

HELPP ELGG podcasts

<http://helpp.hull-college.ac.uk/uploads/report/interviews/elgg-part3.mp3>

Engineering Tutor

Q With which courses did you use ELGG?

A I used ELGG on all of the HE programmes in Engineering, so that would be HNC Mechanical Engineering, HNC Electrical Engineering, Foundation degree in Engineering Technology and the BEng (Hon) in Engineering Technology.

Q What sort of age group are those students?

A They're all part-time students. I've got no full-time students at all. Most of them on the foundation degree and BEng are in pretty responsible positions so they're not like your normal student; they're here to get a professional qualification really more than anything else.

Q The way you use it. Were you replacing a paper-based system?

A I was. Specifically for the HNC programmes but one of the requirements for the second year of the HNC is they actually do an individual project or a group project and in the past I've only done that myself for the past 18 months sort of thing they would keep a project log book and one of the main things about that was the external examiner could come along and if a student was borderline between a very good or a passable he would use the log book as a sort of reference point, so effectively if it was a good log book he'd bump them up, if it was a poor log book he'd bump them down or he wouldn't bump them up effectively and what we found was it was very much list orientated, 'I did this', 'I did that', it wasn't really geared to reflection on anything, how they were finding things difficult, how they overcame things, did they have things in place if the first things didn't work, these sorts of things, so the paperwork was generally not very good and when the external examiner had looked he was rarely really motivated to change anything, he just thought well the mark's the mark, even if they were close, he'd say well there's nothing there to make me think it's any good. From that point of view what we've done with using ELGG is they're doing the same thing, the same information's in there, however it's letting me adopt a more formative approach. I'm able to look at how things are progressing and give them feedback in a periodic nature rather than looking at it at the end, marking it and sort of saying, 'there you go' sort of thing and again the good thing is the way that I'm assessing it. And again it's got a measurement associated with it shall we say, in other words they wouldn't do it if there wasn't a measurement as far as I'm concerned is that they have got to have everything, so when I'm talking about their project to the individual students if the information isn't there on ELGG I won't discuss it with them so they now know how to get stuff up. Now some of them are not doing it properly but some of them are. Again, it's up to them, they've got until the end of the year to sort it all out so they can still go back and put information up and that sort of thing. Slowly but surely people are getting into it and I think they realise the benefit of having it there because they can talk to me rather than messing about and opening different packages and all that sort of thing so the flexibility's very good and I mean the server we've got here, we've had some issues with space, I think that seems to be working okay. So they are able to upload a multitude of different files – videos, PowerPoint documents, Microsoft project documents, lots and lots of different bits of information that otherwise would be just a paper

source, so we're able to look dynamically at the information. I can basically say what have you done here and they can actually show me physically show the thing doing something. Or they can basically go make a modification of the software rather than opening packages individually, everything's there and the way it works, if I click on to an autocard or a works document it opens up automatically so you've got the whole information in there in front of you so it's useful from that point of view, it's a dynamic resource as far as I'm concerned, rather than just a piece of paper, you're reading off a screen.

Q Will you be using it next year?

A Definitely using it next year and I think the good thing is next year most of the HNC students last year went on to the foundation degree and all of the foundation degree go on to the BEng so next year it will be even easier because they've all done it and it won't be a shock to the system. I'm sure some of them will still be going, 'Oh God!' but I think the rest of them will realise, 'I know what I'm doing here', because I'm treating them all the same, the three levels. On the foundation degree it's very much reflection you'll know yourself with the PDP (PPD?) units it's having to do PDP (PPD?) 3 and 4 there's a lot of reflection involved in that so the reflection aspects of that are assessed on the blog so there's no doubt about it – they've got to do that otherwise they're not going to pass that part of the actual module. The BEng goes back to a project thing again. The difference between the projects that they do on the foundation degree and HNC is the engineering content isn't that much of a worry; it's what they're doing at work so again a lot of the courses are based on 'what am I actually doing in my job at work?' On the BEng it's very much got to have a significant engineering content so a lot of them are in positions of responsibility where they're not doing a lot of engineering anymore so it's a bit of an issue for them so again that's helped me ensure I'm going into enough detail to satisfy the external examiners, those sorts of things so it's very useful but I mean the foundation degree's where the main aspects of and that's the sort of thing you'll see on Friday – it's the foundation students because they're using it for their PDPs (PPDs?). Their work-based learning and obviously to reflect on the other units they're doing as well but specifically for the PPD (PDP?) I've basically developed a learning contract that they're implementing and that's got to be kept online and up to date and with the work-based learning project it's like the other projects, they've got a log book, so they're using it more this semester than they were last semester really so it's a significant tool for me because it means I can map things quite easily.

For me it's a useful tool – I think I'll get more out of it next time to be honest because I'll basically know what to ask the kids.