

Principles of Online Teaching at UNE

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THIS POLICY IS CURRENTLY UNDER REVIEW AND THE STATEMENT OF ONLINE TEACHING OPTIONS IS EXPECTED TO BECOME REDUNDANT FROM 2008.

This paper is intended to consolidate previous discussion documents that relate to the development of online teaching and learning at UNE. It summarises the key principles that should underpin the UNE approach to online teaching, and inform online teaching development at UNE. All relevant previous documents are appended.

UNE must give serious consideration to committing resources to the achievement of an online presence for all UNE units (minimum presence to include unit information online, resource links, and bulletin board availability [online supported]). The disadvantages associated with this approach can be minimised if this is implemented within a realistic time frame, giving due consideration to provision of adequate support and resources and harnessing the interest and commitment of staff and Faculties. Development of online courses and units (at a basic level) would be prioritised to support the online development of units and courses in strategically important areas, those subject areas where working in an online environment is central to the subject or teaching, and supporting committed online teachers in further developing online teaching.

In order to be sustainable such an approach would prioritise the online development of distance education subjects above online development of internal units but consideration should be given to encouraging the development of online units for use with combined distance education and internal groups.

Online Options

This paper summarises three options for online teaching development, characterised by different levels and types of use of various online tools, and different mixes of media (ie print, online, face-to-face).

Option 1: Online Support

The online environment is used to provide additional support for units and students, providing essential information to students about the unit and links to key resources. This option makes use of simple features of the web environment for information provision and some communication. It is intended to enable students and staff to acquire expertise in technology use and to develop online teaching and learning skills. Distance students continue to receive print resources, and online provision is supplementary to traditional distance resources. It is not envisaged that much active

teaching would occur in this option, rather it provides a UNE presence online and provides students with access to essential information, and key contacts and resources. Bulletin board would be available for voluntary use by students and may be used by staff for communication of non-essential information. The library's electronic reference library, online data base access and proposed e-reserve would be included.

Option 2: Enhanced Online

The online environment is used to enhance the unit through the inclusion and use of communications tools such as bulletin boards and chat and links to resources. Two categories of enhancement may be used to represent different uses that may be made of these tools. The first would see interaction used informally to assist student learning, the second would involve more formal, structured interaction and learning tasks.

a) In this approach distance students receive essential information and resources in print form, and learning is enhanced through active use of communications tools, integration of online resources and tools, and up-dating of key information and content as necessary.

b) Advanced

Units taught in this approach combine print and online resources, according to the benefits that each offers to learners and the appropriateness of the medium for achieving desired outcomes. This may include a print reader, or textbook, and/or a partial print study guide. The content pathways in *WebCT* are used to provide a structured learning environment for students, with notes and learning tasks including online quizzes and other forms of online assessment

Option 3: Fully Online

In this option all aspects of the unit or course would be delivered online. All interactions would occur online, there would be learning tasks designed specifically for the online environment and significant use of online resources and tools. Online is the only medium in which teaching occurs- while this may take a range of forms, all content and learning activities are delivered via the web (or alternate electronic medium). Online access is essential for learning in these units or courses.

The options described above do not distinguish between whether the approach is used for teaching on or off campus students or a combination of modes. While the options are used to describe activity within units of study they may also be used to conceptualise different approaches to online course development. The development of online courses may also include a planned blend or sequence of options for various units within that course.

These models may be considered developmental- although this is not exclusively the case. They represent more sophisticated uses of the tools available in an online environment to achieve different learning experiences for students. While it could be expected that with increased experience teaching in an online environment, a teacher would make greater and more complex use of the tools and opportunities, developing more refined teaching strategies it should be noted that different uses of the online teaching environment will be appropriate for different contexts, subjects, learning outcomes and cohorts. Consequently, it should not be expected that all online

teaching will eventually occur in the same form. Neither should it be assumed that all courses or units will be offered as fully online. However, this should be seen as an appropriate form for some courses and units.

