NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY

Benchmarking of e-Learning at Nottingham Trent University

November 2006 – April 2007

www.ntu.ac.uk

Foreword

This report outlines the main e-Learning benchmarking activities conducted at Nottingham Trent University during phase 1 of the HE Academy/JISC Benchmarking exercise, and the key findings, emerging issues and lessons learned.

The recommendations and actions resulted from consultation with Professor Peter Jones, Senior Pro Vice Chancellor, Sue McKnight, Director of Libraries & Knowledge Resources and Jane McNeil, Deputy Head of CASQ (Learning and Teaching). These have been contextualised within the framework of the institutions Learning Teaching and Enhancement strategy.

The report offers a brief discussion of some issues arising from the benchmarking exercise. Reflection and evaluation of the exercise and the factors impacting on the conduct of the exercise are considered along with the need to plan for a process that is sustainable for future iterations.

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Nottingham Trent University
e-Learning Benchmarking Report

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Nottingham Trent University
e-Learning Benchmarking Report

1.0 Background and context

The University's Strategic Plan of 2004-10 set out a commitment to prioritise e-learning delivery to support and enhance learning and teaching. This follows a period in which many staff have already taken up opportunities to employ learning technologies and make use of the in-house Virtual Learning Portal. The use of flexible approaches and delivery of learning opportunities enhanced by e-learning is also integral to a number of NTU strategic objectives.

The Higher Education Academy (HEA) in collaboration with JISC led a higher education benchmarking of e-learning exercise in 2006. The national benchmarking exercise developed in response to feedback from the sector about the need to understand more about their own, and the sector's, progress in e-learning. NTU's participation in Phase 1 of the HEA led e-learning benchmarking exercise from October 2006 – March 2007 was therefore timely as it would enable the University to assess progress in e-learning development and its supporting infrastructure.

1.1 Defining e-Learning

To assess the University's progress in the development and effective delivery of e-learning it is important to define what we mean by this term. On the University's website definitions of e-learning are cited from JISC and from the Learning Skills Council. These have been used to help inform the benchmarking project on what appropriate data and information to collect.

1.2 Using the JISC e-Learning programme framework

The JISC e-learning programme (October 2003 – March 2009) identifies how e-learning can benefit learners, practitioners and educational institutions by improving the quality of learning through:-

- Practitioners developing the confidence and skills to manage and
- facilitate e-learning in different contexts and with different pedagogical approaches
- A technical infrastructure that supports flexibility, diversity and extendibility
- Easy access to high quality, flexible learning materials
- Effective and responsive e-learning policies, systems and structures in place at local, regional and national level

For more details see the JISC e-learning programme:

http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/themes/elearning/programme_elearning.aspx

From a learner perspective e-learning in summary can be described as follows:

e-Learning is a method of learning delivered on a distributed or mobile tele/communication technology platform and conducted using information technologies, eTools and eResources for learning purposes.

This focuses attention primarily on learning carried out using tools and environments that are supported by a networked infrastructure. This does not imply that other stand alone technologies for instance, cannot support learning. It recognises that the use of flexible approaches and delivery of learning opportunities enhanced by e-learning is integral to a number of NTU strategic objectives, for instance to the University's commitment to promote student employability and widening participation.

2.0 The aims of the NTU benchmarking exercise are:

Acquisition of baseline data to enable NTU to benchmark progress internally and to make comparisons (where appropriate) with similar HEIs.
Objectives

2.1 to obtain a comprehensive profile of current e-learning capability and provision across the University;

2.2 to obtain a comprehensive profile of current e-learning capability and provision for each School;

2.3 to enthuse and stimulate staff to consider use of the wide range of tools that enable e-learning;

2.4 to position NTU as an important contributor and model of organisational learning to the HE sector.

Rationale

a. Acquisition of data will enable NTU to adopt a structured systematic approach to e-learning development;
b. Enable NTU to fully participate in e-learning research and developments;
c. Provide a marketing tool for a range of e-learning-based course provision.

The aims of the national exercise are:

- to provide institutions with an opportunity to participate in an externally-driven process of reflection and analysis of their current e-learning provision and processes using a recognised methodology. Institutions can use this process to inform their internal decision-making and planning, and compare their practice with other institutions involved in the exercise
- to help identify areas of strategic importance arising from the institutional reflections and analyses that inform the work of JISC, the Academy and the Funding Councils.

To enable as many institutions as possible to participate in the exercise, a phased approach was adopted.

The pilot phase began in January 2006 and was completed in July 2006. Twelve institutions from across the UK participated in the pilot. Nottingham Trent University participated in Phase 1 of the exercise started in October 2006. Thirty-eight institutions participated in this phase. Phase 2 began in May 2007 involving twenty-seven institutions.

3.0 Key stakeholders

The benchmarking exercise involved a broad range of staff across the University identified as key stakeholders to engage in the process and conduct of the exercise. A list of participants included:

Stakeholder	Name
Project sponsor:	Vice-Chancellor, Professor Neil Gorman Pro-VC, Professor Peter Jones
Project manager:	Angela Trikić, Head of Educational Development Unit, (EDU)
Steering Group:	Angela Trikić, Head of EDU Anne Liggett, Learning and Teaching Co-ordinator (LTC), Social Science Paul Periton, Centre for Academic Standards and Quality, (CASQ) Celia Coates, Library & Learning Resources, Academic Service manager
Working Group:	Angela Trikić, EDU Anne Liggett, Learning and Teaching Co-ordinator Celia Coates, LLR 1 Information Systems representative 2/3 representative per 10 Academic School 4 EDU representatives 1 Student Union representative 1 Student Support services representative
HEA consultant	Peter Chatterton

4.0 Project implementation

4.1 Project management

The project was managed initially by an e-Learning Benchmarking Steering Group, which met to assist in shaping how the benchmarking exercise was carried out. It became clear that in adopting the Embedded Learning Technologies Institutionally (ELTI) tools, a broader group of academics was needed to ensure that the questions listed in the survey are relevant from a Nottingham Trent University perspective. An e-Learning Benchmarking Working Group was formed consisting of representation from each of the ten academic schools tasked with adapting the ELTI tools to satisfy the University's benchmarking aims. A workshop event was arranged in November 2006 with the specific task of working on and adapting different sections of the survey to tailor it to a NTU context.

The Educational Development Unit (EDU) was responsible for converting the staff and student surveys to an online format and for promoting these within the University to encourage completion. The EDU also organised and scheduled the school and college-based focus groups that took place during February/March 2007. To support facilitation of the focus group role, Phil Wane, a Senior Lecturer in the School of Social Science and a specialist in research skills, led a focus advisory group to help prepare EDU and LLR ALT colleagues to undertake focus group facilitation.

A consent form was prepared to enable each focus group session to be recorded and the transcriptions used to help formulate the reports.

4.2 Methodology

Benchmarking e-learning at the University for the first time called for a multi-faceted approach to gain a comprehensive description of what is going on, how e-learning is conducted and who is involved. Qualitative and quantitative methods were employed using the methods listed below. The adoption of a new VLE for September 2008 is likely to offer more opportunities for data collection to discern usage patterns and participation rates across the University.

4.3 Methods

Opting for multiple methods to give complementary intelligence and an overview of e-learning provision at NTU was achieved by using:

4.1 Online staff and student surveys
4.2 Focus groups
4.3 Virtual Learning Portal data collection

4.4 Enhancements made to the ELTI toolkit

The work undertaken to develop tools to assess how well e-learning is supported, managed and delivered across the whole institution was carried out at Bristol University. This was the result of a JISC funded project, which led to the production of the Embedded Learning Technologies Institutionally (ELTI) toolkit. Although the surveys and checklists were helpful, colleagues noted that Nottingham Trent University has a more distributed learning and teaching practice that it was important to capture. Furthermore, in common with many Universities involved in Phase 1, the project revealed that there is not always easy access to data or information sources that would help measure the rate of progress or indeed lack of it.

a Rationale for the enhancements

The staff workshop described above carried out the task of editing the ELTI staff survey to tailor questions as appropriate to the University model and terminology;

The Chester college survey was adapted to collect student profile data and skill ratings with e-tools as the ELTI tools focus on staff experiences.

b Mapping the updated toolkit to the detailed objectives

Two workshop events were arranged in November 2006 with the task of adapting and mapping different sections of the survey tailored to a NTU context. A workshop sub-group also worked at formulation of questions for the focus groups to complement the findings from the survey. Follow-up tasks were assigned to ensure that the survey and focus group questions were complete. Edited work was circulated to workshop participants and re-wording agreed.

5.0 Results of the benchmarking

The totality of results of the benchmarking exercise derive from the online staff and student surveys, complemented by staff and student focus groups. The results are reported below and then discussed in the next section, which addresses lessons learnt and presents recommendations and proposed actions.

The online staff survey gives some insight to staff perceptions of:

a. Institutional factors
b. Policy and planning
    i. culture
    ii. Infrastructure
    iii. Student and staff expectations
b. Skills (staff and students)

Please see appendix 1 for the full survey results.

5.1 Results of the online staff survey

5.1.1 Participation rates

216 staff participated in the online staff survey during February 2006 representing approximately 25% participation rate by full-time academic staff. Of the staff respondents over 65% are directly involved in course delivery and over 30% perform some form of support role to the learning and teaching process. A summary of the results is offered below. For the full survey results please see Appendix 1.

5.1.2 Institutional factors: Culture

School policy and practice

There is considerable variability in perceptions of school policy on learning and teaching with a majority 72% staff agreeing that there is a strong focus on good Learning and Teaching practice in their school. A more divided picture emerges when it comes to considering teaching quality enhancement strategies with around 50% agreeing that these are in place and 34% disagreeing or unsure that this is the case. A similar result emerges with perceptions of the importance attached to the Learning and Teaching record in academic appointments where 43% of staff assert that this is an important recruitment criteria against 42% who disagree. When it came to considering the importance of Learning and Teaching record in academic appraisals, 40% of respondents agreed that this is important against 28% who disagreed or had no view. On the expectation of academic staff to advance scholarship of their subject from a Learning and Teaching/e-learning perspective, 37% of staff acknowledged this expectation with 49% in disagreement or neutral on this point.

5.1.3 Infrastructure

School learning and teaching/e-learning infrastructure

61% of teaching staff agreed that they have access to an appropriate range of e-learning tools to use with students with 34% disagreeing or unsure.

At the time of the survey 53% of staff agreed that there is a concerted effort to integrate some aspects of e-learning into programmes where this is appropriate with 39% disagreeing or unsure. A divided picture emerges when trying to obtain a view of whether there is a culture of promoting good teaching practice in regard to e-learning. 44% staff agree, 25% disagree and 25% neither agree or disagree. An indicator of a supportive school learning and teaching infrastructure is the existence of an action plan which includes clear aims, targets and resources plans with respect to e-learning. Only 27% staff agreed that this was in place with a majority, 54% disagreeing or having no view. 52% of staff agreed that there is an appointed person or team in their School whose role it is to support e-learning against 33% who disagreed or are undecided.

Staff experiences of e-learning at school level were captured by their views on school wide initiatives to promote good practice in e-learning. 43% of staff agreed that there is evidence of such initiatives and promotional activities whereas 47% staff disagreed or are undecided. This accords with the result of the query on the culture of sharing good teaching practice in regard to e-learning where 37% agreed that this was in place against 56% who disagreed or are undecided. However, a promising result emerges about the existence of e-learning innovators with over 66% staff agreeing that there are staff that perform this role with only 21% of staff disagreeing or undecided. 47% of staff disagreed that e-learning innovators occupy senior academic positions with 17% of staff agreeing that this is the case. A similar result emerged when staff were asked if e-learning innovators influence decision making with 23% of staff agreeing to such influence against 34% in disagreement or undecided. Similarly 23% of staff thought that learning and teaching innovators have school support (e.g. allocation of time, funding, support staff) with 49% disagreeing or undecided that this is the case. 44% of staff agree that they have personal experience of Learning and teaching innovators influencing practice with 21% of staff disagreeing that their practice had been influenced.

Embedding e-learning into the curriculum

48% of staff agreed that e-learning is incorporated into curriculum planning as indicated for instance in module documentation with 42% of staff either disagreeing or undecided. When it came to considering whether e-learning is embedded into most courses within the subject curriculum 30% of staff agreed that this was the case against 54% who were in disagreement or were undecided. However, when staff were asked whether they included some use of e-learning in their subject's curriculum a high 70% indicated that they did with only 10% not including any element of e-learning in course delivery. Regarding school wide projects aimed at integrating e-learning into the curriculum, 25% agreed that there is evidence of this in their school against 51% who disagreed or are undecided that such integration exist.

Student feedback to e-learning experiences

Evidence is sought of school actively collecting student feedback regarding the use of e-learning. 14% staff reported that their schools were engaged in obtaining feedback against over 59% of staff who disagreed or were undecided as to whether this is happening. When asked if there is a high level of demand from student feedback for e-learning integration in their courses (e.g. online material, forums, communication, resources), 30% of staff agreed that there is student demand for e-learning integration against 51% of staff who disagreed or were undecided. When staff were asked if they acted on student feedback regarding their e-learning experiences, 33% of staff agreed, 17% of staff disagreed. The largest response to this question resided with the 'don't knows' and 'undecided' with over 51% staff recording this response. The qualitative responses to student feedback in this area provides a number of exemplars tried by staff (see Appendix 1).

Support for e-learning

When asked where staff obtained support for using the Virtual Learning Portal (VLP), 37% of staff access the support of the Educational Development Unit (EDU) VLP support staff with 29% of staff turning to their colleagues and 16% accessing school support or professional staff.

For questions focused on where staff obtain support for particular e-tools (e-assessment, e-discussion, videos, animations and images) most staff did not know where they would go for support, with the exception of content creation

tools where 29% of staff turn to each other with 22% accessing school support/professional staff.

Perception of how well learning technologies are supported at the University generated a 77% agreement that the VLP is well supported. Most staff responding to the support of Question Mark Perception (the University's e-assessment tool) indicated that this was not well supported with 40% unsure whether it is supported or not. A slightly more positive result emerges for support for content creation tools with 37% of staff respondents indicating support for these technologies. There are very small results recorded for support of e-discussion, image, video and animation creation tools.

44% of staff agreed that they have easy access to advice and training of e-learning tools against 29% who disagreed. However, only 10% of staff agreed that e-learning in their School is adequately resourced (financed) with 41% disagreeing that this is the case. Fewer staff, 30%, thought that there are enough school learning spaces (e.g. lecture and seminar rooms) with networked computers and data projection compared to 45% of staff who disagreed that there is adequate provision. When quizzed about school support for student use of e-learning tools and materials 30% of staff agreed that school provision is offered with 28% of staff disagreeing that their school supported student use of e-learning tools and materials. See Appendix 1, question 29 responses, for staff comments on their experiences of support for e-learning.

5.1.4 Policy and planning

Awareness of learning/teaching/e-learning strategies

68% of staff are aware of Nottingham Trent's Institutional Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy (ILTES) with 32% of staff unaware of this policy. This result drops to 41% of staff who are aware of an action plan for their school for implementing projects that aim to fulfill the ILTES with 59% of staff unaware of the school's action plan. The latter result is confirmed by similar figures reflecting staff awareness levels to action points related to the school's e-learning initiatives.

The survey continues to question staff about their awareness and estimates of the number of courses with e-learning components embedded in current or planned courses. Most staff are unaware of the current way in which e-learning is used in their subject or of future plans.

Use and availability of e-learning resources at school level

Only 9% of staff agree that their school evaluate and select appropriate e-learning material made freely available to Higher Education (e.g. through JISC, HEA, subject centres) compared to 27% who claim that these resources are not used. An overwhelming 64% indicate a 'don't know' or 'undecided' for this question. 52% of staff indicated that their students are well supported in their use of e-learning materials in the VLP compared to 14% who disagree. 25% agreed that specialist staff develop e-learning materials for their school although 38% of staff claim that specialist staff do not perform this role or not within their school.

When asked if students have flexible access to relevant e-learning materials during course contact hours 41% of staff agreed that they did compared to 20% who disagreed. A complementary question to discern whether students have flexible access to relevant e-learning materials for self-study (off campus) elicited a 47% agreement that students are supported with flexible access to resources against 10% who disagreed that flexible access to resources is provided.

On the issue of feedback to e-learning provision, 39% of staff thought that students are offered opportunities to give feedback on the quality of e-learning provision although 16% of staff disagreed that this is the case. 46% of respondents however, indicated that they did not know or are undecided.

On the question of student involvement in developing e-learning resources within the school, 9% agreed that students did contribute to the development of e-learning resources whereas 34% claimed that students were not involved in the generation of resources. Again, an overwhelming 57 % of staff indicated that they did not know or are undecided.

Addressing accessibility of e-learning resources
Only 11% of staff agreed that accessibility issues (e.g. SENDA legislation) are prioritised in school decisions about e-learning tools, materials and ICT facilities with 15% disagreeing that accessibility is prioritised. An overwhelming 74% of staff responded with an undecided or 'don't know' to this question however. A similar pattern emerges with the remaining two questions on accessibility. 7% of staff agreed that staff with additional accessibility requirements are well supported in their use of e-learning and materials with 18% of staff in disagreement that this is the case. 75% of staff however are undecided or are unaware of school arrangements. 23% of staff agree that students with additional accessibility requirements are well supported in their use of e-learning tools and materials in comparison to 16% who disagree and 61% of staff who are unsure or do not know.

Quality assurance and enhancement procedures in relation to e-learning
e-Learning is fully integrated into standards and quality assurance and enhancement (QA&E) procedures for School programmes according to 14% of staff respondents compared to 31% of staff who disagree that this is the case. 55% of staff however, were unsure or did not know. On the issue of informing external examiners, only 26% of staff agreed that external examiners are fully informed of the way e-learning is integrated into school programmes compared to 28% of staff who disagree. Again, the majority of staff respondents, 45% are undecided or do not know. 23% of staff agreed that accessibility issues are addressed in QA procedures compared to 18% who disagreed that they are. 59% of staff are unaware or do not know whether accessibility issues are addressed in QA procedures.

Promotion and dissemination of e-learning
An equal weighting of 24% of staff were respectively in agreement and disagreement that their School is well integrated into established networks on e-learning, such as JISC, ALT, HEA Subject Network with 51% of staff undecided or did not know. 20% of staff thought that e-learning is promoted as a major feature of the School's external profile (e.g. in marketing to potential to students) compared with 39% of staff who disagree and 40% of staff who are unsure or do not know. Information on current e-learning developments relevant to the discipline is collected and disseminated by the school according to only 24% of staff with 36% of staff disagreeing that this is done and 39% of staff unsure or do not know.

5.1.5 Skills (staff and students)

Staff skills in e-learning
42% of staff agreed that there are regular staff development /educational activities, which support development of e-pedagogical skills. This compares to

39% of staff who disagree that this is available. 44% of staff agreed that there are regular staff development activities, which support development of ICT skills compared to 36% of staff who disagree that this is the case. On e-literacy skills, 16% of staff agreed that their department regularly update their e-literacy skills to meet their needs compared with 55% of staff who disagree that e-literacy skills are updated. 39% of staff claim that all academic staff use the Virtual Learning Portal (VLP) against 42% who disagree that this is the case. 36% of staff agree that there are experienced e-learning champions within their department who are used as mentors and advisers. 34% disagreed however and 29% of staff are undecided or do not know. Only 12% of staff claim to regularly engage in staff development and training opportunities for e-learning provided centrally (e.g. EDU) compared with 42% who do not access central e-learning training and support provision. 46% of staff respondents are undecided or are unsure about this point. 39% of staff agree that they participate regularly in training opportunities locally and/or centrally organised compared to 42% who do not participate in University training provision.

Student skills in e-learning
Only 5% of staff agree that student e-literacy skills are audited on entry compared with 57% of staff who disagree that this audit takes place. 47% of staff are unsure or did not know whether student e-literacy skills are audited on entry. A similar pattern of responses emerges on the question of the audit of student ICT skills. 13% of staff claim that student ICT skills are audited on entry compared with 40% of staff who disagree that this audit is carried out. 47% of staff are undecided or do know what the practice is regarding an ICT skills audit of students. Similarly, 20% of staff agree that all students are required to have baseline competence in general ICT skills (e.g. ECDL) with 40% of staff disagreeing that such requirements prevail. When it comes to encouragement, 58% of staff agree that students are encouraged to regularly update their ICT skills although 17% of staff disagree that this is done. 80% of staff agree that student make routine use of ICT in their courses with only 4% of staff disagreeing. All students receive induction training enabling them to use the VLP according to 59% of staff with only 5% of staff disagreeing and 36% unsure or do not know.

Student use of e-tools
30% of staff agree that all students are offered training enabling them to use e-learning tools (e.g. e-assessment, e-communication tools) with 15% of staff disagreeing that this is the case and 55% of staff are undecided or unaware of the training opportunities offered. 54% of staff did agree that students are required to use e-learning tools (e.g. VLE, assessment tools) in most of their courses with 21% of staff disagreeing with this view. On staff perception of student competence with e-learning activities, 54% of staff agree that students are generally competent in their use of e-learning activities in courses compared with 13% of staff who disagree that they are.

