Virtually there: supporting and assessing the development of digital literacies through virtual group work

Debbie Witney
Business School
I want to...

- Introduce a first year Business School module and explain how the design incorporated Digital and Information Literacies
- Describe three e-tivities and highlight some design and implementation issues
- Present student evaluation data relating to their learning and assessment experience
U58003 Managing in a Diverse Global Environment

Learning Experience

• a blend of face-to-face and on-line working
• independent and small group working (face-to-face and on-line)

Assessment: Group Report

• working a small virtual group (4-5 students) to complete a project that will
• involve co-operative learning, negotiation and evaluation of the group processes
• use Brookes Virtual discussion boards and wiki
1 Embedding digital and information literacy within the module curriculum

The **functional access, skills and practices** necessary to become a confident, agile adopter of a range of technologies for personal, academic and professional use

- use appropriate technology to search for high-quality information; critically to evaluate and engage with the information obtained
- reflect on and record learning, and professional and personal development
- **engage productively in relevant online communities**

(SESE 2011)
Importance of virtual working

(engage productively in relevant online communities)

preparing graduates for

‘productive participation in a networked and knowledge-based economy’, in the ‘multi-faceted virtual culture of the network enterprise

(Castells 2000, 214)
2 E-tivities using the 5 step model (Salmon, 2002)

Design and implementation issues
Tools: Asynchronous discussion board and wiki (Brookes Virtual (VLE))

- Development of co-writing and collaborative working skills (Parker and Chow, 2007)
- Exploit functions enabling monitoring of activities and contribution levels (Trentin, 2009)
- Separated discussions from report creation (Cubric, 2007)
  - Collaborative content creation
  - Discussions reviews and feedback
  - Assessment requirements (50% product:50% process and individual contribution)
Scope of the challenge for module leading

Semester 1
• 334 students (14 sets in traditional F2F workshops, 72 Virtual Groups), 8 tutors

Semester 2
• 215 students (8 sets, 45 virtual groups), 6 tutors

On-line submission, marking and moderation of assignment
❖ Abi
❖ Module Assistants
Welcome to the Wiki!

This space is designed to help your Virtual Group work collaboratively on the development of your report for U58003 Managing in a Diverse Global Environment.

You each have a "Group page" which you should use to work on. Please make sure you are on your group page before you start writing as the rest of the class will be able to see what you have written.

To access your group page click on the Groups Semester 2 10-11 link on the left of this page, then on the name of your Virtual Tutor and finally on your group number.

You could start by creating the headings for your report (check the guide to report writing on Brookes Virtual) and then you can add text to any element of the report as and when you feel ready.

Last semester, one student described working in a virtual group for this assignment as "fun". I hope you will also find this fun and enjoy the challenge of communicating without the advantages of face to face interaction.

Best wishes

Debbie Mitney
Module leader
E-tivity 1  (related to Stage 1- Access & Motivation)

- **Purpose** - to be able to access the VLE Asynchronous Discussion tool
- **Task** - to post an initial message introducing themselves to others
- **Interaction** - the virtual tutor checks that students can access and provide feedback for motivation.
Importance of trust in teams

• ‘Swift ‘trust
• built and maintained by a high level of activity and responsiveness (Meyerson, Weick, and Kramer, 1996)

• Role of face to face meeting (Kirkman et al, 2004)
  • familiarity and affection for the face-to-face environment (Witney and Smallbone, 2011)
E-tivity 2 (related to Stage 2 - Online Socialisation)

- **Purpose** - to agree a set of Group rules
- **Task** – to edit Group rules via wiki tool (Confluence) on Brookes Virtual
- **Interaction** - contributions from others in the group discussed within a 'threaded' discussion. Participation and summary by virtual tutor
Rules for maintaining trust
Jarvenpaa and Leidner (1998)

1. Everyone in the group should check the discussion board every Wednesday and Friday.
2. Clear language must be used.
3. Encouragement and constructive criticism must be provided.
4. Try to be as efficient as possible.
5. We should aim to finish a little before the deadline because we don't want to have to rush it.
6. Pass on any helpful information that could help another group member.
7. Make sure we keep accurate references.
8. Before the final draft is submitted all group members should proof read the work, highlighting any errors for amendment.
E-tivity 3 (related to Stage 3- information exchange)

- **Purpose** – to exchange information from starter sources
- **Task** – share comments on set readings and start discussion of report content
- **Interaction** - others members of the group provide their own interpretations and thoughts on the set readings. Virtual tutor moderate
Student 1

Also, about the articles we were given on week 5... I missed last week's workshop where we were meant to discuss the relevance of our given article towards our group report. Has anyone posted this on wiki? Maybe this could get us started on the structure of our report...

You not have an article?

