



The University of Sydney

Academic Board Resolutions: Quality Assurance and Learning Management Systems

Approved by: Academic Board on 8 December 2004

Date of effect: 1 January 2005

1. Coverage

This policy applies to any staff member, academic, general, permanent or casual, implementing, administering or using a learning management system to systematically support the learning experience of enrolled University of Sydney students with online activities and materials.

2. Dictionary

2.1 *Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)* – in this policy refers to learning technologies that support students in achieving their learning outcomes

2.2 *Learning Management Systems (LMSs)* – in this policy refers to software systems that systematically provide Unit of Study resources to students electronically

2.3 *Enterprise-level Learning Management Systems* – LMSs that support greater than 500 enrolled University of Sydney students

2.4 *Small-scale Learning Management Systems* – LMSs that support 500 or less enrolled University of Sydney students.

2.5 *Learning Management System Administrator* – one or more people responsible for maintaining and providing key services associated with the learning management system

2.6 *Unit of Study websites* - Websites developed to provide unit of study resources for enrolled students at the University of Sydney

3. Policy

3.1 The University's approach to quality assurance for teaching and learning embraces and emphasises improvement, not just accountability.

3.2 The University recognises that greater flexibility and a student-centred approach to teaching is likely to improve learning outcomes.

3.3 The University recognises the need for a systematic form of review of learning support, to ensure the efficient and effective use of learning resources at the University.

3.4 To help promote these standards, the University has adopted a coordinated approach to the management and evaluation of learning management systems (LMSs), where the University LMS provides a benchmark for Faculty LMSs in terms of quality of service.

3.5 The purpose of this policy is to:

3.5.1 set out the principles underpinning the University's approach to quality assurance for key services surrounding learning management systems;

3.5.2 identify responsibilities for ensuring that the principles are implemented in the appropriate locations throughout the University;

3.5.3 clarify and acknowledge sustainable expectations of quality assurance of staff and students in terms of support of LMSs and what is required to meet those expectations

3.5.4 be a resource document containing all Academic Board policies relating to quality assurance for key services surrounding learning management systems; and

3.5.5 be a resource document containing the procedures related to quality assurance for key services surrounding learning management systems

3.5.6 Ultimately, the purpose behind the policy is to improve the quality of the student learning experience at the University of Sydney through a well-understood approach to the management of learning management systems.

4. Background

- 4.1** After three years of successful implementation of Academic Board's "Quality Assurance and Online Learning Policy" for the University learning management system, Academic Board commissioned a report into quality assurance for information and communication technologies (ICT) in teaching and learning across the University in 2003.
- 4.2** As a result of the endorsement of the report by the University governance committee for ICT in teaching and learning, a revision of the Quality Assurance and Online Policy to incorporate all enterprise learning management systems was requested.
- 4.3** An Academic Board working party was established which led to the development of a discussion paper (see appendix 4).
- 4.4** The discussion paper was tabled at Academic Board's Teaching and Learning Committee who endorsed the paper and the intention to use it as a basis for this policy.
- 4.5** The discussion paper identifies quality assurance issues of key services closely associated with learning management systems. It recognizes that the provision of a unit of study materials on websites raises many issues concerning the quality of the student learning experience and the means of evaluating the experience and learning outcomes. The quality of unit of study websites in relation to their contribution to quality student learning is dependent on the extent of their integration into the learning outcomes of their UoS and on their technical robustness.

5. A collaborative approach to on-line learning

- 5.1** The University has adopted an integrated and collaborative approach to on-line learning. This approach focuses on training and supporting staff in the production of quality on-line learning environments and the support of students in the use of the on-line learning environments. A collaborative and integrated University approach to on-line learning and quality is one in which on-line learning resource support is reflected in all the important strategic plans of the University: faculty and University teaching and learning plans, faculty and University staffing plans, faculty and University policy and procedures, and faculty and University resource plans.
- 5.2** While collaboration is important, responsibility appropriately assigned is equally so. This policy distributes the responsibility for quality assurance of online learning into three broad areas: technical responsibility which sits with the relevant technical support; functional responsibility which sits with the administrator of the learning management system and pedagogical responsibility which remains with the Faculties who publish learning resources on the learning management system.
- 5.3** To maintain cohesion between this policy and the changing technologies which it governs, the discussion paper in appendix 4 of this policy should be updated when appropriate.

