

cEVU

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REPORT ON BUSINESS WORKING GROUP MEETINGS

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2003

1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT	4
1.1 INTRODUCTION TO CEVU.....	4
2 INPUT FROM OTHER WORKING GROUPS	5
2.1 CEVU POLICIES WORKING GROUP	5
A. Model A.....	5
B. Model B.....	5
C. Model C	6
2.2 DIGITAL PLATFORMS.....	7
2.3 ACCREDITATION.....	7
2.4 QUALITY ASSURANCE	8
2.5 INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS AND COPYRIGHTS	8
A. Model 1	8
B. Model 2	10
C. Model 3	10
3 MATRIX OF ELEMENTS	11
3.1 MARKETS AND THE LEVELS OF CO-OPERATION	11
3.1.1 Exchange of study material.....	13
3.1.2 Exchange of courses.....	13
3.1.3 Offering of complete programmes.....	14
3.2 PEDAGOGIC MODEL	14
3.3 LEVELS OF INVOLVEMENT	15
4 OVERALL OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS	16
A. OPPORTUNITIES	16
B. THREATS.....	17
5 BRANDING STRATEGY.....	19
6 ELEMENTS OF A BUSINESS PLAN	21
A. THE COMPANY	21
B. THE BUSINESS IDEA	22
C. PRODUCTION, PROCUREMENT, QUALITY, ADMINISTRATION	22
D. MARKET ANALYSIS	22
E. MARKETING AND SALES	24
F. MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATION	24
G. FINANCIAL PLAN.....	24
H. OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS.....	25
REFERENCES	26
Appendix 1. Summary of things to be done	27
Appendix 2. Case study A.....	29
MASTERS PROGRAMMES.....	29
<i>Masters programme in Management of Innovation and Entrepreneurship</i>	30
LESSONS LEARNED	30
Appendix 3. Case study B.....	32
THE EVALUATION PROCESS	33
TRANSITION MODULE	34
<i>Module description</i>	34
<i>Input from the evaluation</i>	34

<i>Recommendations</i>	35
INFORMATICS MODULE	35
<i>Module description</i>	35
<i>Input from the evaluation</i>	35
<i>Recommendations</i>	36
E-MODERATION	37
<i>Module description</i>	37
<i>Input from the evaluation</i>	37
<i>Recommendations</i>	38
THE VIEW OF THE PROCESS MANAGER	38
CEVU MANUAL RECOMMENDATIONS	38
<i>Digital Platforms / Technology</i>	39
<i>Language</i>	39
<i>General policy issues</i>	39
GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CEVU	39
THE INDIVIDUAL PRODUCTS	41
<i>Development process</i>	41
<i>Quality</i>	41
<i>Impact of product</i>	41

1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT

The collaborative European Virtual University project (cEVU) was set up in order to develop ideas and the technical infrastructure for a European Virtual University. The cEVU project consists of five university networks and is coordinated by EuroPACE. The project is supported by the eLearning initiative of the European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture, Training and Youth.

The tasks of the cEVU-project were divided between working groups. Working groups 10 and 11 (Elements of a Business plan) were combined into one working group.

The working group met on 20th of May and 3rd of July 2003 to discuss its tasks. Based on the discussions, this draft proposal of the elements for a business plan has been written.

1.1 Introduction to cEVU

Two main models are proposed for a European Virtual University. A cEVU could be created as an entirely new, independent organization. The Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC) is one example of a virtual university that was created as something new. UOC is a completely on-line university.

On the other hand, a cEVU could evolve from collaboration between existing universities and networks, which is the option chosen here.

An important issue to be discussed is whether a cEVU should start at the full level of Europe from the beginning and if it should include all levels of higher education and all branches of studies. Another point that needs to be solved is the tuition fee policy. In some countries universities are not allowed to charge fees.

Also, creating a cEVU might be in conflict with the Principle of Subsidiarity. The European Union does not have jurisdiction over education; the decisions lie in the hands of national governments.

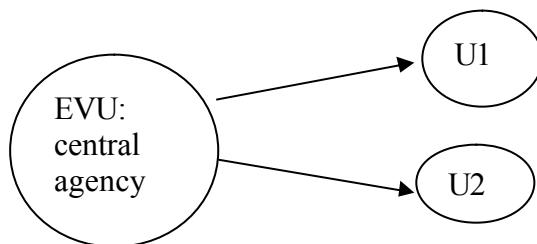
2 INPUT FROM OTHER WORKING GROUPS

2.1 CEVU policies working group

The cEVU policies working group (WG 2) came up with three different governance models for cooperation. These models (proposed by prof. Gössling) and parts of the text have been taken from the minutes of the WG 2's second meeting.

