Using ICT to widen access and support reflective learning and personal development planning within a blended learning environment.
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Abstract
This is a “work in progress” presentation on the development of a 1st year undergraduate law module delivered through a combination of both face-to-face classroom and online activities using a WebCT platform. The background consists of two main elements. Firstly, recent changes to institutional policy now require that Personal Development Planning (PDP) for 1st year undergraduates is assessed either as an independent module or by being embedded within the existing curriculum. Secondly, both institutional and departmental policies promote the use of WebCT for the delivery of all modules as part of a broader strategy to support more flexible, student-centred, learning.

The model adopted has been to embed the PDP process within the core curriculum by re-designing the assessment tasks to ensure alignment with the learning activities and intended learning outcomes and by re-structuring the personal tutor system to integrate personal tutoring with the assessment process. A strategic, team-based, approach to the development of the blended learning environment has been taken, involving considerable staff development focussed on e-learning. The process of embedding PDP within the module involves 3 main elements:

- Reflective Practice Log, designed to support legal skills development and self reflection on learning and performance.
- Careers Management Portfolio, designed to develop students’ awareness of career options within the context of the legal profession.
- Oral Presentation, supported by Powerpoint slides, designed to develop students’ oral communication and IT skills.

The presentation will identify the pedagogic rationale for the approach adopted and demonstrate how the use of the WebCT platform has enabled tutors to create an integrated framework for the delivery of skills training, the provision of learning resources, online formative and summative assessment tasks, interactive discussion forums for learning support and an administrative structure for tracking and supporting student progress. Finally, the presentation will evaluate the first two semesters’ experience, drawing on student feedback, peer evaluation and evidence of student performance at that stage and conclude by identifying further issues for discussion.