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# Communique

## About the Learning Commons

### INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW LEARNING COMMONS

*Situated on the Ground Floor of the University Library, the Learning Commons provides students with support services and state-of-the-art facilities*

## The Learning Commons: Open for business

The new Learning Commons marks the end of a long period of effort and planning. Building work on the Commons began in November 2007 and was finished in March this year. Designed to meet student needs, the Learning Commons offers the latest facilities for both private study and collaborative learning.

The Commons facilities are available for the full range of Library opening hours. The Commons is open 8.30 AM to 9.00 PM Monday to Thursday and 8.30 AM to 5.00 PM on Fridays. On most weekends, the Commons operates from 1.00 PM to 5.00 PM. During these hours, students can

consult with support personnel. These include learning and careers advisors, counsellors, librarians and IT specialists. Visit the Service Desk near the Library entrance if you need assistance.

Students have access to purpose-built learning spaces. These include a dedicated training lab, media rooms, a podcasting studio, study rooms and classrooms for problem-based learning (PBL).

In the Commons, students can use computer workstations with Word, Excel, PowerPoint, SPSS and high-speed Internet. There is also recording equipment, scanners, printers, copiers and microfilm/microfiche readers.



### Power to the people

Most Learning Commons computers use Vista, not Windows XP. The decision to switch to Vista was taken because this OS offers a powerful range of tools. Making the switch now means that students will be comfortable with Vista by graduation, giving them the workplace edge.

▶ READ ON TO DISCOVER THE RESOURCES AND PEOPLE AVAILABLE IN THE LEARNING COMMONS: THE NEW LEARNING HUB FOR STAFF AND STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND.

# IT Service Desk in the Commons

The IT Service Desk staff in the Learning Commons assist members of the UNE community with their IT problems. The Service Desk team has five staff members, who deal with queries from across the UNE community, distance students as well as students and staff on campus.

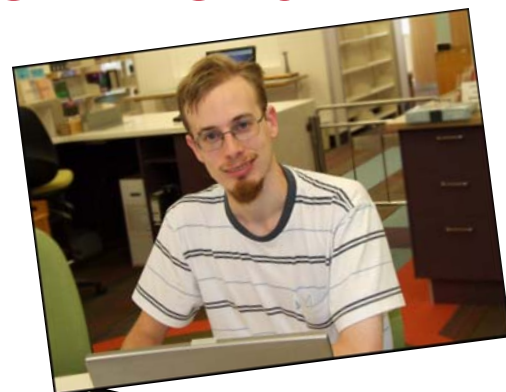
This year sees a number of changes to IT systems at UNE. Many of these changes are expected to have an impact on demand for the IT Service Desk. For the first time all UNE students must have a computer and Internet access. In addition, many students will be using the e-submission system for a wider range of assignments. In 2008, students will also have the option of submitting their assignments to the *TurnItIn* plagiarism-detection software.

Another change to the IT environment has been the

adoption of two new learning material systems. These are Blackboard CE6 and Sakai. Both systems went live at the start of the year. In the past, support for the university's learning material systems rested with the TLC. In 2008, this responsibility lies with the IT Service Desk.

In 2008, the Service Desk will extend its support hours. During term, the Service Desk will be available Monday to Thursday 8.30 AM to 7.00 PM, Friday 8.30 AM to 5.00 PM and on weekends 1.00 PM to 5.00 PM. During holidays, the Service Desk will operate Monday to Friday 8.30 AM to 5.00 PM.

***The number for the Service Desk is 02 6773 5000. You can also visit the Service Desk in the Learning Commons or email <servicedesk@une.edu.au>. See you there!***



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## ASO: Help with academic writing

The Academic Skills Office (ASO) was one of the first support services to establish a presence on the Ground Floor of the University Library. During 2007, Learning Advisors from the ASO had an office set aside for student consultations. The start of work in November put an end to this initial presence. With the completion of the Learning Commons in March, the ASO is back in the Library. There is not only a purpose-built office, but the ASO also has access to a range of study spaces and meeting rooms.

The ASO supports the learning of all students: no matter whether a student has a quick query or

needs a 30-minute consultation. Nor does it matter whether the student is in Armidale or elsewhere, as the ASO provides support to distance students by means of telephone, email, fax or videoconferencing.

