2012 UNIVERSITY ANNUAL LEARNING & TEACHING CONFERENCE

2012 & Beyond

Afternoon Oral Bites	13:55 – 14:30

Enhancing student support via telecommunications
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Abstract:

The presentation will give an overview of a project funded by the LTSU – 'Enhancing Student Support via Telecommunications' - and incorporates many of the themes outlined in the four areas of the strategic plan, especially: empowering people and striving to deliver an outstanding, individualised and inclusive student experience. Particularly relevant from each area are: the concept of "Going Beyond" in Recognised for Excellence, " integrated learning environment" and "quality of the student experience" in Learning and Teaching, and "an individualised student experience" in Empowering People and "focus on quality" in An Engaged University.

The use of Skype was initially used in Student Support Services in response to the student voice for an alternative way to access for support whilst at university, especially on placement. It represents an alternative way to engage students, whether: on placement, a part-time or mature student, having caring responsibilities, accessing specialist support, living some distance from the university, requiring additional support beyond course content or students who may require a more flexible approach. The NSS survey recorded comments from students that at an area for improvement is the availability of staff (NSS, 2011). These findings were mirrored in comments collated from students via Focus groups and evaluation forms during collaborative projects with the Faculty of Health and Social Care and Sport Rehabilitation - embedding of study skills into their programs. The importance of improving student experience in terms of contact hours is being considered by the university (Strategic plan p.15) and this project, Enhancing Student Support via Telecommunications has the potential to address this.

Flexibility, functionality, immediacy and ease-of-use of Skype make it an ideal tool for staff to support students on and off-campus and so improve student experience. Its multi-functions means that it is an effective teaching and learning tool easily adapted for: teaching direct skills, delivering feedback or assessment in one-to-one or group situations. Through alternative communication modes it can increase access to support from tutors, supervisors and peers.

Skype represents the opportunity "to do new things", and to create innovative concepts to bring a new richness to the learning experience (Strategic plan p.26)