The models were simplified so that there were only two universities in each example.

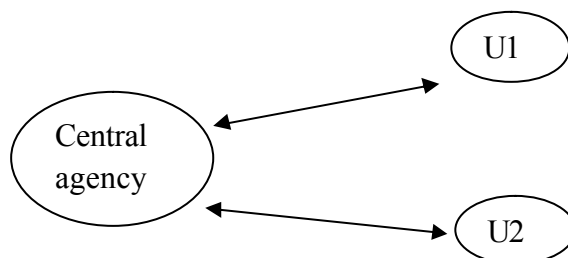
A. Model A



In model A there would be a central body. It would be a consortium, in which the individual universities would maintain their autonomy. Universities could award their own diplomas or cEVU diplomas. There is also a possibility of awarding double diplomas. In this model the students would register at a central body, but they would stay at their own universities

This model, which could be called a branding model, includes full courses.

B. Model B



Model B includes modules. There would be a central agency, which would operate as a repository for storing the material. The central agency would be given some power of decisions from the

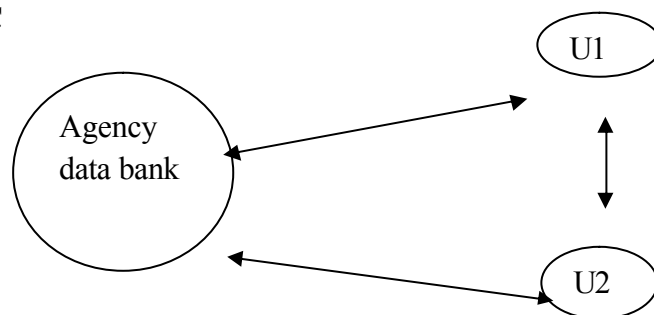
member universities and therefore, it would be more influential than in model A. The central agency would provide sustainability and standards (quality control). Setting up a central agency would require a large staff, because for instance data and technology have to be updated and made compatible.

In this model the universities would continue to register the students and grant diplomas. Also the responsibility of courses would be at the individual universities. One possibility could be that material is produced in a common language and the universities would be allowed to make local adaptations to the material. Individual universities would have more interaction with the central agency than with other universities.

In the first phase, there should be a limited number of universities, which have a good mutual collaboration. There should be an equilibrium of input/output. However, it might be difficult for external universities to integrate to this kind of consortium.

An example is provided by UK e-Universities Worldwide, which is a foundation operating as a broker for all the member universities. An important detail is that the universities want to maintain their autonomy and thus the name of the foundation includes e-Universities representing all of the members.

C. Model C



In model C, which could be described to be a collaboration model, there would be an agency operating as a database. The active data exchange would mainly take place between the universities, which would have the initiative. The agency would operate as a bookkeeper keeping track of the data and know-how exchanges. Only a relatively limited staff would be needed to maintain the agency database.

The policies working group stated that at the moment, model A seems to be unrealistic. However, it was pointed out that the situation might change in the future. If the central body would evolve from the collaboration of member universities and it would not be created as something new, then maybe model A might be possible.

Another possibility that the policies working group emphasized, is that these models can co-exist. From a business perspective, it seems more sensible to start with model C because it is the simplest model.

2.2 Digital platforms

For the working group on the business plan, it is premature to discuss the technology and digital platforms to be used in an EVU. However, the costs of open source solutions and proprietary solutions should be considered. Open source solutions can be as expensive as commercial options, because they need to be adapted to the existing technological infrastructure of the universities. On the other hand, when applying open source solutions the control of development is in the hands of the client, which is not the case when a commercial solution is chosen.

Too many standards should not be imposed. The aim should be interoperability between different technological applications, which is more important than standardization.

2.3 Accreditation

In formal accreditation (e.g. ECTS-system), the transferring of credits between universities has proved to be problematic, because the formal elements are closely connected to contents that are specific to individual universities. There are vast differences between universities.

Therefore, it is suggested that the quality assurance system should be informal and based on competences, which would create unity on accreditation between universities. In France VAE (la validation des acquis de l'expérience) will be applied in higher education. In addition to formal education, also gained experience is important in VAE.

There could be either a central accreditation body or national bodies. Most countries are setting up national accreditation bodies already. In the future, these national bodies will probably have to collaborate.