6. Defining the scale of online learning at the University of Sydney

- 6.1** In outlining an integrated and collaborative approach to quality assurance of learning management systems, three modes (A,B,C) are used to help articulate the scale of online learning at the University of Sydney on key learning management systems. They are:
 - 6.1.1 Mode A - Web Supplemented** (participation on-line is optional for the student): Enrolled students can access information on units of study that is additional to that available in the University Calendar or handbook. The information may include course descriptions and study guides, examination information, assessment overview, reading lists and other on-line learning resources. The information is used to supplement traditional forms of delivery.

6.1.2 Mode B - Web Dependent (participation on-line for one or more of the activities described in 6.1.2.1-6.1.2.4 below is a compulsory requirement of participation although some face-to-face component is retained):

6.1.2.1 students must use the web to interact with the education content necessary for study

6.1.2.2 students must use the web to communicate with staff and/or other students

6.1.2.3 students must use the web in order to complete an assessment exercise

6.1.2.4 students must use the web both to interact with some combination of content/communication/assessment in order to satisfy the requirements of the unit of study

6.1.3 Mode C – Almost fully On-line: Almost all interactions with staff and students, education content, learning activities, assessment and support services are integrated and delivered on line.

7. Quality Assurance Procedures relating to the University Enterprise-level Learning Management System

7.1 Responsibility: Responsibility for oversight, sponsorship and evaluation of the University Learning Management System rests with the Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic and International). As such, any decision to change the University learning management system, either by replacing it with another, or adding to it, must be made by that Office in consultation with the University Chief Information Officer and other appropriate stakeholders. The Office of the DVC (Academic) is responsible for defining which software systems comprise the University Learning Management System.

7.2 Procedures and instruments for quality assurance

7.2.1 To ensure that on-line learning does not lead to a reduction in the quality of student learning experiences, the University has identified the need for the following quality assurance mechanisms for the University learning management system:

7.2.1.1 staff training and development in the pedagogical and technical aspects of on-line teaching and learning;

7.2.1.2 the design and development processes for going “live” with unit of study websites

7.2.1.3 student technical support via a helpdesk once unit of study websites are part of the student learning experience

7.2.1.4 student support services available via a link to the Student Services website

7.2.1.5 the evaluation of student experience and learning outcomes.

7.2.2 The following management and support processes and instruments are mandatory for quality assurance:

7.2.2.1 A formal activation process currently based on the Application to Activate a Unit of Study Website: This application requires an approval by the Unit of Study (UoS) co-ordinator (and Head of Department/School) in particular circumstances) and an approval by the WebCT Co-ordinator for the website to go “live” as part of a UoS curriculum. In giving an approval for activation, the UoS Co-ordinator is assuring the pedagogical quality of the material and the E-learning administrator is assuring the technical quality of the unit of study website along with the provision of technical support to students. The Application to Activate needs to be completed every time a unit of study is offered. The documentation supporting this mechanism is shown in appendix 1.

7.2.2.2 A helpdesk solely dedicated to supporting staff during the development of unit of study websites and supporting students once the unit of study websites are part of the student learning experience. The minimum support provided by the helpdesk as at July 2004 should be 8 hours a day, 5 days a week.

7.2.2.3 A systematic strategy to ensure the cyclical review of unit of study websites each time they are used in the delivery of a unit of study. Once an offering of

a unit of study has been completed, its website should be archived for the purposes of review, and a copy of the website cleared of student data should be made available to the relevant academic for redevelopment in preparation for the next offering.

