Removing barriers to nursing student success through technology competency Training

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Rationale

In line with a nation-wide focus on improving student retention, increasing educational achievement and extending the reach of core courses to distance and distributed learners the Waikato Institute of Technology has made significant investments in the development of information and communication technology systems and infrastructure to support students engaged in learning and to enhance the student learning experience. In 2010, Wintec received two reports, *'Report on the e-Learning Maturity Model Capability Assessment of Waikato Institute of Technology, 2010'*, and the internal report '*Master of Nursing Programme Self-Assessment, 2009*'.

These reports identified two areas of concern/deficiency firstly, there was a lack of detailed information on the potential needs and current capabilities of students to inform the design of the provision of technological support and secondly, there was a critical need for the institution to improve its processes around preparing students for engagement with the ICT systems and infrastructure.

Project methodology

To address these deficiencies/concerns, the student technology competency project (STCP) was initiated late in 2010. The underpinning goals of the project were firstly, to increase students' competence, confidence and confidence in the use of course-related ICT and secondly, to assist the overall acquisition of digital information skills of learners. The project was to be jointly managed and implemented by library and the information and technology support helpdesk staff.

The project was designed around three critical components:
- gathering of data from teaching staff, support services managers and institutional administrators to identify core ICT required in courses and for administrative purposes and the skills they expected students to demonstrate competence and confidence in
- design, deployment and delivery of generic instructional packages on institutional ICT systems and specific course technologies to newly-enrolled students
- review and evaluation of the programme.

The project commenced delivery at the start of the 2011 academic term. Initially, the training offered was generic and was included within the institution-wide induction programme for first-year students. These generic courses were supplemented by classes delivered in response to specific tutor or departmental requests. It became clear immediately that face-to-face instructional materials required mirroring as online instructional packages to support flexible delivery components of study. During the first four weeks of Semester 1, 2011, around 1000 newly enrolled students received the technology instruction programme across the main and satellite campuses.

Discussion

At the completion of the first stage informal feedback from students and teaching staff was positive and formal responses received were also positive but statistically-insignificant owing to the low response rate but, within this limitation, indicated clearly the value of the programme. However, the project team conducted a structured review of the training programme using key indicators from the e-learning maturity model (eMM) capability assessment framework. The review was undertaken to collect evidence-based information and to identify, firstly, the success of the programme and, secondly, potential ways forward.

- eMM recommendation 1 – expand and include the technology competency programme in all blended courses at a minimum
- eMM recommendation 2 – provide information on course-related technologies and expectations to students prior to study commencement

Future development

A capability self-assessment tool will be built into the programme in 2012 to gather more meaningful data from participating students and tutors.