2.4 Quality assurance

Within the agency, there should be a (minimal) quality assurance program. There is a clear need for quality assurance in the selection of material and the teachers, production, delivery of teaching and selection of the candidates for member universities. Quality assurance is very important for the brand name of the cEVU (cf. later).

2.5 Intellectual property rights and copyrights

Concerning Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and Copyrights, the IPR and Copyright working group (WG 3) has discussed related issues, which will be discussed in this report based on the report of the working group. Some of their proposals and recommendations might not be in accordance with what other working groups have discussed.

The IPR and Copyright working group have come up with three models. It is expected that model 1 would be applied in the pilot phase and that model 2 would be applied after that in the future, whereas model 3 would be used for commercial purposes.

A. Model 1

Model 1 covers existing web based teaching material and subsequent updates. In this model, same or broadly similar contracts should be made between the individual member institutions, but there might also be a need for local agreements between the individual members of personnel.

According to the report of the working group, the general principle would be established on recognition of authorship and integrity right (moral rights/acknowledgements). Copyright would be the main type of IPR but depending on the parent institution other models like Database Rights or

Software Patents for example might be applied. The terms and conditions of use would be specified on a Consortium Agreement. Special clauses for deviating conditions should be attached to the Consortium Agreement. The description of the courses and the materials should be included as an annex. Also a clause for liabilities and defaulting partners should be made.

IPR of materials would be managed by a non-exclusive copyright license. The staff member or the institution would hold the IPR but the partners would be able to use the materials under a non-exclusive license. If the copyright is held by an individual member of staff, the copyright for use of the material should be transferred or licensed to the parent institution on a perpetual non-exclusive basis with rights to sub-license to other cEVU member institutions. The parent institution, as licensee, should also be able to represent the holder of the IPR.

The applicable law would be the law of originating country of the materials. Tasks of the parent institution would include quality checking of the content (e.g. confidential material should be removed), creating a database of items (inventory of all the assets of the course) and a list of contractual limitations on use (e.g. already existing licenses). It is recommended that the institutions would consult copyright specialists when the model is locally implemented.

It is suggested that the creators of the material should not receive any payment. Nevertheless, if there are commercial implications relating to the transfer of rights, which cause financial payments back to the institution, then the creators should be compensated. The creators, who retain the right to update, customize and modernize their materials, have to guarantee that the updating, customisation and modification of the course and the materials are done according to certain rules. They will also give permission for a cEVU backup copy to be made of all web-based materials. Withdrawal of courses would require consultation between the members of cEVU and should not take place during an academic year.

The working group recommends that materials would be available to members of cEVU free of charge during the pilot phase. For the description of courses the individual universities have created, there should be a standard template according to which the courses could be described in a common way. Quality assurance is the responsibility of the parent institutions, but in the future a Scientific Committee should be formed for peer review.

B. Model 2

Model 2 is actually a variation of model 1. Model 2 will only be possible when external funding has been assured and it covers materials that are specifically commissioned and paid for by cEVU members for cEVU members. The most prominent difference between model 1 and 2 is that in model 2 the institution would have the ownership of IPR, while in model 1 also an individual member of staff could be the holder of the IPR.

If there is pre-existing non-web based material, the creator would maintain the copyright for that non-web based material. When the material is put on-line, the parent institution would maintain the copyright. There should be a Scientific Committee reviewing the material. Remuneration scheme should be based on an easily understandable and cost-efficient model.

C. Model 3

Model 3 is the commercial model, whereas the previous models are non-commercial consortium models. For the time being, this model has been put aside, but in the future a commercial model might be needed.

This model requires that the cEVU becomes a legal entity, maybe even a company. Much depends on the legislation of the country where the legal entity is set up. According to the report of the working group, there are two subcategories within the model: commercial utilization of pre-existing course material and commissioning of material for commercial purposes.

3 MATRIX OF ELEMENTS

3.1 Markets and the levels of co-operation

Below is a matrix of elements containing the levels of studies (= markets) and the possible levels of cooperation, which were agreed upon in the working group meeting. Some of these cells can be identified, but will not probably work as a market (internal or external) for a cEVU. Later in this chapter, some comments about the cells have been added. These comments appeared as examples in the meeting and are tentative. Therefore, a more specific identification is yet to be made.