7.2.2.4 A Unit of Study Outline: The provision of on-line resources as part of a UoS curriculum raises a potentially serious threat to the cohesion of the curriculum and the quality of learning. The provision of the unit of study outline, required by the Management and Evaluation of Teaching policy, within the Unit of Study website will can be used to articulate how the online resources are related to the whole unit of study. Appendix 2 provides a template that is consistent with the requirements of the Management and Evaluation of Teaching policy.

7.2.3 The following technical processes and instruments are mandatory for quality assurance:

7.2.3.1 appropriate disaster recovery and problem management strategies. For a discussion of these, refer to the appropriate section in appendix 4.

7.2.3.2 appropriate authentication and authorization procedures for users of the learning management system. For a discussion of these, refer to the appropriate section in appendix 4.

7.2.4 The following processes and instruments are recommended for quality assurance:

7.2.4.1 Workshops: A central workshop program offered by staff from both the Institute of Teaching and Learning and staff in the Office of the PVC (Teaching and Learning) which offers an introduction to both pedagogical and technical issues relevant to on-line teaching and learning integrated into a campus experience.

7.2.4.2 Peer Discussion/Review Checklist: Using the on-line environment to publish components of curricula produces a tangible product which is different to the ephemeral nature of face-to-face teaching. For this reason, the publication of such material needs to be more along the lines of the processes used by researchers when publishing, notably feedback. Therefore, discussion and review of website materials by peers is an invaluable quality assurance process. (see appendix 3 for guidelines)

7.3 Confidentiality and Privacy: Unit of study websites, their materials and activities, are an extension of the teaching spaces that unit coordinators use to support the student experience. As such, unit coordinators are responsible for all activity occurring within the website. To allow unit coordinators to meet their responsibility of supporting users of the unit of study website, any access to sites requires the written permission of the unit coordinators before access is enabled.

8. Quality Assurance Procedures relating to Faculty Enterprise-level Learning Management Systems

8.1 Responsibility: Responsibility for oversight, sponsorship, management and evaluation of Faculty Enterprise-level Learning Management Systems (supporting more than 500 enrolled students) rests with the Dean or nominee of the relevant faculty

8.2 Procedures and instruments for quality assurance: The following management and support processes and instruments are mandatory for quality assurance:

8.2.1 A formal activation process currently equivalent to the Application to Activate a Unit of Study Website: This type of application requires an approval by the Unit of Study (UoS) co-ordinator (and Head of Department/School for modes B and C) and an approval by the faculty LMS administrator for the unit of study website to go “live” as part of the student experience. In giving an approval for activation, the UoS Co-ordinator is assuring the pedagogical quality of the material and the faculty LMS administrator is assuring the technical quality of the website along with the provision of technical support to students. The application to activate must be used for every offering of a unit of study that has a unit of study website.

