student is enrolled in the correct cohort for each intake. Each student is also offered computer support via the computer support assistant in the PN library where they can get help for any technical issues they may be having. With a large amount of storage being required to store the PC's and monitors, an additional space has been provided for this. This space is also used to image and re-image returned PC's. Careful tracking of the return of PC's also takes up a large amount of administration time. Each NCC student can also access the normal range of student support services available to all other students including but not limited to, additional learning support, health services, disability support and personal education planners.

4 Challenges and the Future

2007 has seen challenges in maintaining adequate levels of learning support with the closures of Free & Easy sites at all UCOL campuses except Palmerston North. New ways of offering learning support have had to be implemented and negotiated with each campus site including building partnerships with external agencies for rural areas such as the Dannevirke Rural Education Activities Programme (REAP). Ideas for future improvements include the introduction of induction and specific subject tutorial sessions, with an aim to increasing engagement and success.