	1 Exchange of study material	2 Exchange of courses	3 Offering of complete programs
A Bachelor's level	A1	A2	A3
B Master's level: 1. Normal 2. Advanced	B1	B2	B3
C. Executive training	C1	C2	C3
D Postgraduate: 1. Long running 2. Refreshing	D1	D2	D3
E PhD level	E1	E2	E3
F Corporate training: 1. On-site university training 2. In-company training	F1	F2	F3
G Lifelong learning	G1	G2	G3

The potential target markets are Bachelor's, Master's, Executive Training, Postgraduate and PhD levels as well as Corporate training and Lifelong learning. It was decided to divide the Master's level into two subcategories: normal and advanced. Also a distinction was made between Long running and Refreshing Postgraduate courses. The Refreshing Postgraduate courses would be targeted at people who want to update their knowledge in their own field. The Long running Postgraduate courses could be targeted for instance at persons, who have graduated in one field, but

are working in another field. By taking up Long running Postgraduate courses, these persons could acquire a better understanding of the field they are working in.

Corporate training is designed for business organizations and it was divided into on-site university training and in-company training. Basically, the content is approximately the same as it would be for ordinary students, but the admission criteria and the methodology of tutoring are different.

The Executive training level is a level in between the Advanced Master's and both Long running and Refreshing Postgraduate levels. This kind of training is primarily targeted at professionals, who want to acquire scientific foundation for executing their tasks.

Which of the cells are relevant for a cEVU? This has to be decided in function of choices for collaboration. E.g. offering full programmes might not be feasible at the Bachelor's level, and the in-company training might not be one of the primary goals for the cEVU, because it is already a well established business. On the other hand, it would be risky to rule out markets in advance that could be interesting in for example executive training. This decision will be closely connected to the branding issue. It should be determined in which of the cells the brand is important and in which of the cells it is a problem to have a product that is a result of many universities offering something together.

The subjects to be offered have not yet been decided. It was suggested that there would be a different combination of universities for each subject. This way the universities could participate and contribute in their strongest fields of education, which on the other hand would guarantee high quality of the material. The fact that the content of some subjects varies between different countries should be taken into account. For instance, accounting and law are usually different because of the national contexts.

The possible levels of cooperation are exchange of material, exchange of courses and offering of complete programs. At the level of exchanging material, the integration is quite loose, while at the level of offering complete programs it is more compact.

3.1.1 Exchange of study material

In addition to the exchange of material, this level of cooperation could also involve e.g. the exchange of instructional learning material tools for solving technological problems, organizational models or something else, which would have financial interests.

In column 1 from row A to F the benefits for the teachers are quite similar, one of the biggest advantages being better access to a larger repository of material. At the Master's level in cell B1, there could be a virtual case clearing house (a database, catalogue). This might also be the case for the cells A1 and C1.

A website offering simulations on a number of topics is also another opportunity in column 1. The question remains whether this is feasible for a cEVU. There is already some competition in this field. One example is the Merlot, Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and Online Teaching (<http://www.merlot.org/>). Some institutions already sell cases. Harvard is one of the universities selling cases via Internet (<http://www.ksgcase.harvard.edu/>). In cell **D1** a virtual library might be an interesting aim for collaboration. It would also be interesting to create a database containing for instance information about different market areas in Europe. This would be easier to achieve by collaborating internationally.

3.1.2 Exchange of courses

At the PhD level the exchange of courses might be feasible. Exchange of courses would be less interesting at the Bachelor's level except for European topics such as European law, and for courses that include further specialization. The latter is however connected to the existence of a Bachelor's degree that provides a real opportunity to find a job.

There are various issues relating to the exchange of courses. One of the issues is if separate courses should be commercialised instead of whole programs. Another issue to be discussed is if the courses are going to be primarily for internal use.

A situation where the exchange of material or courses is in equilibrium would be ideal, because then every institution would get an equal amount of materials or courses as a return for their own

input. Whether this needs an accounting system with payments between partners, has to be explored.

A simple agreement can be found in the Intercampus, a Catalan example where 8 Catalan universities are collaborating (<http://www.catcampus.org/>). Each university offers an equal number of courses open for a limited number of students from the other universities.

In the fields of executive and corporate training, joint course development might be interesting.

3.1.3 Offering of complete programmes

Complete programmes might be interesting at the Advanced Master's and the PhD levels. In cell **D3**, a partially virtual PhD programme might be interesting .

There are legal issues regarding the degree:

- Who is awarding the degree?
- What kind of a degree is it? A double degree or bidiploma?

