Introduction: Learning Technologies in Higher Education

The theme of Learning Technologies in Higher Education offers a range of papers discussing developments in assessment, feedback, online collaborative and independent learning, and curriculum design and enhancement.

Ribchester (2007) presents a case study of how Podcasting has been used to provide enhanced assessment feedback on two dissimilar modules within the Department of Geography and Development Studies at University of Chester. Saadatmand (2007) explores the development of self assessment as a tool for learning in the Web-based Learning Environment. Two papers examine the use of online tools to support health care professionals with off-campus and collaborative learning. The Development and Evaluation of a Shared Learning Wiki in an Inter-professional Context (Stephens, Robinson and McGrath, 2007), discusses the use of a wiki to facilitate collaborative, problem based learning in cross-discipline groups. Enhancing the Learning Opportunities of Part-time Postgraduate Students Whilst Off-campus (Nightingale, Mackay and Mollo, 2007) describes how the Blackboard Virtual Learning Environment was used to provide online study for the development of image interpretation and report writing skills. This interactive programme for off-campus Postgraduate Advanced Practice Gastrointestinal students was developed to address student concerns of isolation and de-motivation during lengthy periods of clinical practice away from university.

Educational Games in Higher Education (Rossiou and Papadakis, 2007) investigates the value of on-line educational games in synchronous virtual classrooms at the University of Macedonia, Greece, exploring whether student competitiveness enhances their learning and motivation to learn. Conboy and Goldsmith (2007) examine the opportunities for learning and collaboration by integrating Commercial Off-the-Shelf Games into the curriculum, arguing for a holistic approach that considers the students experience, rather than a narrow focus on content. Langley (2007) provides a case study of blended learning from the University of Northampton in which a distinctive case is made for the blend between e-learning, experiential learning and social learning. All three elements are critical to the development of these forms of learning in which it is the articulation of new technologies with existing theories of learning rather than technology offering to solve engagement with higher level learning. Jarvis (2007) argues that the assumptions underpinning Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) need to be reviewed in the light of empirical research that he carried out into the use of Computer-Based Materials in Resource Centres. His evidence indicates the different ways in which learning spaces are used or not by language students and the ways in which developments in web and e-learning can alter the structural limits that we design as curriculum. Sahel al-habashneh (2007) argues that few researchers have investigated user satisfaction issues for web design, and the effect of gender on the context of end-user e-testing software. He reviews the literature on design and gender and applies specific tests to the content to explore the gender differences in users' understanding of this.

Aguele (2007) reviews the challenges of deploying and integrating ICT into teaching and learning in the universities of developing nations, focussing particularly on Nigeria, highlighting the historical development, problems and present status. The Use of Eye Tracking Technology in the Evaluation of e-Learning (Eachus, 2007) presents a feasibility study where students' eye movements were tracked as they interact with a Virtual Learning Environment and other Internet based resources. The data was analysed to find search patterns and hot spots within the online resources, which could then assist course designers with the development and evaluation of on-line learning.