Online Teaching Options

These apply to on-campus and distance education

	Option 1 Resource provision (Supported)	Option 2a Communication & additional resources (Enhanced)	Option 2b Online teaching & peer interactivity (Enhanced)	Option 3 Virtual classroom + Online assessment (Fully Online)
IT usage & resources	<p>Limited supplementary learning resources & communication tools provided. Unit information online.</p> <p>Homepage as an additional source of information for students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ essential unit information ▪ contacts & staff calendar ▪ content outlines ▪ chat or BB • e-mail links 	<p>Use of bulletin boards for communication, feedback & learning. Includes online activity/ discussion that function as key learning activities. The communications functions are actively used in teaching/learning.</p> <p>Homepage as an additional source of information for students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ essential unit information ▪ contacts & staff calendar ▪ content outlines ▪ chat or BB ▪ links to Internet resources, professional bodies, etc ▪ e-mail links 	<p>Teaching activities online. Topics and some assignments online.</p> <p>Some component of the unit may be completely online ie replacing face to face or aspect of study guide.</p> <p>Homepage as the source of essential information for students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ essential unit information ▪ contacts & staff calendar ▪ content outlines ▪ links to resources ▪ bulletin boards • quiz • links to tools and software 	<p>The entire unit is online. Resources as in other modes plus additional Web use, eg:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ management tools ▪ content delivery ▪ bulletin boards ▪ collaborative learning ▪ online assessment <p>Homepage as the source of essential information for students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ essential unit information ▪ contacts & staff calendar ▪ content outlines ▪ links to Internet resources ▪ e-mail links ▪ links to tools and software
Staff development	Overview session on use of Web CT	Task design for Bulletin Boards	Content pathways in WebCT Design of online learning activities	Online assessment practices Advanced design of online learning activities
Use of print	Printed Study Guide & Reader for distance learners	Printed Study Guide & Reader for distance learners	Reader only And/or Partial study guide	No print resources Reader in PDF file or CD Rom

Online teaching development at UNE should be informed by the following principles:

- Online developments will be used to enhance the attractiveness of courses to prospective students and to enhance the educational experience of students.

- The design and delivery of units with online components will emphasise interactivity among students and between students and lecturer.
- All online units will include a bulletin board to facilitate student interactions with each other and the lecturer.
- All online units will include links to key resources.
- Option 3 online developments will be reserved for units identified as strategic priorities by Faculties and these must receive endorsement by the Executive Dean.
- Academic staff developing online units will attend an introductory information session. Other information resources and workshops will be available to assist academic staff who wish to develop further expertise.
- Central support and resources for online teaching will be restricted to the use of *WebCT*.
- The Teaching and Learning Centre, DIT, the library and other relevant units will continue to streamline and refine procedures and services for supporting online teaching.

Online Teaching Development

- Online development should occur in those subject areas and units where there are clear or potential advantages for the teacher, learner and/or university.
- The capacities of online should be exploited so that units offered online use the features to offer learners opportunities and or experiences that can't be offered realistically or feasibly in existing approaches. Online teaching development be guided by acknowledgement of the capacities of the web, Web CT and exploitation of these to benefit learners, teachers and the university.
- That the university should maintain its staged approach to the development of online teaching. Continue to develop online courses that can be marketed as such and can benefit from transfer of staff learning during development.
- It is realistic to view the development of online teaching as occurring predominantly in the mode of supporting units, followed by enhanced units with a smaller number of fully online units and courses.
- The development of online teaching should be viewed as developmental. This will require the provision of resources to support staff development in the use of technology and development of teaching strategies and approaches.
- It is important to acknowledge the resource demands on developing necessary infrastructure to support online teaching- including technology and technological support, maintenance, teaching and educational development support, student support, and revised Student Centre business practices. It will be necessary to develop and monitor the administrative practices and procedures relating to the establishment and maintenance of online courses and units. Regular consultation with users will inform and refine practices.