These matters affect branding and costs. Additionally, one major problem is related to accounting. Universities get money from the government when the students finish their studies at the university. Therefore, it is important to determine which body will be awarding the degree.

3.2 Pedagogic model

When it comes to the question of blended or completely virtual model, students at the undergraduate level attend contact lessons not only because of the teaching, but also for other reasons such as social reasons. At the (Long running) Postgraduate, Lifelong learning and (Advanced) Master's levels the content becomes more important than the format. Mature students might not have the time to attend contact lessons and they already have established a social network.

Courses could be offered as fully online, blended or a combination of both approaches. This depends on the product, the target group and the partners. The policies of the partner institutions should be explored. A good strategy might be to start with something blended and continue from there. Also data on existing resistance against the use of technology might be useful.

Generalizing, the entirely virtual courses might be more suitable for the Master's, Postgraduate and Lifelong learning levels; for undergraduate students the blended approach seems the most appropriate. However, the approach depends also on the subject and the contents of the particular course. Therefore, the pedagogic model might be different between the cells of the matrix and there might even be more than one model used in one cell.

Different teaching models might cause some problems. If project teaching is applied at university A and traditional at university B, it might complicate the collaboration.

3.3 Levels of involvement

Entity levels that are involved in the project are faculties, departments, universities, networks and cEVU. These should be taken into account in the business plan.

4 OVERALL OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

The working group reflected on the opportunities and threats that the creation of a cEVU would bring about. The following reflections came up during the discussions; most of them are rather hypothetical and have to be seen as possible topics for further investigation.

A. Opportunities

- On a European level, the cEVU would support European citizenship and European identity. Australia and the United States of America already have national virtual universities. Their universities are already active in important markets such as Eastern Europe, Asia, etc. Creating a European Virtual University would also support European identity. All the special features and cultural aspects of Europe could be taken into account when preparing the material and this would naturally benefit the European virtual students.
- For universities the joint production and maintenance of material and courses could be cost-efficient.
- Administration costs would also be lower, benefiting the participating universities.
- For teachers the joint production would mean savings of efforts and time.
- Joint production would include peer review of materials by the production team. Experiences prove that this review improves the quality.
- Teachers will receive high quality learning material to be used in teaching, which will also benefit the students.
- Students would be able to take courses at other universities, which is a great advantage because their own universities might not offer some specific courses that the students are interested in. This would give the students a possibility to tailor their curriculum to better fit their specific interests and the requirements of their options for working life.
- The cEVU would support virtual Erasmus as well. When students leave to study abroad, they might miss some important courses at their own universities. The cEVU would provide an excellent opportunity for exchange students to keep in touch with their own universities and offer a possibility to study all the relevant courses that the student would otherwise miss because of the exchange period.

- When there are assignments involved in the course, students can put them on the discussion section of the virtual environment so that all the students can give feedback to each other and see what the others have done. When the teacher adds his/hers feedback, also the other students can learn from it.
- New member countries of EU can be seen as potential collaboration partners and as a market area.
- In the long run also the markets outside Europe could become potential market areas.

B. Threats

- Students taking distance education courses need more support. This, on the other hand, will increase the workload of the teachers. However, technical and organizational solutions may contribute to overcoming this phenomenon. For instance, FAQ-lists and coaching roles might be used to alleviate the workload of the teachers. Nevertheless, the experience of most teachers is that distance teaching settings increase the workload compared to classroom settings.
- Partners might not be willing to pay for the material (as in some countries fees are legally forbidden).
- There might be important quality differences (between the universities) and differences in pedagogic approaches, quality assurance, accreditation and in the level of expertise. Moreover, there might also be differences in staff attitudes towards concrete operations and in the way the central management is organized at individual universities.
- Technical applications and updates could be too expensive
- Material might not always be compatible (quality, contents and pedagogic approaches).
- Too many partners at the start could be a risk.
- Partners might not be willing to work voluntarily or might not have the resources to do that (personnel, time, money).
- Teachers might not be willing to exchange their own materials (even if they get paid for it).
- Some member universities might have a lack of interest and little motivation.
- Cultural differences might cause problems (also the adaptation to regional circumstances; language and cultural aspects have to be considered).
- Different digital platforms might not be compatible.
- Accreditation: double diplomas are not acknowledged everywhere. Differences in the systems of accreditation and accreditation regulations between the universities might turn out to be hindering factors.
- Admission requirements vary between universities.

