

<http://helpp.hull-college.ac.uk/uploads/report/interviews/elgg-part4.mp3>

Business and Computing Tutor

Q Can you tell me what course you used ELGG with?

A We've used ELGG with the majority of our HE courses, part-time and full-time Business and Computing really. Primarily we used it for work-based learning support to put those courses on but we have used it for other things in particular personal and professional development as well.

Q What sort of age group are your students?

A The age range is quite broad because obviously we have the part-time students who are people in work and their age range can be anything from 20 to, I think our oldest student recently was 60. On the full-time courses the age range tends to be a bit narrower – from about 19 to about 25.

Q Have you replaced any paper-based systems and processes and practices?

A From the point of view of work-based learning certainly we have because we use ELGG's system for project support to create learning contracts which then allows us to attach tangible outcomes to learning outcomes and to track those with mentors and the student. In that sense that would have previously been a paper-based document but now we're actually using ELGG to track that and to reproduce it. In addition to that we've also used ELGG to give us some additional things in terms of recording the student activity and progress through the process with use of the blogs because previously we'd have asked students to create diaries, now we ask them to produce blogs. There's the additional facility that for people – the mentor, the tutor or other students to comment on the content in those blogs when we're tracking work-based learning or indeed in any other kind of HE work – attach that to PPD comes to mind again, so that's allowed us to kind of expand on what would have previously been a paper-based process. The blogs can then be used to feed into the student's own documentation and so if, for instance, they're doing a professional development plan they can use information from the blogs to see what direction they're going in and what they need to do for the future.

Q Do you think it's improved or enhanced interactions between staff and students?

A It certainly has from the point of view of the part-time students who won't always get the opportunity to contact staff during the week because they're working and staff aren't available. It's another point of contact so from that point of view it's provided a further option from a more general point of view when it comes to the work-based learning it gives 3 way communication between tutor, student and mentor which would have been difficult to organise using any other means really because in this case everyone can look at the information that's there within a particular group depending on the restrictions that are attached to a blog entry or a forum entry or a file again that would have been far more complicated before because it would have required the tutor to coordinate activity between, for instance, the mentor and the student and similarly the mentor might have to coordinate activity between the tutor and the student. So it's improved the

workflow is how I'd put it, it's made it more efficient and made it so that lines of communication are more flexible.

Q What about accommodating different learning styles? Has it really made any difference to how you accommodate learning styles?

A This is a bit more difficult to establish because obviously we're using it for very specific things with the work-based learning and the personal and professional development, certainly it does give students a bit more control over their own learning because they can, to directed study or if they're using to store active files in e-portfolio. They've got a bit more control over what they're producing there and in that sense it will support their learning style better because they can choose what they use ELGG for. In a more conventional sense, for instance in more learning materials, providing of and so forth we'd use other systems for that in general, for instance Moodle is used for a range of materials for differentiation.

Q Did your expectations change over the period of the project?

A Not specifically because I'd had experience of using ELGG with work-based students before I got involved in the project personally. I knew it was tied into the project but I had been using it as a tutor so there wasn't a big shift. The only thing that did change was some of the facilities over time in terms of the development of the implementation available at the College and that sort of opened up some opportunities but in some ways it's closed others down because it's become more difficult to work with communities in some ways.

Q Will you be using it next year?

A I'm pretty sure we will be because it's too useful a tool not to use so from the point of recording students' thoughts and activities and diaries just for that alone it's worthwhile but if you then bring into it the idea of keeping track of work-based learning through learning contracts, having the file repository, the function for students to even be able to create a web page on there those kinds of things so they can create an e-portfolio and deliver work through that. That brings it into the kind of policies and agendas for sustainability as well because it means we can, to a certain extent, reduce the amount of paper that's being used and all those things make it a very valuable tool.