

THETA

The Higher Education Technology Agenda

Innovating today's learning and teaching to engage tomorrow's learners and teachers

Introduction

Swinburne University of Technology (SUT) supports staff to be innovative and experiment with new models of learning and teaching. The Learning Transformations Unit (LTU) in SUT developed the Graduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching (GCLT) to empower academic staff in this pursuit. The GCLT is an online course, designed for participants working in higher education that enhances learning by transforming teaching approaches and practices, and promotes innovation through the use of technology and design.

Create

The Carpe Diem learning design process (Salmon, 2014) has been offered to SUT's academic staff since 2011, as a two day workshop. Participants are introduced to a learning design framework that enables teams, containing content experts, library liaison officer and learning technologist, to implement collaboratively developed and technology enhanced learning design (Salmon & Wright, 2014).

While the success of the Carpe Diem learning design process workshops was cultivated at SUT, there was an awareness that across higher education institutions that the impact of professional development opportunities in new learning design and delivery was limited (Lion & Stark, 2010). A scalable effective solution to provide this learning opportunity to the broader academic community was desired. The Carpe Diem learning design process was redeveloped to create the Carpe Diem Massive Open Online Course (CD MOOC). The aims of the MOOC were to allow for large-scale dissemination of knowledge and skills by offering an engaging online experience for educators while promoting professional collaboration. The MOOC also provided the opportunity to explore whether the experience could offer a way of expanding knowledge that translates to practice for technology enhanced learning design

(Salmon, Gregory, Lokuga Dona, & Ross, in press).

The development of the CD MOOC was a collaborative process involving assistance from SUT Library staff, SUT IT staff, Blackboard's CourseSites (www.coursesite.com) and Mozilla Open Badges (www.openbadges.org), with all learning resources created in-house. The CD MOOC was offered as a six week course starting in March 2014. The 1404 participants were from all around the world, with the majority from Australia. SUT staff were invited to participate and 150 staff members, academic and non-academic, took up the opportunity.

It was recognised that MOOCs have played an influential role in creating brand awareness for Universities (Rosell-Aguilar, 2014) and that this MOOC was a global example of the learning offered by SUT. It was also recognised that there were risks associated, in creating and offering the CD MOOC (Morrison, 2013; Oremus, 2013). However, the learning and research opportunities afforded by running the CD MOOC outweighed the risks. The research findings published since the conclusion of the CD MOOC have supported the challenges undertaken (Lokuge Dona, Gregory, Salmon, & Pechenkina, 2014; Salmon et al., in press). The experience of creating the CD MOOC continues to positively impact the learning and teaching within SUT.

Connect

The professional networks that grew around the CD MOOC established a rich source of expertise. Connections were made outside SUT with learning design experts and Carpe Diem proponents, such as Alejandro Armellini (Armellini & Aiyegbayo, 2010; Armellini & Jones, 2008) and Panos Vlachopoulos (Vlachopoulou & Cowan, 2010), as well as MOOC specialists. Group participation from both Massey University, New Zealand and Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technological Education (SLIATE, 2014) strengthened institutional relationships. This professional learning network has meant future iterations of the Carpe Diem learning design process will be informed by substantial feedback and analysis of current research and practice. The CD MOOC community was connected through social media (Facebook, Google+, and Twitter), which allowed information about future professional development opportunities to be communicated.

The SUT participants in the CD MOOC were encouraged to enrol in the GCLT and offered an opportunity to receive a partial credit for their effort in the CD MOOC after an assessment in a relevant GCLT unit. The CD MOOC also raised the profile of LTU within SUT itself, showcasing skills and opportunities that that LTU could offer.

Consume

The development efforts, ideas and feedback have enabled LTU to deliver well-tested, evaluated learning resources within the GCLT, and this is where the CD MOOC is now being consumed. Feedback from CD MOOC participants was received through evaluation surveys (155 responses) and interviews (29 interviewees). Modifications, based on this feedback, have enriched the GCLT unit (EDU60014 Design and Delivery for Online Learning), reusing the components that worked well and re-designing the areas that needed strengthening.



While many graduate certificates in teaching and learning delivered in Australia are on campus and university based, SUT's online GCLT, has been open to a wider audience. The online delivery of the GCLT meant an online solution to the two day carpe diem workshop was needed; the CD MOOC was in a position to meet the needs of the GCLT. The six week CD MOOC was integrated into the GCLT unit. In applying the CD MOOC to a higher education course, a number of its features were altered. A number of resources were amended or added to, made more appropriate for a postgraduate unit and for a smaller cohort. Also, formal assessments were introduced into the unit.

The experience and knowledge gained by the LTU staff while creating and delivering the CD MOOC has been shared with other SUT staff who are considering developing their own MOOCs. One such example is the SUT's Education team's Autism MOOC planned for delivery in 2015 (Turner, 2014). SUT staff has started using some of the experiences and concepts learnt from the CD MOOC in their own learning and teaching. Ravindra Savangouder from SUT's Centre for Engineering has integrated badges into his blended online/on campus course (Savangouder, 2014).

Conclusion

The creation, connection and consumption of the CD MOOC and the GCLT have improved the support for learning and teaching within SUT. The collaborative online learning experience has empowered staff to transform not only their learning design processes but their teaching approaches and practices, thus enhancing the learning experience.

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