- 8.2.2 A helpdesk dedicated to supporting students once the unit of study websites are part of the student learning experience. In order to achieve consistent standards across learning management systems in the student learning experience, the benchmark of the operating hours of the faculty helpdesk is level of service provided by the University learning management system.
- 8.2.3 A mechanism to ensure the cyclical review of unit of study websites each time they are used in the delivery of a unit of study. Once an offering of a unit of study has been completed, its website should be archived for the purposes of review, and a copy of the website cleared of student data should be made available to the relevant academic for redevelopment in preparation for the next offering.
- 8.2.4 **A Unit of Study Outline:** The provision of on-line resources as part of a UoS curriculum raises potentially serious threat to the cohesion of the curriculum and the quality of learning. The provision of the unit of study outline, required by the Management and Evaluation of Teaching policy, within the Unit of Study website will can be used to articulate how the online resources are related to the whole unit of study. Appendix 2 provides a template that is consistent with the requirements of the Management and Evaluation of Teaching policy.
- 8.2.5 The following technical processes and instruments are mandatory for quality assurance:
 - 8.2.5.1 appropriate disaster recovery and problem management strategies. For a discussion of these, refer to the appropriate section in appendix 4.
 - 8.2.5.2 appropriate authentication and authorization procedures for users of the learning management system. For a discussion of these, refer to the appropriate section in appendix 4.
- 8.2.6 The following processes and instruments are recommended for quality assurance:
 - 8.2.6.1 **Workshops:** A faculty workshop program offered by faculty specialists which offers an introduction to both pedagogical and technical issues relevant to on-line teaching and learning integrated into a campus experience.
 - 8.2.6.2 **Peer Discussion/Review Checklist:** Using the on-line environment to publish components of curricula produces a tangible product which is different to the ephemeral nature of face-to-face teaching. For this reason, the publication of such material needs to be more along the lines of the processes used by researchers when publishing, notably feedback. Therefore, discussion and review of website materials by peers is an invaluable quality assurance process. An example of this is shown in appendix 3.
- 8.3 **Confidentiality and Privacy:** Unit of study websites, their materials and activities, are an extension of the teaching spaces that unit coordinators use to support the student experience. As such, unit coordinators are responsible for all activity occurring within the website. To allow unit coordinators to meet their responsibility of supporting users of the unit of study website, any access to sites requires the written permission of the unit coordinators before access is enabled.

9. Quality Assurance Procedures relating to Faculty Small-scale Learning Management Systems

9.1 Responsibility

- 9.1.1 Responsibility for oversight, management and evaluation of small-scale Learning Management Systems (supporting 500 or less enrolled students) rests with an individual academic who is using the LMS for the purposes of research and innovation.
- 9.1.2 Such an academic must receive the written permission of the relevant Faculty Dean annually to administer the LMS.
- 9.1.3 Such an academic is responsible for all quality assurance matters, both technical and pedagogical, for enrolled University of Sydney students using the small-scale LMS.

- 9.2 Support:** Advice about the types of quality assurance issues facing administrators of small-scale LMSs can be provided from the Office of the DVC (Academic) and the Director of the University Information Technology Service.
- 9.3 Confidentiality and Privacy:** Unit of study websites, their materials and activities, are an extension of the teaching spaces that unit coordinators use to support the student experience. As such, unit coordinators are responsible for all activity occurring within the website. To allow unit coordinators to meet their responsibility of supporting users of the unit of study website, any access to sites requires the written permission of the unit coordinators before access is enabled.

10. Authority

10.1 Development/consultation

As a result of recommendations from the Academic Board Report into ICT in teaching and learning in June 2003, the University governance committee for ICT in teaching and learning requested a revision of the Quality Assurance and Online Policy to incorporate all enterprise learning management systems. An Academic Board working party was established which led to the development of a discussion paper (see appendix 4). The discussion paper was tabled at Academic Board's Teaching and Learning Committee who endorsed the paper and the intention to use it as a basis for this policy.

10.2 Management responsibility

Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) has the overall management responsibility for the policy.

10.3 Implementation and monitoring

Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) has the responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of this policy.

10.4 Review

Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) has the responsibility for conducting reviews of the policy. This is the second publication of this policy.

10.5 Communication

Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) has the responsibility for communicating the policy and authorised updates.

10.6 Contact

Inquiries about this policy can be sent to Dr Robert Ellis X13781, r.ellis@vcc.usyd.edu.

11. Related information

11.1 Related University legislation, resolutions, policies and procedures include:

11.1.1 Academic Board Resolution: Creation, Variation and Deletion of Award Courses and Units of Study at <http://www.usyd.edu.au/policy/>

11.1.2 Academic Board Resolution: Management and Evaluation of Teaching at <http://www.usyd.edu.au/policy/>

11.2 University policies superseded or replaced by this policy:

11.2.1 Quality Assurance and On-line Learning Policy

11.3 References and additional information include:

11.3.1 ICT in Teaching and Learning Project at <http://itl.usyd.edu.au/ict/>

11.3.2 Flexible Online Learning Project, website, at: <http://www.usyd.edu.au/webct/>

Appendix 1

2004 APPLICATION TO ACTIVATE A UNIT OF STUDY WEBSITE AS PART OF A CURRICULUM FOR ENROLLED UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY STUDENTS

