

Northumbria Research Link

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PILOT TO INVESTIGATE PEER MENTORING IN A VIRTUAL FORMAT.

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DIVERSITY AND PEER NETWORKS

- personal networks affect student attainment (Eggens, van der Werf et al. 2007)
- students from lower income families have less peer support to draw on. (Harvey, Drew et al. 2006)
- Farmer et al., (2008)...
 - older students perceive peer support as less supportive
 - similar findings found for 1st generation students
 - international students experienced difficulty integrating into the university community.



NEWCASTLE BUSINESS SCHOOL: VIRTUAL MENTOR PILOT

Aim: to improve and extend induction and transition experiences of new students through the provision of programme based support

Objectives:

- To promote social interaction between students in and across years and instil a sense of programme identity
- To support the academic programme through reactive and proactive interventions
- To evaluate the sustainability of Virtual Peer Mentoring by piloting different models

Rationale:

Large student base across range of undergraduate programmes; International admissions; Student Satisfaction; Emphasis on the student experience; Difficulties experienced in implementing a face to face peer mentoring programme



VIRTUAL PEER MENTORING

- “emerging” technologies e.g. Virtual Worlds illustrated by Second Life.
- “established” technologies e.g. virtual environments (VLEs)
- “populist” technologies e.g. Social networks illustrated by Facebook

At Northumbria ...

Only 12 of the 451 students surveyed indicated they used the Second Life Virtual World.

1/3 have heard of it but do not use...

2/3 of the sample said they hadn't even heard of the application



MODEL 1: VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT (VLE)

Positives

- provides students opportunities to engage in social interactions with their peers alongside course related conversations (Burge 1994; Sole and Lindquist 2001)
- two-thirds of respondents saying they access the VLE on a daily basis, further 30% stating they access on a weekly basis.

Downsides

- commonest model in undergraduate teaching is that of 'transmission' (MacLaren 2004)
- students unenthusiastic about VLEs citing them as an unimaginative repository for materials (Conole and De Laat 2006)

“The VLE is mainly used as a repository...it really does depend so much on the lecturer.”



MODEL 2: SOCIAL NETWORKING

Positives

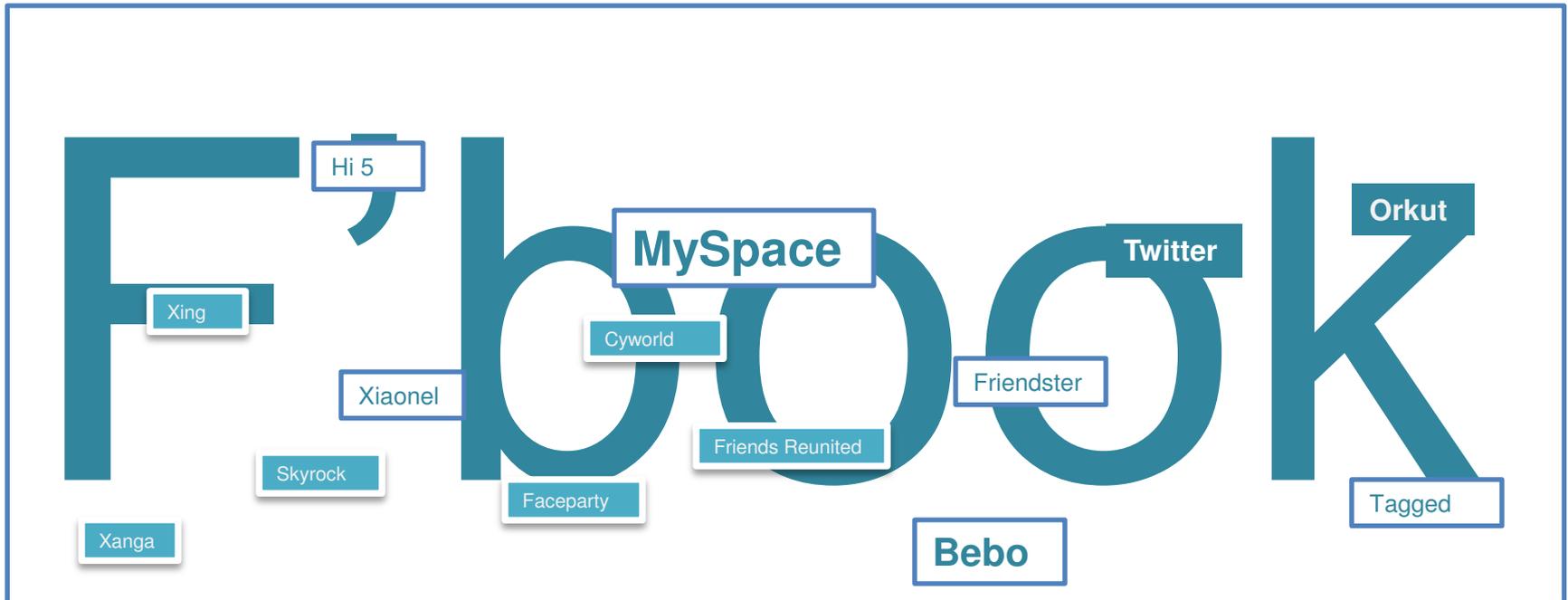
- potential for creating social learning environments that offer ‘social communities of practice’ (Phipps 2007; Cain 2008; Ryberg and Christiansen 2008)
- Northumbria: over three quarters of the respondents noting that it is accessed on a daily basis, 10% more than those accessing the VLE daily.

