

COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF EXISTING LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS (LMSs)

Name of institution: Dublin Institute of technology

Type of institution: ...Third level

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Name of training manager:(Optional).....

LMS used:.....taking this to be a VLE - WebCT.

URL of LMS:.....not applicable..

Language of LMS:.....?

Number of years in use:....Institutional licence purchased sept '00 used previously by some depts.

Other LMSs used:.....TopClass, Intranets

Number of students in the system:...currently approx 100 will be several hundred later this year

Number of courses available:...approx 12 Typical duration:...used to support face to face courses as well as mixed mode so varies from one module to full one/three/four . Years

Number of tutors in the system:...difficult to say. ..

This analysis is divided into six parts.

1 Course development tools

2 Student support tools

3 Tutor support tools

4 Administration (student database and records)

5 Technology (quality of software)

6 Price

1 Course development tools

1.1 *Course creation.* How satisfactory was the LMS for course creation?

Very good in terms of ease of use some limitations in functionality

1.2 *Structure and didactic flexibility - openness.* In the creation of course materials did the LMS permit didactic flexibility? Was the structure open to differing didactic possibilities?

Yes if appropriately used – required some additional training eg in e-moderating and course development for tutors to encourage fuller student engagement and be able to assess appropriately eg online group collaboration. We have a consultancy service, cert/diploma masters programme including an online diploma module to raise staff awareness about the the pedagogical implications Soon to have a learning technology team.

Possible to upload existing powerpoint, word files, set up WWW links in order to allow access to resources. However, integration of a range of online activities and multi-media possible.

1.3 *Teacher userfriendliness.* How easy was the LMS to use by teachers and course developers?

Very easy – that's one reason why we picked it

1.4 *Support for graphics, audio and video, moving image.* Did the LMS support the provision of graphical materials, moving images, audio and video in the course content?

Yes

1.5 *Questioning, assessment, assignments.* What provision was made by the LMS for student questioning and assessment and the design of student assignments?

Assessment tool to support object testing available within the package – but also able to integrate Perception – a Qmark product as well. Respondus was given free with the product.

2 Student support tools

2.1 *Interactivity possibilities.* What provision does the LMS make for student interaction?

Bulletin board, whiteboard and chat available

2.2 *Online student to student communication (synchronous and asynchronous).* What facilities does the LMS provide for student communication to other students and how successful is it? Is both synchronous and asynchronous communication between students supported?

Yes both available – successful if used appropriately by academic staff – have had some staff try out discussions with student groups without training with some resultant problems – important to consider whether these function for support, are assessed etc

2.3 *Online student to tutor/institution communication (synchronous and asynchronous).* What facilities does the LMS provide for student communication to the tutor or to the institution's administration and how successful is it? Is both synchronous and asynchronous communication supported? Are these support services available 24 hours a day?

Yes to all. Also tutor can get logs of synchronous chat sessions and track student logins, access to WWW pages ect

2.4 *Resources, library, references.* What facilities does the LMS provide for student acquisition of resources required by the course, especially library resources and references to required readings?

Allows resources to be made available WWW links to be integrated, also student workspace to upload and share files,

2.5 *Feedback on work and assignments.* What is the quality of provision of feedback to students on their work and assignments?

Feedback available through synchronous/asynchronous discussion, immediate feedback on assessments through assessment tool if required eg of marks, no of questions completed etc. Also shared documents can use tracking facilities to show additions and changes

3 Tutor Support tools

3.1 *Tracking students - database questions.* How user friendly is the LMS for tutors wishing to track their group(s) of students and retrieve data from the student database?

Easy – from designer tools facility – can select to track students, view marks, download chat sessions etc

3.2 *Group management tools.* What facilities are provided by the LMS to the tutors for managing their group(s) of students?

*Can set up private discussion space – limiting access to group members
Can select to email individual or groups of students
Can restrict participant workspace to groups of students working on a collaborative project.*

3.3 *Preparation of questions and assignments by tutor.* How successful is the LMS in providing tutors with user friendly and didactically successful tools for the design of student questions and assignments?