5.1.6 VLP data collection

The total NTU modules for 2006-07
(Source: IS VLP team Oct 07)

The context within which this survey is conducted is set in an environment in which about 6200 live modules being delivered during 2006-07. The breakdown of modules delivered by school is listed on the following page.

No. of modules	Unit code	School/service
13	XX	Support Services
80	ZZ	VLP Test Area /non traditional modules
44	GS	Graduate School
211	AR	School of Art and Design
219	CP	Computing and Technology
247	NL	Nottingham Law School
401	AE	School of Animal, Rural & Environmental Sciences
444	BN	School of Biomedical & Natural Sciences
624	SO	School of Social Sciences
785	BE	School of Architecture and the Built Environment
817	AC	School of Arts and Humanities
857	ED	Education (EU)
1296	NB	Nottingham Business School
6038		

Modules populated per School 2006-07
(Source: IS VLP team Oct 07)

Unit code	School	No of modules with element[1] of content	% of total possible modules
AC	Arts and Humanities	304	37%
AE	Animal, Rural & Environmental Sciences	204	51%
AR	Art and Design	119	56%
BE	Architecture and Built Environment	235	30%
BN	Biomedical and Natural Sciences	217	49%
BS/NB	Business School	290	22%
CP	Computing and Informatics	91	42%
ED/EU	Education	178	21%
GS	Graduate School	20	45%
NL/LW	Law School	20	36%
SO	Social Sciences	269	43%
	Total	**1947**	

[1] An element may consist of a single unit of resource e.g. module handbook or all module content and e-activities/resources.

According to the data presented above, during the academic year 2006 – 2007, 32% of the total number of modules delivered had some form of module content. Care with interpreting this result is proposed. Although the University does have a definition of a module as published on the CASQ website, the size of a module varies greatly. Module may be as small as 5 credits or could total 120 credits with a wide range of other credit values in between. We do not at present capture the credit value of modules, which renders interpretation of the above statistics difficult. A further issue relates to the number of modules on which students are enrolled that subsequently did not run. It is unlikely that modules created (in the VLP), triggered by enrolment were then removed if they were not delivered as a business process does not exist to ensure their removal.

Nevertheless taking account of these caveats we have a baseline which, anecdotally, compares favourably within the Higher Education sector. (The e-

learning benchmarking exercise represents a starting point for establishing the tools and indicators capable of describing the baseline for HE and FE organisations). For Nottingham Trent University, it offers a starting point for improving the quality of the student and staff online learning and teaching experiences.

5.2 Findings from staff focus groups

5.2.1 Background organisation

A staff focus group was organised for each of the ten academic schools. Each focus group was recorded with the permission of staff participating and transcripts produced. In order to facilitate interpretation and readability of transcript data this consolidated report pulls together the comments and views expressed along the themes represented in the prepared questionnaire (see Appendix 2). Anonymous quotations are incorporated into the report to reinforce points and have been italicised to help inform the reader of the source of the comment(s).

Evaluative comments highlighting key points are also included to help clarify or assist with interpretation of the findings.

5.2.2 Drivers for e-learning development

Most existing practice is driven by a need to address, for example, rising student numbers and a proliferation of software tools of potential use to support learning and teaching. So there is a drive to investigate new opportunities presented by awareness of the digital environment. e-Learning does address widening participation although this is mediated by some expectation of human interaction for course delivery.

Connectivity is also an important student expectation. A school in Scunthorpe was cited where students had laptops in the canteen and on desks. Secondary schools have wireless networks so this should be supported by the University. Nominally, this is the case at NTU, but the coverage is patchy. A number of staff asserted that *'wireless support needs specifying upwards so that it works everywhere'.*

Staff agreed that students are used to an instant response culture (FaceBook, MySpace, MSN). Some staff in the School of Art and Design views varied between marking out NTU as a distinct 'learning space', separate from personal online space as provided by MySpace, YouTube etc. and looking at how the informal online world can integrate with the formal learning environment of a university, as students will be part of an online creative networks in a real post-university world.

'At present the academic space is a 'slow train' which is at odds with the cultural expectations of the creative industries which all run online'.

Comments here highlight the ubiquity of e-tools and environments external to a university environment and an expectation by many students and clients that we have a technical infrastructure that supports networked and mobile learning. Consistency and ease of access to e-learning resources via different routes is becoming the overriding expectation.

5.2.3 Perception of e-Learning

Perceptions of e-learning were varied and wide. For some e-learning means an assumption on the part of providers that learners are starting from the same place. Others claim that this is true of education in general. Colleagues in the Nottingham Law School and School of Education reflected on the difference

between e-learning, e-resources and e-tools like email, powerpoint, e-search and wordprocessing. Perceptions would depend on how broad a definition is under consideration.

'e-Learning is a bit like gardening, there's a mystique surrounding it'.

For some School of Social Science colleagues perception of e-learning tended to equate with the use of the VLP as this was their daily contact with an e-environment.

Although a working definition (see 1.2) was provided for the purposes of collecting benchmarking information, people's perceptions of e-learning varied from definitions akin to JISC's, as 'learning facilitated and supported through the use of information and communications technology' to interpretations that associated e-learning with technologies used in a networked environment. The embeddedness of e-learning into course design is obviously dependent upon staff interpretations of this term.

5.2.4 Empowerment

Some common threads surfaced across schools including the perception that e-learning gives an opportunity for students to extend their autonomy as a learner and to learn at their own pace. 'It empowers the student to learn things for themselves, if that suits their particular learning style. You can use e-learning to support basic calculations in science. It's an opportunity to give students additional resources.'

e-Learning can support students being self-organising as fostered by the experience of using e-learning in Art and Design, which is almost always based on student input. Artefacts are critically assessed by student peers and staff or evaluated online. Students use e-learning as part of their cultural experience.

Empowering students in art involves calling on students to choose a medium in which they are going to work. *'We need to be wary of pushing online space. A sculptor could legitimately refuse to have anything to do with an online space. We should not have a 'one size fits all' approach. The proportion of online time to face-to-face time would vary by specialism'.*

The notion of empowering learners to manage and engage in learning opportunities is an important attribute that we want to support. Here, staff have an important facilitating role where responsibility for the resourcing and presentation of online module content is critical to enabling learner empowerment. It also highlights the importance of the role that students play in generating their own learning experiences with each other as well as interactions with tutors.

5.2.5 Interactive engagement

The notion of interactivity to complement the presentation of material seemed important to many staff. An attribute of a web-based environment is that it supports communication initiated by staff and can be used to encourage students to produce their own postings thus giving impetus to a more interactive mode of operating. The key property and benefit here is perceived as interactivity and engagement to support learning. In language learning this has been taken a step further with evidence in the use of online discussion forums successfully integrated into assessments in undergraduate modules.

However, the use of an e-communication tool per se is no guarantee of effective support for learning judging by the comments from staff in the school of Arts and

Humanities. It seems there have been many attempts to incorporate online discussion into module activity that have engaged few participating contributors. As one colleague commented:

'The culture of e-learning is bitty and unless it forms part of a formal assessment process it is difficult to embed. It's important to take an instrumental approach'.

Whilst another commentator suggested that; *'the key to success is based on the nature of the task, which should not be too complicated. Instructions need to be thought out and simplified. If students are not expected to consume a huge volume of text they can be successful.'*

School of Art and Humanities staff highlight students as a learning resource. Students send material via hyperlinks etc which can inform the next session and contribute to an email discussion. *'I am learning from them as well as them learning. I encourage them to articulate what they find difficult, which seems to work.'*

The points raised here highlight the direction that the current generation of e-learners are going. The e-tivities described above that can be incorporated in a wide range of tasks, aim to prompt the learner in cognitive action to engage and stimulate beyond the starting point. A shift towards an e-tivities approach involves skill in learning design and an alignment between the e-tivity and planned or expected outcome.

5.2.6 Open/distance/blended learning

There is a strong association and understanding of e-learning as being similar to open learning but involving electronic materials; a mode of learning that can be used in formal or distance learning. Others considered e-learning as a tool to aid and assist students; anything involving technology is a form of e-learning.

University support for the VLP means 'we have become more supportive of Distance Learning. We don't see much of the students. We have Distance Learning practices without a Distance Learning strategy to deal with absence'.

'When I taught at the Open University, I had more contact with my students. Perhaps because of the large teaching groups in the first year, we need a Distance Learning strategy'.

Computing and Informatics staff referred to their directed learning as having an element of blended learning. 'This implies a mix of traditional delivery and additional links to follow up, a feature of good educational practice.'

The terminology of open, blended and distance learning is associated with e-learning. The underlying assumption is that e-learning supports remote learners however, it is packaged. The key point highlighted is that these presentations of learning opportunity are provided with the aim of giving learners maximum flexibility. The terminology used simply distinguishes the format of delivery (print, e-environment) for presenting this degree of flexibility.

5.2.7 e-delivery

Another point emphasised in a number of schools highlighted the distinction between e-learning and e-delivery. There is a difference between accessing and doing something with the materials. Students accessing materials are not necessarily learning from them. *'There are a variety of digital environments designed for learners that is more about delivering data such as module information. This represents e-support rather than e-learning.'*

A number of science staff concurred with the view that they had not contributed much to e-learning, but have done lots of e-delivery of lecture notes and other support materials including work on modules for external companies (some of which are now available to NTU students).

Colleagues in the School of Architecture and the Built Environment considered that e-learning is equivalent to making information available, *'not to do with learning at all as we can't assume that the materials are used.' 'It's easier to present material to students; participation is another thing.'*

A member of the School of Social Science staff represented a view commonly expressed that the culture (at NTU) is about e-delivery. The potential of e-learning is not explored or developed with students. *'I see the VLP for acquiring information rather than a mechanism for e-learning. I use it in a haphazard way, largely for document delivery. I prefer students to come to lectures, but the experience is that they download lecture materials.'*

An advantage of electronic delivery identified is that student use of resources can be monitored.

There are many comments made by staff across the schools who claim to be involved in e-delivery, but not necessarily in e-learning. The concerning point here is that staff uploading content sometimes appear to disparage the value of e-delivery. It is encouraging to hear many voices expressing interest in more interactive engagement with e-tools, however, it is important to emphasise the value that students attach to having module content that they can access. e-Learning has many dimensions and placing online content, may seem mundane to some, but is an important contribution to a student's online experience.

5.2.8 Creative production

School of Art and Design colleagues emphasised their use of e-environments as a channel for creative productions as well as for e-delivery. Fine Art use online facilitation to support different types of learning.

One example cited highlights the creation of an online space for the production of artefacts. This is included to reinforce the point that there are many online applications that support learning and teaching that may sit inside or outside the boundaries of a VLE environment. University policy, technical architecture and design decisions are needed to ensure that the university is fit for purpose to support diverse learning and teaching needs.

5.2.9 e-support

Perception that there is a minimum level of e-support offered already is widely held. Many administrative staff add core information including programme and module guide information.

School of Social Science staff point out that e-delivery gives support for teaching not learning. The proper focus they argue should be on student support. There is a need to look at the level and timing of students support needs throughout the academic year. They cite regret with the *'stopping of student induction with the VLP'* as causing a difficulty and highlight the point that if student skill levels are to be raised then this must be supported as acquiring skills usually improves performance with the technologies.

The mistake of equating e-learning with the VLP was emphasised. Wider forms of e-support are important for students with limited or no knowledge of netiquette. *'Basic e-communication skills need to be addressed'.*

School of Animal, Rural and Environmental Sciences staff highlighted how e-learning can support learning in different ways. They cited an example of a deaf student who conducted a video of signing to verify identity of students undertaking assignments. In this context technology is being used to record evidence.

A comprehensive view of support means that *'we need to manage expectations regarding student support, e.g. state (realistic) typical response time for email. If you send an email the expectation is that it will be returned in 15 minutes, which adds to pressure on staff'.*

A variability in perception of e-support is offered here including provision of e-content, responses to student mail and the need to support student acquisition of netskills. This VLE implementation project provides an opportunity for giving guidance on support levels and standards of service that can reasonably be offered and expected.

5.2.10 Flexibility

Colleagues in the School of Architecture and the Built Environment continue to highlight how e-learning**,** *'allows us to present learning material in different ways, so suits other ways of learning. It gives the opportunity to do something besides presenting 'words on a page.'*

'If you have an area of learning complexity, for instance, digital animations may be good for very specific applications as it is available 24/7 …. at least it allows the student to rewind and replay content. They also potentially free up lecture slots for more productive activity.'

This key point highlights an important attribute of web-based learning. It can offer an infinite number of opportunities to re-visit learning material enabling complex (multi-media) objects to be presented and investigated using different techniques.

5.2.11 Access

Provision of e-supported information to students was regarded as a positive as, *'it addresses accessibility to students for those not usually able to access the university'* (by offering flexible delivery). A member of staff put forward a counter-claim suggesting that *'when students are on campus, it's easier to monitor whether they are learning properly.'*

Staff in the School of Architecture and Built Environment agreed that there should be a base level of information always available electronically and this is particularly important for part-time students. *'This should include information about the module and also information about the next tutorial etc.'*

School of Architecture and the Built Environment staff identified the concept of presentation as needing attention. The VLP's presentation of a default list of files without a naming convention was described as an access problem for students who do not know which file(s) to open. Providing online presentation of courses would improve accessibility so despite the investment in developing these skills it would lead to far more effective presentation.

Some staff in the School of Art and Design stressed that *'we need to look at accessibility and participation. We also need to consider parents who are major stakeholders and may be wary of anything seen to reduce staff/student contact.'*

Whilst flexibility serves to widen access, concerns were expressed that e-learning tends to isolate students and that the underlying assumption of computer literacy and access to computer facilities was often not justified or checked. *'The greatest danger I found was to assume that students have access to technology itself. They may have no computer, child care responsibilities etc.'* Other colleagues pointed to the role of e-learning in widening participation given the flexibility of accessing resources and engaging within an e-community of learners.

School of Architecture and the Built Environment courses have many mature students who are reported to be less engaged with online materials. During the first year students are directed to the VLP and receive more support than in subsequent years. Students are nervous and may not have a computer at home, or will want to engage to make extra effort to access facilities.

A further point raised concerned NTU courses that run in youth offending institutions that do not allow computers. Also students on work placements and professional courses hosted by corporate clients experience firewall problems. These conditions have implications for widening access using networked technologies and impact on course design.

The assumption that e-learning supports widening access is a view commonly expressed and closely linked to the flexibility to learning resources that it provides students. The balance between usage of e-based resources with face-to-face contact is one that needs to be addressed by course teams. Students engaged in online courses require support and signposting to e-resources and their usage and this is an important aspect of facilitating wider access.

5.2.12 Complementary role of e-learning

The notion of the complementary role of e-learning is often cited. School of Science and Technology staff use computers to enhance learning. This could be computer based resources within a lecture or to complement it. *'It's i.e. e-learning) something more than just using PowerPoint presentations and giving electronic quizzes.'*

e-Learning is seen as an extension to what students' do, not a replacement. It gives more time for the student to absorb the material. Staff were aware that more feedback from the student is required to evaluate its effectiveness and there is interest in how you obtain feedback and get questions answered. There is a perception that distance-learners will need more e-learning materials than campus-based ones.

Law Courses have high contact time (2 and a half hours) per day. Nevertheless, e-learning is used to help students prepare and support their learning. Staff believe face-to-face contact is a selling point for the institution. It was also pointed out that the staff:student ratio is determined by the Law Society, which has an impact on pedagogic practices in the Nottingham Law School.

Many thought e-learning could play a positive role *'providing it is kept in context.'* This does not mean *'replacing face-to-face teaching'* as people have *'different learning styles'* and one member of staff cited evidence that *'students appreciate human contact with lecturers.'* Also one commentator asserted that: *'e-systems aren't intelligent enough to respond to different students' needs,'* a view that was widely supported.

Whilst it can't replace "hands-on" skills, e.g. actually doing experiments, it can be a useful pre-amble to technique training displaying the equipment of machine as an introduction/familiarisation experience serving as a pre-requisite for carrying

out a 'real' task. Biomedical science staff cited lots of 'what if' questions that could be simulated in an e-environment.

There are very few totally online modules or programmes running in the University. The points raised here indicate how many staff are thinking about using e-learning as a means of complementing e-learning with text-based and/or face-to-face sessions. This blended learning approach is consistent with the University's strategic plan objectives, which seeks to offer a wide range of flexible provision maximising the affordances of learning technologies. The amount of face-to-face delivery will depend to some extent on course objectives, perceptions of student preferences balanced against an actual student practice trend towards remote i.e. off-campus learning (whether full or part-time).

5.2.13 Barriers and limitations of e-learning practice

Impedes social relationships

'Higher Education, particularly for the traditional, post-A-level student base, is about engaging with the academic community and with each other. Is there a danger of our graduates not 'growing up?'? Employers do not need naive students. Lots of social skills are developed around 18, so if e-learning is promoted it would remove that.'

Versioning

Considerable frustration was expressed by the lack of compatibility of one e-system with future upgrades. A case cited involved a substantial question bank prepared in Question Mark v2.0, which could not be transferred to the next version. Stability and continuity of the system is clearly required to inspire confidence and commitment to using e-tools. *'It's a good investment only if you can use it over a long period of time.'*

Overload and the quality issue

Information overload is frequently cited as a problem. *'Students can easily drown in material, maybe using twenty references from the Internet. They won't read a text book, but will use sources from the Internet. Students aren't selective; they don't discriminate between good and bad sites. This is a higher order skill. The Internet is more difficult to obtain quality source material as a book has been through a publication process.'*

The barriers and limitations raised here are often cited in e-learning literature and need to be taken account of. This university has a very proactive culture of inclusion and provision of social opportunities for students that will help mitigate against experiences of isolation. Clearly subject disciplines have their own role to play in this respect and this may be happening.

The versioning issue cited is one that is being addressed with respect to the current virtual learning environment project. Each new version of the VLE and the tools incorporated in it will be upwardly compatible such that an older version of work/activity can be expected to work in a later environment/tool version.

The overload of information that staff and students face operating within a web environment is being addressed by the Library and Learning Resource (LLR) Academic Liasion Team (ALT) information literacy strategy. The ALT team are working to enhance staff and student awareness of search, information and quality management strategies. Implementation is expected to reduce a sense of cognitive overload and lead to improved quality of academic work.

5.2.14 Application of e-tools

School of Science and Technology staff reported that they receive positive feedback about published papers or questions posted on the VLP but this tends to occur *'only if they have the hook of being helpful in the completion of an assignment.'*

A good example was of an e-learning package on Protein Purification *'which wasn't too difficult to work through but was quite linear, not really interactive. You can't give them too much choice or they might drift off course.'*

Support for the use of polling systems with push-button handsets was expressed. Biomedical science staff have seen this in action and perceive that it can be used in many aspects of teaching although the comment that *'writing good questions is not easy'* underlay the point that the pedagogic task is the primary challenge not the use of the technology.

School of Education colleagues maintained that e-learning is the use of electronic tools, documents or objects to support or enhance learning. Discussion within their School concluded *'that it is all of these things … but as a School we are looking at "blended learning", this is the focus of our ILTES policy. Using different tools to enhance learning but keeping students on campus.'*

Staff from the School of Computing and Informatics pointed out that *'like any tool it's how you use it. … The VLP has a practical advantage – information is available to the students where and when they want it, they can study at their own pace. It has its limits, though. It is only part of the structured support process, lecturers have to make professional decisions about when its use is appropriate.'*

'The days when a lecturer could turn up with 10 year old scrappy lecture notes are long gone.'

Colleagues from the Nottingham Law School stated that they have *'quite a bit of e-learning as between us we train people for legal practice as solicitors and barristers and Graduate Diploma in Law. We're conscious that the practice environment will include e-resources, therefore students must have e-learning as part of their tuition.'*

Colleagues within the Nottingham Law School claimed that *'e-learning and e-learning resources is quite a broad definition. We all use email, PowerPoint, e-search, word processing etc.'* School of Arts and Humanities staff extensively use interactive whiteboard in their work with Further Education (FE) students with disabilities. They also employ a variety of tools for students who are wheelchair users.

At Brackenhurst students regularly use digital cameras to develop their portfolios. There is a camera hire scheme to give students access to this type of learning activity. Students video each other horse riding, to enable a slow paced review of the rider position, horse movement and biomechanics.

Students make use of video editing software and there is a special programme for equine students to analyse animal behaviours over time, this includes the ability to undertake heart rate analysis.

Art and Design staff make use of *MakeaTV* to do online performances and to exchange performances with students in Japan. This is a tool used internationally.

They also use Skype which is a free web-based communications and collaboration tool that can be downloaded and installed on a PC. It can be used for text and voice message conversations with others who have Skype which is how staff contact post-graduate students abroad for conducting tutorials.

There is some evidence of staff preparing online presentation of course material in the School of Arts and Humanities. Use of CourseGenie (a course creation tool) to author material is proving a very effective way of presenting and structuring course material. 'It includes integration of online learning activities in the modules.' Another member of staff is using CourseGenie for creating online formative assessments.

