Institutional partnering for effective e-learning capability development in higher education

Anne George
University College Falmouth, UK
Roger Dence and Alejandro Armellini
University of Leicester, UK

Scope
- Some perspectives on partnering and partnerships
- Two institutional landscapes and contexts
- Leveraging an e-learning initiative across institutions
- Outline the partnership project and activities
- A pilot course development – policy implications
- Follow-on partnership activities

Perspectives on innovation partnering
- Hannan et al (1999) highlight:
  - Moves towards ‘directed’ innovation to maximise returns from ICT investments, to compete better, with a tendency towards standardised curricula and a more individualised pedagogy
- Velho (2004) highlights:
  - Real or perceived asymmetry in institutional partnerships may generate distrust, self-determination and ownership issues
  - Knowledge and expertise may be seen to flow unidirectionally

Institutional contexts compared
- University College Falmouth
  - A specialist arts institution of university status
  - At a key stage in its strategic development
  - In early stages of integrated e-learning provision
  - HE Academy benchmarking Phase 2 institution
- University of Leicester
  - A traditional university, with dual-mode provision
  - A well-developed e-learning capability
  - Profile of research projects in learning technologies
  - HE Academy benchmarking + Pathfinder pilot institution

The Falmouth ‘need’
- Merger in 2008 of two specialist HEIs in arts and creative disciplines – Dartington + Falmouth
- Growing regional HE ‘hub’ role – Combined Universities Cornwall main campus; Exeter link
- Extending the student reach internationally
- Meeting expanding student CPD needs and employer WBL/skills and partnership agendas
- Transition from f2f FT only delivery to include PT / DL
- E-learning a key enabler of institutional strategies - a ‘step change’ needed in capacity and capability

The Leicester ‘contribution’
- The Carpe Diem change intervention methodology proven over 2+ years and 37 internal workshops
- Understanding the UCF context/need; adapting the approach; briefing the course team
- Facilitation of a 2-day workshop + review meeting
- Recording and mapping outputs
- Providing feedback based on e-learning, f2f/online teaching and associate tutoring experiences
- A ‘neutral’ role as an external contributor

Collaboration partners in an HE Academy-funded CHEETAH ‘Network’ project in 2008
www.le.ac.uk/cheetah

Anne George; Roger Dence and Alejandro Armellini
University College Falmouth; University of Leicester
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The Carpe Diem approach

**Concept**
A well-researched, well-rehearsed, team-based intervention for promoting:

• learner-centred design
• learner-centred assessment
• better exploitation of core university-provided technologies
• innovation and institutional capacity building

**Key features**

- Rapid prototyping and development
- Working in course teams with professional support
- Using creativity techniques
- New build using e-tivities
- Structure around Salmon’s 5-stage model + scaffolding
- Aligned with assessment

www.le.ac.uk/carpediem

The development context

- Selected pilot course (MA Professional Writing) moving from 1-year FT delivery to include 2-year PT + DL provision
- A DL ‘practice model’ needed developing to support widening of the institutional reputation and course reach
- Courses are inherently practice- or skill-based in nature
- Working extensively with part-time and associate staff as practitioner tutors > need more presence online
- MOODLE VLE provided a good institutional base:
  - Varying levels of uptake, but some activities well established
  - Limited use in mid 2008 of other learning technologies
  - Other activities ‘offshore’ - out of sight / scrutiny /support

Some specific e-learning issues

- Diverse professional writing disciplines and media are involved … potentially supporting different e-learning approaches and using different learning technologies
- Provision of generic student discussion areas … across cohorts and between delivery modes
- A question of developing practice, confidence, capability … both for staff and for students
- Building and developing the professional staff community, including fostering a greater online role and ‘presence’ both formally and informally

Focus areas in e-learning

- **Writing portal** – developing links to professional practice information, learning exercises, showcases
- **Course model** – use more extensively to provide material > set exercise > post anthology > peer critique > tutor review > discussion forum
- **Discussion fora** – developing a range of a/synchronous formats for seminars, discussions, quick activities etc
- **Project work** – providing collaborative spaces, facilitating reading groups, online magazine writing and page design, social support for work placements etc

Redefining the course mission

“To offer students of all backgrounds, ages and levels of experience, the opportunity to develop the set of core skills and knowledge necessary to operate as a professional writer, according to their individual abilities and aspirations, through an intensive, commercially-focussed, practical, community learning experience.”