- Different timing systems (periods begin and end at different time) might be problematic.
- School systems, degrees and courses might not be compatible
- Agreement on IPR and copyright might not be reached.
- The project cannot depend too much on external funding.
- Phlegmatic management (at universities/central agency), which is not up-to-date and willing to respond to changes in the field of eLearning and to update or adopt new technical applications
- Changes in personnel, new personnel not willing to pursue their predecessors' work or the fact that they have come from the outside and do not have the needed knowledge about the project.
- Disequilibrium in input/output between the member universities
- There will be other competitors.
- It is uncertain if proper commitment among the partners will be automatically secured.
- It is uncertain if proper common understanding about the objectives of the project and the actions needed to obtain these objectives can be secured.

5 BRANDING STRATEGY

The brand of cEVU should be strong and stand for high quality in Europe. The brand can be only as strong as the brands of the participating universities are. Therefore, it is not a good idea to combine good and “not so good” universities, because then the final result might be no brand at all. The partners should be of roughly equal status. Prestigious universities such as Oxford might for example be unwilling to collaborate with former polytechnics.

The same brand should not be used for different purposes. If one would like for instance to deliver high quality material in Europe and pass lesser quality material to other countries, having just one brand would be a bad idea. Instead, there might be separate brands for different purposes and even for different subjects. It is worth considering if branding is as important for each market.

European culture should be reflected in the material. European business is characterized by networks and small and medium sized enterprises and this element could be present in a cEVU. An extension outside of European borders can also be an opportunity. The cEVU brand should be a mark of quality for outsiders, which might be very important for Africa for instance. There, the names and reputation of individual universities are less well known. One could assume it means more to get a cEVU brand as a guarantee of quality. It could still be mentioned on the university degrees by which university the cEVU degree is awarded. This would be interesting for both the European universities as well as the students in countries outside Europe.

There might be coordination and branding problems when it comes to international marketing. Therefore, there should be an agreement on who will take care of which tasks and so forth.

The cEVU project already has a logo. Nevertheless, a new name and a logo could be developed for the virtual university. One suggestion that came from within the working group was “Euroversity”.

Experts at the central agency should gather to discuss which are the quality standards for the participating universities. The purpose is that universities should be involved in the cEVU in their

strongest fields of education, which would ensure the quality of material. Then there would be subdivisions of the cEVU brand for each subject. Content quality of a subject can only be defined by experts in their own field.

This could be expressed in the marketing that the material is from the top universities in their field. On the other hand, there is also a market for universities that do not have top quality departments in particular branches of education.

6 ELEMENTS OF A BUSINESS PLAN

The Ten telecom project produced a Business Plan Support Manual as the outcome of the project. The structure for a Business plan presented in the manual will be used when discovering elements for a cEVU Business plan.

A. The Company

The collaboration should be started with a limited number of universities that are truly willing and able to participate. At the moment three networks are active: ECIU, EUNITE and EuroPACE. One could imagine that the suitable universities might be found within these networks. Other universities have not been excluded. However, the collaboration should be started with a reliable group of universities. The level of the universities is essential, but the willingness is even more crucial.

A consortium can be based on partners that are individual institutions, but also on partners that are themselves networks, who act within this consortium as if they were an individual partner (through their “representing agencies”). However, coming to common decisions about the issues of the consortium might be cumbersome, while such partners need to find a decision first within their own network. Especially, when financial issues are discussed, it might create problems.

Including external research networks could be a good idea, as research networks within a discipline provide strong working relations and good views on expertise that is available in each partner university. It can be a good basis for the development of courses in that discipline.

There is a possibility of having an asymmetric structure set up with sub networks within the consortium to conduct activities. This is possible provided that the universities feel that they receive similar returns for their investments at the end of the day. Constructing internal networks might be a good idea since not every partner wants to take up every course/module. In fact, the idea is not to force every partner to take every option that is provided within cEVU.

There has to be a strong commitment and financial support from the institutions. The project should not be based solely on funding from the European Union, which should be considered as additional money that is welcomed if the project meets the requirements of EU funding. EU funding includes many requirements and restrictions and it might be that the project does not meet all of the requirements. Incentives to do the work are needed as well as central commitment from the partner universities.

B. The Business Idea

Decisions on the kind of business should be reached at some point. Relevant questions include if the operation is going to be purely internal within the consortium or if it is going to be also external towards the markets outside the consortium, if a stepwise approach is applied or if all the relevant cells are involved from the beginning. It should be decided also if an asymmetric model in the consortium structure should be applied, whether the courses are going to be free of charge and if so for which audiences.

