

Coleg Llandrillo

Environment for Learning

Institutional context

The main college site is based at Rhos-on-Sea, on the outskirts of Colwyn Bay in North Wales. Four other centres have been established at Rhyl, Denbigh, Abergele and St Asaph. The college is committed to responding to local needs through the development of community-based learning across a wide area of North Wales.

Coleg Llandrillo has strong links and partnerships with a wide range of employers and local organisations. It is an accredited college of the University of Glamorgan and a partner in the e-college Wales network. In session 2004/05 there were approximately 25,000 students (4,500 FTEs), around 58,000 enrolments on some 3,500 courses.

Key specialisms

Hospitality and catering provision is an important element in the college's links with the local economy. The college was awarded the title of Best Hotel School of Europe in 2000 and is the only college in Wales to be awarded Network of Excellence Status for Hospitality & Catering. Other key areas for the college are the Centre for Automotive Technology and the Centre for Advanced Studies.

Current MLE

Student Record System	EBS ¹ EBS – Oracle-based system is currently the only one capable of providing information for the LLWR return.
Management Information for Staff	Funding Council Qualification and Aims database is held within the MIS, updates are downloaded when ELWA provides them
Virtual Learning Environments	Teknical Virtual Campus ² (hosted off-site by vendor) and Moodle ³ (hosted on-site)
Library	Alice ⁴
Timetabling	CELCAT ⁵ – automatically updates EBS
Registers and Registry reports	In-house system built in Microsoft Access with embedded SQL
Retention/Achievement/ Progression	Course Self-Assessment system – online form
Curriculum Planning	In-house system using EBS data
Finance	Staff database and wages database are networked, proprietary but not linked Payroll currently DOS based.
Staff Portal	Staff Intranet G42
Student Portal	Student Intranet i42
Other Systems	STEPS – Staff Training Event Planning System Course Hours Calculator – curriculum planning Exam cards system – developed in-house

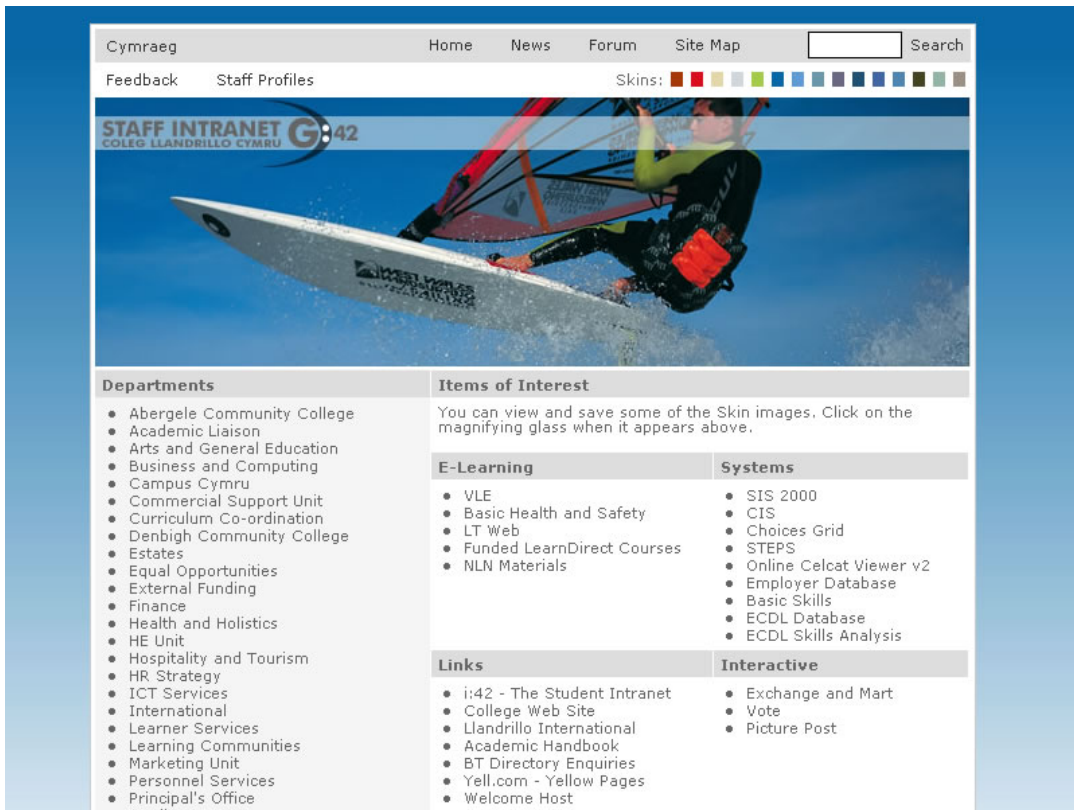
¹ http://www.tribaltechnology.co.uk/html/products/education_systems/ebs.htm

