

## Interview guide for case studies in the Megatrends project

In this interview guide the terms “e-learning” and “online education” is used interchangeably.

### Facts about the institution

Name of institution	oncampus
URL of institution	<a href="http://www.oncampus.de">www.oncampus.de</a>
Country	Germany
Number of employees	38 full-time, app. 150 part-time
Levels in the educational system	Higher education
Interviewer	-
Interviewees	Prof. Dr.-Ing. Rolf Granow Dipl.-Betr. (FH) Farina Steinert

### Contextual factors

Please provide relevant information about:

- Market size (depending on country population, language used)  
 Across all EU countries, English and German speaking people:  
 Market for German programmes: ca. 146 Mio. students  
 Market for English programmes: ca. 214 Mio. students  
 (According to: European Commission (2001), Eurobarometer)
- Market readiness (penetration, technology infrastructure, broadband availability) to use online technology (differences between countries)  
 Germany:  
 ca. 39.000.000 households  
 Internet access: 62 % of households  
 Broadband access: 23 % of households
- Target group acceptance of online education (preference, reputation, legislation?)  
 Distance education is still playing a minor role in Germany. However, according to general prognoses, the acceptance of distance learning in Germany will increase, also based on e-learning. (According to: Forum Distance E-Learning (2005), Fernunterrichtsstatistik 2005). Therefore, the idea of online programmes has still to be promoted towards both students and universities.

Within the oncampus flagship projects the legal framework for a regular implementation of online programmes was developed and adopted.

- Digital literacy in population  
 For prospective students in higher education, ICT usage is self-evident even before entering in universities. Practical experience shows that students get along with ICT without any difficulty as opposed to teachers.

#### 5. National policy (national funding schemes)

The German Federal Ministry of Education and Research funded e-learning flagship projects since the end of the 90's. The focus was not only on higher education.

In 2000 the Ministry launched the programme „New Media in Education“ that had a focus on smaller sized e-learning projects.

Since 2006 the main responsibility for education and research in Germany has been transferred to the particular federal states. A future structure of new programmes has not been decided yet.

The above considerations are however referring to funds with focus on the implementation of e-learning.

In addition, various regional e-learning projects have already been funded via grants of the European Social Funds (ESF) in the framework of labour market policy.

### ***Institutional factors***

#### **Historical context**

##### 1. How would you describe the history of online education in your institution?

The history of online education at Lübeck University of Applied Sciences (LUAS) is prior based on large third party projects dealing with online distance education. The aim has been to gain more target groups for higher education by part-time study programmes. The close cooperation with universities is one of the main success factors.

LUAS started the activities 1997 as lead partner in the German national flagship project “Virtual University of Applied Sciences” (VFH). Within a consortium of universities the aim was to implement full online distance study programmes in engineering and computer science (Bachelor and Master level). At this stage, the oncampus methodology of 80 % online teaching and 20 % presence phases was appointed.

The development and implementation of international online distance programmes started 2002, based on the project “Baltic Sea Virtual Campus” (BSVC). The focus was again on engineering and furthermore transregional management (Master level).

The regional focus was covered in 2002 by the ESF-project “Portal to future”. The aim was to implement particular online courses in continuing education. The respective e-learning courses were dissolved out of the already provided Bachelor and Master programmes. The credit points attained are chargeable on full programmes, leading to the respective degree.

All e-learning activities of LUAS and all activities with relation to the consortiums VFH and BSVC are today bundled under the name “oncampus”. Actually about 35 professionals are full-time employed at LUAS. They care for development, implementation, operation and marketing of programmes as well as for the project administration. Approximately 150 persons have been involved part-time as authors and teachers. oncampus actually runs 145 e-learning modules (online material). At the moment, 480 courses are being offered and 5.300 course enrolments are registered. More than 1.300 students have been enrolled since 2001.

2. How has competence in online education developed in your institution and how has it contributed to your success?

oncampus, the e-learning department of LUAS, consistently employs e-learning professionals in technology, didactics, project management and marketing. All activities concentrate on the development and operation of online study programmes on the basis of the oncampus methodology. Collaboration with universities or other partners is essential to manage the e-learning business. Every online mentor involved has been prepared in special trainings. Without any doubt, competence building has been a crucial factor for the success of oncampus.

3. Has this development been abrupt or would you describe it more as a gradual step-by-step process)?

As collaboration with many partners implicates large effort, the development and implementation of online programmes could only be generated step-by-step.

4. How has online education been followed up by evaluation and research and how has this contributed to your success?

Evaluation has been an important factor for the today's range and alignment of oncampus study programmes. The evaluation tools are: survey amongst students and mentors, automatic feedback functions integrated in course material, reviews within the content production process.

oncampus is not conducting research on online education, but innovations are being integrated in the production process continuously.

## Technical issues

5. How would you describe competence in information and communication technology in your institution?

Our key competence is the development and implementation of online distance study programmes. For this purpose, oncampus follows an integrated production process. Several technical tools have been developed and implemented to manage this challenge:

- oncampus-factory (authoring tool)
- oncampus-portal (database for course management)
- SAKAI (open source learning platform)

oncampus-factory and oncampus-portal have been brought to a certain maturity. Thus, oncampus is actually bringing them into the market of business solutions.

The oncampus e-learning material ("modules") belongs to the category of rich content (high voluminous). It is independent from any learning platform. Automatic embedding of multimedia objects is provided. Automatic feedback and bug report are integrated in each module. The content is provided by one source, thus the material is available in many

formats (html, pdf, print, on mobile devices). All these preconditions provide high quality and flexibility regarding customising and usage.