In a half-hour appointment, a Learning Advisor from the ASO can help you assess your current academic strengths and weaknesses. The Advisor will get you started on the road to study success. Advisors can also give you guidance on any academic skills-related issue. By far, the most frequent request from students is for help with writing assignments. So, if you would like to improve your study skills



or the writing process (eg analysing the question, planning and structuring the answer, referencing, academic style and so on), the ASO has plenty of experience. Book a time with an ASO Learning Advisor now at <<http://www.une.edu.au/aso>>!

# Two new faces at Student Assist

Two new faces have joined the Student Assist team as part of the exciting student engagement program at UNE. The duo are Ed Campbell (right) and Meredith Duncan (below).

Ed Campbell, well known to many students through his association with TUNE-FM, has been employed as the Student Experience Liaison Officer. Ed will be working closely with First Year on-campus students to help ensure that their UNE experience is a happy and fulfilling one. His goal is to keep students connected with the right people, the right information and the appropriate support services. Ed has a blog at <http://blog.une.edu.au/studentexperience/>.

Meredith Duncan is the new Programs Officer for distance students. Her blog is at <http://blog.une.edu.au/deassist/>. Meredith is developing ways to keep students informed and participating in the university experience, particularly in the online environment.

Ed and Meredith will be using the Student Assist space in the Learning Commons throughout the year, meeting students and offering assistance. Ed has also been known to wander the Learning Commons, handing out lollypops!



# Careers Advisors

Thinking about your post-university career? Looking for the right employer? Airlie Bell and Julia Perryman, the Careers Advisors from Student Assist, can help. Airlie and Julia will be in the Commons at specific times during the April Residential School. During these times they will be available for appointments and drop-in sessions. For more details, see the *distance assistance @ UNE* blog <http://blog.une.edu.au/deassist/>. Appointments can be made by ringing the Student Assist Office 02 6773 2897, emailing [careers.service@une.edu.au](mailto:careers.service@une.edu.au) or by dropping in to Student Assist (near the Newsagency) when on campus.



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## Computer Talk

There is a new way to ask IT questions, raise issues or share tips on anything computing: Computer Talk. Computer Talk is an online forum provided for UNE staff and students by the IT Service Desk. Personnel from the

Service Desk will participate in the forum, providing information and advice on computer problems. To access the forum, visit <http://www.une.edu.au/it-services/> and login using your UNE username/password.



# myAssist + myLibrary

In March, two components were added to myUNE portal: myAssist and myLibrary. These provide students with online access to many of the support services based in the Learning Commons. In time, myAssist and myLibrary will form part of a virtual Commons.

Using myAssist, students can ask for IT support or arrange a meeting with an academic advisor. They can also explore the wide variety of services available to local and distance students, through links to the Web sites of ITD, Student Assist and the Academic Skills Office.

Future plans for myAssist include a podcast library. This library will gather together the range of podcasts produced by student support services at UNE. In addition, myAssist

will include a collection of handouts and fact sheets in Adobe Acrobat (PDF) format.

At present, myLibrary hosts quick search tools and links to the Library site. These have proved very popular with students, but are only the beginning. In the next few weeks, the Library will deploy a purpose-built online booking system. This system will allow students to book places in workshops and study spaces in the Learning Commons. This system will allow distance students to pre-book workshops and rooms before Residential Schools.

myLibrary also contains links to two online training packages of special interest to students. The first of these is the link to eSKILLS UNE, an award-winning guide to information

literacy. eSKILLS UNE is designed for undergraduate students and has been adopted by universities as far away as Spain. myLibrary also has a link to eSKILLS Plus, the online information literacy program for postgraduates. eSKILLS Plus provide postgraduates with a range of research and career-related skills.



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## On the air in the Commons

Ever wanted to record your own audio? The facilities to do this are now available in the Learning Commons. The Commons includes a small recording studio (Media 1) with a high-quality microphone and hardware/software for recording. For the time being, you can book the studio by calling extn 2458 (off-campus 02 6773 2458) or visiting the Service Desk in the Commons. When the new booking system database is running in a few weeks, you will be able to book online through myLibrary (part of myUNE).

Once you have recorded your audio, you need to post it on the Web so everyone can listen.

Fortunately, there are a number of options. Free hosting services include GCast <<http://www.gcast.com/>>, Ourmedia <<http://www.ourmedia.org/>> and Podbean <<http://www.podbean.com/>>.

There are many other online services, some of which charge a small fee.

Why delay your rise to multimedia stardom? Head down to the Learning Commons and get started!

