

Oxford Brookes University

Sharing knowledge, applying expertise

The University

Ranked as the “best modern” university in the UK for ten consecutive years, Oxford Brookes is an international institution with a local focus. It is the only modern university in the UK to have achieved 24 subjects rated as excellent for teaching and hosts two national centres of excellence in teaching and learning.

Oxford Brookes enjoys a leading reputation for employability and considers its community and environment to be key priorities. The University, which attracts over 18,000 students, is committed to research excellence and to the development of partnership working with national and global organisations.

Background and context

A tutor on the Postgraduate Certificate of Teaching in Higher Education, Greg Benfield joined the Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development (OCSLD) at Oxford Brookes University in January, 2001. As an e-learning advocate, his work focuses on the development of e-learning initiatives within the University and throughout the sector.

Through his involvement with the JISC e-Learning programme, Greg has made a significant contribution to a number of JISC e-Learning initiatives, including:

- The ‘Learner Experiences of e-Learning’ theme of the JISC e-Learning programme, which funded a total of 10 projects from 2005 to 2009, which explored learners’ perceptions of and participation in technology-enhanced learning in a digital age
- The JISC publications ‘In Their Own Words’ and ‘Responding to Learners’, which synthesised outcomes from the research programme, outlined above
- Support to the development and delivery of a series of national workshops centred on the development and understanding of learner experiences of e-learning

Participating in the e-Learning programme has confirmed Greg’s belief that ‘institutional e-learning policies should be influenced by learners’ experiences’.

Within this case study, Greg highlights the way in which resources available through the JISC e-Learning programme have provided invaluable support to the development of a wide range of initiatives which have, subsequently, made a significant impact upon sector-wide teaching and learning, personal development plus the implementation of institutional objectives.

‘The JISC e-Learning programme, especially the Learner Experiences of e-Learning research, has been surprisingly influential in shaping Oxford Brookes’ learning and teaching policy. It provided us with the evidence base that led us to adopt digital and information literacy as one of the university’s five graduate attributes’ **Greg Benfield, Tutor on the Postgraduate Certificate of Teaching in Higher Education, Oxford Brookes University.**

Making the most of resources from the JISC e-Learning programme

The examples outlined, below, demonstrate the varied contexts in which the e-Learning programme resources have been utilised effectively both at Oxford Brookes University and across the education sector.

1. Making an impact on staff development

The development of Course Design Intensives (CDIs) by Greg and his colleagues at OCSLD has supported the development of the critical staff skills required to deliver blended learning effectively within institutions throughout the sector. The two-day workshops have been designed specifically for teams within institutions which require support to develop blended learning or distance learning courses, either as new programmes or to convert existing courses.

Since December 2003, these courses have been delivered at a number of universities, including Oxford Brookes, Brighton and Leicester. The workshops and supporting materials have incorporated a number of the JISC e-Learning programme resources such as the Effective Practice Planner¹, a framework which can be used to support practitioners in the design (and appropriate use) of technology.

2. Making an impact on teaching and learning

The JISC e-Learning programme resources have enabled Greg to deliver the blended learning module of Oxford Brookes' Postgraduate Certificate of Teaching in Higher Education extremely effectively. For example, using a combination of the Effective Practice Planner and Effective Practice Evaluator² (provided originally in the 'Effective Practice with e-Learning' publication and on the associated CD-ROM), has enabled new academic staff to creatively plan for new-technology-enriched learning activities.

Scenarios developed for the Planning and Evaluating Effective Practice workshops³ have also played a critical role in the teaching of the Postgraduate Certificate; for example, to raise awareness of the benefits of technology-enhanced learning and to reinforce students' understanding of the application of technology to learning. The scenarios require cross-disciplinary teams to respond to a described situation and to then design an activity incorporating technology which would enhance that situation. The teams present their proposals by poster at a plenary session and receive feedback from the group. Descriptions of the scenarios can be downloaded from www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/elearningpedagogy/workshops/session3.aspx

3. Making an impact on institutional objectives

'The aims of the JISC e-Learning programme sit comfortably with our institutional culture.'

**Greg Benfield, Tutor Postgraduate Certificate of Teaching in Higher Education,
Oxford Brookes University**

The resources available through the JISC e-Learning programme have also supported a number of Oxford Brookes University's institutional aims.

Internal groups at the University which support the development of e-learning, such as EL@B (the e-Learning at Brookes special interest group), and, previously, the e-Learning forum, have benefited greatly by using the knowledge and information gained from the JISC e-Learning programme publications as a basis for discussions.

¹ www.jisc.ac.uk/resourceexchange

² www.elearning.ac.uk/effprac/html/planner_evaluator.htm

³ www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/elearningpedagogy/workshops/content.aspx

EL@B has a membership of approximately 60 Oxford Brookes University professionals, including academic staff and learning technologists and holds informal seminars and provides input into strategic development.

Findings from the JISC e-Learning programme projects and extracts from the programme's publications, such as 'Responding to Learners', 'Effective Practice with e-Learning' and 'In Their Own Words', have been presented at these meetings as a stimulus for e-learning development discussions.

The University also benefits from an evidence-based embedded institutional-wide digital literacy policy, which supports the understanding and effective promotion of the benefits of e-learning across Oxford Brookes. Consequently, all students are now expected to graduate with highly developed digital literacy skills, which will support their future learning opportunities and provide them with a competitive advantage within the employment market. The JISC e-Learning programme has played a vital role in shaping Oxford Brookes' policy through funding relevant projects and by reinforcing and refining e-learning thinking within the University.

The value of the JISC e-Learning programme

Greg acknowledges the value of his involvement with the e-Learning programme. Through his knowledge and experience he is able to promote the valuable work undertaken by the programme, enhance his personal practice and support institutional developments in technology-enhanced learning at Oxford Brookes University.

Links

Information about the Course Design Intensives

<https://mw.brookes.ac.uk/display/CDIs/Home;jsessionid=6B2464EA7143A130750B159C42136544>

JISC Effective Practice Planner

<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/programmes/elearningpedagogy/planner.doc>

JISC Effective Practice Evaluator

<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/programmes/elearningpedagogy/evaluator.doc>

Planning and evaluating Effective Practice workshops. Session 3: Designing learning contexts in a technology-rich context. Ten scenarios

http://www.jisc.ac.uk/uploaded_documents/Scenarios.doc

Responding to Learners (JISC, 2009)

www.jisc.ac.uk/publications/programmerelated/2009/respondingtoplearners

Effective Practice with e-Learning (JISC, 2004)

www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/publications/effectivepracticeelearning.pdf

In Their Own Words (JISC, 2007)

<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/intheirownwords>

Effective Practice in a Digital Age (JISC, 2009)

<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/practice>