² http://www.teknical.com/products/virtual_campus.htm

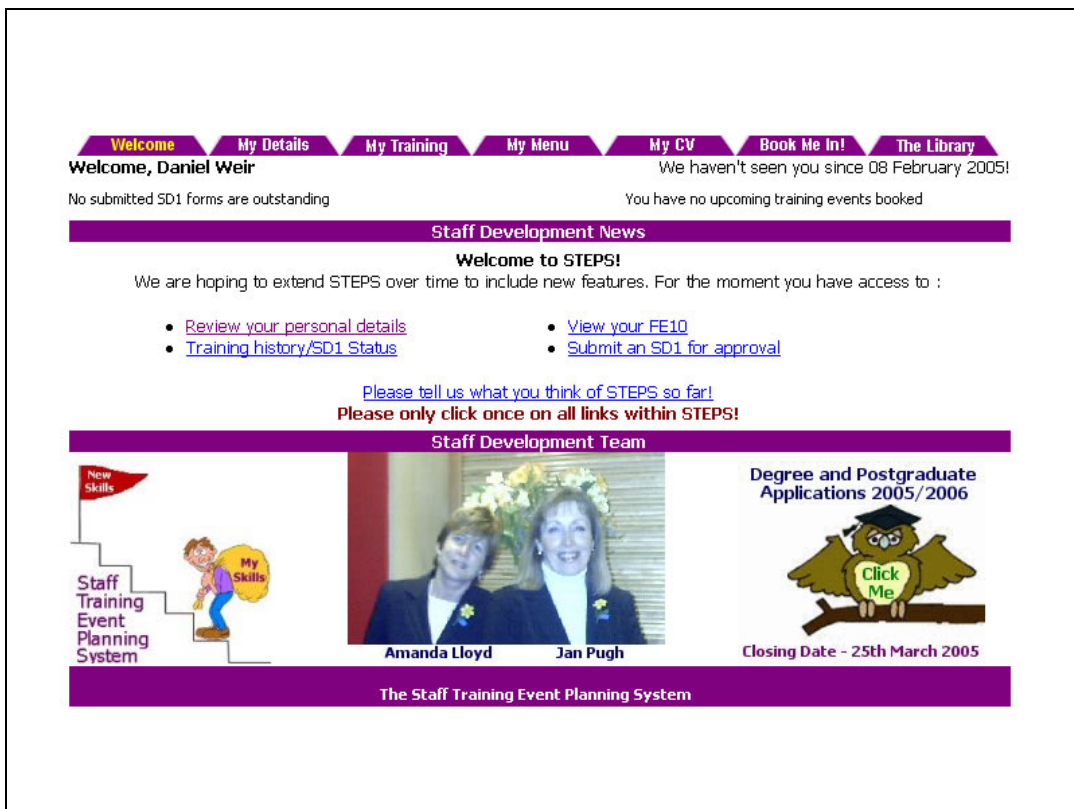
³ <http://moodle.org/>

⁴ http://www.softlink.co.uk/gateway/gateway.exe?TIMESTAMP=17514353515&X_=001f&displayform=index&library=11&category=solutions§ion=alicegrad

⁵ <http://www.celcat.com/products/timetabling/index.html>



Screenshot 1: Staff Intranet G42



Screenshot 2: Staff Training and Event Planning

Screenshot 3: Student Intranet I42

Student Register - Aidan Sheil - Microsoft Internet Explorer provided by Coleg Llandrillo