Easy technically takes through a series of steps – doesn't help with the construction of effective questions – that's down to the tutor. Collaborative exercises can be set up see earlier and the provision of group rules, guidelines assessment criteria made easily available – again that's up to the expertise of the tutor and the group not to do with the technology – we would provide guidance in that.

3.4 *Course planning for students (monitoring pace).* What tools are provided by the LMS to tutors to enable them to monitor and plan student progress?

Can restrict and time access to sections and questions – get feedback on student results and manage these – move to other administrative areas.

3.5 *User-friendly administrative systems between tutor and institution.* What provision does the LMS make for successful tutor to institution communication?

WebCT is compatible with our MIS system through SCT banner

4 Administration (student database and records)

4.1 *Enrolment procedures and fee paying.* What facilities does the LMS provide for student enrolments, course allocations and payment of fees?

The system is inter-operable with our MIS system. Courses can be password protected, Registration can be carried out by students. Students can see all the courses they are registered for

4.2 *Passwords and security.* How successfully does the LMS handle student access to the system and the security of all student interactions with the system?

Very well

4.3 *Student records database.* How successful is the system's student database, especially for data storage and data retrieval.

Seems fine so far

4.4 *Examination and certification records.* What structures are provided for recording of data and results leading to examination and certification?

It will be integrated with our central systems

4.5 *Course, class and tutors database.* What facilities are provided for administration of courses, classes and tutors?

Can manage courses, students, files through a designer facility

5 Technology (quality of software)

5.1 *Server - hardware and software options.* What is the quality of server hardware and software options? How is the system integrated with existing software?

Computer services are going to support the courses through use of 2 central servers to ensure access at all times. System integrated with MIS system through SCT Banner module

5.2 *Client - hardware and software options.* What is the quality of client hardware and software options? Does the system permit metatagging?

These questions would be better answered by computer services or through looking at the WebCT pages

5.3 *Flexibility of didactic structure; updating, adaptability.* Is the didactic structure flexible or is it determined by the technology? How adaptable is the

technology to updates and to new technology that becomes available to the market?

Flexible but also limited by the designers level of creativity and their pedagogical expertise. It is possible to integrate other software within the software structure and we went with an internationally recognised, well established software provider to make sure there would be regular upgrades of the technology. They were particularly supportive of academic's needs as a lot of their work is to support this market.

5.4 *Limitation of size (number of students, courses, tutors..)* How satisfactory is the LMS for handling varying numbers of students, courses, tutors? How does it cope with 100, 1000, or 10000 students and large course databases?

We have gone for an institutional licence to cover this – it appears very good in supporting large numbers of students, courses, tutors. That's why we went with this company.

5.5 *Speed of system.* How is the speed of the system and student satisfaction? How does it cope with downloading courses and high bandwidth materials?

Limited by the speed of the connection not to do with the system. Problems with the bandwidth in some parts of the institution and also accessing from home

6 Price

6.1 *Cost of the LMS (Learning Management System).* What is the cost of the LMS to the institution?

We negotiated this with the company

6.2 *Annual fee.* What fees have to be paid annually for the system by the institution?

As above

6.3 *Student Enrolment fee (100 students, 1000 students, 10000 students.)* How do fees to use the LMS vary when the student base is 100 students, 1000 students, 10000 students? Is online invoicing available?

See company costs

6.4 *Maintenance costs: staff involved in management, IT specialists, trainers, etc*
What is the maintenance course to the institution of the LMS and what staff resources are need to maintain it and keep it functioning?

Need financial support for staff training, purchase of central servers – technical maintenance of departmental and central machines

6.5 *Training of teachers and learners and system users.* What costs are involved in staff and student training to use the LMS system?

Provided centrally eg through LT team and LT centre – top-sliced funding for dept projects

Conclusion: Overall evaluation:

Very good, userfriendly so far. We are only in the initial stages of implementation – see www.webct.com for more information

What features would you like to see included in this LMS in the future?