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Administering Initial Teacher Education in WebCT

ePioneer: Paul Thompson

Mentor: Gordon Joyes

Proposed Quick Gains:

- To develop a methodology for the efficient creation and management of online materials across the various courses in Initial Teacher Education
- To produce learning resources which could be equally accessed, but in a variety of ways, by students across PGCE, PGCCE, GTP courses

Potential contribution to School/wider University e-learning development:

A transfer to other areas of the School, and possibly throughout the University, of the methodology developed.

Outcome:

Feedback from eight PGCE Flexible students in Science and MFL, obtained during an intensive 90-minute focus group discussion in February which was funded by ePioneers, confirmed widespread user-dissatisfaction with the 'messiness' of an online course which was distributed across a range of web-spaces and required simultaneous opening of parallel browser windows. A further outcome of this seminal focus group session was a very detailed action plan for VLE development and a much clearer understanding about what we had to do to make our new web spaces presentable and acceptable to students.

Our project had turned into an inquiry into the effective management and administration of our Flexible PGCE learning platform. We took a decision to convert all of our modules into eXe during the Summer. eXe has the advantage of portability into most e-learning platforms and can sit within the WebCT structure, thereby continuing to benefit from the security of the University's official VLE support system. Funded by a grant from the TQE fund, the conversion was undertaken by Liz Johnson and Matthew Nilan during the Summer of 2007, and a new revised course was presented to all PGCE Flexible students in October 2007. In February 2008, a second 90-minute focus group evaluation session was funded by ePioneers with a small group of students. When we compared the feedback of the two groups (February 2007 and February 2008), it was clear how much progress had been made. Far less criticism was evident and students seemed much happier with their online experience.

The whole of this developmental process has also led, through discussion at the ITE committee, to the establishment of a working group dedicated to Quality Assurance in e-learning (QAEL). The group has so far met four times and has begun to establish procedures for the assurance of high standards in the production of all new and existing e-learning materials in ITE.