It is evident to many staff that e-learning tools are evolving all the time and content creation tools like CourseGenie and the new VLE are opening new opportunity to refresh modules. Online presentation of courseware that incorporates e-resources facilitates greater signposting for students and is therefore likely to lead to improved access.

This section highlights the wide range of tools and applications that can support or be a vehicle for learning and teaching. The new VLE will be an important suite of e-tools that can be expected to support a majority of learning and teaching activity. However, the diversity of the university's portfolio means supporting mobile learning and extending learning and teaching activity beyond the boundaries of the VLE. This is critical to ensuring a creative and expanding network of professional outreach activities and collaborations.

5.2.15 e-Assessment

Colleagues in the Nottingham Law School remind us of the student focus on assessment, which calls for alignment of learning and teaching methods with assessment. This will help motivate students who *'don't have the luxury to 'chat' or email other students (due to time limitations). Law students need time to reflect and think. The timetable restricts this. It's a busy course, very similar to practice.'*

School of Architecture and the Built Environment staff tried authoring assessments on a variety of online assessment tools and found them all very cumbersome. They also commented on the immense workload involved in giving (and typing) individual feedback to 35 students. However, they conceded that the students liked it.

A novel e-assessment idea was presented in the form of a scenario based assignment involving the setting up a virtual environment that changes an accommodation feature. For example, *'students can visit a zoo to get ideas for changing the enclosure. This task is about design and the reasoning underpinning decision making of design options. It is lots of work but would be great.'*
Provision of a virtual environment addresses ethical issues in equine studies. *'You can't withhold food for seven days and see what happens….. we need to look at simulation options using technology.'*

School of Art and Design colleagues noted that most online assessment seem to be based around an exam model, which is rarely used in art and design. Peer review is favoured as a more suitable method where the journey is assessed as being more important than the end product.
Online assessment doesn't need to be based on right/wrong approach. *'Their can be a focus on a reflective activity to determine if the student is ready to move on. A progressive tool may typically encompass a sequence of task reflections on pieces of art conceived as a progressive tour rather than an assessed tour.'*

The comments on e-assessment describe different methods and approaches to e-assessment including the structured question types that staff may be familiar with in their use of the Questionmark Perception package. These contributions highlight the variability of assessment activities and the importance of designing e-assessment tasks aligned to learning outcomes specified for the course. This approach is more likely to motivate students to engage and provides the scaffolding to achievement of the learning outcome.

5.2.16 Online lectures

Nottingham Law School colleagues are considering putting lectures online prompted by the idea of a 'safety net' rather than a replacement. Online lectures would act to compliment real time lectures. iTunes used as a substitute for lecturers is not popular with students according to some staff. They point out that some competitors (to NTU) using electronic resources are receiving negative feedback from students, due to their nature.

'It's more relaxing for students to be scheduled for lectures. They don't like so much time that they have to organise themselves. Flexibility is not always welcome. We're not a sausage factory, students expect individual attention.'

There were many contributions on this topic and clearly variable practice. The method of presenting online lectures, the different format options and the timing (pre or post lecture delivery) are clearly issues. The e-learning website would be a good place to initiate a (time-limited) blog or wiki that could form the basis for articulating approaches to this topic that best supported student learning. This could be populated with anonymised contributions from focus group participants.

5.2.17 Social-networking software

School of Art and Design colleagues are conducting research using blogging, discussions, and multimedia tools. They would like to incorporate staff websites with students as one method of linking learning with research.

In the School of Education students undertake a reflective practice approach and this is being carried out with blogs.

School of Architecture and the Built Environment staff reported that they wanted to use blogs but were told that this is not possible *'as we are without an institutional blog at present.'* They were concerned that the University is *'resisting the march of technology'* which they thought they *'must try to integrate with in our learning environment.'*

Staff are using social-networking software in the way described. The prevalent use of social networking software outside the formal structures of the University suggest that the University needs a framework for tapping into these resources. A Learning, Teaching and Research applications framework has already been accepted. An acceptable use policy and guidance is needed to provide the operating conditions in which staff management and student accountability responsibilities are described. This will provide the assurances needed particularly in the area of protection of individuals and the University against defamation.

5.2.18 Issues

Support

Students prefer contact via email. They completely ignore tutorial slots, but will email anytime during the week rather than using office hours. We need protocols. In the School of Social Science the issue of how to support distance learners on professional courses and how to support their access to e-learning materials is an important issue that the University needs to grapple with.

Attendance
School of Social Sciences staff point out that *'attendance policy is very tired.'* The VLP limits attendance at course events so this should prompt a discussion about what kind of learning culture we want to foster. *'It would be good to have resources and activities available online at any time but this could work against attendance. We meet student expectations but can our system cope with it?'*

NTU website
According to some Social Science staff, the University should show the student experience beyond e-learning. Many students are using YouTube and blogs and therefore:

'are not perceiving a fantastic experience (from the NTU website), which is seen as a retrograde step. We need to sort out this issue of marketing vs. educational role. Students don't want things to look the same. Students want to see that their course is unique and about individuality. It's misunderstanding the role of marketing from the quality of support, which is not visible.'

'We should be able to reach out in another way. If you look at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and show students they can see what's going on in classes. They don't have to look at a brochure; they can just see what is going on and the quality of this.'

'One of the problems for us is that on competitor sites there is much diversity. We're not like Birmingham, Helsinki or Sheffield Hallam. We are like New College Nottingham and the University of Northampton. We don't come over in the same league i.e. present more like an FE college than a University. An institution that is going to inspire is about diversity not uniformity.'

Lack of e-learning policy/standards
Some staff reported that there is no accepted practice for schools in the use of the VLP for all.

'What is lacking is an overarching strategy for e-learning. A coherent change is needed. E-learning should be embedded in all courses. An agreed benchmark is needed to establish what we want to achieve, and an agreed strategy and timescale for getting there'.

'Changing practice is difficult and can deter people, especially those who are hesitant about e-learning when confronted with a stream of ICT initiatives. It can become a negative experience and affects the whole school.'

Performance
'Much greater support and faster response time is needed. It shouldn't take 6 months to get a response. If you can't do something, say so up front'.

This point highlights the unacceptable length of time staff sometimes experience in obtaining a response for requests for technical changes or resources.

Workload model
'The workload model is in need of review. The focus on teaching (500 hours) at the moment comes at the expense of staff development (200 hours). The University needs to review the internal costing of time allocation as the current model does not support the pedagogic practice changes.'

The workload issue was raised in a number of schools where the perception that more resources or balance of resources was needed. *'We need a change in*

culture. Half-hour allowed per student for tutorial but email contact is not counted as student contact.'

Computing staff perceived that the direction is towards provision of more distance learning work that would eventually require fewer lecturers. This model would eventually be extended to undergraduates too. If Distance Learning works for postgraduate students, it could give good grounds for extending it to undergraduate students.

'This would not necessarily call for staff reduction as the same number of staff could be maintained with a doubling of the number of students. This would have the benefit of enabling a broader offering.'

There is a lot of unease with e-learning particularly concerning workloads. 'It is important that the school provides guidance on workload to support and develop e-learning'. The example of Spanish was cited where the final year alternate weeks with face to face sessions with a week spent using e-learning. The workload model in Spanish appears to support this, so there is experience that can be drawn on.

Limited contact time with students
The issue of students' complaints that there is not enough contact time needs to be given careful regard. A blend of delivery appears to afford the most effective package for students where the benefits of e-pedagogy can combine with other methods.

Managing expectations
Managing expectations within an e-learning environment is a repeated theme particularly in the area of student support, which can be resolved by policy/guidance that stipulates a *realistic* typical response time for email. Student expectation that an email response will be returned within fifteen minutes imposes excessive pressure on staff.

Another unrealistic student expectation experienced by a number of staff is expressed by the comment that *'students send reams and expect staff to print it off. A virtual learning space is different to email. We need to encourage the former to reduce the pressure.'*

Responses to the issues raised from the staff focus groups have been used to formulate recommendations and/or action points in section 8.0.

5.2.19 Facilitating cultural change
School of Social Science staff argue that there is a need to encourage students to use e-learning in an active way. *'NTU graduates are not matching the graduate attribute statements on the NTU web site. The common practice is the use of e-learning to 'deliver stuff' not as a means of doing things, which needs a cultural shift. So students are passive, we need to get e-learning to be active''*

'Parents demand value for money' and some staff point out that *'there is some danger that students are reporting to parents 'we do it all ourselves.' We must make sure that we are seen to be adding value to the student experience. We need to continue to stress that it's not taking something away, but adding a new dimension, extending the role of teaching.'*

Consequences of operating within an e-environment are being experienced with some difficulties. One view expressed is: *'it's wrong to assume because students are younger than us that they're keen on e-learning.'*

School of Architecture and the Built Environment staff commented on changed practice highlighting that 'we have tended to use pre-recorded video, but now people are going further and embellishing the content. The VLP is a prevalent driver to produce our own videos and copyright issues also reinforce this need.'

The expectation of more policy and protocols to guide practice regarding student attendance of lectures and seminars was frequently raised although the preferred source for such developments varied from a 'top down' approach to the need for a more local academic team steer. The issue was an absence of clarity on how to respond/handle persistent student absences, variability in practice of staff uploading of lecture/support material on the VLP and managing student expectations of response time to email queries etc.

A School of Architecture and the Built Environment member of staff reported on his experience of delivering a module in Network Analysis following up lectures with an activity with exercises on VLP to be ready for next lecture. Great resistance was experienced from students who felt that *'they should be given everything, rather than have to print out and do exercises.'* The cultural view that seems to emanate from some students is summed up by *'if it isn't on the VLP it isn't worth knowing.'* Staff are concerned to address this attitude and are looking forward to the new VLE to consider options.

Many staff recognise that promoting and making use of different forms of e-learning delivery is fundamentally about cultural change. By definition this takes time, but it can be moved forward by deliberate strategic policy and practical steps that are supported. The investment demonstrated by the Senior Management Team in the setting up of the Educational Development Unit (EDU) and the VLE project amply testifies to this commitment. Combined with a robust Institutional Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy with e-learning at its heart, tangible deliverables can be expected by the time of the next e-learning benchmarking exercise. If this is conducted as a three-yearly cycle, the new VLE will be in place, providing a comprehensive University wide infrastructure with an EDU augmented to support and network with staff and encourage innovation. This facilitation of development of e-learning will help drive cultural change.

5.3 e-Learning infrastructure

5.3.1 University infrastructure and policy framework

Responses to questions relating to the University's support for e-learning elicited associations with the VLP and the NTU website. The corporate approach to the NTU website is experienced negatively by many staff who want to use web pages as a vehicle for delivery. There is a strong perception across the University that a corporatist agenda is supported, but *sold* on the basis of security that is constraining use of e-learning technologies being employed elsewhere in the HE community for learning purposes. *'Staff are using external blog accounts that embed clips from YouTube and blogs as these cannot be supported by the VLP.'* The NTU website is a strong candidate for staff frustration in other respects. Staff express concern about their limited control and ability to change information concerning their courses. Staff maintain that students enrolled on courses want to see course content not course fees as the first thing they view, but are confronted with an inability to influence the '*template'* in use.

One member of staff highlighted a big missed opportunity when all modules were re-specified without reference to e-learning. This subject review could have been used as an opportunity to identify suitable e-interventions, developments and content check.

A further restriction is reported by staff who are not allowed to use SKYPE: *'I have to go home to participate in a conference with other academics who are using it in their university.'*

There is agreement that a systematic development plan is needed that should not only be driven by immediate need. The absence of a systematic approach means that individuals may be reinventing the wheel as well as experiencing fragmented and inadequate resources. This has not stopped progress however, for instance, the E-gallery came from a practical need to share and view Fine Arts students' work between staff and students and was built with funding from a JISC grant.

What is strongly needed at NTU is a focused look at the pedagogy of e-learning rather than looking at the tools. An integrated pedagogic approach is required.

Clearly many staff used the focus group as an opportunity to have a swipe at the approach the university has adopted for the NTU website development and management. There is nevertheless, a serious issue to address here. One of the key attributes of hypermedia technology, on which the web is based, is that it offers multiple views/perspectives. The tension that presents as current policy compared to academic staff expectations is entirely deliverable from a technology perspective. This is also desirable from the perspective of delivering on many of the university's strategic objectives as the University has many 'markets' beyond the 'potential student market.' The broad learning and teaching and research agendas including potential for course collaborations with universities in the UK and globally can be addressed marginally within the current framework. The issues raised here provide a good starting point to frame discussion that will help to update and modify policy, systems and practices.

5.3.2 School support for e-learning

Colleagues in the Nottingham Law School were complementary about *'the great support from the librarians.'* They place a lot of emphasis on the use of e-learning resources hence students have to do research and investigate e-learning resources. Whilst students already have the PC skills, they need help with developing research skills.

Nottingham Law School have an independent IT support group within the school using Citrix hardware and so some staff perceive themselves as *'semi-detached from the University'* with support provided internally.

'We are more exposed to commercial reality – looking at the needs of firms. We need to make sure things work. Delivery time does not always meet requirements.'

School of Animal, Rural and Environmental Sciences staff valued the e-learning day organised during the summer 2006 and contrasted this with the practice of holding seminars in the City. *'It isn't realised that for a one hour meeting in the City it takes half a day (to get to and) from Brackenhurst'*.

One colleague in the School of Social Science claimed that there is a laissez faire attitude. *'People pick up ideas, drifting with the tide. Generally in psychology, people are positive, but not pro-active. There is some strategic direction in e-learning incorporated in the ILTES. Schools are to identify e-earning priorities. We do seem to have lots of strategies, but it doesn't lead us to shape our Learning and Teaching.'*

'When people hear about strategy they don't want to hear anymore. There is so much documentation. People aren't interested and haven't got time to interpret strategy.'

'It needs to be relevant to every day work… There is so much on paper, it's almost creating residual resentment.'

However the School of Social Science do have a good Learning and Teaching committee and a Distance Learning Special Interest Group (SIG). This emerged from a small group of people interested in distance education. Their strategy is to disseminate within the School and staff described support for e-learning enthusiasts who have their *'time bought out.' 'Some senior managers have been a bit pro-active and have given support.'* Awareness of ILTES and the VLE project was fairly widespread.

School of Architecture and the Built Environment colleagues emphasised that emailing individual students is the primary means of communication and support. For placement and work experience students the use of a e-discussion forums cited as a means to encourage students to communicate and support each other although this is presented as an aspirational goal given the staffing difficulty reported which has led to limited capacity to track and account for the quality of placement experience.

The School of Education focus on internal provision of staff development and workshops to address the needs of new staff. These are identified and arranged by the Academic Team Leader (ATL) in conjunction with the member of staff. The perception of good support was expressed and little resistance to e-learning presented.

School of Architecture and the Built Environment colleagues reported that they have all purchased external hard drives using their own money to reach a solution because the institutional route was reported to be too slow to obtain the digital storage capacity they required. The trigger for this was identified as the centralising of IT budgets as this was not an issue when schools had their own delegated IT budgets.

They also comment on network performance that is slower, post-centralisation. *'It means it takes fifteen minutes to start a computer.'* However, this was not the experience of other staff. It was suggested that perhaps the performance problem is associated with the setup in the Maudslay building.

School of Architecture and the Built Environment staff expressed frustration that they are not assigned administrative rights on their own machine. *'I cannot even download software without IS's say so causing lengthy preparation time for use of external resources.'* This point was echoed by staff in the School of Computing and Informatics who reported that that they are prevented from downloading useful software for teaching. They reported requests to IS for downloads to be part of the Biomedical and Natural Science (BNS) drop, but have been refused and complain about IS regular "Spring-clean" of software and files of PCs e.g. *Chime, Mage*, etc. and the inability to download *Biodiversity Pro* in the computer room where access for students would be very useful.

e-Learning is a major priority in the School of Architecture and the Built Environment Action Plan and *'we need to provide a continuum as students are coming from schools with lots of e-learning experience.'* Inadequate pc support in lecture rooms is reported although the students that live on campus have access

to the Internet and are able to take heart rate monitors (School of Animal, Rural and Environmental Sciences) straight to the pc.

The School of Animal, Rural and Environmental Sciences is a distinct school with much work carried out outside. The greenhouses don't have access to the University network. Staff are investigating the use of 'unbreakable' or robust laptops so that if dropped outside they would survive. Discussion of giving each veterinary nursing student on placement a laptop is under consideration.

The School of Education holds training sessions for the whole school on Wednesday afternoons and focuses on learning technologies like interactive whiteboards and wikis. Colleagues considered the School to be forward looking and are committed to continuing with their training programme. There is mixed awareness of all the tools and procedures to support audio visual media and the need for improved intra-school communication is recognised. The two issues that emerged concerned the excessive number of emails that staff have to process. Discussion boards are identified as a preferable communication medium for information sharing compared to practice of email circulars. Also, a database to inform staff what hardware is available for loan similar to the system which exists for reprographics would be very useful. More linking up of EDU, AV and IT was put forward as a suggested development to provide a form of one-stop shop.

5.3.3 e-Administrative support

The school-based VLE co-ordinators are a conduit for gaining feedback from students on their use of the VLP, which they report is primarily positive. However, VLE co-ordinators comment that students want more than reading lists and report that there is not enough material in the VLP for students. There appears to be variable usage patterns with extensive use reported for undergraduate programmes in the Nottingham Law School where staff are expected to upload their modules and are chased if this is not done. However, some students are disadvantaged because some academics do not use the VLP at all.

The VLE co-ordinators highlight e-support functions including attendance monitoring, which assists tutors with tracking. Giving VLP access to external examiners for the review of learning materials and view of students profiles has made moderation tasks much easier to carry out. A further example of VLP administrative support is given in Design Management where student tutorial groups are arranged as are the delivery of e-resources.

Administrators reported that they use the VLP for monitoring and checking handbooks and student timetables. An information source providing a record of who the subject co-ordinator and subject administrators are for each school is identified as potentially useful for new (and existing) staff who find it takes lengthy time and effort to find this information at present.

5.3.4 Research and Development

In some schools, for instance, the School of Art and Design, the emphasis is shifting from teaching undergraduates to research. However, most schools maintain that they do not have a pedagogical research culture, but assert that *'we need to take this seriously as we live in a competitive environment and need to look for novel ways of harnessing learning and teaching technologies.'*

The perception that development is not happening in a systematic way and leads to practice driven by immediate need, was coupled with concern that absence of a systematic approach 'means that individuals may be reinventing the wheel'.

A suggestion put by School of Art and Design staff was for staff to have their own research blog. This was presented as a good way of conducting peer review. *'This would be a good to make research a part of teaching and it helps students understand connection between academic's own practice and teaching.'*

Most existing e-learning practice is driven by need, e.g. rising student numbers, the proliferation of software tools. The E-gallery came from a practical need to share Fine Arts students' work between staff and students. This was only built because a JISC grant bought out IS time to develop it.

5.3.5 Resources

School of Animal, Rural and Environmental Science staff are *'desperate to use a video link up in the riding school. The practical riding side is being left behind. We want a big screen to show a round of show jumping. We're really keen to take it forward. We could produce better material for the students to comment on. There is so much we could do.'*

JISC is identified as an excellent source and School of Architecture and the Built Environment staff found movie maker and multimedia very useful.

Although development of e-learning is time consuming, eventually investing the time to develop e-learning material becomes a time saver. The example of Spanish was given where staff were able to use the material via the VLP while colleagues were off sick by directing students to the online material. Time is cited as the barrier for affording opportunity for developing materials across most of the schools.

School of Art and Design colleagues highlight that *'we need to ensure students (and ourselves) are fit to face the challenges of working in a digital environment. The sum of what I do will be available in another form, extending the student experience. Guides are needed on how to search etc in order to give students confidence in an e-environment.'*

Similarly, the School of Education highlighted that *'it is time-consuming for staff to set up and research new e-tools e.g. podcasting. It takes time to do podcasts well. We need less teaching time and the support of local technicians. It's definitely a resource issue.'*

School of Computing and Informatics staff would value digital work space/presence to experiment with technology with access to web servers. They are hampered by IS firewalls, etc. preventing them from conducting developmental work either on campus or at home.

5.3.6 Staff Development and Support

Staff generally accepted that *'we need a much better infrastructure of support for e-learning and that VLE training should be incorporated into the staff induction process.'*

School of Architecture and the Built Environment staff accepted that they need to *'pick up skills'* and introduce colleagues to basic concepts. One colleague cited an instance where it *'took a while to develop a 15 minute video program.'* However, staff could be trained quite quickly if facilities and ancillary staff are made available, which would enable better supported use of multimedia. The consensus was that the considerable time needed to create, for instance a quality 'video lecture' should be addressed.

Some School of Art and Design staff suggested that staff development time could be usefully focussed on the development of blended learning rather than e-learning. The general complaint around staff development and training was given as inadequate time allocated and the need to catch up in the evenings. *'I was registered on the PGCHE but dropped out because there is too much to do to keep up with it. No time is allowed. I am doing one module per year now.'*

To support development of e-learning, the School of Architecture and the Built Environment is setting up a small e-learning committee that will have a number of jobs including dissemination of what good work is being done as colleagues are not aware of what they could do.