Staff Details

| | | |
|--------------|----------------|---------------------|
| Surname | Title | First Name |
| Phone number | e-mail address | UniKey /WebCT login |

Please Note : The person submitting the application will be considered Primary Designer, unless otherwise specified. If you wish other teaching staff (shared designers or tutors) to have access to the site, please fill out the spreadsheet at <http://www.usyd.edu.au/webct/additions.html> and email it to webct.helpdesk@usyd.edu.au

Unit of Study (UoS) Information

| | | |
|---|----------|--|
| UoS name | UoS Code | Other UoS Codes which need access to the site? |
| Date for UoS to be activated (eg 4 th August 2004) | | |

UoS Website Pedagogical Design and Development Checklist

| | | | |
|----|---|-----|----|
| 1. | Has the website been discussed/reviewed with a peer? | Yes | No |
| 2. | Does the website contain a Unit Outline? | Yes | No |
| 3. | Have you prepared a process to distribute information to students on how to access the site? | Yes | No |
| 4. | Are there links to the IT and WebCT helpdesks and Student Support Services on the UoS homepage? | Yes | No |
| 5. | Is there a date of publication and copyright notice on the UoS home page? | Yes | No |

Unit of Study Coordinator

I have viewed the on-line resources and approve their delivery to students on-line in the following category (*circle one letter only*):

There are three modes of on-line resource development for Unit of Studies at the University of Sydney

Mode **A** – Web Supplemented (student on-line participation is optional);

Mode **B** – Web Dependent (student on-line participation for some percentage of the curriculum is mandatory);

Mode **C** – Fully On-line

NameSignatureDate.....

Head of department/school's signature (or nominee) for modes B and C only

NameSignatureDate.....

Please fax the completed form to x18729 and mail original copy to:
Stephen Sheely, Flexible On-line Learning Unit, MPG, Services Building, G12

BY

Camperdown:
Monday July 5th, 2004

Cumberland:
Monday July 19th, 2004

Information about beginning of semester delays

To ensure that sites are free of any access difficulties for students, every website undergoes a technical check.

Your site will be checked as a student with both PC and Macintosh computers, using both Netscape and Internet Explorer.

Sites received prior to the deadline (ie a fortnight or more before the deadline) will be checked and made available to students usually *within a few days* of your request.

Closer to the deadline, longer delays will be experienced due to the volume of sites that need to be checked. This delay will be approximately 3 weeks.

The technical check looks at these areas of your site.

To have your site available to students faster, you can ensure that these areas in your site are ready & free of any access problems before sending this Application to Activate:

| | |
|--|---------------|
| <p>Has the site been updated for the new semester? e.g. old discussion postings removed, quiz dates reset and the unit outline updated for the new semester.</p> | <p>Yes/No</p> |
| <p>Do all the links function properly? e.g. links to links to websites need to be checked each semester for websites which have moved or are no longer available.</p> | <p>Yes/No</p> |
| <p>Are the links to journal articles, book chapters and the works of other authors correctly dealt with for copyright purposes? e.g. journal articles should be scanned & held in the library, not in the website. e.g. links to other websites should be correctly cited as the works of other authors or organizations.</p> | <p>Yes/No</p> |
| <p>Is the text able to be read off the screen? e.g. is the font size readable - have any problems occurred as a result of the conversion from MS Word? e.g. are there very long html pages which would be better as separate pages or as print-friendly documents?</p> | <p>Yes/No</p> |
| <p>Are the download times acceptable for students working off campus? e.g. when multimedia resources are included in such as video or audio files, PowerPoint presentations and large PDF documents, it can take a long time for students to access these files using a standard modem.</p> | <p>Yes/No</p> |
| <p>Is the site ready for release to students? e.g. if there are notable gaps or omissions in the site, we will need to consult with you as to whether this is accidental or deliberate and what impact it will have on the effectiveness of your site. This could further delay release of the site to students</p> | <p>Yes/No</p> |

