



Initial lessons in VLE usage



Hands-on training, course 1

Introduction

This lesson plan gives an outline of a four session introductory course to Virtual Learning Environments. The course is designed to be delivered to small groups of staff in face-to-face, hand on sessions.

For all lesson plans in this series a certain level of computer knowledge and skill is pre-supposed for participants, in this case the level of knowledge is basic and non-technical.

This course will be delivered using the test VLE set up by VLE4VET. This is a Moodle VLE but the skills learned on this course will be transferable to any VLE.





photograph by Alessandro Valli

Course outline

SESSION 1: making it work for me

This introductory session will ease participants into the theoretical and practical reality of VLEs. As it is the initial session the emphasis will be on inspiring and in giving participants the opportunity to get hands-on as quickly as possible.

Learning Objectives

- Understand what a VLE is
- Give examples of its use as a content repository
- Give examples of its use as a discussion area
- Give examples of use to support learning

Venue:

This lesson needs to be delivered in an area with individual computer access for all participants. Computers must have internet access, audio speakers and be of sufficient graphical power to run video over the web.

Consideration should be given to accessibility requirements for participants who may be visually impaired or have problems with physical actions (such as mouse-control).

1, Begin with an introduction to the theory of VLEs, their current usage and the benefits that they can offer to institutions, teachers and students. Keep this session light, interesting and relevant.

2. First activity is to get participants to log-on to the VLE and have fifteen minutes to explore. Trainer can move around the classroom discussing with individuals.

3. Discuss course set-up and structure. Emphasis on organisation and planning so that the structure is logical and simple for students to use.

4. Ask all participants to start a blog. Talk about the benefits of blogs as reflective and active.

5. What does the teaching and learning process consist of currently, without VLE?

Brainstorm what teachers and students want to happen, and what activities take place within and without the classroom to facilitate learning.

Discuss barriers to learning - for groups and individuals.

Ask for electronic equivalents to:

- exposition by teacher on board,
- practice exercises
- experiments
- discussion etc

6. Demonstrate use of VLEs in the classroom, they're not just a tool for distance learning but can be a powerful ally in the classroom.

7. Show video of teachers talking about their use of VLE in classroom (use trainer course in VLE to deliver the video).

8. Ask all participants to write up their experience of the class on their blog before next session. Demonstrate discussion board and wiki in test VLE and explain the power of these tools. Set topic on discussion board - "Feedback on 1st class", ask participants to give feedback on delivery style, content etc. before next session.

Note: throughout be sure not to separate eLearning and Learning, eLearning is just another aspect of everyday learning.

Important to address concerns over common issues from teachers:

- Are we writing ourselves out of jobs?
- Will students decide not to turn up or pay attention in class as they can do it all electronically at other times?
- What about the "digital divide"?

SESSION 2: Making it work for students

Learning objectives

- Understand how a VLE can address needs of students and enhance learning opportunities
- Be able to give two independent examples of how student needs could be met via VLE

1. Begin with video of students talking about their experience of learning and participating via VLE.

2. Discuss learner voice and empowerment. Review participants blog entries and responses on discussion board (take any negative comments as good, alter delivery timings, methods as appropriate, if suggested)

3. Give examples of how vle can aid accessibility

4. Brainstorm: what would your students say are the barriers in the way of success? How might the use of electronic means help to overcome this?

5. Session to demonstrate accessibility

- 24/7 access
- Drill and practice
- Quicker feedback
- Pre-prepare materials
- Font size colour adjustment et
- Demo text to speech

3. Cover VLE as repository. Demonstrate upload and organisation of materials for learning. Hands-on, get participants to upload own materials to their course and send announcement to students concerning availability.

4. Get participants to set homework assignment. Demonstrate the time-stamping feature of uploaded work.

5. Introduce participants to Trainer Course. Show uploaded material for whole course (including this lesson plan and materials for final two sessions). Encourage participants to do some pre-reading on next sessions and to post any comments or questions under the appropriate topic on discussion board.

Session 3: 20 Quick Wins

Using the accompanying handbook each participant should pick 5 quick wins to complete in this session. Trainer work classroom spending time with each individual giving help and answering questions. Where questions are pertinent for whole group post answers on Training Course FAQ for all participants to access - send real-time announcements to show the FAQ has been updated.

End session by informing all participants that "homework" for next session will be set that evening. Show them where to access.

Homework informs participants that next session is a show and tell. They must all look at what they have learned and reflect on what will be most useful in their teaching practice and for their students. They must write about this in their blog and then prepare a ten-minute session to deliver to fellow participants at next session - resources to be uploaded to VLE.

Session 4: Workshop

Each participant will come prepared to give ten-minute presentation, a reflection on VLE usage.

Questions and comments that arise addressed in group session after final presentation.

Inform participants that Course 2 will be fully delivered via test VLE.