'The reality is that staff and students lead insular lives, if there is more shop windowing between other staff – to see what others are doing, it would be helpful. Staff in the school have lots of ideas, but need support to learn and implement.'

Affording time for staff development is raised as an ongoing issue. Different options were put forward including dedicated training sessions and award bearing routes. Small group based activities are identified as most effective for demonstrations. One member of staff is very motivated and inspired by the PGCHE where development topics including the use of Jaws, Dragon Dictate, interactive whiteboards, PowerPoint annotation tools and integrating tools into other applications.

A member of the Nottingham Business School pointed out that *'until you know what you need you can't identify skill deficit'.*

The perception of some staff in the School of Art and Design is that there *'isn't that much sharing about internal or external projects. We need a physical or online forum for this. Sharing happens locally and invisibly. There has never been a culture of sharing here, although this is changing.'*

Suggestions put forward included outward-facing web pages to showcase programmes to potential students and a school website that is visible and functional.

A number of staff in the School of Art and Design called for a pool of support to be available to academics and a much better infrastructure of support for e-learning. This would enable development time for extended use of PowerPoint or for building online assessment recognising that *appropriateness* of online assessment differs dependent on subject differences.

School of Architecture and the Built Environment staff cited Flash and improvement in Questionmark Perception skills as priorities. The approach to support is considered critical.

'Somebody doing it for you is a waste of time. We need assistance to develop our own resources. We are the subject experts so we just need support to author our own material. It can take six weeks to implement a web page update in Rhythmyx, when you could do it yourself in two minutes. The Rhythmyx system is too restrictive.'

Staff development in online assessment, e-discussion, e-moderation and opportunities to reflect on e-learning practice are described as important staff development topics that can be carried out using a formal or informal approach.

Basic training in the use of e-tools was also emphasised i.e. how to use PowerPoint, Flash, DreamWeaver properly. Short one hour sessions in a workshop format drawing on staff expertise emerged as the preferred model. Staff expressed support for online training and for generic packages that can complement 'speaking to people who have expertise'.

A mix of a bottom's up and top-down approach offered to give direction was conceded as a good balance that would help to avoid *'the usual enthusiasts and no-one else'* getting involved.

'Something needs to galvanise everyone as the practice is too patchy at present. Some kind of event(s) for sharing good practice or five day period for helping each other out. The EDU could have a facilitating role, also in the leveraging of investment e.g. setting up a recording suite.'

Some School of Social Science staff discussed the policy that all new teaching staff have to do the PGCHE. This marks a recognition that different pedagogic approaches need to be understood. It is argued that the same approach should be taken to e-learning as this represents a *'new skill set needing staff development that for instance, can help staff to discern when adopting e-learning is likely to help improve learning and development of deeper learning requires. The standard staff development is 200 hours, but as this is shared with research, which is valued more highly, there is a tension between training and research.'*

School of Science and Technology staff maintained that before the establishment of the Centre for Effective Learning in Science (CELs), support was very ad hoc. However, there is acknowledgement of opportunities to take up VLP training as advertised in eNews, which competed with other sessions or meetings. Regret is expressed that insufficient commitment is given to sharing resources and knowledge although peer observation is practiced and found to be useful.

Colleagues pointed out that *'it is harder to prepare for e-teaching than face-to-face teaching materials as questions and answers have to be 'watertight.''* However, staff asserted that if there is a central drive to develop e-learning materials then this should be supported by secondments. Having the knowledge to develop a topic via e-learning could be used to cascade to other colleagues. Awareness of the EDU/CASQ secondment scheme is evident as well as a willingness to engage with this process.

A staff development need is recognised in the area of copyright compliance where a perceived policy shift is noted, placing personal responsibility for copyright material on staff. A lack of clarity on policy and procedures exposed the scale of work needed to improve awareness and practice changes in copyright compliance.

School administrative staff highlight the need for more guidance on policy relating to VLP permissions and procedures for managing this. They pointed out that many staff do not know how to handle permission setting, which has the effect of placing this role on administrative staff.

School administrative staff welcome the support they receive from the VLP help staff and express interest in engaging in supporting academic staff if they receive appropriate training to carry out this role. They would welcome provision of online training given that time is an issue and this method of delivery would help to reduce the need for travel whilst supporting staff progression and improving development.
VLE training they argue should be part of the standard NTU courses like Race Equality, Health and Safety etc. that are prioritised.

6.0 Results of the online student survey

Data collection was promoted via the Student eNews and via the login page of the VLP. A summary of results are described below and are complemented by the survey results in Appendix 3.

6.1 Participation rates

A total of 256 students completed the online student survey, 82% of which are undergraduate and 12% postgraduate students. Roughly an equal number of students completed the survey for each level of undergraduate study with slightly fewer third year participants. There is a marked difference in participation by gender with 62% female and 38% males completing the survey.

6.2 Student profile

90% of students completing the survey are full-time and 10% part-time. A corresponding 54% of students are not employed, 17% of students report that they work for up to ten hours per week, 16% of students work between eleven and twenty hours per week and 13% work over twenty one hours each week.

An overwhelming 98% of students have access to a computer during term-time with 95% also having access to the Internet. 94% of students report that they have broadband access to the Internet.

6.3 Student computer application skill levels

Students reported that they are moderate or advanced with the following common applications, as listed below.

	Moderate/ Advanced
Word Processor Packages e.g. Word	97%
Spreadsheet Packages e.g. Excel	71%
Database packages e.g. Access	40%
Presentation packages e.g. Power-point	85%
Statistics packages e.g. SPSS	16%
E-mail	96%
On-line discussion forums	64%
Web searching	93%
Using web-cams	44%

Enquiring about student use of the computer during independent study revealed that 47% of students use the computer for between 50-74% of the time and 24% use the computer between 75–100% of the time.

88% of students reported that they use the VLP to access and/or engage with e-learning resources whilst 12% reported that they did not use the VLP.
The 10 features of the VLP cited as useful in order are as follows:

1	Study resources, course materials
2	e-mail
3	Timetable
4	Library - esp. e-journals, e-Search
5	Module handbooks
6	Discussion tools

7	Anytime / anywhere access
8	Electronic databases
9	Other software – Lexis, CV Builder
10	Online software tutorials

The 10 features of the VLP cited as least useful in rank order are as follows:

1	Timetable out of date or not used by lecturer
2	Lesson / study materials not up to date by lecturer
3	e-Search / e-Journals hard to use
4	My World – not relevant or not used
5	Irrelevant or redundant features
6	Discussion boards – hard to use, irrelevant or not implemented by tutor
7	Past exams – not easy to use, not available for me, not up to date
8	Complexity, can't find stuff
9	Difficulty in using features
10	My Profile / CV Builder / PDP – not used

72% of students reported that more than half of their modules had some module content in the VLP.

6.4 Sources of support

36% of students agree that their subject staff have given a lot of help in using the VLP whilst 35% disagree that this help is available. 43% of students agree that the library User Support or VLP Help have given a lot of help in their use of the VLP with 29% disagreeing and 39% of students are undecided or don't know. Subject staff have given a lot of encouragement to make more use of the VLP according to 67% of students with 15% of students dissenting from this view. Peer support is received by 29% of students for assistance with the VLP, but 38% of student respondents do not access peer support.

The Personal Development Planner is a useful e-Learning resource according to only 16% of students compared with 28% of students who disagree and 56% respondents are undecided or do not know. The usefulness of the software tutorials (currently being re-named, *online tutorials*) is reported for 21% of students with 25% reporting that they are not useful and a majority 54% of students undecided or do not know about these tutorials. Responding to the general question about the overall benefits of using the VLP for study, 84% of students agree that the VLP does play a beneficial role with only 6% of students disagreeing.

When responding to a query about the e-learning activities, tools and resources students have accessed during the current year, email usage comes top, with online lecture notes following. Web links (URLs) to other reading and materials, access to the on-line library catalogue and e-journals are listed in order of the usage rates reported.

A closer examination of student use of online resources reveals that the top three activities used most are email (32%), e-journals (16%) followed by the online library catalogue (10%) (see Appendix 2, question 21 results for more details).

The top three main advantages of e-learning that students cite are the helps it provides to find information for coursework (21%), enabling access to a wider range of sources of material (16%) and meeting learning needs when travelling away from home or the University (16%) (see Appendix 2, question 22 results for more details).

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6.5 Barriers to using learning technologies

The top five barriers to using learning technologies reported by students are listed below:

	Percentage
Availability of resources	13.3
Absence of immediate access to my tutor	12.9
Lack of support	11.2
Absence of face to face contact with other learners	11.0
Availability of the University's computers	10.3

6.6 Findings from student college based focus groups

6.6.1 Background organisation

Four focus groups were arranged by the Educational Development Unit and conducted on a college-wide basis during February and early March 2007 to assist with the e-learning benchmarking exercise. The questions were similar to those presented to staff with a focus on drawing out student experience, perceptions and views. Each focus group was recorded with the written consent of each participant.

6.6.2 Defining e-learning

Some students associate e-learning with what is available via the Internet. Many agreed that there is no one easy definition. *'Delivering material via the VLP doesn't mean that it always engages you.'*

e-learning is viewed as an 'assistive tool' and complements the use of real books and learning off the page. *'E-learning enhances rather than replaces the traditional teaching environment.' 'There is a high level of e-learning used at NTU, e.g. the discussion boards are good for asking questions and everybody gets to see the answers. This opens new channels for your work.'*

Contributors from the college of College of Architecture, Design and Built Environment thought that e-learning is a tool to be used from any geographic location and to allow you to send essays by e-mail. e-Learning is a tool independent of tutors and for others the VLP means *'getting study organised.'* e-Learning is any software tool that supports learning.

6.6.3 Understanding and experiences of e-learning

Many students across the Schools cited the Library e-resources as an experience of e-learning practice as it offers a means to access online journals, databases and other subject specific applications. College of Business, Law and Social Sciences students welcomed a number of library services such as reserve, print papers and the ease of online access compared to physical access to the library. Both frustration and understanding of the restriction of license limitations was expressed in some areas of the School of Animal, Rural and Environmental

Sciences. Some staff encouraged students to obtain printed copies where conditions of free use of interlibrary loans from the British Library services operated.

A number of students report a gradual increase in the use of e-learning tools during their time at University.

As one would expect the VLP was cited by many students as an e-learning tool. At the time of the focus group, frustration is expressed with the inaccuracies of timetable information, which deterred some students from using the VLP.

Various practices are reported across schools regarding the placing of lecture notes or handouts on the VLP. Some staff place them on prior to lectures, some after and some at the end of term. Comments were also made about lecture notes not always being updated. One teaching technique described was inclusion of blanks in lecture notes that are to be completed at the lecture. The issue of lecture notes is raised at course representative meetings where students claim that they would still go to lectures as they would not miss out on explanations and understanding of diagrams.

The reason tutors offered for posting lecture notes onto the VLP after the lecture related to concern about student attendance of lectures.

Although some students felt that lecturers do not know how to upload lecture notes most lecturers put some information on the VLP whilst some additionally offer useful web links etc.

College of Business, Law and Social Sciences students welcomed having resources available when they required them. 'If you have missed a lecture, the ability to access the material afterwards is more advantageous'.

Other issues associated with e-based lecture notes were discussed with an example of a lecture with 120 people. Students did not consider it feasible for the lecturer to print off a large number of lecture notes. PowerPoint is viewed as a useful means to convey lectures complemented with notes taken during the lecture. However, some students warned against too many PowerPoint slide shows, stating that they are de-motivating. Some students also claimed that it is much quicker to read paper.

Some students referred to staff scepticism about the use of websites where they are directed to *'use books because they are reliable.'* The problem of discerning and being guided to reliable information is identified as a gap. One student confessed that she *'can do more in developing skills, to identify sources that are credible and substantiated. Credible sources are the key (in my course whereas) in Fashion and Retail just views abound.'*

e-Tools used recently include the Resources section of the VLP, lecture notes, software used for presentations, Excel for laboratory groups and email contact with tutors. The module booklets are amended easily electronically and timetables and documentation put on the VLP.

School of Social Science staff have a practice of producing academic papers, which they then submit for peer review expecting it to be critiqued. This practice was initiated with students to enable them to develop their critiquing skills. 2nd and 3rd year students are encouraged to put their work in the VLP to be critiqued by each other, which staff claim is resulting in improved critiquing skills. Other

students can see it working on lots of modules – sociology, etc English based subjects….

Nottingham Business School students found it an advantage to have access to 1st and 2nd year material available to use whilst on placement via e-learning so that they could access online resources *'Our primary assessment task was the completion of the dissertation proposal. However, we still got emails and it was wonderful to access journals via e-learning, which was really helpful. As library facilities in home towns are often inadequate and a return to the University to access resources would have presented real barriers for completing the dissertation. So I did not feel I lacked anything. We kept going with emailing each other occasionally. It might have been a good thing to have access to an online discussion area.'*

School of Animal, Rural and Environmental Sciences students go off-campus in the 3rd year and claim that it would be quicker if students had an MSNish service on the VLP instead of text or email. *'This would be useful to contact tutors and for group work particularly where students are distant learners.'*

Students experiences often relate to their communication and information technology (CIT) skills. One student claimed to work more effectively from home, where she can *'get much more work done.'* However, lack of practice meant that she had forgotten how to conduct an online search.

Wikis are cited as an e-tool used to support learning. However, issues related to the reliability of the information on a Wiki is noted. *'I might just put up random information…. sometimes it's just wrong or unreliable.' 'It's a good idea (wiki) as long as people reference material.'*

Application of e-learning used in Schools include use of the VLP's integrated email and the "Library Tool" online catalogue, email for correspondence with lecturers, CV Builder and software based tests, as used in Computing and Informatics. There are lots of e-learning facilities in Computing such as virtual software, simulations e.g. circuit boards.

More standard usage includes PowerPoint slideshows and one lecturer puts his latest slides, news, questions etc. up very quickly after the lecture providing a "Real Time link" with the classes, designed to provide follow up and continue the momentum from the lecture.

However, variability in practice is often highlighted with one lecturer refusing to use PowerPoint on the grounds that diagrams presented are complex and need to be complemented with explanation.

'*I can't imagine doing a degree without home access -- especially using journals. It makes things easy, but I also still use library books.'*

6.6.4 Barriers to e-learning

From a student perspective the absence of module content is commonly cited as a barrier and a staff training issue was identified when it became evident that staff could not use the VLP.

Questioned about what students expect as a basic set of tools the following were identified: assessment criteria; module packs, timetables and reading lists. A list of tutor contact names and emails would also be welcome by students.

Not everyone looks at instructions, a harsh commentator reported that *'we had a mature student last year who was computer illiterate and left because of this… Computer support is offered so it is his responsibility to be able to access training. He chose not to access help.'*

6.6.5 Inconsistency of student experiences

Many problems were experienced with VLP timetables. Lots of lessons were recorded with inaccurate information as changes were not updated. Inconsistency between what the VLP presents compared to what lecturers say and the module handbook presents about the timetable was evident from the number of comments expressed on this point.

There is also a lack of consistency with lecturers not putting resources on the VLP. Students agree that practice is inconsistent across modules and courses. 'Some don't touch it and other staff are very involved.'

Students in the same College may have mutually distinct experiences. One claimed that, *'I didn't know discussion boards existed'* whilst another stated *'we used discussion boards to help with revision, which was really good. I logged on at 11pm and another person was online!'*

6.6.6 Virtual Learning Portal (VLP)

The VLP platform is identified as a key e-learning tool by most students and experiences are variable. *'The VLP gives more direct access to information than using the library. It's useful for finding out timetables and administration details.'*

Tutors use it as a communication tool where students can access deadlines, course news, timetable changes and getting briefs.

A number of students agreed 'that the VLP has become a convenient communication tool; we associate it as administration tool but not a learning thing'.

'I have access to the VLP all day like most people on my course. It's really good because things do change on the day (tutors make changes of content and to schedules)'.

VLP support for careers planning is cited as useful for students. More support to access relevant online resources would help to complement limited opening times of the Brackenhurst career shop.

'Real time messaging in the VLP would be good so we can see who is online in VLP on your course. This would help to support idea sharing/developing'. 'Putting up information would be good as you don't always know where to start with an assignment. You could bounce ideas off other people.'

'It offers online tutorials to work at your own pace e.g. for using online tutorials such as learning Flash.'

Some students felt that tutors rely too much on the VLP and claim that the expectation of Internet access at home is not highlighted as a pre-condition for studying at NTU. Consequently timetable information can't be accessed from home. There was general agreement that residential halls need to have Internet access.

Students appreciate lecturers who display up-to-date Web links to obscure websites for architecture and building. *'It really does help but he is the first tutor*

to do it and they are maintained each week. The lecturer is not technically savvy, but just directs and guides student use of the Internet.'

Students in the College of Science pointed out that *'it is made clear to us from the start that the VLP must be used by students as a means of course communications.'* However, communication tools are not always employed successfully. One lecturer tried a discussion board but didn't get much participation and other students report experiencing some technical difficulties with discussion boards. Online discussions are good in theory, especially for large modules. However, they are not usually made available and access problems make them hard to find. However, there is great potential for supporting virtual lectures in virtual environments/worlds.

College of Business, Law and Social Science students welcomed tutor use of WebBoard by posting ideas and/or critique it. *'This is done during the day or night so you are free to contribute when you want to. I find it an easy way to comment and get feedback.'*

One student reported that she had to give a presentation on WebBoard, whilst another student lives in Loughborough so will find it useful to participate remotely. The need for practice was emphasised. Some groups used discussion boards regularly i.e. every two weeks. The student based in Lincolnshire found this helpful as she could not get into campus regularly yet can still take part. *'It's a lifeline.'*

Help in using the VLP is great. A student reported that; *'One Sunday night I was struggling with something in the VLP and emailed the helpdesk – and was very surprised to get a response within 10 minutes. I was still struggling and replied and got another response which solved the problem – most impressive on a Sunday night!!!'*

Variable experience with maths modules was explained. *'Use of OHP's instead of the VLP arose because of the lack of support for formulae, paper handouts are still used. Occasionally the module handbook is in the VLP. On other modules there is news, handouts, results etc.'*

'I did my degree in Ghana where handouts were photocopied. I came here and PowerPoint was used. It's so easy for students. We can print PowerPoint slides which is extra convenient for me. WebBoard could work well too. At first I did not want to use it, as I had an initial fear of using WebBoard and then I found out how helpful it could be. I hope lecturing staff use it.'

'Most modules have some content in the VLE, even if it is only the course specification. There was only one in the second year that had not been set up at all. Even if tutors do not use the VLP the course spec(ification) is always there and is very useful to refer to for (Nottingham) Business School students.'

6.6.7 Induction

There are mixed views on VLP inductions. 'We have induction in the first week when we do not know the buildings your going to be in - so inappropriate timing'.

How students learn about features of the VLP is highlighted by a willingness by some to explore or make accidental discoveries for uses of the message board, news feeds and access to home directories. Students claim to learn from having to use the VLP. Remote access to the home directory is regarded as a valuable asset but the problem with the time it takes to transfer documents from home

computers to the network home directory are reported. The fault found with the VLP is rooted in the hardware and network speed and performance standards of home computer equipment in use.

Approaches to learning to use the VLP varied. Some adopted a trial and error approach. Others received help from friends or partners and some received a brief overview by their tutor at the beginning of the year. Others claimed, 'it's easy to use if you are computer literate and most people are'.

By contrast, a number of comments are expressed on similar lines. The VLP is simple to use so doesn't require detailed training. The features could be made more obvious and exploited more. *'There are intrinsic flaws in the layout though. It is not intuitive.'*

Because of the different approaches to learning there is a reluctance to insist on making VLP induction compulsory during Welcome week as students had far more distracting activities to engage in.

Student induction in year one is of limited use and refresher workshops are welcomed although more promotion is needed. Other students indicate that more refresher courses for 2nd and 3rd year students would be welcome, when more in depth study warranted use of information search and retrieval skills.

'It is an advantage if you have previous ICT training/knowledge – the one hour training on the VLP that first years receive is insufficient for those that don't. The assumption underpinning VLP training is that you have a lot of IT experience.'

'Once I had found CV builder I realised it would be a good idea to look for more e.g. software tutorials.' A number of students point out that there are some good tools which are not promoted like CV Builder. Discovery of new tools can prompt further exploration *'once you know 'how' to search within the VLE and find things like Exam Papers.'*

A number of students from the College of Architecture, Design and Built Environment find the LLR user support very helpful for offering basic help, using search tools and for finding information. However, Nottingham Business School students report that operating in two e-environments can be confusing. *'The old NBS portal, which is very basic is nothing like the VLP and accessing placement adds to the confusion too.'*

6.6.8 Online discussions

Limited use of discussion tools were reported, although there is some evidence that some staff had tried to make use of these.

