

## DIRECTIVES AND ACADEMICS: EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPERS, TECHNOLOGY AND THE RIGHT

### SUPPORT

This paper considers the need for various models of supporting academic teaching staff in being able to teach with a range of technologies. There are several professional development models that might support staff who could be new to teaching, new to educational technologies broadly or new to particular types of technologies. The role of the Educational Developer with technological expertise has long been considered vital to the uptake and creative use of educational technologies in learning contexts (Oliver 2005). Policy support and management directives, too, have been effective in galvanising teaching staff in the uptake of technologies, although research warns that top-heavy direction must be balanced with appropriate support for not only the development of technological competence but for the development of a solid appreciation of how students learn alongside the ability to design curriculum according to sound principles. The teaching context is complex (Fullan 2003) and technology plays only a part in the teaching and learning experience and must be underpinned with pedagogical wherewithal.

There are several themes at play in supporting academic staff to use technologies for educational purposes. Teaching staff in universities are a diverse cohort and the uptake and integration of technologies in teaching can be highly idiosyncratic (Woodley and Papadopoulos, 2009) and piecemeal. It has been noted that the uptake of technologies for administrative purposes and for the dissemination of information by teaching staff has often been more successful (Steel and Levy, 2009) than the uptake of technologies for interactive or student-generated teaching and learning activities.

At Victoria University (VU) in Melbourne, a new VU Agenda aspires to the university being known for educational programmes “that maximise opportunities for blended and e-learning”. At a Faculty level, the Faculty of Business and Law’s Strategic Plan aim echoes that of the university to “extend the use of eLearning 2.0 technologies, mobile learning technologies and other forms of multimedia content capture and delivery to enhance student-centred teaching and learning and to ensure every unit has a minimum online presence”. In part as a response to increased student expectations about how and when they learn, the Faculty of Business and Law resolved that, from 2012, all units will be automatically recorded electronically using Lectopia with an opt out clause to be justified on a case-by-case basis in conjunction with the appropriate Head of School. In the School of Nursing and Midwifery in the Faculty of Health, Engineering and Science,

the school was contemplating a move to electronic submission and marking of all written assessment in an effort to improve quality processes as well as feedback to students on their work. To achieve this shift, teaching staff in the school were supported to trial the use of Turnitin's Grademark function with all assessment in second and third year nursing units except for clinical placement units. Based on majority of staff support and overwhelming student support for this trail, the use of Grademark is now mandatory in Nursing and Midwifery.

The introduction of any new technology or function, such as mandatory Lectopia use or the use of Grademark, cannot be regarded as discrete aspects of the curriculum. Recorded lectures, in particular, should impact of the rest of the curriculum although previous studies in other universities show that most staff who recorded lectures did not change anything about their unit of study (Gosper, et al, 2008) though they may change their behaviour in lectures.

In this discussion, we distinguish between technologies that are university-supported – such as PebblePad, Blackboard, Blackboard Collaborate, LibGuides, Turnitin, Lectopia – and Web 2.0 cloud applications that are publicly available. Our focus is a general examination of what support is available to staff using university-supported technologies for teaching. We use two different examples from different faculties where academic staff have needed to comply with Faculty or School directives to use particular university-supported technologies such as such as Turnitin's Grademark function or Lectopia. The discussion about staff uptake of those technologies as well as staff perceptions of the effectiveness of the technologies for teaching will draw on general themes of two evaluations administered in each faculty. The evaluations were designed to gauge both student and staff perceptions about the general use of the technologies and to identify any issues with the technological quality, pedagogical effectiveness or ethical and legal implications of the use of mandated technologies.

The importance of professional development in the effective uptake of new technologies cannot be overstated. Given the diversity of staff, the range of ICT competence in teaching staff, the geographic, discipline and AQF variance of staff across faculties, as well as the possibilities of support services on offer, the question of how to balance management directives with technical and pedogodiical support for teaching staff is challenging. Notwithstanding the challenge, it is clear that technological uptake highlights the need for teaching and learning issues to be central to any mandatory directive. Professional development opportunities and strategies need to be resourced

(Gosper, et al. 2008) and appropriate to academic staff at the coalface. The need to meet the strategic goals of a Faculty, in part through the work of centralised VU support units, can be also challenging and the effectiveness of targeted embedded support within Faculties versus support from centralised units is a debate that Australian universities continue to have.

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