Source: UCF/UoL Carpe Diem session, April 2008

Some challenges arising

- The online development and delivery process itself was more resource intensive than anticipated
- New cost models required – DL is not a cheap option!
- Identifying dual-mode crossover benefits for enhancing the student experience and re-use of course materials
- Clarifying the roles and skills of associate tutors in an online setting – role/remit/time, contracts/rewards, training/support
- Understanding the IPRs in course / teaching materials for online and/or multiple uses using different technologies – institution-owned, teacher-produced, teacher-performed and externally-sourced materials
**Perspectives on e-learning partnerships**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recipient</th>
<th>Donor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open and willing to use partnership approaches to develop e-learning capability/capacity</td>
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<td>Requisite organisational competences available to enhance capability</td>
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<td>Enhancing e-learning skills/capabilities in a policy of continuous improvement</td>
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<td>Experience in different disciplines, delivery models and HEI life stages</td>
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<td>Development of a new resourcing model</td>
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<tr>
<td>First distance learning course developed and launched</td>
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<tr>
<td>New role of learning information design identified</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improved structures to support technology-enabled innovation in course development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Test bed and critical evaluator of approaches from different contexts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to use e-learning approaches in combination to meet institutional, programme, course + individual needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Key success factors were: internal relationships; using simple technologies; external involvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Experience of varied teaching/learning disciplines, settings, approaches</td>
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<td>Ability to broker co-operative efforts across organisational boundaries</td>
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**Source**: UCF at CHEETAH symposium, July 2008

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**Partnership results #1**

- Partnership benefits included:
  - Improved structures to support technology-enabled innovation in course development
  - First distance learning course developed and launched
  - Enhanced institutional profile
- Key success factors were: internal relationships; using simple technologies; external involvement
- Potential barriers were: (in)sufficiency of resources; time and focus; staff contracts inappropriate for new directions

**Source**: UCF at CHEETAH symposium, July 2008

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**Partnership results #2**

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<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Institutional</td>
<td>Review of academic staff contracts undertaken</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Development of a new resourcing model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New role of learning information design identified</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>Redesign of the VLE undertaken</td>
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<td></td>
<td>IT resilience and support for DL students addressed</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Review of PPRs and materials ownership/usage issues</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Capture of f2f teaching sessions for subsequent DL use</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Technology training for associate staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic Services</td>
<td>Enhanced collaboration/co-operation within teams</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Interdisciplinary co-operation enhanced</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Increased awareness/reduced anxiety/fear</td>
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**Source**: UCF at CHEETAH symposium, July 2008

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**Quotes on practice**

- “I think everyone felt a sense of achievement over what had been put together and a clearer understanding of the work involved in setting up the course.”

**Source**: UCF Learning Resources participant, April 2008

- “The course is making good use of the materials developed in the Care Diem session and taking the ideas forward. … We have also redesigned the look and feel of our VLE … which came across as unfit for purpose during the session.”

**Source**: UCF IT Support participant, April 2008

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**Quotes on policy**

- “The CHEETAH/Carpe Diem work has helped the course team significantly in enabling an exploration of the relationship between the existing campus-based and the new online course and the way in which elements of the delivery and timing of delivery will need to be adapted.”

**Source**: UCF at CHEETAH symposium, July 2008

- On capacity building: “The Carpe Diem work has been discussed at a number of different levels including Academic Board, Learning and Teaching Committee and Strategy Group, as well as in senior team meetings of Academic Services and Library and IT User Groups.”

**Source**: UCF at CHEETAH symposium, July 2008

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**Follow-on activities**

- Within UCF – completion of ‘seamless’ integration of functions for DL provision (admissions, IT support, learning technology, digital resources, teaching)
- Within pilot course – development of: further technologies (eg online submission, VOIP, virtual reality); short/specialist courses portfolio; more industry collaborations
- With UoL - CALF (Creating Academic Learning Futures) research project – an HE Academy-funded collaboration to create, explore and present plausible ‘alternative futures’ for learning and teaching methods in higher education

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Anne George; Roger Dence and Alejandro Armellini
University College Falmouth; University of Leicester
September 2009
Thank you for your attention!

Anne George
University College Falmouth

Roger Dence and Alejandro Armellini
University of Leicester

References