C. Production, Procurement, Quality, Administration

Adaptations to local languages and cultures might be required. Courses at the Bachelor's level should probably be adapted.

Legal issues and their business implications cannot be ignored. For example, how should study material be exchanged where the material is owned by the creator? What if the material is full of references to other materials?

D. Market Analysis

The working group is not able to conduct a market analysis, but it highly recommends that a thorough market analysis should be carried out by experts. However, the guidelines for a market analysis should be determined. Answers should be provided separately for each relevant cell, since the markets that the cells represent are different in nature. At least the following questions should be answered: Who are the main competitors? On what level are the participants willing to pay? What

are the target segments in different cells? What is the present and the future size of the target markets? How much market share could the cEVU gain? What are the needs of the customers in different cells? Is branding equally important in each cell?

Each cell in the matrix represents a different market. The size of one single market could be portrayed as a pie. 1. How big are these pies? The answer to this question should provide information on the sizes of the pies (= markets). 2. How big a slice of the pie can the cEVU have? The answer should indicate the share of the pie that the cEVU can obtain. Moreover, distinction of factors affecting the size and the slice of the pie should be taken into account. The size of the pie is more effected by opportunities and threats and the slice of the pie by strengths and weaknesses (advantages and disadvantages in this case).

Investigation of interests of the target audiences should be conducted. E.g. in France many universities build Master's programs to be products. The customers are not taken into account the way they should. Given the fact that *e*-Courses cost a lot of money, the customers should be taken into account. Because if the customers are not interested in the *e*-Courses offered, the whole process will be unprofitable.

“Investments” will also be a function of available products and expertise in the network: e.g. although a joint marketing programme would be an interesting objective and it would have a clear market, such a programme can only be developed if sufficient expertise in marketing exists in the network.

Some institutions might be collecting valuable data about the size of university programmes. Perhaps it might be possible to gather some preliminary information about the market size. Based on the figures, if they are available, comparisons could be made.

Another recommendation is that a separate project should be set up to gather information about other existing initiatives and their successes or failures. By analysing the case studies, a lot of useful information could be obtained. The following matters should be taken into account in the case studies: goals, intended outcomes, actual outcomes and the factors that lead to this kind of result. Determining the key success factors and the major stumbling blocks would be especially beneficial.

One interesting case study might be a new proposal called Erasmus Mundus. Its goal is a European Master's programme. Maybe it could be extended into a virtual European Master's programme later on. Outcomes of Erasmus Mundus might provide essential information that could benefit the cEVU as well. Some of the problems of Erasmus Mundus might not even be present in the virtual environment.

E. Marketing and Sales

Concrete indications on Marketing and Sales can only be provided after basic decisions have been made concerning issues such as structures, policies and so forth. Notwithstanding, it might be wise to develop phases for Marketing and Sales in relation to identified stages in the development of a cEVU. (E.g. in the first phase, the market is only internal, which enables a decision that no sales are made. One very important issue is the question of who is taking care of the marketing. Would it be best if the consortium would be in charge of the marketing?

F. Management and Organization

As mentioned before, there should be incentives for performing the tasks. Otherwise, it is too early to discuss Management and Organization.

G. Financial Plan

There should be a financial plan. At this phase, the working group on business can only produce input to help people make a choice. For instance, two different markets can be considered: the market within the consortium and the market outside the consortium.

Can this project generate enough income to cover the expenses or is it possible to find enough subsidy to cover the expenses?. The cost structure for courses should be investigated. This depends not only on the production costs, but also on the mode of delivery.

Collaboration requires investment in structures that initiate, stimulate and monitor the collaboration (e.g. central agencies). If the cost of such a structure is relatively high, no single university will be prepared to pay for it. Therefore, some seed money is needed to demonstrate the (financial and other) benefits of the existence of such a structure. Different ways of financing should be carefully examined. One way of financing the project is through venture capital, but the consequences should be considered. There might be loans with low interest, but the required minimum amount of a loan will probably be too high.

First the factors should be identified; an overview of what is existing (knowledge) at the moment. Secondly the financial elements should be considered. At the moment, there are no concrete figures available, only estimations. In his paper, Turoff made assumptions that are not valid in this case (Turoff, M. 1996 Costs for the Development of a Virtual University. Available on the internet (<http://eies.njit.edu/~turoff/Papers/cbdevu.html>)). Therefore, the reasoning presented in his paper should be exploited instead of the concrete figures.