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Student Information	Class Information	Course Information	Register Information	Management Information	Helpful Information	
Register Day	Session Start & End		Status	Attendance		
				P	T	
				%		
Monday	09:00:00 - 12:00:00		A	19	22	86.36
Monday	12:00:00 - 13:00:00		A	16	20	80.00
Monday	14:00:00 - 16:00:00		A	18	23	78.26
Monday	16:00:00 - 17:00:00		A	10	14	71.43
Tuesday	09:00:00 - 12:00:00		A	21	23	91.30
Tuesday	13:00:00 - 17:00:00		A	21	23	91.30
Thursday	09:00:00 - 11:00:00		A	18	22	81.82
Thursday	11:00:00 - 12:30:00		A	20	23	86.96
Thursday	13:00:00 - 14:30:00		A	18	22	81.82
Thursday	15:00:00 - 16:00:00		A	15	18	83.33
Thursday	16:00:00 - 17:00:00		A	20	23	86.96
Friday	09:00:00 - 10:30:00		A	19	21	90.48
Friday	10:30:00 - 12:00:00		A	21	23	91.30
Friday	13:00:00 - 14:30:00		A	17	20	85.00
Friday	14:30:00 - 15:30:00		A	15	18	83.33
Average Attendance				268	315	85.08

Legend	
Number of Weeks Present	P
Total Number of Weeks Expected To Attend	T
Attendance	%
Attendance is below 75% for this register	
Attendance is between 75% and 85% for this register	

Screenshot 4: Student Register Attendance Statistics

Standards and specifications

Coleg Llandrillo was involved in a SWaNI project exploring interoperability between FD EBS and Teknical Virtual Campus using IMS Enterprise, with Welsh extensions for the LLWR. However, IMS specifications are not required for internal data transfer. While the college is aware of the advantages of using IMS specifications for third party data exchange, current franchise arrangements with the University of Glamorgan operate dual enrolment systems, with no electronic transfer of learner data.

Institutional strategy and policy

Responsibility for overseeing the strategic development of the college rests with the Corporation Board. The Board takes a keen interest in the impact of the College on the local area, and members are encouraged to influence the direction of the college in terms academic provision and quality issues through representation on the college Academic Board.

In 2003, the college merged its Virtual Learning Centre and IT systems support service to form a new Information Communication Technology Services Directorate. This has enabled a streamlined and coherent approach to systems development and support across the institution as a whole. The Director is a member of the college Senior Management Team and reports to the Principal.

Rationale and context for MLE development

A key driver for MLE development at Coleg Llandrillo is the growing need for robust data to facilitate the reporting requirements of a complex organisation dealing with multiple external agencies. For example, in session 2004/05 there were over 700 16-year-old students registered at the college, of whom half receive Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) funding, requiring detailed attendance monitoring and reporting.

Another important factor in the development of college systems has been improving the speed and quality of information available in order to reduce the administrative burden on staff, minimise errors and facilitate management planning by plotting targets and trends.

The Course Hours Calculator facility enables managers to determine course viability and break-even points for recruitment and retention, and the calculation of teaching hours on a course to optimise funding. Through password protection and levels of access, there are rigid controls for altering course information and deleting non-running courses.

There are manual procedures for the uploading and checking of enrolment information in the MIS. Staff can then use this information to create their own registers. The in-house Examination cards system minimises potential errors and ensures that the college derives maximum available funding from student assessment and achievement records. A further driver for MLE development is increasing student expectations of high levels of service and the immediate availability of information about their progress.

Access to resources

The institution has a policy of 1:1 staff / PC access. All full-time and substantial part-time students (those attending a course of more than 3 hours) have access to the general communication tools in the VLE. Access rights are centrally controlled: tutors can request access on a course code basis to upload materials, and students have read-only access.

Functional access issues

The in-house staff development facility STEPS (Staff Training Event Planning System) records staff development events, enables online application, and provides staff with email reminders of their bookings and upcoming training events.

Pedagogical Aspects*Curriculum and quality issues*

Students on the college's initial teacher education course (PGCE) are among the heaviest users of the VLE, as the use of ICT/ILT for learning and teaching is integral to the course.

The college's internal quality processes are based on a Course Self-Assessment (CSA) system recording student enrolment, attendance, attainment and progression. Formerly a 30-page paper system, the CSA is now available as an online form for staff to complete and return.