Downsides

- Struggle to see how used in learning ...free expression without worrying what “professors” might think. (Monteith and Smith 2001; Lipka 2007; JISC 2008)
- Kolek and Saunders (2008) recommend that institutions at the very least “*should develop clear policies and procedures for the use of social networking sites in (the name of) official institutional business*”



WHICH SOCIAL NETWORK? WEEKLY USE AT NORTHUMBRIA



Madge et al (2009) ...

students reported that they specifically joined *Facebook pre-registration as a means of making new friends at university*

Students thought *Facebook was used most importantly for social reasons sometimes used informally for learning purposes.*

THE PRACTICALITIES OF THE PILOT

- Led by relevant Programme Leader
- Nature of Marketing Management / Business Studies programmes
- Recruitment of first year student as mentor
- Training and other HR issues
- What content should we offer (overlaps with other student support efforts)?



THE PILOT

	Model 1: Blackboard	Model 2: Facebook
Programme(s) involved:	BA Travel and Tourism and BA International tourism	BA Business Studies and BA Marketing Management
Mentor basis	Final year students mentor direct entry students post enrolment.	2 nd year transition students mentor students pre and post enrolment.
Phase 1: Apr. – June 2010	Recruit and Train mentors; Data collection via postcards asking “One thing which would have been most useful for me to know about University life when I started was...” Materials prepared on the basis of results. Focus groups conducted with mentors to examine technical considerations in creating materials. .	
Phase 2: Aug. 2010		Mentees contacted via the “friends” website and mentoring begins
	Materials development continues e.g. library orientation, referencing skills	
Phase 3: Oct. – Nov. 2010	Awareness survey with mentees conducted Mentors asked to keep diaries of virtual contact made with mentees	
Phase 4: Dec. 2010	Social Network Analysis to mentor/mentee activity applied to diaries (Haythornthwaite, 2008) In line with action research, methods will be determined by outcomes of previous phases.	

FACEBOOK MODEL: ANTICIPATED BENEFITS FOR NBS

- ▶ Relationships between students that are formed pre-enrolment will promote strong attendance and also aid in group work.
- ▶ Newly enrolled students will have a reliable, relevant and readily accessible mentor
- ▶ Increased cross year group interaction will allow students to be better informed on crucial issues such as work placements and dissertations.
- ▶ Students who have already engaged with one another prior to induction are likely to benefit from reduced anxiety.
- ▶ An increased sense of course identity, providing students with a genuine bond across their programme.



FACEBOOK SITE (SEPT 2010)



Attach:

Share

Information

Category:

Student Groups - General

Description:

Hi Guys, my names Natalie and im a Marketing Management Student at Northumbria. This group has been set up to help you first years to get settled in here, Im here to answer any questions (However trivial) to make your experience even better!!

This is YOUR group so dont hesitate adding stuff to it, questions, comments, photos :)

Privacy type:

Closed: Limited public content.
Members can see all content.

Admins

- Natalie Warne (Newcastle) (creator)



Ben Thorpe Is there a list of books we need because I haven't got one yet...