College of Business, Law and Social Sciences students used WebBoard (discussion board) to critique literature reviews – *'I am expected to respond so it is a continuous improvement exercise, an iterative approach.'*
A second year module used this review process as an alternative to self-critiquing. It was noted that online discussion boards improved participation rates with people who you would not expect to contribute. They do actually really get involved. *'Often the quiet ones you have never spoken get very involved in the WebBoard and make lots of contributions.'*

This offers a more academic approach, because if you couldn't access people on the course to give feedback you would need to ask people face-to-face and/or

parents. The perception is that because it is electronic remote communication, you get more honest responses, more feedback.

'Discussion boards, especially, allow you to feed back. And it's good you can do that when questions are fresh in your mind – you don't have to wait until you can see a lecturer.'

There is some concern in Art and Design that the *'VLP is meant to standardise practice which can mean losing time in the studio, which means losing some sense of community, caring …books and the café contact. It leads to isolated working at home.'* A competing view acknowledged that in practice it is difficult to get groups together so it's much easier to get together for an MSN interview.

6.6.9 Online assessment

Variation in typing speed as compared to handwriting is raised as a limiting constraint for online assessment. The nature of the assessment makes multiple choice questions suitable for more functional and logical tests because they offered immediate feedback. A number of staff perceive multiple-choice tests as more suited for science-based subjects as there is limited scope for online assessment that involves discursive answers.

Some students referenced positive experience of online assessment at other institutions including GCSE "Bitesize" tests and the online Driving Theory Test element. These are regarded as particularly helpful in a formative context so that improvement can be tracked and provide a boost.

College of Business, Law and Social Sciences first year human services students have had an assessment session where the results are received simultaneously. *'It's much better to get the results straight away than having to wait. You could only take the test once. You could not resubmit. To evaluate what has been learned was not assessed.'*

6.6.10 Social isolation

The use of the VLP now means; *'we don't meet each other, especially later year students. We used to sell tickets for social events, we used to be more integrated and met with our elders (senior students).'*

This sense of isolation may be course specific. *'It's completely different from our Foundation year, when we were always in and had a (physical) notice board that always had up to date information. But now there is not much contact between students across the years. As a course we don't socialise much at all.'*

'Art and Design should be more personal. It's important to get input from other people.'

Similar experiences occurred at other universities although Art and Design 'should be more personal' and 'face-to-face is important, because you get inspiration from your peers'.

The use of communications technology to enhance communications and social cohesion is also expressed: *'We can e-mail and back in the same day without trouble and have an appreciation that tutor contact via email affords depth of feedback and you can arrange a meeting if needed.'*

6.6.11 Social networking software and informal learning

Students were familiar with blogs and used them more socially than for learning. However, an example of developing a MySpace e-learning context is described with a link forwarded to an employer.

Awareness of social networking tools is variable. Facebook is cited as a useful tool for keeping up with friends. Some students use MySpace for outside interest groups and news that the University had unblocked MSN messenger after Christmas was welcomed.

For some School of Art and Design students, ownership of a website is noted as an impressive asset for demonstrating use of industry-standard tools such as Flash, Dreamweaver and Photoshop. *'You can create your own pages. I gained the skills myself. They are really powerful for getting people to see (what you can do). A number of students are using MySpace. In fact there is an industry expectation of presentation on the web. Indeed you have to be amazing to be noticed(i.e for non e-artwork).'*

A number of College of Science students are aware of social software citing external use of MySpace and YouTube. However, no members of this focus group were using these methods to support their learning.

Four out of the seven participants of the College of Business, Law and Social Sciences focus group are users of Facebook. One contributor pointed out that Facebook has only really taken off during 2007 and its use has spread quickly. The advantage is, *'that you can ask anyone what they think. You get wide feedback and opinions.'*

It is evident from the discussions that large numbers of students on Facebook have been signed on without the consent of individuals listed. The focus group sessions suggest that Facebook is engaging the University student age range.

Students learn a lot by talking to others and with Facebook you can start conversations and talk informally about formal things. *'It's especially useful at exam times when you are trying to prioritise and see what others are doing – how they are tackling things.'*

'More students use Facebook mostly for social arrangements. This is in contrast to Webboard, which is generally dependent on the academic setting it up for student use. The location of a tool is important. If it is in an academic section you won't use it because it's just used for learning not socialising.'

'We have created a Facebook for business school students (unofficially). We could use this when on placement. If the Uni had this it would be great. Kent students have got their own Facebook. Other universities have their own version of it. It gets others involved in the subject. Any person can create a group – find out who is studying this or that. There are University face-books for networking.'

'It would be very good, I use it all the time. It would be better if it was set up in the University.'

6.6.12 Distraction

Experimentation does lead you to come across different features, but you can get distracted by MSN. Books are better in a way as they demand your attention – online sources tempt you to be distracted and experiment around. *'I can't see e-learning replacing a traditional teaching environment, I see it as enhancing it.'*

6.6.13 Sufficiency of e-learning resources

'There are good resources in the University environment; you can always get on a PC. The VLP has improved, even within the space of a year and offers very useful information that needs to be updated, e.g. room change information which needs to get to those who miss a lecture.'

Email works really well. Lecturers respond very quickly. It would be good to make use of discussion boards. On the whole it is good, but would be better if all lecturers put materials on VLP. There is a lack of consistency in this respect, but most lecturers do respond quickly to e-mail queries.

For computer support, students use the library computers as there are limited school-based computers although you can get peer group support. *'In Bonington, computer performance and speed is poor and often timetabled so we are not able to use them.'*

6.6.14 Suggested improvements

'Use of discussion boards! Then we would get more users and a greater range of opinions. In science this would be especially helpful as understanding varies and you can draw on different levels of expertise.'

'Discussion boards promote communications with other students. It would be helpful if the names of people rather than their User Number appear on discussion boards.
Videos of example projects on the VLP would be valuable – plus more links to other information on the Web.'

Requests for feedback opportunities to respond to the anonymous questionnaire at the end of term is cited as a desirable option.

'More about "how to give a presentation." Following an experience I had of an audio recording of a lecture at King College London. I found listening to it an uneconomical use of my time.'

'"Podcasting" (so called) recording lectures for non-attendees is OK if you have the accompanying slides. There are still lots of technical barriers to overcome. Lots of storage space is needed for these things. Overheads of professional editors is possibly an issue too.'

More videos on web-sites was identified as a useful way of learning.

Students would like to see online assessment utilised more ie. for formative assessment. *'We're guessing what we know at the moment and do not know if we are at the right standard. Students would like quick quizzes to test their understanding. If they get a 6/10, they would know they would have to go over it again.'*

Module results are obtained from the undergraduate office at the moment but students would really appreciate it if they could monitor progress during the year. *'It would be good to see how we are getting on during the year rather than just get one mark at the end of the year. This would be particularly beneficial for the first year who don't know what the goal posts are.'*

'You could have a first year Facebook to help with support and orientation as you don't know anyone.'

Business, Law and Social science International students find it very difficult if the material is not on the VLP prior to the lecture as they cannot print it out. *'They have to translate, and panic, using palm tops so cannot enjoy the lecture as they are catching up all the time.'* *'Dyslexic and international students have additional pressure if they have to take notes of the whole lecture, so it's important for lecture notes to go on the VLP before a lecture.'*

There was consensus that lecturers should choose how to put up material. However, there was also an expectation that students need to know what they can expect from tutors. Hence tutors need to be explicit about what will be provided. There is uneven practice about what will be offered.

7.0 Lessons learnt

In common with most Universities in the Higher Education sector this is the first e-learning benchmarking exercise that Nottingham Trent University has undertaken. Active and extensive support from a wide number of staff across the schools, services and from senior management contributed to the success of the exercise. Externally, the support offered by the ELTI group during Phase 1 and events from the national sponsors at HEA, assisted in providing opportunities for collaboration and information sharing.

The ELTI tools provide a useful starting point for obtaining staff perceptions of e-learning and related issues. The institutional focus of the surveys and focus groups on the dimensions of culture, infrastructure and staff expertise and support, offered a holistic perspective for assessing progress in the embeddeness of learning technologies in curriculum design and delivery. In summary the methodology enabled an assessment of the adequacy of the University's technical and support infrastructure and the extent of staff training and expertise.

However, the results from the surveys and focus groups generated primarily qualitative data in the areas of interest. The paucity of quantitative data to verify the extent and type of use of learning technologies is a shortcoming that can be addressed in any future exercise. This will in part be enabled by the outcome of a significant project initiated prior to the e-learning benchmarking exercise.

7.1 The Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) Project

The University had already taken a decision to replace its in-house Virtual Learning Portal (VLP). The VLP provided a valuable environment for the delivery and development of programme information, resources, news and discussion for over eight years. However, developments in learning technologies, changing emphases in teaching practice and new ways to support students' learning signalled the need to select an alternative VLE.

The selection of the Desire2learn VLE and its implementation during the academic year 2007-08 demonstrates strategic commitment to the provision of a robust and coordinated infrastructure that allows flexibility, provides the potential for use and re-use of learning objects. It also provides a wider range of communication tools, supports the establishment of communities of practice internally and externally, and provides enhanced tools to help monitor classes, students as well as offering feedback opportunities.

Whilst a study of e-learning across the University is not limited to activities conducted in the VLE, it is expected to provide a core online learning and teaching

service for all students. The reporting and statistics that can be obtained from the new VLE can be expected to assist in complementing qualitative findings in future benchmarking exercises.

7.2 The Institutional Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy (ILTES) 2006-10

The completion of the ILTES strategy in 2006 provides a framework within which the University's nine schools can identify priorities and the support structures and activities to support these priorities. As eLearning is identified as a central underpinning to the strategy it seems appropriate to map recommendations and actions arising from the benchmarking exercise into the structure of ILTES objectives that follow:

- Objective 1: Creating an innovative and inclusive learning environment (for students and staff).
- Objective 2: Encouraging excellence in professional development.
- Objective 3: Enhancing learner support systems.
- Objective 4: Continue to create a modern and inspiring curriculum.

8.0 e-Learning benchmarking: recommendations and actions

Category	Recommendations/Actions	Outputs/resources
Creating an innovative and inclusive learning environment for students • *Extending e-tool use* • *Module/assessment Feedback* • *Innovative L&T practices*	1. Development of pedagogic based training and support with e-tools; 2. Develop training and promote use of VLE tools for giving and receiving online student feedback; 3. Prioritise innovation aligned to University priorities e.g. ePortfolio, Learning Object Repository (LOR); 4. Continue to progress work of the VLE Accessibility Group and partnership with Desire2Learn.	1. Training courses and roll-out of training focused on learning and teaching e-tool exemplars; 2. Online resources and training courses that focus on e-Assessment and online feedback options; 3. Formation of eLearning steering Group with reporting sub-groups to facilitate ongoing innovative Learning and Teaching developments; 4. Partnership with Desire2Learn to prioritise accessibility developments that progress an online environment compliant with SENDA and the principles of Universal Design.
Encouraging excellence in professional development • *Needs analysis* • *Staff induction* • *Training and support* • *Guidelines*	1. Conduct an e-tools needs analysis with staff to ensure appropriate advice/support; 2. Development of online, group and face to face training provision for staff; 3. Development of online information literacy and e-resource support; 4. Review University-wide induction programme for new staff and incorporate	1. Report on training and support requirements and recommendations on service models (EDU); 2. Report of training provision including metrics and feedback analysis (EDU); 3. Roll out of University wide e-literacy programme and report (LLR ALT); 4. Collaborative process for embedding staff VLE and e-tools induction (EDU, Prof Dev Unit, CASQ);

Category	Recommendations/Actions	Outputs/resources
	VLE/e-tools training; 5. Develop guidelines and procedures needed to support best practice in e-learning/blended learning.	5. Best practice guidelines in e-learning/blended learning (EDU, LTCs).
Enhancing learner support systems • *E-Support* • *Induction* • *Training* • *Module/assessment feedback*	1. Selection and implementation of eLearning Helpdesk system; 2. Review and enhance University-wide induction programme for students and embed VLE/e-tools training; 3. Conduct student induction training (f2f and online); 4. Development of feedback models using VLE tools	1. Installation of helpdesk software (EDU, LLR, IS); 2. Enhanced level of service between users and Helpdesk (LLR EDU, LLR CS, IS); 3. Streamlined and co-ordinated student induction service plan (EDU, LLR CS, CASQ). 4. Statistics recording the number of inductions sessions, numbers of students, hit rates for online tutorials and feedback data (EDU, LLR CS); 5. Generic feedback models for use in/at end of module/programme/activity
Continue to create a modern and inspiring curriculum • *Design, approval and review* • *Curriculum re-design*	1. Work with Schools to articulate elearning, blended and flexible learning in programme specifications; 2. Academic planning to include e-learning/blended learning development; 3. Schools encouraged to work with EDU to support use of learning technologies to	1. Modified processes to facilitate capture of e-, blended and flexible delivery (CASQ); 2. Additional guidance on the articulation of e, blended and flexible provision in programme specifications. (CASQ); 3. Review academic planning process to facilitate consideration of flexible delivery

Category	Recommendations/Actions	Outputs/resources
• *VLE and e-tools* • *Operation and maintenance* • *Emerging technologies*	enable achievements of their ILTES priorities; 4. Showcasing and dissemination of good practice embedding the use of e-tools e.g. outputs from secondments.	options(Schools); 4. Embedding of elearning in School Action Plans (Schools); 5. Showcasing of good and developing online exemplars posted on the elearning website (eLearning Steering Group, EDU).
Management • *Minimum standards* • *Processes, procedures & systems* • *Audit & benchmarking* • *Evaluation*	1. Review policy on basic onlineness i.e. minimum standard of online presence for each module that facilitates a common experience for all students; 2. Practice guidelines that help to manage student expectations in an e-environment e.g. response time to email communication; 3. Devise process to enable school administrators to support staff with VLE administrative tasks; 4. Commit to an e-learning benchmarking exercise every three years; 5. Central reporting on the extent of use of elearning (EDU, ASQC); complemented by routine incorporation of elearning practice in Peer Observation of Teaching schemes (PSQR, SSQR); 6. Review the student contract to facilitate flexible access to web resources for students. 7. Annual report on VLE and e-tool training and support and e-learning/blended development.	1. Revised policy on the provision of basic online learning and teaching resources and services for all students (eLearning Steering Group, Schools); 2. A process to regularly review the minimum standard of online provision to ensure continuous enhancement (ASQC, Schools, EDU); 3. Guidelines to assist students operating in an online learning environment; 4. Process to enable school administrators to support staff with VLE administrative tasks (EDU, Schools, Admins); 5. Outputs and dissemination from 3 yearly e-learning benchmarking exercise; 6. Metrics to assess use and effectiveness of e-learning/blended learning and e-delivery e.g. number of modules offered for blended learning delivery; the number of modules that include an e-learning/e-assessment activity; 7. Proposed amendments to student contract if appropriate;

Category	Recommendations/Actions	Outputs/resources
		8. Report of training provision including metrics and feedback analysis (EDU); 9. Summary report on e-learning/blended learning development across the University (Schools, EDU).

8.1 Reflection and evaluation

The e-learning benchmarking exercise, on reflection, was a major undertaking and in tandem with the VLE project has significantly raised the profile of e-learning across the University. The continuation of the VLE implementation project during the 2007-08 Academic year gave rise to pro-active partnerships with key stakeholders responsible for progressing the broader learning and teaching strategy including supporting services and infrastructures. The development of university-wide networks and stronger relationships with academic and support staff are likely to have a beneficial and positive impact in the post-VLE implementation phase.

Evaluation of benchmarking is considered from a number of perspectives described below.

Factors influencing the choice of methodology
Positive factors:
1. Prior familiarity with the JISC sponsored ELTI methodology and confidence in the development process that led to its formulation.
2. Agreement by senior staff with the core focus on the following dimensions:-
   - Culture
   - Infrastructure
   - Expertise
3. Ability to tailor the tools to NTU's organisational structure and requirements.
4. Ability to engage a wide group of staff and students in the exercise (compared with Observatory on Borderless Higher Education (OBHE) which is externally managed and driven).
5. Ability to complement the methodology with additional tools e.g. online survey and focus group design for capturing student data and student experiences.

Constraining factors:
1. The University was granted less than one week by the HEA benchmarking team for Phase1 participants to consider alternative methodologies. This proved an inadequate time to give proper consideration to alternative approaches;
2. Perception amongst the Phase 1 participants suggested that OBHE is a highly managed and controlled exercise. Whilst this appealed to a number of University's because this would reduce workload of staff engaged in the exercise, it would also reduce the scope for detailed organisational learning, which may impact on an ability to conduct evaluation and revisions in future
3. The Pick-and Mix option conveyed a mix of methods rather than a coherent methodology, although ELTI facilitated inclusion of different tools.
4. The E-Learning Maturity Model (eMM) methodology was focussed strongly on processes which provided an element of the University's information requirements. NTU needed to gain information on processes, infrastructure and tangible evidence of progress;
5. The MIT90 was described as a robust framework that takes account of organisational border, culture and the external environment. As a framework it has the potential of providing a wrap around ELTI or eMM.

On reflection the sector was probably not in a state of readiness to adopt any of the methodologies on offer given the novelty of the exercise and paucity of data collected on institutional e-learning dimensions. With the benefit of hindsight it may have been preferable to invite participants use of components of the methodologies that met institutional requirements thus reducing 'competition' between the methodologies.

This approach may have generated an outcome of an HE framework for conducting e-learning type methodological studies. Indeed there is a high degree of overlap in the way the methodologies are articulated and in the tools and methods used to obtain findings.

A good outcome for this very extensive exercise will be provision of an overarching framework with a set of tools to draw on that offer a degree of flexibility to tailor to local needs.

The benefits for the University from taking part in the benchmarking exercise

These include:

1. Obtaining an overall profile of University wide e-learning developments and supporting infrastructure.
2. Engaging over 216 staff and 260 students in the exercise thus promoting awareness of and interest in e-learning and related issues.
3. Raised profile of the Educational Development Unit (EDU), which facilitated focus groups, implemented and promoted the online surveys and conducted data collation;
4. Provided evidence for each School to assist with development of School based Learning and Teaching Enhancement Action Plans
5. Yielded good practice exemplars that led to collaborations, feeding into the development of the NTU Pathfinder proposal.
6. Gaining insight into the experiences of other universities adopting the ELTI methodology and the wider benchmarking community.
7. Focus group discussions provided welcome opportunity for staff and students to come together to discuss e-learning related issues.

The main constraints, institutional reactions and unexpected issues

1. Time to adapt the instruments was limited, but it was necessary to engage NTU staff in this process to be assured of suitable surveys and focus group design;
2. Training needs of EDU staff to conduct the focus groups was not initially envisaged. Social science colleagues provided a training slot to prepare EDU staff to take on facilitation role;
3. Preparation of consent forms to address ethical issues to secure use of focus group recordings;
4. There was a need to prepare a student survey (based on Chester college model) in order to obtain an overview of student perceptions and experiences as the ELTI methodology was focused on University infrastructure and staffing, but not the student experience;
5. There was belated agreement to permit installation of a NTU blog for this exercise – implemented in December 2006, but posting problems persisted throughout the exercise giving the University exercise a limited external profile;
6. The University's reaction to the exercise was extremely positive exemplified by facilitation of an e-Learning benchmarking ELTI group meeting, use of the

University communication channels to promote participation in the exercise and senior management encouragement to Schools to support the exercise.

8.2 Sustainability of the benchmarking process

Conducting future e-learning benchmarking exercises is an important adjunct to the University's strategic commitment to e-learning provision and delivery. A regular three year full scale exercise will help to identify progress and focus for future planning. A three year cycle can be complemented by the school-based annual review and evaluation of the e-dimension of the ILTES School Action Plan.

Learning from the current audit will entail:-

1. review of e-learning benchmarking methodologies internationally taking account of academic work underpinning MIT90, eMM and developments in Europe, US, Canada and Australia;
2. revision of the methodology to include methods and tools for obtaining student experiences and perceptions of e-learning provision and support;
3. a revised methodology to take account of sustainability issues and embed maturity dimension using scaling;
4. further development of relationships with Schools to embed annual review and planning to promote culture of change management, research and development
5. Organise reflective practice event (key staff were totally immersed in VLE replacement project activities from the end of February) for all participants in the exercise.

Plans for implementing changes or developments as a result of the benchmarking exercise include:-

1. The e-Learning benchmarking report will assist Schools in identifying their strengths and weaknesses and to help prioritise initiatives and actions for their Learning and Teaching Enhancement Action Plans;
2. Provide a focus for the EDU and CASQ to work with the Schools, Centres and services;
3. The results of the exercise are assisting with NTU's VLE replacement project;
4. Prompted a review of social networking technologies for learning and teaching and gave impetus for formulating Learning, Teaching and Research policy framework. This is facilitating guidelines and procedures to support appropriate use of social and collaborative web-based software.

