EVALUATING ONLINE TEACHING: A PORTFOLIO APPROACH

Stephen Bright
Professional Development Unit
Waikato Institute of Technology, NEW ZEALAND
Stephen.bright@wintec.ac.nz

Abstract
There are a number of outlines emerging as templates for lecturer/teacher characteristics, lecturer/teacher actions and course design features which contribute to excellence in online teaching and learning. This poster presentation examines several of these templates and suggests a portfolio approach as a practical and unobtrusive way of evaluating online teaching and supporting good practice in this ‘virtual classroom’ environment.

There is a range of literature identifying the characteristics of an effective teacher (for example Feldman, 1988). Effective online teachers are a subset of this group of effective teachers, with extra skills, attitudes and actions which are uniquely required by the online learning environment. Several profiles now exist of the effective online teacher (for example Illinois Online Network, Graham et al, 2001 and Hayes, 2002). These profiles are useful in evaluating online teacher/lecturers, but the problem remains of how to collect the data. Where an effective teacher/lecturer in a face-to-face setting may have their teaching processes observed and evaluated by a colleague or professional development staff by ‘sitting in’ on a class, this may be obtrusive in an online environment. The software capabilities of some VLE software means that it is possible to produce a portfolio of printed material – discussion postings, chat session logs, email messages. This portfolio, together with a short questionnaire on how the lecturer/teacher uses the design of the course to engage students, provides a comprehensive overview of the teacher/lecturer and can be evaluated. These evaluations can then be cross-matched (if required) with student feedback to give a profile of the lecturer/teacher’s performance in the online environment with no intrusion or disruption to the online learning process.

References
Illinois Online Network: Facilitator Profile. Available:
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