Yesterday at 15:13 · Comment · Like · Flag



Natalie Warne Hiii Guys! Glad to see youve joined the group! Hopefully you can get to know others on your course and i can answer any questions you might have! Have a little luck on the group and see what you think! If theres anything ive missed just let me know! xx

01 September at 19:37 · Comment · Like · Flag



Natalie Warne

How the Geordies say it! Alreet - Hello Aye - Yes Bairn - A child Beuk - Book Bewer - Good looking Girl Bowk - Puke Caad - Cold Canny - Fine Divina - I dont know Foaming - Mad Gadgie - Old Man Gan yem - Going home Giz - Give me Gwaak - To stare Heed - Head Hyem/Yem - Home Hockle - To spit Ho...

See more

22 August at 20:43 · Participate



Natalie Warne Check out this link for a guide to finding and understanding your timetable! If you have any questions just let me know!

<http://cid-d8b81849b417302d.office.live.com/view.aspx/.Public/VPM%20PP.ppt>



EXAMPLE OF MATERIAL ON SITE: GUIDE TO TIMETABLE

Note: Semester 2 timetables will be in DRAFT and fixed by 18th

You get some more information about the class from here. Basically L1 means it is a lecture S1 is a seminar and W1 means it is a workshop. The number at the end is the group number you are in for the lesson.

Let's start by finding the room. This is the bold bit in the middle of the box. The first part of the code tells you what building you are in. In this case City Campus East 1 (NBS and Law Building) The first number is the floor you are on, 0 is the ground floor, the next two digits tell you which room on that floor you will be in. The last bit in brackets tries to describe the room layout .

e.g. TLT: tiered lecture theatre; IT: Computer Lab

	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00	11:30	12:00	12:30	13:00	13:30	14:00	14:30
Mon			BM0129 ACCY/M1/22 CCE1-227 (IT) Peter Hampson Weeks 10-21				FN0146 ACCY/M1/22 CCE1-001 (TLT) Gavin D'Northwood Weeks 9-20				BM0129 ACCY/L1/01 CCE1-001 (TLT) Simon Lillystone Weeks 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21	

Please remember to click the LEFT button to move on

This part tells you who is due to take the session.

This tells you a bit about the subject i.e. its code. Here BM is business modelling and FN is business finance

Now for the trickiest bit!!! the week numbers. I realise you would expect week 1 to be the first week of teaching BUT at Northumbria there are summer schools. This means that WEEK 1 is actually set as the start of August. There is a guide to the week numbers on the web-based version of the timetable but basically teaching usually starts either on week 8, 9 or 10. So here, what you are really being told is the lesson will happen every week during the semester.

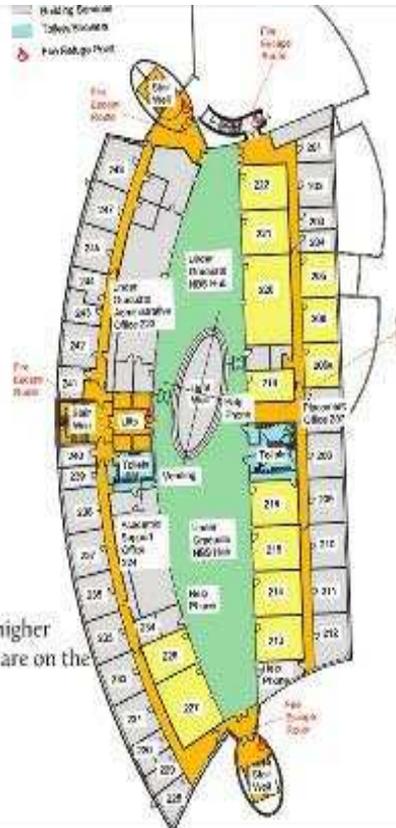
Some sessions don't happen every week so individual week numbers are used instead. The most common pattern is once a fortnight and in this case they start from Teaching Week 1.

Please now click the LEFT button



EXAMPLE OF MATERIAL ON SITE: BUILDING MAP

The orange areas show you where you gain access to the offices on the outside edges of the building



Offices with the lower numbers 201-222 face the School of Design building

Offices with the higher numbers 223-248 are on the motorway side

The second floor is the main floor for students doing degrees i.e. Undergraduate



THE FUTURE

- Means of evaluation: mentor diaries and qualitative research
- Home versus International: Are all students receiving the mentoring they need?
- Academic versus Social: What are the nature of queries coming through the scheme?
- Ad-hoc versus planned: Is such a scheme best being proactive or reactive?
- Short versus long term: How long will students need this facility?



Any questions?

