

COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF EXISTING LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS (LMSs)

Name of institution:..... Manchester Metropolitan University
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Type of institution:. Post -- 1992 University.

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URL:. HTTP://www.LTU.MMU.ac.uk

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

LMS used:..... WebCT

URL of LMS:..... HTTP://odl.mmu.ac.uk

Language of LMS:..... English

Number of years in use:..... 4.....

Other LMSs used:... in-house system: courseware

Number of students in the system:..... Approximately 7000.....

Number of courses available:..... 150.....Typical duration:...2 hours – 120 hours.....

Number of tutors in the system:..... 190

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?

Excellent

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

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

No major complaints

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?

Limited only by web browser

2 Student support tools

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

Plenty of opportunities: personal pages, discussion area, web mail, presentations area, multimedia....

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?

Chat, discussion area and work mail. Success depends on the course design. Yes, both synchronous and asynchronous communication supported.

2.3 *Online student to tutor/institution communication (synchronous and asynchronous).* What facilities does the LMS provide for student communication to the tutor ion 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?

As 2.2. The tools are available 24 hours a day, a manned support service only available during working hours.

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?

There is a special tool for this.

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

This depends on the tutors. Feedback can be built in, but it is up to individual tutors to provide it.

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?

Perfectly usable.

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

Groups can be allocated, different groups cannot access to different tools at different times, tutors can search for particular conditions

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?

the LMS is fine, tutors need training in the production of computer-based assessments, of course

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?

Tutors can see which pages have been viewed by which students, how many discussion messages students have read, how often students have logged on.

3.5 *User-friendly administrative systems between tutor and institution.* What provision does the LMS make for successful tutor to institution communication? *None*

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?

None

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?

The system is as secure as any HTTP system -- that is to say, probably acceptable but we are looking at alternatives.

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

The system is limited by being in flat file format. A move to a full Oracle database is anticipated in early 2002

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

None at the moment. The institution is actively considering how to move to such a system.

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

There is a web based interface to manage these issues.

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?

The LMS can be used on a wide range of hardware and software platforms. There is no integration with existing software at present time, although this is possible

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

The client software is a normal web browser, most common browsers are supported, as well as screen readers. However, certain browsers give better results than others. In terms of hardware, this depends on what the tutors put in the courses. Bandwidth can be a major problem.

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?

the didactic structure is completely flexible. The software is regularly updated and seems to take into account technology changes.

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 no major problem is running on a two-year-old server with 8000 students. However, the move to an Oracle database should improve the reliability of databases.

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?

This is limited only by bandwidth at the client end.

6 Price

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

Currently \$5000 per year

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

See 6.1

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?

Flat fee

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?

Academic support: approximately one member of staff per year
technical support: about one half of a technician

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

Staff time: about 35 to 40 days a year for training and training development. All training is carried out online.

Conclusion: Overall evaluation:

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

No special requests, although we do make feature requests from time to time via the manufacturer's web site.