Appendix 2

Unit Outline Template

[Unit of Study code]: [Unit of Study title]

Welcome & Unit of Study Description

[This description should be the same as the one in the handbook. You can check your unit's description at- <http://www.usyd.edu.au/exterel/publications/handbooks/>. You will need to find your Unit of Study off this link]

Unit of Study Aims/Goals:

[situating the Unit of Study in relation to the course as a whole]

The relationship of this Unit to previous UoS

The key focus of this UoS

The relationship to subsequent UoS

Relationship between this UoS and University generic attributes

Student Learning Outcomes:

[What are the student learning outcomes of your unit of study?]

“ By the end of this UoS, students will be able to

Learning Commitments and Contact

[If you intend to use a variety of learning situations, what expectations do you have of your students in terms of their learning commitments to the face-to-face learning, on-line learning and other components of your unit of study?]

Daytime attendance – (hours?)

Nighttime attendance – (hours?)

Weekend workshops/residentials – (days?)

On-line commitments – (hours?)

Other

Learning Situations

[What learning situations are you likely to use in your unit of study? What will you expect students to do?]

Lecturers/seminars

tutorials/workshops/practicals

Laboratories

On-line learning

Field Trips

Work placement

Independent Study

Learner Preparation:

[What preparation do you expect learners to do or have completed before they begin your unit of study?]

Particular skills

Advice about Computer Access (if appropriate)

Pre-Reading

Assessment:

[What are the grade descriptors, assessment components, due dates and weight of you UoS ?]

A description of the grade descriptors.

| No. | Component(eg essay, exam, etc) | Due Date | Weight |
|-----|--------------------------------|----------|--------|
| 1 | | | |
| 2 | | | |
| 3 | | | |
| 4 | | | |
| 5 | | | |

Unit of Study Program:

[ie. This is usually organized in milestones which could be weeks, modules, knowledge groupings, concepts]

| Week/Module/other | Topic | Description |
|-------------------|-------|-------------|
| 1 | | |
| 2 | | |
| 3 | | |
| cont'd | | |

Evaluation

[A reference to how past student evaluations have contributed to changes in the Unit of Study]

“Past student evaluations of this Unit have suggested.....Changes in the Unit which reflect these suggestions are.....”

Unit of Study References:

[List of core texts and textbook/s, and other broad/generic learning resources: Essential, Recommended, and/or Additional Reading, web links and university policies can be included at this point]

Essential Publications

Recommended Publications

Web Links

University Policies – Referencing, Assignment Extensions, Deadlines, Academic Honesty, Equity

Staff Contact Information

[Who do students contact for the duration of the unit of study?

-for administrative help

-for learning help

- for technical help]

Student Support Services

Link to website

Appendix 3 – Suggested Peer Review Process for Unit of Study Websites

This proforma should be read in conjunction with the On-line Units of Study Outline Template and is designed to assist Staff who wish to ask a peer to engage in a review process of a Website that accompanies one of their Unit of Studies.