Current systems are evolving with experience and this development of procedures should occur systematically and be on-going.

- Students must be informed whether Internet access is optional or essential.
- The gradual development of increasing numbers of online units and courses will have significant implications for the future of current print-based distance education approaches. While it may be expected that the forthcoming review of distance education will recommend changes in this area it is important that the development of online teaching is accompanied by monitoring of print development activities and associated changes in this area of distance education operation.

Processes for Approval and Quality Assurance for Online Units

These guidelines relate specifically to units which are being developed within UNE to include online components. Online development covered by the guidelines may range from units which include minimal online elements to those units which are offered in online form only, with no supplementary print materials. It is assumed that all units will have been through the normal Faculty and Academic Board approval processes. These guidelines are confined to the online aspects of units only. They cover new online units as well as the addition of online elements to existing units or the translation of existing units to online delivery.

Such guidelines are needed within UNE to ensure that online developments are being adequately planned and resourced. All units which include online elements place various demands on resources within the University, both within Faculties and within central service areas. These demands relate to the development of the unit as well as to its administration, ongoing support and maintenance. It is essential that these demands are monitored. Furthermore, Faculties and support services within the University require information about online developments to assist with their planning.

Approval Processes for the Development of Online Units

The process for approval of the development of online units is as follows:

1. The Head of School is required to approve the Application Form for Online Unit Development, which is submitted by unit developers to the Teaching and Learning Centre in order to gain access to *WebCT* at the beginning of the development process. Unit developers must obtain this approval from the Head of School before submitting the Application Form to the Teaching and Learning Centre.
2. The Head of School will apply the following criteria when granting this approval:
 - (a) Does the unit have sufficient enrolments or potential enrolments to justify the development, administrative, support and maintenance costs involved in online development?
 - (b) Will online development provide educational advantages for the students of this unit? (What online teaching and assessment strategies are being planned and how well do these relate to the objectives of the unit?)

- (c) Will online development provide marketing advantages for the unit and/or course/s in which the unit is offered?
 - (d) Is there a demand for online options within this subject area?
 - (e) Have student access issues been considered? (What proportion of students have Internet access? Have students been informed of the need for Internet access prior to enrolment?)
 - (f) Are there adequate resources available to maintain and update the unit after its initial offering?
3. Submission of the Application Form for Online Unit Development also implies agreement that the unit developer will:
 - (a) undertake at least a minimum level of staff development related to online teaching;
 - (b) provide at least a minimum level of input to the Bulletin Board/s; and
 - (c) abide by UNE's Web development guidelines.
 4. The Teaching and Learning Centre will provide regular advice to ITS about the number of units planned for online delivery and the likely impact of these developments on IT services.
 5. All unit developers may avail themselves of the online teaching support services provided by the Teaching and Learning Centre. These include workshops, Educational Developer consulting services and help facilities.

Approval Processes for the Release of Online Units to Students

The following process is required to ensure that the quality of UNE's online materials are appropriate. The process is similar to that in which Heads of School authorise the printing of print-based materials. Heads of School have an important quality assurance role in this respect. They may delegate this task to another person or group within the School with specific knowledge of online teaching.

The process for approval of the release of online units to students is as follows:

1. The Head of School is required to approve the Release Checklist which is submitted by the unit developer to the Teaching and Learning Centre in order for a unit to be activated and made ready for students to access. This occurs at the end of the development process.
2. The Head of School will apply the following criteria when approving the Release Checklist:
 - (a) Is the online material of appropriate quality for release for student access?
 - (b) Have students been notified of how they will gain access to their online materials?
 - (c) Have UNE Web guidelines been followed?
3. When existing online units are revised the Head of School shall approve the Release Checklist submitted by the unit developer.

Support for Heads of School

To assist Heads of School and other staff who carry out these approval processes, the Teaching and Learning Centre will conduct information sessions and provide written guidelines and checklists.