Support for learning

Basic Skills assessment is an important element of the college's support for learning. Online assessment of basic skills is carried out with each application or enquiry to the college, so information is captured prior to enrolment, and learner suitability for their preferred course is confirmed.

Feedback from students on online basic skills testing indicates that while many did not respond well to paper tests, they submit more willingly to online assessment. In this context, staff see the introduction of online basic skills testing as an example of technology enabling an improved learning experience. Basic skills assessment is used to develop individual support plans for students, to map their needs to appropriate provision and to address retention issues.

Technology-facilitated learning design in the college works as follows. The student completes a basic skills assessment, the tutor reviews the assessment and provides comments, and appropriate courses are selected from the available menu to create an individual Learning Programme. This information is fed to the college learndirect manager through a web page facility, courses are set up for the student to access online, and the student is registered (manually) on the learndirect system. Details of the course are emailed to the student, and the course remains available to the student for four weeks, during which time the tutor can monitor student access and progress.

The college is involved in piloting a personal and professional development planner for ICT/ILT working alongside Pembrokeshire College in south-west Wales, as part of the ILT Champions programme

Assessment

Staff interest in the potential of online assessment is growing, due in no small part to the success of automated basic skills assessment in raising staff awareness and expectations of ILT. Consolidated basic skills test results data is also providing college managers with information on entry levels of literacy and numeracy to inform ongoing negotiations in a national context about funding for key skills provision.

Reflections

Benefits and opportunities

College managers see increasing potential for using technology to improve business processes and services to learners, and strategic planning through access to better information. Streamlined and robust electronic systems also enable the college to offer the increasingly higher levels of service that students expect from educational providers.

Risks and challenges

College managers see staff engagement with ILT as the main challenge to more widespread use of technology across the institution. Despite the facilities and functionality of the systems, engagement of staff in some quarters is limited. One of the key reasons for this lack of engagement may in fact lie in the early enthusiasm for the potential of technology to transform learning and teaching at Coleg Llandrillo in the late 1990s. It is now recognised that the hype and promotion by politicians, the media and policy makers in the use of ILT for economic reasons may have alienated lecturing staff with rumours that online learning would replace the need for face to face teaching, and that the adverse effects of this on staff interest in using technology are still being felt today.

It is recognised that system developments have been driven mainly by ICT Services under the direction of senior management. There are real concerns about generating and maintaining staff support for the use of technology, and a potential over-reliance on basic skills assessment and LearnDirect as the main means of raising awareness and generating interest in ILT in general. By comparison, achievement statistics for the college European Computer Driving Licence

(ECDL) provision show that there is a 100% pass rate for the taught course, but only 68% achievement for the online course. While there may be several reasons for this discrepancy, it does not serve to instil confidence among staff in online provision and assessment.

There are a number of staff development issues associated with MIS developments, and some reluctance among staff to engage with professional development planning opportunities for ICT/ILT. The introduction of the online Examination cards system has not been without difficulties caused by a combination of complacency and human error. Challenges have been encountered in getting staff to use course management information to take ownership and responsibility for allocating course codes and calculating course viability.

Some staff also seem reluctant to make their resources available in the VLE, possibly because they want to protect the materials they have developed, or because of a lack of confidence in their suitability for sharing college-wide in an open forum.

The college recognises that there are some issues with cost, flexibility and interoperability associated with the implementation of the FD EBS suite of products. However, these risks are balanced by confidence in the robustness of the systems.

Further challenges to MLE development and exploitation of the functionality of the college systems are encountered in the interfaces with external agencies that are not set up for data exchange with large colleges, for example the careers agency currently operating EMA on behalf of the government.

Future plans and vision

There are many plans for the future development of ICT and ILT for the college. Basic Skills assessment will be developed and enhanced for literacy and numeracy and a new IT element will be added when standards are ratified.

The development of ICT systems for business purposes will continue as this has had a significant impact on quality and standards at the college. The use of ILT in the curriculum will continue to grow as technology progresses and accredited material become more available.

Plans for the future development of college systems include enhancing basic skills assessment to include college-specific IT assessment elements such as accessing resources, file management and email. There are also plans for curriculum-specific key skills assessments, for example health and safety elements for construction courses.