Supporting and clarifying

Student 2

Hi LOVE your input onto the discussion board!

No I do not have an article - do you know how I go about getting one!? I am going to try and go to PAL on Thursday if I haven't managed to have this cleared up beforehand as I am so confused!

And yes I think the way you were talking about splitting up the report and allocating sections sounds great. Should this allocating be done on here or the wiki though?

Collaborating or cooperating?

Student 1

Hey I just checked on Brookes virtual and all the articles are under 'course content' of this module. I have the article, "when culture and style aren't about clothes...". If everyone can post what article they have, so that we can find out which one is meant to have that would be great.

On page 33 of the module guide it explains how our report must be produced using wiki. It also says how our report is meant to identify the main communication challenges facing organizations in supporting the development and functioning of virtual teams in an international environment.

If everyone has read the article they were given on week 5 and made notes on how it can relate to the assignment task on p.33 we can hopefully put our report together on wiki.

I know everyone must be busy with other assignments, but what does everyone think on writing 500 words each based on our articles and posting it on wiki by Friday? This way we can edit each other's work over the weekend and hopefully produce an introduction, executive summary and reference list some time next week before the deadline on Friday...?
Student 1

Hi

Student 3, great notes! If you would put your notes under the headings you feel appropriate that would be great, and remove notes already posted which you think do not need to be there as long as you have a reason for it. This applies to all of us of course. The report is really taking shape guys, keep it up!

Regards
Student 1

In Reply to: Re: Group working

Reply Forward

Student 2

Hi guys,

I have posted few notes on the wiki about communication. Can you have a look at it and let me know what you feel. Can I also please suggest that when we visit or post notes on the wiki, we also edit it if necessary to avoid having the same message twice. Can we also start tyding up the wiki? This is just a suggestion guys if you have other ideas please bring it on the table.

Kind regards

Reply Forward

Student 3

I will try to post my 500 words by tomorrow. The reason that I am not on the discussion board often is that I lost an internet connection about a month ago, my internet company promised to fix it but they still have not done anything. I am currently using my neighbors wifi. Thank you for your understanding guys. If you cannot reach me, I am always on my cell 07969000712.

In Reply to: Report structure

Reply Forward

Subject: Re: Group working
Author: Student 1

Date: 14 March 2011 10:47 PM

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Subject: Report structure
Author: Student 2

Date: 15 March 2011 4:37 PM

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Date: 15 March 2011 5:06 PM

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Competencies and Skills for E-Moderators

**Process facilitator** – facilitating the range of online activities that are supportive of student learning.

**Adviser/counsellor** – offering advice or counselling learners to help them get the most out of their engagement in a course.

**Assessor** – concerned with providing grades, feedback, validation of learners’ work, etc.

(Goodyear et al. 2001)
3 Evaluation of Student Experience
## Module Evaluation Semester 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>😃</th>
<th>😊</th>
<th>😞</th>
<th>😣</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working with <strong>Brookes Virtual</strong> on this module has helped me improve my ICT skills</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I found the <strong>wiki</strong> easy to use</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would be confident about <strong>future</strong> virtual group working</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I learnt a lot from the experience of group working using Brookes Virtual and the wiki

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree in part</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree in part</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student Comments

• How to deal with other members without seeing them...quite fun...Good learning experience

• Learnt a lot about difficulties of working online

• Using the wiki doesn’t work for all group members, we ended up using word and attaching files into wiki what (sic) wasn’t the aim of the exercise
Assignment workload and value

Task Size
- Trivial 1
- Short 2
- Medium 3
- Long 4
- Huge 5

Task Difficulty
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Task value- Online skills
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
Assessment arrangements and marking have been fair in this module

- 82% ‘Mostly agree’
- ‘Marking was fair and accurate. Was pleased my individual contribution was recognised as some of my group did not pull their weight’
- ‘The feedback was provided efficiently’
- ‘Unfair to mark something we have never done before’
Reflecting on experiences

- Digital literacy is an important graduate attribute but productive engagement is slowly learnt
- Creating e-learning experiences for on campus students is relatively straightforward
- Module leaders on large modules need additional support
- Staff need development time and support for e-moderating
- Students vary in their approaches and response to e-tivities
- Affordances of on-line tools can make assessments are seen as fair (er?)
References


Salmon, G (2002), "E-tivities. The Key to Active Online Learning", London: Tayler & Francis
  See also Salmon, G (2003) E-moderating: The Key to Teaching and Learning Online (2nd edition), London: Taylor & Francis


Any questions?

• Am I virtually there? What should I try next?
• Do you any examples of e-tivities from your experience as a teacher or as a learner?
• If you were to introduce some of these ideas into your teaching what would be the main constraints?
• Any suggestions as to how you can work within or overcome these constraints?