

COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF EXISTING LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS (LMSs)

Name of institution:.....CREATE

Type of institution:.....Research Centre.

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

LMS used: WebCT

URL of LMS: www.televsity.ac.uk/televsity

Language of LMS:.....

Number of years in use: 18 months

Other LMSs used:....Solstra hybrid (developed by CREATE)

Number of students in the system:800

Number of courses available:..13 Typical duration:..5 – 30 hours .

Number of tutors in the system:

9

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?

It was very good because of the speed once you'd created the materials, it was possible to upload them and create a fully interactive course

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?

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

Very user friendly for course developers, and very easy for teachers to access and use

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?

There is a variety of auto marked and tutor marked quizzes, and the assessment area allows uploading and storage of student work

2 Student support tools

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

Interaction is possible dependent on the course design – WEBCT supports discussion and ‘chat’ – synchronous and asynchronous depending on management. The facility exists to share URLs.

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?

Synchronous – chat (not used very much – efficient, but requires own port number)

Synchronous – internal email and discussion threads

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?

As above for student communication to tutor

Communication to institution – not used in this way but is possible with WebCT

System available 24 hrs a day

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?

Links can be added to external resources from WebCT, students can add their own bookmarks.

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

Auto-marked quizzes, and auto-comments

Tutor assessed assignments – tutor comments are easily accessed

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?

Students can be tracked easily by group or course, but not individually across all courses.

Tutor can view areas visited, and tools utilised.

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

Adding deleting students, overriding marks, uploading marks, accessing assignments, viewing statistics of overall marks.

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?

Given appropriate training, the system for design of quizzes and tests is simple to use for tutors. Several different types of quizzes/tests available.

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?

Grades are automatically allocated to students' name and accessed in the Manage Students area

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

Have not used this feature

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?

Used as a stand alone learning environment, not as an integrated management systems- therefore not aware of facilities for these processes.

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?

No access is allowed to the system without a user name and password

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

Very successful and stable and easy to manipulate the data

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

Grades are recorded in the assessment area

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

The global data base stores all information, and one can import and administer in individual course database

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?

Using as a stand alone environment but works with our Apache web server perfectly well (it is shipped with Apache anyway)

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

The Client needs to have a version 4 or higher browser, with java enabled.

Current version in use doesn't permit metatagging. Later versions will.

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?

Depending on the course design and content, also on the technology

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?

Only used for up to 800 accounts, but we are aware that many other institutions use it for much higher numbers of students, and it handles very well

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?

Depending on the server used (recently moved to dedicated server and there are now no performance issues) We have decided to use low bandwidth content due to end user software/hardware issues.

6 Price

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

an unlimited WebCT Standard Edition server license in 2002 will be \$7,000 annually, effective January 1 (an increase from the current list price of \$5,000). This price allows you to provide service to an unlimited number of students per server.

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

See 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?

In addition, if you plan to have 400 student accounts or less, you will have the option of purchasing a one-year, non-renewable Standard Edition Pilot license when your license expires in 2002 at a cost of \$1,500.

Not aware of on-line invoicing

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?

Adminstrator and help desk support, we use multi media authors also.

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

We used a re-seller to train our staff at a cost of approx £500 per day

Conclusion: Overall evaluation:

WE have found WebCT ideally suited to our needs, efficient, and adaptable. We have had very few problems.

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

Global tracking of students, and cross course emailing, and further movement towards IMS/IEEE specs.