Key messages about e-learning for the sector

Some suggested key messages include:

1. It would be beneficial to have a common working definition of e-learning or an framework to give the University ability to assess progress with other partners, with UK HE sector and potentially to facilitate international comparative studies;
2. The experience of e-learning benchmarking should form the basis for provision of a common e-Learning framework to assist in assessing progress and identify strengths and weaknesses;
3. The HEA/JISC can use the experience of the e-learning benchmarking exercise to contribute to international forums and be proactive in collaborating on the production of an international framework;
4. HEA/JISC can draw on the e-learning benchmarking exercise and use the emergent networks to foster University collaborations to develop/evaluate key challenges/priorities;
5. The diversity of e-learning implementation should not detract from institutions capacity to capture what is going on, how it's being done and who is doing what.

The synergy of projects (e-learning benchmarking and VLE) and people have raised staff expectations. It is providing an impetus and energy that looks to the new VLE as an avenue for exploring the use of e-pedagogies and new ways of learning. It will be a challenge for the next benchmarking exercise to capture the richness of experiences as well as the metrics that tangibly describe e-learning (inside and external to the VLE), on a University wide level.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Results from the Staff Online Survey – ALL Schools

Appendix 2: Focus group questions for staff

Appendix 3: Results from the Student online survey

Appendix 1 Results from the Staff Online Survey – ALL Schools

1) **In which school/service do you work?**

	Percentage	Responses
Animal, Rural and Environmental Sciences	5.1	11
Art & Design	5.6	12
Arts & Humanities	14.4	31
Biomedical and Natural Sciences	6.5	14
Built Environment	6.5	14
Business	8.8	19
Computing and Informatics	5.1	11
Education	9.7	21
Law	5.6	12
Social Science	10.6	23
Other *	22.2	48
Total responses:		**216**

* IS, Student support, LLR etc.

2) **Which of the following <u>school or college</u> roles, if any, do you have within the University?** (select all that apply)

	Percentage	Responses
Programme Leader	19.5	58
Module Leader	34.7	103
Academic Team Leader	3.4	10
PT/Session staff	5.1	15
Research postgraduate	2.7	8
Learning & teaching Coordinator	2.4	7
Deans	1.7	5
Associate Deans/Associate Deans for Research	1.7	5
Learning technologist	2.0	6
Other*	26.9	80
Total responses:		**216**

* Lecturer, student support, administrator, researcher, library staff, technician, coordinator

3) Which of the following service or support roles, if any, do you have within the university? (select all that apply)

		Percentage	Responses
LLR		12.5	13
CASQ		8.7	9
Administrative VLE coordinators		7.7	8
Information Systems		13.5	14
Student Support		35.6	37
Other *		22.1	23

* Administration, other support, admissions, H & S. etc.

4) Considering your own experience, please rate your agreement with the following statements. *In my school:*

	Strongly disagree	*Disagree*	*Neither A nor D*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Don't know*
a. There is a strong focus on good Learning and Teaching practice.	3 (2.61%)	13 (11.30%)	11 (9.57%)	39 (33.91%)	**43 (37.39%)**	6 (5.22%)
b. Teaching quality enhancement strategies are well established.	3 (2.65%)	18 (15.93%)	23 (20.35%)	**42 (37.17%)**	15 (13.27%)	12 (10.62%)
c. Learning and Teaching record is important to academic **appointments**.	6 (5.22%)	14 (12.17%)	22 (19.13%)	**30 (26.09%)**	19 (16.52%)	24 (20.87%)
d. Learning and Teaching record is important to academic **appraisals**.	5 (4.39%)	9 (7.89%)	18 (15.79%)	**34 (29.82%)**	18 (15.79%)	30 (26.32%)
e. Academic staff in my School are expected to advance scholarship of their subject from a L&T/e-learning perspective.	8 (7.02%)	20 (17.54%)	27 (23.68%)	**34 (29.82%)**	8 (7.02%)	17 (14.91%

5) Considering your own experience, please rate your agreement with the following statements. *In my school:*

	Strongly disagree	*Disagree*	*Neither A nor D*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Don't know*
a. Teaching staff have access to an appropriate range of e-learning tools to use with students.	4 (3.51%)	17 (14.91%)	17 (14.91%)	**58 (50.88%)**	11 (9.65%)	7 (6.14%)
b. There is a concerted effort to integrate some aspects of e-learning into its programmes where appropriate.	6 (5.26%)	21 (18.42%)	18 (15.79%)	**50 (43.86%)**	10 (8.77%)	9 (7.89%)

c. There is a culture of promoting good teaching practice in regard to e-learning.	9 (7.89%)	19 (16.67%)	28 (24.56%)	**42 (36.84 %)**	8 (7.02%)	8 (7.02%)
d. There is an action plan which includes clear aims, targets and resources plans with respect to e-learning.	11 (9.73%)	**30 (26.55 %)**	19 (16.81%)	21 (18.58%)	9 (7.96%)	23 (20.35%)
e. There is an appointed person or team in your School whose role it is to support e-learning?	11 (9.73%)	17 (15.04%)	9 (7.96%)	**37 (32.74 %)**	22 (19.47%)	17 (15.04%)

6) Considering your own experience, please rate your agreement with the following statements. *In my school:*

a. There are school wide initiatives to promote good practice in e-learning.	10 (8.85%)	21 (18.58%)	22 (19.47%)	**41 (36.28%)**	8 (7.08%)	11 (9.73%)
b. There is a culture of sharing good teaching practice in regard to e-learning.	10 (8.85%)	26 (23.01%)	27 (23.89%)	**36 (31.86%)**	6 (5.31%)	8 (7.08%)
c. There are e-learning innovators.	7 (6.19%)	8 (7.08%)	9 (7.96%)	**53 (46.90 %)**	22 (19.47%)	14 (12.39%)
d. E-learning innovators occupy senior academic positions.	18 (15.93%)	**35 (30.97 %)**	15 (13.27%)	14 (12.39%)	5 (4.42%)	26 (23.01%)
e. E-learning innovators influence decision making.	14 (12.39%)	24 (21.24%)	**25 (22.12 %)**	20 (17.70%)	6 (5.31%)	24 (21.24%)
f. Learning and teaching innovators have school support (e.g. allocation of time, funding, support staff.)	14 (12.39%)	19 (16.81%)	23 (20.35%)	19 (16.81%)	7 (6.19%)	**31 (27.43 %)**
g. Learning and teaching innovators influence my own practice.	9 (8.11%)	14 (12.61%)	28 (25.23%)	**38 (34.23 %)**	11 (9.91%)	11 (9.91%)

7) Considering your own experience, please rate your agreement with the following statements. *In my school:*

	Strongly disagree	*Disagree*	*Neither A nor D*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Don't know*
a. E-learning is incorporated into curriculum planning (e.g. module documentation)	9 (8.11%)	22 (19.82%)	16 (14.41%)	**43 (38.74 %)**	10 (9.01%)	11 (9.91%)
b. E-learning is embedded in most courses within the subject curriculum.	10 (8.85%)	**32 (28.32 %)**	20 (17.70%)	23 (20.35%)	11 (9.73%)	17 (15.04%)
c. There are courses that include the use of e-learning in my subject's curriculum.	6 (5.36%)	5 (4.46%)	11 (9.82%)	**59 (52.68 %)**	19 (16.96%)	12 (10.71%)
d. There is/are a school wide project initiative/s aimed at integrating e-learning in the curriculum.	9 (8.04%)	25 (22.32%)	23 (20.54%)	24 (21.43%)	4 (3.57%)	**27 (24.11 %)**

8) **Considering your answer to the previous question please (briefly) describe any initiatives of which you are aware.**

Shared module space

DL and PT Social Work programmes are either based on or incorporate elements of e-learning. I don't know about all programmes but most modules on the programmes I am aware of at least use e-learning as an alternative method of delivering module and programme information, news and links to online resources etc.

Increased use of chatrooms and other interactive dimensions of module delivery.

Most of the e-learning is focussed on our Masters course in Bio-med Sci.

In-school staff developments sessions on Blogging, Wikis, IWB, remote voting equipment.

Pockets of individual excellence and some courses more amenable than others to formally including e-learning provisions.

Chris Cramphorne and Adrian Castell with Medusa. Carole Tansley with MSC strategic HRM.

E-counselling project commenced October 2005 to offer counselling by email to students away from campus on placements. This has periodically been extended to offer the service to other students in relation to specific student issues. The pilot is currently being evaluated and there are proposals to extend the service to synchronous (Internet Relay Chat) format

The e-gallery initiative in Fine Art works within one course. Also in the Art and Design MA.

Training and support for new staff/new systems.
Dissemination of good practice.
E-learning forums within the school.
Occasional workshop to spread the word, but nothing really structured or regular.

VLP training. Meetings regarding more Distance Learning, including e-learning and blended learning, for our MA in ELT.
Blended learning with FD's

Masters modules

Use of Wikis and blogs in undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

Development of online M-level modules.

PGCE HE Pearl Academy e-learning.

Sue Wallace's bid to CASQ.

Possible bid for e-learning module.

Use of Web 2 Technologies to support learning and teaching.

Some staff were involved in the TALO project.

use of JISC supported resources for certain modules.

LTSU support for e-learning e.g. School wide dissemination of Course Genie, Schoolwide CPD offered for e-learning, technology resource area open to all staff.

School wide projects in the past include those on e-copyright and developing e-learning material.

E-learning distance learning course MSc Research Methods.

Podcasts on VLP; use of discussion forums/ wikis.

Use of CAL Tests and of audio visual lectures.

Use of e-learning is left to the module leader's discretion.

My own part time curriculum development role is to assist colleagues with integration into their subject planning.

CELS lecturers using e-learning; ELMS (e-learning in mathematical sciences) group which meets monthly to discuss e-learning issues but is struggling for funds, visibility and university support.

Incorporated into PGCHE teaching qualification.

Setting up an online transaction for students to run through email…very embryonic.

Email discussion projects in Modern Languages.

CAL testing and electronic databases are common (though CAL not across the board).

Used where easy to incorporate without much investment of time.

David Jukes is probably the key innovator with e-learning in ARES, also Steve Godby using e-resources for GIS and GPS mapping....others (including myself) to a lesser extent and I am not aware of any school-wide initiatives as such.

Diagnostic, formative and summative testing with QMark; use of blogs and wikis for contact and reflection and collaboration use of video and audio downloads discussion boards for contact on placement use of VLP for document storage etc.

One of my colleagues is developing a teaching resource called Medussa to use within IS teaching. Most staff make some use of the VLP for storing of documents/ Web links. In the past we have had more School wide activity and support and specific days to encourage sharing of best practice.

9) **Considering your own experience, please rate your agreement with the following statements. *In my school:***						
	Strongly disagree	*Disagree*	*Neither A nor D*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Don't know*
a. My school actively collects student feedback regarding the use of e learning.	15 (13.76%)	**33 (30.28 %)**	16 (14.68%)	14 (12.84%)	1 (0.92%)	30 (27.52%)
b. There is a high level of demand from student feedback for e-learning integration in their courses (e.g. online material, forums, communication, resources)	7 (6.36%)	**25 (22.73 %)**	24 (21.82%)	23 (20.91%)	10 (9.09%)	21 (19.09%)
c. Student feedback with regard to e-learning is acted upon.	5 (4.55%)	13 (11.82%)	24 (21.82%)	**35 (31.82 %)**	1 (0.91%)	32 (29.09%)

10) Considering your answer to the previous question, if student feedback is collected in your school, at which level is it acted upon? (e.g. programme, team, SASQ, school, etc.)

Grouped responses:

Team	10
Programme	15
School	6
Course	2
Division	1
Module	5
SASQ	3
EDU	1
School L&T group	1

Comments:

Certainly at programme and module team levels. SASQ and School Learning and Teaching committees have e-learning amongst their priorities.

Current focus collection by EDU is the first that I am aware of and the results of this are currently not known.

Not really sure there is a great deal of feedback directly connected, and even if at programme level there is support / desire to promote e-learning, there is little staff expertise / desire to do so at module level.

Note: feedback is collected on ALL issues of relevance to teaching practice/quality but not, especially, on e-learning. If students did demand more e-learning facility I

guess we would attempt to provide it. In reality, however, students demand more personal interaction with tutors.

Student feedback is always considered BUT does not necessarily result in an action! Student feedback about e-learning (online materials) tends to be very assertive/demanding but student perception is not always the best (or most appropriate) learning & teaching approach for that subject/activity.

The part time job I have is a response to the need in Primary PGCE & BA QTS courses to provide ICT input. Part of this involves the use of e-learning & part of my remit is to respond to the need. (Appropriate links, shared blogs, session input)

I've conducted small surveys about e-learning at programme level. But not as part of wider initiative.

We do what we can at programme team level but often are frustrated by lack of response from HQ. Many problem come for students' own h/w and s/w issues that we can't fix.

The only time e-learning has featured in student feedback is that they want more electronic access to library resources, to access from anywhere.

I guess all but I really don't know. Mostly programme team/module level.

Rarely collected and seems never to be acted on.

Generally at module and/or programme level. On the Programme I manage we always have some questions on module feedback forms in relation to use of the VLP. If issues are picked up I would investigate these with module leaders.

11) **I am aware of Nottingham Trent's Institutional Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy (ILTES)**

	Percentage	Responses
Yes	67.6	73
No	32.4	35
	Total responses:	**108**

12) **I am aware of the action plan for my school for implementing projects that aim to fulfil the ILTES**

	Percentage	Responses
Yes	40.6	43
No	59.4	63
	Total responses:	**106**

13) **I am aware of action points which refer to e-learning initiatives.**

	Percentage	Responses
Yes	36.4	39
No	63.6	68
Total responses:		**107**

14) Can you (briefly) list your School teaching and learning priorities for the current academic year?

Due to the recent appointment of the Dean and LTC and subject review, implementation of the ILTES has not started.

1. Continuing professional development for those who are involved in teaching and supporting student learning;
2. Integrated student support with particular emphasis on induction, study support and retention;
3. Curriculum development in the areas of work based learning and research informed teaching.
4. Innovative teaching practices including the development of e-learning. Supporting the transition from a predominantly document based VLP to blended learning.

Enhanced use of VLP.

More modules to use Course Genie.

More use of VLP for distance learning modules rather than just relying on email?

Mine are to introduce Web 2.0 services into my teaching. In the light of financial problems, failing student numbers, large scale departure of staff, the priorities are simply to get staff allocated to classes and have them taught. There is little room and even less money for innovation.

A. Enhance the Application of E-learning
B. Improve Student Retention
C. Enhance Work Based Learning
D. Enhance Assessment and Feedback Practise
E. Research Informed Teaching

To deliver education that relates to the rapidly changing context of the creative industries, under the impact of new media technology.

Professional development for teachers.
Induction and student support.
Work-based learning, research informed teaching.
Moving from document delivery to blended learning in e-learning.

Maintain standards among an increasingly disillusioned and de-motivated team!

Fashioning the Legal Practice Course to fit new initiatives from the Law Society first year experience.

Sorry, I'm not aware of any priorities.

Ensuring staff are allocated to 1375 hours.

Extending JHP provision.

Innovative and inclusive learning environments (e-learning fits here)
Excellence in CPD (including in e-learning)
Enhancing student support
Innovative, engaging and inspiring curriculum (e-learning fits here)

IMPROVE THE YEAR 1 EXPERIENCE.

Continue to create an innovative, engaging and inspiring curriculum includes e-learning and blended learning opportunities.

Inclusivity
Scholarship & academic practice
CPD for L&T
Employability

Student Feedback
Timetabling
Graduate Employability

Better use and allocation of resources. This seems to be a university wide obsession at the moment. Teaching and learning now appear to be secondary considerations.

Learning & Teaching priorities:
Student Scholarship and Craft
Inclusivity
Supporting Professional Development

Implement delivery of redesigned & re-specified School taught programmes.
Establish L&T strategy. Action short term School priorities (First Year undergraduate experience. student experience) within ILTES.
Create School Action Plan to respond to full ILTES timescale.

More students, less staff. Don't know what the priorities are.

Get enough students to survive next year.

Other than a general request to improve teaching quality.

No, we have not had an L&T coordinator in place for some time and consequently L & T strategy has been rather neglected. In addition the school has been reeling from loss of a large number of academic and support staff so just finding staff to teach everything on a day by day basis has been a struggle hence long term plans have been a lower priority.

CPD; integrated student support; curriculum development in work-based, distance learning and research informed teaching; innovative teaching practice/ blended learning.

15) **From the list below please select the approximate number of courses with any e-learning element CURRENTLY in your School (e.g. uploaded course content, eassessment, ecollaboration activity)**

	Percentage	Responses
none	1.7	2
1-5	17.5	21
6-10	6.7	8
11-15	4.2	5
16-20	1.7	2
More than 20	14.2	17
I don't know	33.3	40
Total responses:		**120**

16) **Please estimate the approximate number of PLANNED courses with an e-learning element.**

	Percentage	Responses
none	5.8	7
1-5	13.3	16
6-10	4.2	5
More than 10	6.7	8
I don't know	47.5	57
Total responses:		**120**

17) **Please estimate how many fully online courses there are in your School?**

	Percentage	Responses
none	30.0	36
1-5	9.2	11
6-10	4.2	5
More than 10	1.7	2
I don't know	32.5	39
Total responses:		**120**

18) **Please make a note here of any other Learning and Teaching agendas for your School that would impact on e-learning integration (e.g. widening participation, personal development planning).**

PDP

Design software for garden design accessible on VLP possibly.
Both of the above are implicitly important since important to NTU (this year next year who knows?) and simply coping with numbers might be helped by appropriate use of e-learning, perhaps as part of a considered blended learning approach.
The above questions are poor. In reality all course where copies of lecture slides are made available fall into the above categories, but that is not in my opinion E-learning (I do have an MEd in E-learning so am coming from a position of knowledge!)

The complete lack of an L&T coordinator for the past 18 months, and financial restrictions reducing any investment in L&T, relatively zero staff development events etc.

Online working has transformed the individual working practices within the creative industries. Any E-learning initiative in Art and Design needs to be lead by student generated content. We therefore need the resource to enable students to upload their own work into a space for critical debate and interaction. They need to become confident networkers and producers of their own online content. If we do not provide the space they will simply move their work elsewhere.

Widening participation

Developing distance learning routes for existing and new modules

Blended learning
Personal development planning
New MA modules
Explore the use of blended learning on full time ITE and JHP programmes
Developing study skills

There is rhetoric, how substantive that is I would not like to guess.

Widening participation and explanation of what resources are needed to successfully run this (staffing, time, funding).

In respect of question 17 (fully online courses), I hope there are none (unless specifically for distance learning applications). In respect of question 18, both would help, but presently attention is focused upon efficient delivery, not personal development.

Widening Participation and PDP. Academic skills.

We need policies that people are required to follow.
Staff development to ensure that policies can be implemented.

Lack of money, bizarre admin and management structure, lack of time, stress

Since many decision makers still use slate and pencil, don't hold your breath on this one. We have just designed a PDP module which is purely paper based, and the perpetrator has just been promoted to ATL. Go figure.

Changes in student numbers, internationalisation, offering shorter courses on a direct commercial basis, e.g. like the Barclays University Take the Lead type programmes.

Questions 15 to 17 are impossible to answer because we don't have courses, we have modules and programmes! Almost all modules here would have course content uploaded on the VLP and make some kind of use of e-resources even if they are only web links. Sorry, I couldn't find anywhere else to put this comment!

Where do you get help with the following? *(tick all that apply)*

19) …**Using the VLP (Virtual Learning Portal)**

	Percentage	Responses
VLP Team (in the Educational Development Unit)	37.2	74
IS (Information Systems)	12.6	25
School support/professional staff	16.1	32
Colleague	29.1	58
Don't Know	1.0	2
Other *	4.0	8

* Other: Don't use the VLP, online help

20) … **Using QuestionMark Perception (an online assessment building tool)**

	Percentage	Responses
EDU (Educational Development Unit)	11.2	12
IS (Information Systems)	4.7	5
School support/professional staff	15.0	16
Colleague	14.0	15
Don't Know	47.7	51
Other *	7.5	8

* Don't use, Internet, don't know it, from the manual, IT support in Law School, don't use, Trevor

21) …**Using content creation tools (e.g. Word, Acrobat, CourseGenie, Frontpage etc.) to author e-learning content.**

	Percentage	Responses
EDU (Educational Development Unit)	7.3	9
IS (Information Systems)	12.1	15
School support/professional staff	21.8	27
Colleague	29.0	36

Don't Know	22.6	28
Other *	7.3	9

* Internet, self taught/ training, Don't have time, from the manual, JISC and own resources, IT support in Law School

22) …**Using the *WebBoard* discussion tool**

	Percentage	Responses
EDU (Educational Development Unit)	6.9	7
IS (Information Systems)	4.0	4
School support/professional staff	15.8	16
Colleague	20.8	21
Don't Know	42.6	43
Other *	9.9	10

* VLP team, this is interesting; What is it? Online; Don't use it, Don't need any help!