6. To which extent are e-learning courses in your institution based on widely used technologies that can be taken into use by students without requiring them to buy additional hardware or software? (in addition to what they have from before)

The access to oncampus programmes is provided on basis of widely used technologies. Broadband internet connection is advisable.

7. How would you describe the integration between different IT-systems that are involved in e-learning in your institution? How has this contributed to your success?

The production and delivery of oncampus distance study programmes takes place within a harmonised technical framework. The application of technology within regular university business of LUAS and other university partners (presence courses) could be, however, more integrative and broadened. Thus, synergies have not been exploited yet.

8. What are the strengths and weaknesses of your e-learning administrative systems (from enrolment through delivery to certification)?

### Strengths

oncampus uses technical tools that have been developed for individual needs, e. g.

- oncampus-portal matches with the requirements of a professional distance study course management
- SAKAI learning platform provides a very high scalability (system can be broadened easily, flexibility on interfaces is provided).
- oncampus e-learning material is throughout flexible for customisation purposes and usage.

### Weaknesses

- oncampus activities are linked with the regular university administrations. In this context, the use of technology is not established as much as possible.

## **Courses**

9. Which types of subjects are covered by online education in your institution and what is the relative importance of different subjects?

oncampus offers the following online full study programmes:

- Industrial Engineering
- Computer Science
- Transregional Management
- Health Management

All subjects are of the same importance for LUAS and its consortiums, because the aim is to gain new target groups for academic education. The programmes were therefore implemented after market analysis.

10. How would you describe the “onlineability” of the subjects your institution has chosen for e-learning?

Engineering and Computer Science are very appropriate for online studies, due to the possibilities regarding didactical design. Management topics are also very adequate as media competence/virtual collaboration skills are quite relevant for expected jobs.

11. Do the online courses provided by your institution have flexible start-up and progression?

No, because the online mentoring and presence phases are binding part of the programmes. Therefore, courses start twice a year (summer and winter term).

12. What is the role or importance of synchronous and asynchronous communication between students and teachers and among students themselves?

Online collaboration is one of the core USP’s for online distance study programmes (as opposed to regular distance learning). Thus, both communicative devices are of vitally importance. The communication between students as well as amongst teachers is a very important part of the oncampus methodology.

## **Management, strategy and attitudes**

13. How would you describe involvement from the institution leadership in terms of being supportive, and how has this been important for success?

The support of the LUAS leadership was a key factor for the success of oncampus activities (quick decisions, appropriate risk affection, reliability, flexibility, mutual trust).

14. How would you describe the attitudes of the different groups of staff towards online teaching? How has this affected your success?

oncampus programmes depend substantially on the cooperation with authors and mentors. The involvement of adequate professors/teachers is however mainly self-motivated. This situation makes it difficult to incorporate actors.

15. Does your institution have a strategy for online education? If yes, what is (briefly) the content of the strategy and how is it followed up by employees in your organisation?

The oncampus strategy is to strengthen and broaden core competency: the development and provision of online distance study programmes. Every process is focussed on this objective.

16. How does your institution deal with quality issues related to online education and has quality contributed to success?

Certainly, quality is estimated as an important success factor. Hence, oncampus study programmes are accredited. Furthermore, oncampus department of LUAS itself is preparing for an official quality certification.

17. How would you describe the effectiveness of your administrative routines in online education?

Administration is of high relevance for the professional operation of online distance study programmes. Therefore, oncampus developed a tailor-made database named oncampus-portal.

Another complex administrative task is the management of third party funding. As oncampus has long-year experience in project management and the projects are large-sized, related administrative processes have an efficient structure.

18. To which extent do teachers involved in online education have predictable and manageable workloads?

The workload is predictable and manageable, because the student groups are about the same size and the courses start only twice a year.

19. To which extent does your institution collaborate with other educational institutions and how has this affected success?

The collaboration with other universities is a lifeline of oncampus. The effort for the development and implementation of programmes would be too much.

20. How would you describe the credibility of your institution (both formal and informal) with the government and public administration and how has this been an important criterion for success?

Credibility is of very high relevance for the success. The credibility of oncampus has mainly been caused by sustainability; the programmes are being developed on basis on funding, but their operation is financed by the universities of the network.

21. How are you able to handle the large number of online courses and students?

By an in-house developed database called oncampus-portal and the legwork of the university administration departments.

## **Economy**

22. How would you describe the cost-effectiveness of online education in your institution? How has cost-effectiveness affected success?

Even though a large part of oncampus activities (development and production of course material) will always has to be supported by funding, all processes are continuously being reviewed in terms of cost-effectiveness. oncampus activities could only be implemented on that condition by:

- networking principle
- separating learning material from teaching/multiple use of material
- a platform strategy for all processes (development, production, programme operation, marketing, project management), where its core is located at LUAS

All in all the expansion of university programmes by oncampus online study programmes was approximately 30 % cheaper than expenditures in buildings would have been required.

23. To which extent is income from operation of online education stable and predictable?

Students pay a fee for the access to oncampus online courses. As oncampus reviews programmes and methodology regularly in view of quality and demand, the number of students is in some degree predictable and stable.

24. To which extent does your institution experience pressure to be flexible to be able to adapt to a changing market?

Flexibility is a main factor for competitiveness, because oncampus acts as e-learning full service provider. Besides, funding determines the character of activities.

25. To which extent does your institution apply a strategy of flexible employment and use staff to adapt to changes in markets?

Flexible employment is applied. In particular, it is important for the course production process.

## **Additional factors**

26. What other factors have contributed to sustainability, robustness and the achievement of critical mass in your institution?

The success of oncampus has been driven on by some self-motivated individuals.

All cooperation activities base on sophisticated business models (creating real win-win-situations between partners).

oncampus activities have reached high political reputation.