Enhancing the Student Experience through Technology Training

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The Waikato Institute of Technology (Wintec) recognises the development of operational systems and infrastructure to support students engaged in learning is crucial in enhancing the student experience. It also acknowledges monitoring procedures and related activities increase the success of intended outcomes. In 2010, Wintec received two reports, “Report on the e-Learning Maturity Model Capability Assessment of Waikato Institute of Technology” prepared by Stephen Marshall, Victoria University of Wellington, and the internal report “Master of Nursing Programme Self-Assessment, 2009”, that clearly identified the need for the institution to improve its processes around preparing students for engaging with the technology infrastructure provided. Wintec’s strategic goal of flexible delivery is underpinned by technology; there is a lack of detailed information on the potential needs and current capabilities of students to inform the design of the provision of technological support.

To address this deficiency, the Technologies Competency Project (TCP) was initiated late in 2010. The underpinning goals of the project were firstly, to increase students’ competence, confidence and success in the use of course-related technologies and secondly, to assist the attainment of digital information skills. These project goals were to be achieved through the provision of a systematic training programme. The project was jointly delivered by the Library and the Information and Technology Support (ITS) Helpdesk staff.

The project was designed around ten critical stages. These included - receive feedback from teaching staff as to which technologies they required students to demonstrate competency in; create instructional packages; identify specialist trainers to train Library/ITS Helpdesk instructors; develop the programme of instruction; communicate with teaching departments and establish a schedule of instruction; deliver the programme to newly-enrolled students and evaluate the programme against an internationally-recognised, quality assessment framework.

The online instructional packages were developed and Library/ITS Helpdesk instructors trained in their use ready for the launch of TCP at commencement of the 2011 academic term. Initially, the training offered was generic and was included within the institution-wide induction programme for first-year students. Subsequently, classes have been offered in response to specific tutor or departmental requests. During the first four weeks of Semester 1, 2011, around 1000 students were offered the technology instruction programme across the main and satellite campuses.

Although informal feedback from students and teaching staff was positive, the TCP team deemed it critical to conduct a structured review of the training programme. Sections of the e-Learning Maturity Model (eMM) capability assessment framework were employed to collect evidence-based information and to identify, firstly, the success of the programme and, secondly, potential ways forward. The TCP is intended to demonstrate a clear commitment by Wintec to assisting students to become effective learners within technology-enhanced education.