23) …**Creating images**

	Percentage	Responses
EDU (Educational Development Unit)	2.9	3
IS (Information Systems)	5.9	6
School support/professional staff	16.7	17
Colleague	21.6	22
Don't Know	37.3	38
Other *	15.7	16

* Internet, do it myself, none of the above, Online, JISC, Macromedia, own resources, IT Support, in the Law School, online course

24) …**Creating animations**

	Percentage	Responses
EDU (Educational Development Unit)	1.1	1
IS (Information Systems)	3.2	3
School support/professional staff	14.0	13

Colleague		18.3	17
Don't Know		48.4	45
Other *		15.1	14

* Internet, do it myself, none of the above, Online, JISC, Macromedia, own resources, IT Support, in the Law School, online course

25) …**Creating videos**

		Percentage	**Responses**
EDU (Educational Development Unit)		3.1	3
IS (Information Systems)		6.1	6
School support/professional staff		16.3	16
Colleague		17.3	17
Don't Know		44.9	44
Other *		12.2	12

* Internet, do it myself, none of the above, Online, JISC, Macromedia, own resources, IT Support, in the Law School, online course

26) **The following technologies are well supported at the University:**

	Strongly disagree	*Disagree*	*Neither A nor D*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Don't know*
a. Use of the VLP (Virtual Learning Portal)	5 (4.90%)	3 (2.94%)	13 (12.75%)	38 (37.25%)	**41 (40.20 %)**	2 (1.96%)
b. Use of QuestionMark Perception (online assessment tool)	8 (7.77%)	15 (14.56%)	19 (18.45%)	18 (17.48%)	2 (1.94%)	**41 (39.81 %)**
c. Use of content creation tools (e.g. Word, Acrobat, CourseGenie, Frontpage) to author e-learning content	6 (5.83%)	13 (12.62%)	17 (16.50%)	**30 (29.13 %)**	8 (7.77%)	29 (28.16%)
d. Use of the WebBoard discussion tool	6 (5.88%)	9 (8.82%)	28 (27.45%)	19 (18.63%)	3 (2.94%)	**37 (36.27 %)**
e. Image creation tools	12 (11.76%)	11 (10.78%)	19 (18.63%)	13 (12.75%)	0 (0.00%)	**47 (46.08 %)**
f. Animation creation tools	12 (11.76%)	13 (12.75%)	18 (17.65%)	5 (4.90%)	1 (0.98%)	**53 (51.96 %)**
g. Video creation tools	11 (10.89%)	16 (15.84%)	19 (18.81%)	8 (7.92%)	2 (1.98%)	**45 (44.55 %)**

27) **Besides those mentioned above, what tools, if any, would you like to have access to?**

Don't really know what most of these are but would like to know more final cut pro, dragon naturally speaking.

Blogging software for students, WIKI software for staff and students, audio and video editing software for students (and staff) and server space for finished output.

A better more flexible VLE.

I am very happy with the VLP. Maybe a few improvements here or there would be good (e.g. being able to avoid duplication by having to put info twice for the same module taken by students on different courses). The VLP could be more flexible to accommodate students accessing the same module from different courses, rather than having to set up a separate pseudo-module to accommodate this.

Support for secure synchronous communication and capability for group synchronous communication.

Wiks, blogs, ease of access to forums (cannot bookmark), student upload space.

Web 2 technologies need better support by EDU online survey creation and analysis.

Audio recording to make podcasts; Transcription for podcasts; Webcam for tutorials with off campus students.

Blogs, Wikis, managed learning pathways such as LAMS, selective release within the VLE, Wimba Voice Tools, PDP (such as PebblePad).

Macromedia breeze animation element; Macromedia Authorware; Any good animation tools.

Better web creation tools.

Audio recording of lectures to go on VLP.

Database of lectures, outside speakers (resource, not tool).

Creating hypertext links between VLP and other NTU sites and external sites, Wiki/blog based discussions.

Easy surveys, electronic assignment submission we already have Turnitin.

*(Resources are)..*mostly sorted by trial and error rather than any expert support. Useful support was lost when centralised!

video cameras, tools for getting feedback from students quickly.

28) **Please rate your agreement with the following statements concerning the level of <u>e-learning support</u> in your School:**

	Strongly disagree	*Disagree*	*Neither A nor D*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Don't know*
a. Staff have easy access to advice and training with e-learning tools	9 (8.74%)	21 (20.39%)	17 (16.50%)	**34 (33.01 %)**	11 (10.68%)	11 (10.68%)
c. E-learning in my School is adequately supported	12 (12.00%)	**25 (25.00 %)**	20 (20.00%)	23 (23.00%)	4 (4.00%)	16 (16.00%)

d. There are enough School learning spaces (e.g. lecture and seminar rooms) with networked computers and data projection	22 (21.36%)	24 (23.30%)	14 (13.59%)	**27 (26.21 %)**	4 (3.88%)	12 (11.65%)
e. The School provides support for student use of e-learning tools and materials	13 (12.62%)	16 (15.53%)	20 (19.42%)	**26 (25.24 %)**	5 (4.85%)	23 (22.33%)

29) **Please add any other comments you may have about School based support**

I would like to know lots more about the tools mentioned above and to get to grips properly with e-learning but don't really know where to start and during term time there just isn't the time to think about it. I used QuestionMark a little and the VLP team (Wendy and Craig) helped with that but there were problems with the technology which meant that we moved away from it.

Allowances are not built into personal timetables for VLP development and maintenance of programmes or modules.

Most of the support is via colleagues, we need to be able to access information more easily. It is difficult to find out who knows what?

Some great individual initiatives and limited (but appreciated) support from the top but early adopters/champions lack resources (might be money but might be time off from teaching in lieu, access to resources etc).

The set up of classrooms etc via central timetabling negates school based support, and the structure of IS has eroded the good relationships academics had with IT staff (and hence support).

Awareness is the key issue support may be there, but if you're not aware of the tools the support is useless.

E-learning is different from Creative Production which many students in the School of Art and Design are engaged in as their core practice. When you look at e-learning in relation to creative production I think you have to consider that e-learning should be an enabling infrastructure that ensures students develop the confidence to inhabit online spaces, understand how their work operates in those spaces, and receive a critical response to what they have created.

There is no longer any designated space for us on City campus. Our section may have classes in any of City campus buildings, and there is no guarantee that there will be facilities in allocated rooms.

This is done on a drop in basis which doesn't suit me. I want to attend courses.

It is intermittent and not strongly headlined.

Excellent support.

I teach on the post graduate courses in the Belgrave Centre of NLS. We don't use the VLP have own system.

There is not enough support for staff to develop e-learning materials in terms of time. There are many colleagues who are eager to develop but cannot begin to do so because of their workload, despite the presence of the LTSU.

Although many rooms have data projectors, many cannot handle sound and my PCs cannot easily be linked to appropriate media servers.

Advice and training available, but no time to access it.

Not sure that we have any! I rely on colleagues for support some applications are not changed because I'm not sure how they could be now that we have no in-house support. This sort of support ought to be close to the action, not centralized.

All of these questions sort of assume that I think e-learning is useful and inherently good. I think it might be useful, but in most of my learning and teaching situations, I see absolutely no need for it.

Support is there but no time to make use of it

Insufficient take up by most academics in the use of e-learning, VLP and web discussion areas either because they are on overload or not very IT literate.

Not really sure about financing / resourcing. All our rooms have networked computers and data projection but most do not have sound/speakers.

At one time we have had specific school based staff who were willing to help with new developments and enthusiastic. Nowadays there is no-one in a school based role which is about encouraging e-learning developments; I think this type of role is important for developing awareness of the potential of e-learning and sparking off innovation.

30) **Please rate your agreement with the following statements concerning your understanding of the <u>use and availability</u> of e-learning in your School**

	Strongly disagree	*Disagree*	*Neither A nor D*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Don't know*
a. Academic staff within my School evaluate and select appropriate e-learning material made freely available to Higher Education (e.g. through JISC, HEA, subject centres)	7 (6.93%)	20 (19.80%)	**32 (31.68 %)**	10 (9.90%)	0 (0.00%)	**32 (31.68 %)**
b. Students are well supported in their use of e-learning materials in the VLP	4 (3.92%)	10 (9.80%)	21 (20.59%)	**50 (49.02 %)**	3 (2.94%)	14 (13.73%)
c. Students have flexible access to relevant e-learning materials **during course contact hours**	6 (5.83%)	15 (14.56%)	18 (17.48%)	**31 (30.10 %)**	11 (10.68%)	22 (21.36%)
d. Students have flexible access to relevant e-learning materials for **selfstudy** (off campus)	6 (5.88%)	4 (3.92%)	16 (15.69%)	**46 (45.10 %)**	12 (11.76%)	18 (17.65%)
e. Students are offered opportunities to give feedback on the quality of e-learning provision	4 (3.92%)	12 (11.76%)	16 (15.69%)	**35 (34.31 %)**	5 (4.90%)	30 (29.41%)
f. Students are involved in developing e-learning resources within the School.	12 (11.88%)	22 (21.78%)	20 (19.80%)	8 (7.92%)	1 (0.99%)	**38 (37.62 %)**
g. Specialist staff develop e-learning materials for the school	19 (18.81%)	19 (18.81%)	14 (13.86%)	21 (20.79%)	5 (4.95%)	**23 (22.77 %)**

31) Please give brief details related of any student or specialist staff e-leaning developments of which you are aware.

Students have access to module materials via VLP and are well supported in the use of the VLP. I don't think most of what they get is e-learning in the true sense of the word.

Dave Jukes and virtual world project within FdSc STH provision.

We have a small pool of staff that do an excellent job, but we need to disseminate that information better, to demonstrate good practice and to have reliable equipment and speedy, effective support.

School has a small number of academics (about 3) given some time to work on e-learning issues and maybe more happening at course/division level. Standard module feedback forms make no specific references to use of e-learning so students rarely give feedback on e-learning specifically (apart from maybe the VLP).

None currently. We did have Fiona, but she disappeared, and most staff who have had a strong interest in e-learning are becoming disillusioned with it

E-counselling project to provide counselling by email for students

There have been some projects about online interaction in graphic design (PIE) and attempts to do web design and online gaming by students in multimedia and Fine Art but I hear they have to use free commercial server space because the University does not have server space for student generated content. The e-gallery in Fine Art and in the Art and Design MA works effectively with student content.

Designated staff don't appear to have understanding of what we might need!

Our support staff assists us in developing QuestionMark perception materials.

CELs staff producing animations for ballistics.

Masters Modules

JHP IT modules

Superb support from David Jeckells

History students in Level 2 can opt for a project-based module where they can develop an e-resource.

The LTSU develop all kinds of e-learning materials & support staff in developing our own skills in this.

Use of discussion boards, Wikis, Interactive Whiteboards.

AAH has a LTSU with four members of staff who can work with academic colleagues to develop L&T materials, working in the areas of GIS, language learning, study skills, education.Some tasks within the modules I deliver relate specifically to the development of e-learning resources, with opportunities for the development of skills. I also support colleagues providing similar tasks in other modules.

I know that developments take place in Spanish, but no detail.

My own project to create materials for Art and Design intl. students; project badly delayed by lack of time.

Have some rumour of specialist staff appointed but they do not seem to have had any impact on day to day delivery.

Some of the BABIS students have been involved in the development of Medussa over the past 3 years.

32) **Please rate your agreement with the following statements concerning <u>accessibility</u> in your school:**

	Strongly disagree	*Disagree*	*Neither A nor D*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Don't know*
(a). Accessibility issues (e.g. SENDA legislation) are prioritised in most school decisions about e-learning tools, materials and ICT facilities	8 (7.92%)	7 (6.93%)	22 (21.78%)	9 (8.91%)	2 (1.98%)	**53 (52.48 %)**
(b). Staff with additional accessibility requirements are well supported in their use of e-learning and materials	6 (5.94%)	12 (11.88%)	18 (17.82%)	7 (6.93%)	0 (0.00%)	**58 (57.43 %)**
(c). Students with additional accessibility requirements are well supported in their use of e-learning tools and materials	6 (5.94%)	10 (9.90%)	15 (14.85%)	21 (20.79%)	2 (1.98%)	**47 (46.53 %)**

33) **Please rate your agreement with the following statements concerning <u>quality assurance and enhancement (QA&E) procedures</u> in your school:**

	Strongly disagree	*Disagree*	*Neither A nor D*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Don't know*
a. E-learning is fully integrated into standards and QA&E procedures for School programmes	11 (11.00%)	20 (20.00%)	24 (24.00%)	14 (14.00%)	0 (0.00%)	**31 (31.00 %)**
b. External examiners are fully informed of the way e-learning is integrated into school programmes	9 (9.09%)	19 (19.19%)	15 (15.15%)	23 (23.23%)	3 (3.03%)	**30 (30.30 %)**
c. Copyright issues are addressed in QA procedures	6 (6.00%)	16 (16.00%)	15 (15.00%)	29 (29.00%)	2 (2.00%)	**32 (32.00 %)**
d. Accessibility issues are addressed in QA procedures	7 (7.00%)	11 (11.00%)	19 (19.00%)	22 (22.00%)	1 (1.00%)	**40 (40.00 %)**

34) **Please rate your agreement with the following statements concerning the <u>staff skills</u> situation in your School.**

	Strongly disagree	*Disagree*	*Neither A nor D*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Don't know*
a. There are regular staff development /educational activities, which support development of epedagogical skills.	10 (10.42%)	27 (28.13%)	13 (13.54%)	**38 (39.58 %)**	2 (2.08%)	6 (6.25%)
b. There are regular staff development activities, which support development of ICT skills.	9 (9.38%)	26 (27.08%)	14 (14.58%)	**36 (37.50 %)**	6 (6.25%)	5 (5.21%)

c. All academic staff in my department regularly update their eliteracy skills to meet their needs.	17 (17.53%)	**36 (37.11 %)**	15 (15.46%)	13 (13.40%)	3 (3.09%)	13 (13.40%)
d. All academic staff use the Virtual Learning Portal (VLP).	7 (7.29%)	**33 (34.38 %)**	8 (8.33%)	29 (30.21%)	9 (9.38%)	10 (10.42%)
e. There are experienced e-learning champions within my department who are used as mentors and advisers.	10 (10.42%)	23 (23.96%)	17 (17.71%)	**28 (29.17 %)**	7 (7.29%)	11 (11.46%)
f. Staff in my School regularly engage in staff development and training opportunities for e-learning provided CENTRALLY (e.g. EDU).	13 (13.54%)	**27 (28.13 %)**	17 (17.71%)	10 (10.42%)	2 (2.08%)	**27 (28.13 %)**
g. I participate regularly in training opportunities locally and/or centrally organised.	9 (9.28%)	**32 (32.99 %)**	16 (16.49%)	29 (29.90%)	9 (9.28%)	2 (2.06%)

35) **What else do you think could be provided to improve the provision of staff development activities/opportunities in learning technologies?**

Specified hours allowance for IT training.

Teaching staff need 'time' to learn new technologies. Many will not take that first step because of lack of time and lack of confidence. I think mentoring is a good idea. But the mentor and learner need their time recognised on their timetable.

More help over at Brackenhurst due to tight time constraints.

Give people time to attend and/or timetable at non-teaching times.

The blunt reality is that I, for one, rarely go on such courses as there is simply not time within the normal teaching timetable week by week, and it is not something that I am prepared to give up precious research or other 'free' time to undertake.

More staff development to provide appropriate skills. We don't need another Word course. How about writing scripts or developing templates for QuestionMark Perception.

Training I personally would like a gentle course that can lift me out of my dire situation in use of e-learning.

More on the spot help

More online guides.

Compulsory workshops

Technology moves quickly: an annual update (and I mean an overview, not a detailed course or series of courses) on what kinds of resources are available which can be used to enhance learning and teaching would be helpful.

Basic advice on IT BEFORE staff have to use it rather than during or after its introduction.

Mentoring is good. Also, bringing in professionals from local companies doing e-learning, online marketing etc.

More opportunities to discuss applications of e-learning with colleagues.

Opportunities for hearing about good work done by others.

There have been no opportunities locally to develop skills lately Regular sharing of any existing good practice should be reintroduced. I would also like to see opportunities well advertised for central provision of training/sharing practice.

Opportunity to discuss best practice from other schools and having a school e-learning coordinator.

Have it built in to staff development programme rather than time being wasted on 'housekeeping' issues, most of which could be handled via email or informal meetings.

Other comments

Expertise

A more positive attitude to staff on the part of IT.

More freedom to break away from standard delivery model of so many hours of classroom teaching (something academics have to do) to create space for creativity. A timetabling system that can cope with irregular patterns of activity and better equipped classrooms.

Currently there is very little in terms of either supply or demand for other than "how to load lecture notes onto the VLP".

Freedom from other activities and encroachments, especially bought about by a new obsession with planning and resource commitments at points in the year when proper information is not available. We waste too much time being asked to make unnecessarily detailed estimates of future requirements before we have had the opportunity to properly consider them.

Proper resources and structures: It is hard to expect all these sort of activities given the financial constraints and the massive staff turnover. We lack the resources to do a proper audit of practice and it is enough that activities are carried out on a day to day basis.

Regular appraisal including whatever system is appropriate. I had one in 8 years. Not enough time on total overload all the time.

36) **Please enter any other issues you would like to mention concerning ICT Staff skills**

There are still some staff who do the bare minimum. For some it is because they have tried alternatives and it has failed or they feel it will take too long to learn. E-learning mentors would be a good use of advice and support.

Unclear what my colleagues do and do not know. We don't talk about it much but a fairly high level of competence is assumed. Apart from use of the VLP I can't think of any centrally organised e-learning seminars

I'm always amused by the fact that as a university (an institution surely focussed on learning, teaching and training) staff receive so few opportunities for training.

It is always presumed that staff are IT friendly when this is not the case for many people.

Nearly all staff development is initiated by individuals and often involves self development (certainly when it comes to e-learning). Private sector companies would recognise this and allow us to go on courses where appropriate and get trained up. My nominal staff development allowance of £500 (for everything I might to do each year) would not cover the hotel bills let alone the course fees for many courses I might want to go on.

Expertise and use varies, just as teaching methods vary. It does not automatically make them a bad teacher that some of my colleagues do not use PowerPoint or make much use of the VLP etc... it just makes them DIFFERENTLY good teachers.

These vary greatly between divisions within the school. MY own (large) division is highly ICT literate but I'm not sure that's the case across the School and this means it's very difficult to generalise at School level.

I wish more of my colleagues would do the ECDL.

Sometimes there is too much dependence on staff to develop skills in a wide range of ICT where they may be better working in a team with ICT specialists to develop resources.

This is NOT an issue with availability of training and development. Many colleagues would welcome the opportunity to develop skills in this area BUT do not have the time!

Where is the time to develop and use them?

E-learning will not develop if the staff are not educated and are not encouraged.

I think E-learning is promoted without much regard to good quality pedagogy. The message I get from the university is e-learning is great full stop. In some cases, it might be, but most certainly not in all cases.

They are generally pathetic, and the Luddites prevent those with skills from deploying them. We are not allowed to grade student work submitted electronically because some poor souls can't cope.

37) **Please rate your agreement with the following statements concerning the <u>student skills</u> situation in your School** *(see notes below)*

	Strongly disagree	*Disagree*	*Neither A nor D*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Don't know*
a. Student **eliteracy** skills are audited on entry.	12 (12.90%)	32 (34.41%)	10 (10.75%)	5 (5.38%)	0 (0.00%)	**34 (36.56 %)**
b. Student **ICT** skills are audited on entry.	11 (11.83%)	26 (27.96%)	11 (11.83%)	11 (11.83%)	1 (1.08%)	**33 (35.48 %)**
c. All students are required to have baseline competence in general ICT skills (e.g. ECDL).	14 (15.05%)	23 (24.73%)	9 (9.68%)	17 (18.28%)	2 (2.15%)	**28 (30.11 %)**
d. Students are encouraged to regularly update their ICT skills.	3 (3.30%)	12 (13.19%)	7 (7.69%)	**46 (50.55 %)**	7 (7.69%)	16 (17.58%)
e. Students make routine use of ICT in their courses.	2 (2.15%)	2 (2.15%)	4 (4.30%)	**46 (49.46 %)**	28 (30.11%)	11 (11.83%)

f. All students receive induction training enabling them to use the VLP.	2 (2.17%)	3 (3.26%)	13 (14.13%)	**34 (36.96 %)**	20 (21.74%)	20 (21.74%)
g. All students are offered training enabling them to use e-learning tools (e.g. eassessment, ecommunication tools)	5 (5.38%)	9 (9.68%)	16 (17.20%)	19 (20.43%)	9 (9.68%)	**35 (37.63 %)**
h. Students are required to use e-learning tools (e.g. VLE, assessment tools) in most of their courses.	7 (7.53%)	13 (13.98%)	5 (5.38%)	**36 (38.71 %)**	14 (15.05%)	18 (19.35%)
j. Students are generally competent in their use of e-learning activities in courses.	3 (3.23%)	9 (9.68%)	16 (17.20%)	**39 (41.94 %)**	11 (11.83%)	15 (16.13%)

Notes: ECDL = European Computer Driving Licence; VLE = Virtual Learning Environment; ICT = Information and Communications Technology

38) **Please rate your agreement for each statement that best describes the situation in your School, to the best of your knowledge**

	Strongly disagree	*Disagree*	*Neither A nor D*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Don't know*
a. The School is well integrated into established networks on e-learning, such as JISC, ALT, HEA Subject Network	6 (6.38%)	17 (18.09%)	17 (18.09%)	22 (23.40%)	1 (1.06%)	**31 (32.98 %)**
b. E-learning is promoted as a major feature of the School's external profile (e.g. in marketing to potential to students)	10 (10.64%)	**27 (28.72 %)**	13 (13.83%)	16 (17.02%)	3 (3.19%)	25 (26.60%)
c. Information on current e-learning developments relevant to the discipline is collected and disseminated by the school.	8 (8.51%)	**26 (27.66 %)**	14 (14.89%)	21 (22.34%)	2 (2.13%)	23 (24.47%)

39) **In relation to your answer for the previous question, could you please provide brief details of any current examples?**

JISC is used on the majority of modules in my subject area

Staff development sessions. Emails.