| No | Curriculum Review Questions | Notes from Reviewer |
|----|--|---|
| 1 | How does the website support student learning? ie How does it relate to the Unit of Study learning outcomes? | It should be possible to clearly express how a website will support student learning in one sentence. A well-designed educational website displays a clear relationship between its purpose and the learning outcomes of the UoS. |
| 2 | In which mode of online UoS publication does the UoS website appear to fall? Category A B or C? (<i>This should be clear by looking at the Unit Outline and the Website</i>) | There are three modes of on-line resource development for Unit of Studies at the University of Sydney: (i) Mode A - Web Supplemented (student online participation is optional) (ii) Mode B - Web Dependent (student online participation for some percentage of the curriculum is mandatory) (iii) Mode C – Fully On-line |
| 3 | If the online materials fall into one of the replacement categories, ie B or C, do equivalent but not equal learning processes exist in case a student experiences technical difficulties? | Equivalent but not equal learning processes refers to the preparation of alternatives should enrolled students experience any technical difficulties that prevent them from fulfilling the requirements of the UoS. For example, if a student is unable to complete a bulletin board discussion posting because of technical difficulties, is there an alternative written task that a student could submit in hard copy? If the materials fall into category A, ie supplementary materials, then any technical difficulties would not stop students from completing all the requirements of the UoS. |
| 4 | If the online materials fall into one of the replacement categories, how well are they related to other aspects of teaching and learning in the Unit of Study? | Online learning processes should be integrated into the whole curriculum. This is especially important for materials which students use as their main curriculum components. |
| 5 | If an assessment component is dependent on online materials, is this clarified in the assessment framework? | Any assessment components that rely on students engaging with online learning processes should be drawn to students attention so that students can identify the learning strategies and resources which are necessary to engage with the assessment as successfully, and as early in the semester, as possible. |
| 6 | What student learning commitments and contacts do the online materials require? Are they in keeping with normal requirements for class preparation? | Online learning materials have implicit learning commitments. It would be unreasonable to expect students to complete online class preparation in excess of the normal preparation time expected for UoSs. Online learning materials also assume access to appropriate technology. Will students have the technology at home or are they expected to access the website primarily from campus computer laboratories? If it is the latter, which computer laboratory will then use and when can they do this? |
| 7 | Are there print-based instructions that explain to students their access to computers and how to log onto the UoS website? | Students using the USyd online learning network for the first time will be unsure how to access it. They will need detailed printed instructions of where and how to log on. |

| No | Curriculum Review Questions | Notes from Reviewer |
|----|--|---|
| 8 | Is it clear to students how they are to engage with and work through the online materials? | Online learning may be a new experience for many students. Clear instructions, modelled learning processes and other strategies are useful to help reveal the purpose of online materials. |
| 9 | What is the online educational help available? How? (FAQ, email, site map, discussion list). | When UoS have online learning components in the curriculum, students will require some sort of online educational assistance in completing online learning processes. The frequency of student enquiries can be reduced by a FAQ (frequently-asked-questions) list which can deal with educational, student support and/or technical issues. |
| 10 | If additional software other than WebCT is integrated into the website, what sort of technical support do lecturers expect the ITS to provide to students? (eg does the website expect students to download Microsoft Word documents or Adobe Acrobat Reader documents?) | Some UoS websites require learners to download materials into other software for various purposes, eg. word-processors so that they can edit them. To do this, as long as the scope of the technical issues related to such software is simple, then the online technical help can suffice. Lecturers should be aware of the scope of technical assistance they expect to be given to their students, so that any student requests for help can be met. |
| 11 | Are the online materials functional? For example, do all links work and make sense? | One of the technical issues of UoS websites is the functionality of the website. An important functional issue is the operation of links. All links should work, and the purpose of the link in the context of the learning process should be clear to the student user. |
| 12 | Are the online materials useable? For example, is it easy to understand the relationship amongst the learning tasks? Are they easy to read? | Another of the technical issues of UoS websites is the useability of the website. This refers to design issues, such as font size, page backgrounds, colours chosen, relationships between the purposes of the materials on websites. |
| 13 | What access do students have to have in order to engage with the online learning processes. Is their adequate access available? | Issues of equity require all students to have equal opportunities to learn. If successful engagement with curriculum requires students to use online learning resources, departments have a responsibility to ensure there is sufficient access. Access to computer resources can be a combination of campus-based and home computers, but when students do not have private access, campus computers should be available. |
| 14 | Other points specific to the Unit of Study... | Units of Study using on-line materials will reflect their own learning context which have specific needs that the materials are designed to fulfil |
| 15 | Other points | |