



E-LEARNING AT OXFORD

Which units are involved in e-learning support?

e-learning support at Oxford is co-ordinated between a number of different units.

Learning Technologies Group (LTG) – As part of central OUCS providing a suite of online tools for academic staff to use in teaching and learning with their students. The WebLearn virtual learning environment (VLE) has been developed at Oxford to include tools to support traditional teaching models. Staff can easily gather online handouts, reading lists, lecture notes, essay plans, feedback forms etc, and use communication tools for online discussion, sharing, testing and marking. It supports online project/group work, tutorial booking and collections of learning resources. The VLE also includes new ‘web 2.0’ tools for learning and teaching such as blogs, wikis and podcasting. Staff and students can use WebLearn for any types of media such as online video, images or datasets.

LTG staff offer advice and guidance to members of the University in making use of the tools in the virtual learning environment or in producing digital media or modeling software. Advice is also available with regard to planning and evaluating the use of technology and the pedagogical or student support issues which may arise. An extensive programme of training is offered to ensure that staff have the opportunity to develop IT skills for their work. LTG also run an annual survey for Freshers and their knowledge of IT.

Technology Assisted Lifelong Learning (TALL) - In the Division of Continuing Education the Technology Assisted Lifelong Learning group includes a web development team for adult and continuing education short courses offered online and by distance learning. These courses are popular and regularly updated. Students who study on these courses are supported in their online study by TALL and the study support teams within Continuing Education.

Oxford Learning Institute (OLI) – Oxford University’s central educational staff development unit offer support for all areas of academic practice such as skills for teaching and assessment, course design and student support.

Oxford Internet Institute (OII) – A research institute in the Division of Social Sciences which studies and publishes international research into the effect of the Internet on all aspects of society.

Department of Education– Academic and teaching department in the division of Social Sciences which delivers research and courses in education. The Department supervises research projects in e-learning and offers an MSc course in e-learning which attracts international and local students to study at Oxford.

Divisions/Department/College learning technologists – Most units have a local IT officer who provides a range of IT support. OUCS work hard to ensure that any of these local IT support officers who is giving advice or supporting academic staff and students in their use of e-learning are able to make use of centrally provided e-learning tools offered by LTG. LTG/OUCS reps sit on department/college IT committees or have informal links with colleges. LTG runs user groups for key services such as WebLearn and podcasting. The Medical Sciences Teaching Centre has its own technology unit aimed at pre-clinical teaching. Other faculties have, in the past, had learning technologists (joint posts with OUCS).

Oxford University Library Service (OULS) -In many units the promotion of the use of IT in teaching and learning falls to OULS librarians, mainly due to the reading and resource based learning approach of the University. OULS staff offer workshops for students and staff information literacy skills via the LTG training programme.

E-learning at Oxford falls under the wing of two important university committees. The first is the Education Committee and the second is the PRAC ICT sub-committee. These guide the activities of OUCS and the LTG. The LTG advisory committee OxTALENT has divisional representatives and guides the activities of the LTG to promote awareness about e-learning within the Divisions.

LTG contacts on E-Learning: ltg@oucs.ox.ac.uk

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Joint research projects

LTG, TALL, OII and the Department of Education co-ordinate to make targeted bids to e-learning research and project funders such as JISC, BECTA, HEA and EduServe.

Delivery of the Masters in E-learning

The Dept. of Education and the LTG jointly run and deliver a masters programme for students in the Dept. of Education. Colleagues from TALL and OII also teach on this course.

Staff Development Programme

OLI and LTG both run large scale training programmes. In areas where academic practice and technology overlap colleagues from each contribute to the others' delivery, e.g. courses on the use of WebLearn to support teaching and learning. The programme of courses are advertised together and co-ordinators will refer staff to appropriate sessions. Colleagues from the Department of Education, OULS and TALL contribute to the LTG programme.

OxTALENT

OxTALENT is the LTG advisory committee made up of representatives from across the collegiate university. It acts as a steering group to raise awareness, promote interaction, and stimulate the use of IT in teaching and learning across the University. The OxTALENT Committee includes representatives from each division and also OLI, OULS, TALL, OII. It is hosted and co-ordinated by LTG. The OxTALENT Committee reports to the PICT subcommittee and to the Education Committee. OxTALENT also runs an annual competition to reward the most innovative use of IT in teaching and learning.

Annual ‘Shock’ and ‘Beyond’ Conferences

The LTG runs two major international conferences each year on themes of learning technology which Oxford staff attend. TALL, OLI, Dept. of Education and OII colleagues contribute to and attend the conferences. These conferences are held at Said Business School and sell-out each year.

Digital literacy and information literacy support

Support and training for students in the learning skills they need for success is offered in a co-ordinated way both centrally and locally across the University. Colleges and departments are unequivocal in their commitment to the tutorial system of teaching which ensures that each student experiences personalized support for their academic development and skills. In addition to this, opportunities for further generic skills development in the use of IT and web based study or research are offered by LTG and OULS via the extensive IT learning programme (ITLP) in LTG and, where discipline specific needs exist, by specialist literacy or technology support units in academic divisions.

OxCORT and ASPIRE

These two development projects demonstrate how Oxford successfully reacts to strategic needs. In both instances clear improvements in the current systems were identified - OxCORT to provide better and quicker tutorial feedback, ASPIRE a PDP and skills profiling system - which addressed emerging strategic goals for the University. Relevant sub-sections of the University led the appropriate consultation and procurement exercises: College Senior Tutors for OxCORT; and Careers for ASPIRE and the LTG for knowledge of application development and learning and teaching needs. Both projects met clear targets for value for money and developed systems on time and to budget. They both also had a clear exit strategy and are now widely used across the University.

Oxford in iTunes U

This initiative demonstrated how the University can collectively meet an opportunity presented to it at very short notice. Through links developed by the OUCS LTG with Apple computers Oxford was invited to be an early participant in the iTunes U project. This aligned well with key aims of the University to enhance student support, but also to widen its outreach activities. Oxford on iTunes U was co-ordinated centrally by the Computing Services and the Public Affairs Directorate. The initiative was approved by Council and involves a widespread activity across colleges and departments, involving IT staff, students, and academics. Oxford's presence in iTunes U is recognised by Apple as the leading site in Europe and challenges the long-standing sections run by the major US institutions