There is very little focus, expertise or interest in the school outside a few committed individuals

International students see online and e-presence as an important part of a school of art and design.

Colleagues have attended ALTC, JISCPAS and CAA conferences + we have has some visits from subject networks. The LTSU organise sessions on e-learning developments. Colleagues share information about online subject resources (e.g. History Data Service) and these are well used.

Wikis, podcasts, e-assessment,

Dissemination is probably based within Academic teams and this cannot be answered at a school level. Some teams will do this better than others in AAH.

Circulation of papers on e-learning in schools by L&T leader.

There are none - don't know.

40) **Please enter any other comments you would like to make about e-learning.**

General points

I don't know nearly as much about the subject as I would like to but my feeling is that the majority of us are probably in the infancy (if not newborn) stage as far as true e-learning goes.

We need much more in the way of demonstrations and workshops to show us what the potential could be before we even get as far as using specific tools. It's hard to get started when you don't really know what it is you're supposed to be starting on.

I would need to check with staff regarding some of the answers to Q's in this section. In general, we find that students have good computer skills; I am not aware of problems with for example VLP access.

We have a good pool of staff who are enthusiastic about developing e-learning, but we need to disseminate this information more easily. We currently have numerous staff development sessions, but we are preaching to the converted. We need to encourage teaching staff to embrace e-learning, but to encourage staff to pass their involvement to administrators.

Currently we don't have the staff expertise, and perhaps the students who would be motivated to use it to make the pushing of e-learning worthwhile. We should focus time and effort on courses where E-learning could add real value to the student experience, on for example professional / part time programmes.

The major problem is money. The university effectively wants all developments to happen for no cost

It (e-learning) is not taken seriously. A few years ago a new course was validated on the basis that it would be delivered online through the VLP. A few modules were but no real attempt was made to put all material online. On resubmission last year the original statement was dropped.

Very difficult to answer this survey from anything other than an individual perspective. I know that I use the VLP as learning support - no interaction, assessment etc - and that I was a pioneer in the use of the web etc. My involvement in School wide activities suggests that the overall picture is patchy and certainly it is hard to know the extent of some practice given the range of courses and the number of students.

However, I do think that we are weak on monitoring of policies and on support but there have been other priorities!

The number of questions on which I had to disagree or didn't know suggests that we have a good deal to do but I think you would need to distinguish e-support from e-learning. I think we have many good examples of e-support and blended learning, not much with interaction and assessment but then, I think these are overrated anyway.

VLP has got much more helpful for knowing what students are doing I'd like to see these basics enhanced and for us to overcome some of the Banner integration problems I am agnostic about videos, animation etc.

I think confidence is a big issue for both staff and students plus knowing where to begin and what the options might be is half the battle!

In the past there has been much more activity in the school in terms of promoting awareness of tools and techniques that are being used elsewhere. We seem to be quite blind to new developments at the moment.

Supportive of e-learning

e-learning could be a good idea to help cope with larger numbers needs investigating by course teams.

E-learning, or the use of technology as part of blended learning, is key to the staff and student experience of the process. Getting it right (or wrong) might make or break an institution. Early adopters should be given more support (that might not be money but time in lieu etc) and they should get full support from the university technical teams.

Copyright grievance

NTU has "passed the buck" to lecturers on the copyright issue without proper thought. Detailed questions that staff have posed about copyright were simply not answered prior to the recent appearance of a copyright confirmation notice during the middle of an academic term with no regard for how busy academic staff are during such periods. This has probably set back the use of e-learning.

I and other colleagues have already indicated that we do not have time to verify copyright of current material during term and so will remove material from the VLP. Introducing a copyright notice at the end of an academic year with due notice would not be a problem. To do so midyear, merely emphasises how it is difficult to rely on technology and will encourage planning of annual teaching by staff to be independent of delivery means that can be so easily and casually changed during the academic year.

On Students and impacts on students / learning

E-learning is not an option. We need to familiarise the students with the online environment they will occupying for the foreseeable future, and help them to confidently exist within it. E-learning therefore needs to be naturalised into all aspects of learning.

Think it has to be reviewed as to how integrated into courses. Some students appear to get lecture notes/slides prior to classes. Results in laziness, and students do not have to process information themselves. Also, often a cover for inferior teaching....and some students try to impress with hi-tech presentations etc which mask multitude of sins.

While some students are happy to use e-learning, many others are not, and are resistant to downloading materials etc from the VLP to use in seminars etc.

Surprisingly few follow instructions and exhortations to use the net to seek out information/resources, and too often when they do, the material is used uncritically.

There is, despite instruction in module booklets etc on how to evaluate web based resources, little indication students are so doing.

Wikipedia, if used, is taken at face value despite its own disclaimers!! Skills and competences also vary. Few teaching rooms that I use would encourage or enable direct access to the VLP and working out issues relating to debates for seminar discussion etc therein.

Essentially, the majority contact with e-learning for students in my area is where/if a lecturer uses PowerPoint and if a lecturer makes regular use of the VLP for putting up materials for students to access. Out of 20 presentation groups for a third level course, only FIVE have opted to use PowerPoint themselves, though it is possible some others may decide to try it later.

We have students who are largely digital natives and staff who are digital immigrants (in some cases of the illegal variety)

Remember that some students are PG and phrase things to apply to both IG and PG students. The PG ones complain that they feel overlooked and they pay enormous fees eg £18,000 over 3 years

Survey Criticisms

Quite a few of the statements were factual statements that the respondent either knew about or they didn't. I don't think some of the items were that amenable to using a Likert scale of agreement (i.e. the respondent either knew about the information portrayed in the item or they didn't!). Much of my responses are out of ignorance and, if the aim of the survey was to show this, then it probably succeeded. Good luck with the survey.

Although this survey is addressed to include support staff the questions do not seem to be relevant to non academic support staff like myself who do not work within a school.

Regarding this survey, I took "courses" to mean programmes throughout most of it, Later on it became unclear as to whether or not it mean programmes or modules

This questionnaire was far too long and I lost interest in it

The above questionnaire suggests e-learning is a consistently understood entity with clearly defined parameters. This is not the case. If I answer 'yes' to a question regarding e-learning I may be responding in the context of email/vlp usage only, and but not in respect of more sophisticated or invasive procedures. Should this, therefore, have been a 'yes', or should it have been a 'no'?

Most of the ratings above in the "neither agree nor disagree" catagory are there because it's a matter of "some do, some don't." If the questions were related only to students that have opted for a module I deliver, or the module is included in the course (e.g. Primary PGCE) then the responses would be "agree." The same applies to colleagues modules I support.

Some poorly worded items (in survey) making response difficult, e.g. item 4d is two items in one. Overuse of jargon without explanation

Critical of e-learning

Mostly irrelevant for higher education. Whilst I agree that e-learning is a vital tool in modern HE, there often appears to be too much focus on its use when it isn't always the most appropriate system for teaching and learning.

Why do it when the students are here and can be taught face to face in an interactive communicative environment?

E-learning etc can be a useful learning and teaching tool but only when used appropriately. It needs to be properly planned within a blended learning environment and not interpreted as an equivalent (or replacement) to tried and tested learning and teaching methods

The VLP is useful for making course material available and there are some good maths resources on the internet. Obviously ICT has a role, particularly in teaching statistics or in using applets to demonstrate relationships or run simulations.

However, in my view, e-learning is not usually an appropriate way to teach mathematics as students need to watch an argument develop line by line and have the option to stop the lecturer and ask questions. The skill of a maths teacher is to be able to explain things differently in response to student questions and misunderstandings computers do not do this very well, if at all.

In my particular role the students I support certainly do not have the ability or confidence to teach themselves maths by reading material on a screen; they need someone there to build their confidence and basic mathematical knowledge, to start from where they are at.

This will become a vital part of module delivery with the move to year-long modules in the School of Arts and Humanities. Student feedback suggests this has been an unpopular move and students are feeling disengaged by the reduced contact time on modules.

Too much e-learning at NTU is not e-learning but e-storage and distribution of documentations (handouts etc) rather than true e-learning (think interactive, possibly multimedia and perhaps collective). Let us hope the arrival of the new virtual learning environment will reenergise e-learning at NTU.

I still prefer direct lectures & tutorials.

Appendix 2: Focus group questions for staff

1 Part 1: Culture

1.1.1 Your personal experiences of e-learning

1. What does e-learning mean to you?
2. If you personally use e-learning in some way can you provide some examples of the tools you use and explain why you use it?
3. If you don't use e-learning can you think of a circumstance where you would?
4. Where do you get your ideas about e-learning from? (E.g. How do you find out about new technologies and tools? and do you read/follow any research findings?)
5. How does e-learning impact on your role?

1.1.2 Your views on the current place of e-learning in the School?

6. How open do you think your School is to new challenges such as e-learning?
7. How open do you think your colleagues are to e-learning, and to exploring e-learning tools?
8. Are you aware of any e-learning initiatives in the School?
9. Do you consider e-learning is appropriate to the teaching in your area or relevant to your subject?
10. Do you think many modules in your School make use of e-learning beyond the basics of delivering supporting notes?
11. How far do you think your working environment supports the use of e-learning?

1.1.3 The place of e-learning in the future?

12. If someone is really enthusiastic about e-learning, how should the School develop this enthusiasm?
13. Are there any specific programmes and/or occasions where you think e-learning could be developed in the School?

1.2 Part 2: Infrastructure

14. What specific e-learning tools are emerging to be the most appropriate and useful for your area?

15 Is your School evaluating and/or supporting any e-learning tools? If so, which tools are these?

16. Are you aware of other new e-learning tools and technologies that you'd like to use, but are not currently available?
17. Do you feel that existing systems, like Banner and Facility, which provide the details of students, courses, modules and timetables, help to facilitate e-learning?

1.3 Part 3: Expertise and support

1.3.1 Internal support

18. What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of e-learning for your students?
19. Do you think academic staff should spend time learning how to get to grips with e-learning to assist in this?
20. Should e-learning be a recognised area of staff development?
21. What obstacles or barriers prevent you from developing e-learning expertise and support? And how could the University overcome this?
22. What could the School do to encourage you or your colleagues to use or extend your use of e-learning? (e.g. what would you need to happen?)

1.3.2 External support

23. Have you or your colleagues taken advantage of working with the EDU, the Key Issues in Practice (KIP) programme, or your LTC? If so, what has been your experience?
24. What University-wide support could be offered to encourage the development and use of e-learning?
25. If there was an opportunity to learn about e-learning as an online course, would you be interested in doing it?

Any other questions?

26. Do you have any comments to make that have not been covered by the

Appendix 3: Results from the Student online survey

1) What is your programme of study (a long list)

2) Please select your gender What is your programme level?

	Percentage	Responses
Undergraduate	82.4	211
Post Graduate	12.1	31
Cont. Prof Devel	1.2	3
Other	3.9	10
Total responses:		**256**

2) What is your programme level?

	Percentage	Responses
Undergraduate	82.4	211
Post Graduate	12.1	31
Cont. Prof Devel	1.2	3
Other	3.9	10
Total responses:		**256**

3) What is the current year of your course?

	Percentage	Responses
1st	30.9	79
2nd	27.7	71
3rd	26.6	68
4th	10.5	27
5th	0.0	0
6th	0.4	1
Other	3.9	10
Total responses:		**256**

5) Please select your gender

	Percentage	Responses
Male	37.9	97
Female	62.1	159
Total responses:		**256**

6) Are you a part-time or full-time student?

	Percentage	Responses
Part time	10.2	26
Full time	89.8	230
	Total responses:	**256**

7) If you are employed whilst undertaking your study, on average, how many hours per week do you work? (if not employed choose 0)

	Percentage	Responses
0	53.9	138
1 to 10	16.8	43
11-20	16.4	42
21+	12.9	33
	Total responses:	**256**

8) Do you have access to a computer at your term-time residence?

	Percentage	Responses
YES	98.0	251
NO	2.0	5
	Total responses:	**256**

9) Do you have access to the Internet at your term-time residence?

	Percentage	Responses
YES	94.9	243
NO	5.1	13
	Total responses:	**256**

10) If so, do you have broadband access on this computer?

	Percentage	Responses
YES	94.0	234
NO	6.0	15
	Total responses:	**249**

11) Please rate your skills in the following areas:

	None	*Basic*	*Moderate*	*Advanced*	*Responses*	*Average Score*
Word Processor Packages e.g. Word	1 (0.39%)	7 (2.73%)	100 (39.06 %)	148 (57.81 %)	256	3.54 / 4 (88.50 %)
Spreadsheet Packages e.g. Excel	8 (3.13%)	67 (26.17 %)	113 (44.14 %)	68 (26.56 %)	256	2.94 / 4 (73.50 %)
Database packages e.g. Access	41 (16.08 %)	111 (43.53 %)	72 (28.24 %)	31 (12.16 %)	255	2.36 / 4 (59.00 %)
Presentation packages e.g. Power-point	8 (3.14%)	31 (12.16 %)	125 (49.02 %)	91 (35.69 %)	255	3.17 / 4 (79.25 %)
Statistics packages e.g. SPSS	132 (51.97 %)	81 (31.89 %)	31 (12.20 %)	10 (3.94%)	254	1.68 / 4 (42.00 %)
E-mail	0 (0.00%)	10 (3.94%)	86 (33.86 %)	158 (62.20 %)	254	3.58 / 4 (89.50 %)
On-line discussion forums	36 (14.17 %)	55 (21.65 %)	93 (36.61 %)	70 (27.56 %)	254	2.78 / 4 (69.50 %)
Web searching	1 (0.39%)	16 (6.30%)	102 (40.16 %)	135 (53.15 %)	254	3.46 / 4 (86.50 %)
Using web-cams	79 (30.98 %)	65 (25.49 %)	64 (25.10 %)	47 (18.43 %)	255	2.31 / 4 (57.75 %)
Other, please specify software in the next question e.g. photoshop	57 (34.13 %)	26 (15.57 %)	40 (23.95 %)	44 (26.35 %)	167	2.43 / 4 (60.75 %)
					Overall:	2.83 / 4 (70.75 %)

12) If you checked 'Other' in Q11 enter other software name(s)

Photoshop
Flash
Dreamweaver
Auto CAD / CAM
Premier

13) Considering your independent study time, for what proportion of this time would you use a computer?

	Percentage	Responses
0%	0.0	0
1%-9%	2.0	5
10%-24%	7.8	20
25-49%	19.9	51
50-74%	46.5	119
75%-100%	23.8	61
Total responses:		256

14) From the following list tick all the tasks where using a computer is your favoured method

	Percentage	Responses
Receiving the core information about a subject	20.3	158
Finding further information about the subject	28.9	225
Discussing the subject with other students	6.3	49
Discussing the subject with your tutor	6.8	53
Doing exercises to develop skills relating to the subject	11.6	90
Doing tests about your knowledge of the subject	10.3	80
Submitting assignments for assessment	12.9	100
Other	2.9	23

15) Do you currently use the VLP to access and/or engage with e-learning resources?

	Percentage	Responses
YES	87.9	225
NO	12.1	31
Total responses:		**256**

16) If yes, which features do you find MOST useful and why?

10 most cited in order

Study resources, course materials
e-mail
Timetable
Library - esp. e-journals, e-Search
Module handbooks
Discussion tools
Anytime / anywhere access
Electronic databases
Other software – Nexis, CV Builder
Online software tutorials

17) If yes, which features do you find LEAST useful and why?

10 most cited in order

Timetable out of date or not used by lecturer
Lesson / study materials not up to date by lecturer
e-Search / e-Journals hard to use
My World – not relevant or not used
Irrelevant or redundant features
Discussion boards – hard to use, irrelevant or not implemented by tutor
Past exams – not easy to use, not avail. for me, not up to date
Complexity, can't find stuff
Difficulty in using features
My Profile / CV Builder / PDP – not used

18) From your experience, how many of your modules this year make use of your VLP learning room?

	Percentage	Responses
None	3.1	8
Less than half	7.9	20
Around half	16.5	42
More than half	29.1	74
All	43.3	110
Total responses:		**254**

19) Please assess the following as appropriate

	Strongly disagree	*Disagree*	*Neither A nor D*	*Agree*	*Strongly agree*	*Don't know*
a. Subject staff have given me a lot of help in using the VLP	21 (8.24%)	69 (27.06%)	66 (25.88%)	69 (27.06%)	22 (8.63%)	8 (3.14%)
b. The library User Support or VLP Help have given me a lot of help in using the VLP	19 (7.45%)	54 (21.18%)	82 (32.16%)	67 (26.27%)	16 (6.27%)	17 (6.67%)
c. Subject staff have given me a lot of encouragement to make more use of the VLP	12 (4.71%)	27 (10.59%)	40 (15.69%)	112 (43.92%)	59 (23.14%)	5 (1.96%)
d. My friends and other students have given me a lot help in using the VLP	33 (12.99%)	63 (24.80%)	72 (28.35%)	51 (20.08%)	22 (8.66%)	13 (5.12%)
e. The Personal Development Planner is a useful e-Learning resource	33 (12.99%)	39 (15.35%)	73 (28.74%)	32 (12.60%)	7 (2.76%)	70 (27.56%)
f. The Software Tutorials offer me useful training	22 (8.63%)	42 (16.47%)	75 (29.41%)	42 (16.47%)	11 (4.31%)	63 (24.71%)
g. Overall, using the VLP in my studies is beneficial	3 (1.18%)	13 (5.12%)	21 (8.27%)	83 (32.68%)	131 (51.57%)	3 (1.18%)

20) From the following list tick all the e-learning activities, tools and resources you have accessed this year. (Tick all that apply)

	Percentage	**Responses**
Lecture notes on-line	13.8	229
E-books	3.5	58
E-journals	10.7	178
Web links (URLs) to other reading & materials	11.7	194
E-mail	15.2	252
Collection & submission of assignments	6.6	110
Video conferencing	0.1	1
Progress file	0.4	7
Power Point (computer-based) lecture presentations on-line	8.7	144
Signing up for tutorial groups or essays	1.4	24
On-line still images of useful materials	2.6	44
On-line tests & quizzes	2.9	49
Digital readings (e-reserve)	0.5	9
On-line library catalogue	11.4	189
Past exam papers	6.6	110
On-line discussions	2.5	41
On-line movies or audio clips	1.0	17
On-line labs/ simulations / role-play etc.	0.4	7

21) From this list of e-learning activities, tools and resources please tick the three which you have used the most.

	Percentage	Responses
Lecture notes on-line	22.8	171
E-books	1.3	10
E-journals	15.7	118
Web links (URLs) to other reading & materials	5.5	41
E-mail	31.6	237
Collection & submission of assignments	1.5	11
Video conferencing	0.0	0
Progress file	0.0	0
Power Point (computer-based) lecture presentations on-line	6.8	51
Signing up for tutorial groups or essays	0.4	3
On-line still images of useful materials	0.0	0
On-line tests & quizzes	0.9	7
Digital readings (e-reserve)	0.3	2
On-line library catalogue	10.3	77
Past exam papers	2.5	19
On-line discussions	0.4	3
On-line movies or audio clips	0.0	0
On-line labs/ simulations / role-play etc.	0.0	0

22) In your experience, what are the main advantages of e-learning?
(Tick all that apply):

	Percentage	Responses
Helps you to target specific weaknesses	2.8	26
Helps you to build on specific skills	5.0	46
Helps you to find information for coursework	21.1	195
Managing your balance of learning, working and home life	10.2	94
Meeting your learning needs when travelling away from home or the University	15.9	147
Ability to learn at your own pace	12.6	117
Reducing the need to attend lectures	3.1	29
Enabling me to the way I prefer to	3.6	33
Encouraging a deeper knowledge of the subject	8.0	74

Enabling access to a wider range of sources of material		16.3	151
Other		1.4	13

23) From the following list, tick the main barriers to your use of technologies for learning. (Tick all that apply)

		Percentage	Responses
My computer skills		5.7	30
Lack of support		11.2	59
Availability of resources		13.3	70
Reliability of my own computer		8.4	44
Availability of the University's computers		10.3	54
Reliability of the University's computers		4.0	21
Performance of the university network		6.3	33
Performance of the University's internet access		3.6	19
Ease of using the VLP		4.9	26
Absence of immediate access to my tutor		12.9	68
Absence of face to face contact with other learners		11.0	58
Ease of using search tools		4.4	23
Other		4.0	21