H. Opportunities and Threats

An analysis of concrete threats and opportunities should be made (for commercial activities outside Europe). In chapter 4 preliminary overall threats and opportunities have been presented. Still, a more profound threats and opportunities analysis should be made for each level.

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Appendix 1. Summary of things to be done

The working group recommends that the following measures should be taken in order to obtain useful information which will be crucial in the decision-making process.

- **Case studies**

Case studies about other similar projects should be gathered and analysed, as they can provide useful information about the key success factors and the major stumbling blocks.

- **Market analysis**

An Opportunities & Threats analysis should be made for the specific markets and levels.

- **List of conditions**

Basic conditions for joining the consortium should be decided. This list of conditions would also help the construction of the planned collaboration.

Connected consideration: What kind of an agency is going to judge the willingness and the level of commitment of the institutions? Is it going to be a top-down or bottom-up decision, senior management decisions or teachers of a given discipline gathering together to decide?

Probably the top-down procedure would be the simplest. In the bottom-up procedure also the personal relations might complicate things. However, existing cross-institutional staff relationships may be beneficial.

- **Inventory of the level that the involved institutions represent**

An inventory of the level that the participating universities represent in every field of studies should be compiled. After that, it should be decided where the opportunities lie. Also the fields of contribution of the partner universities should be discussed so that every university would contribute on their strongest fields of studies.

- **Economic calculations for the return on investment within the consortium**

Economic calculations should be made for the return on investments within the consortium. However, investments themselves will vary in function of the type of collaboration that is chosen: e.g. it is possible to lower the investments at a central network level, if an equal input of each partner is guaranteed.

• Identification of the fields of possible competition

In some fields of studies there might be conflicts of interests between individual universities and the consortium. E.g. the University of Strathclyde is selling programmes in Asia. If the cEVU enters the Asian market, there would be competition. Therefore, the interests of individual institutions and existing networks should be taken into account by identifying the fields of possible competition.

• Collaboration experiment

One suggestion is that at some point a limited experiment would be set up with a precise Business Plan including an agreement on copyright. The experiment might help to identify the stumbling blocks of collaboration. It should first be carefully explored if it is possible and useful to conduct this kind of an experiment.

Appendix 2. Case study A

Masters programmes

This case study is about a network which has made various attempts at developing masters' programmes. These experiences have now resulted in the attempt at offering both existing masters programmes and developing new joint programmes.

This network builds on past experiences within developing masters' programmes, which can be summarised as follows:

- It is vital that the academics involved feel committed towards the project and have a personal interest in developing the programme.
- It is vital that administrative staff with legal and financial knowledge support academics.
- It is important to look into the market for a programme before starting development activities (realising after several years of hard work that there is no interest in a given programme is bad for morale).

Consequently it is important that there is both institutional support and incentives for staff involved in development activities across different institutions when developing new masters programmes.

The institutional support could be setting up a legal and financial standard framework, which would mean that academics would know how to deal with issues such as tuition fees, accreditation and quality review. Likewise incentives could be that academic staff are given a certain amount of working hours to develop new programmes and receive secretarial assistance.

The project team and a separate group of financial and legal experts were working on setting up a framework for further masters programme productions. At the same time there will be support and advice ready at hand for staff who at present are investigating the possibilities for developing a new masters programme. The project leader will make sure that lessons learned are pooled as a central knowledge resource and that best practice as well as summaries of bad experiences will be available for interested staff.

Masters programme in Management of Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Back in the late '90s it was decided to support the development of a joint masters programme in innovation and entrepreneurship (initially looking for an executive audience, later on shifting focus to regular students). After some initial work, three institutions decided to take on the development work. However, within the first 1½ years the staff involved changed 1-2 times at each institutions and responsibility for the development work was transferred from one department or even faculty to another. Foreign professors were involved meaning that knowledge of local curriculum regulations etc. was not as good as it ideally should have been.

Despite intensive work in completing a curriculum for the programme and the support of a Leonardo grant to set up trial pilots and do market research, the programme was never finalised. The market research furthermore showed that there would be no customers for such a programme, which of course was a discouraging factor for the staff involved.

Central problems identified were that:

- It was a top-down decision to launch the development of the programme and professors were asked to do the development work on top of their other regular work duties.
- There was limited commitment among the staff (and following the first enthusiasm, it was difficult to continue motivating staff through 2½ years of on-off work on the programme).
- There was limited knowledge among some of the foreign staff members regarding the institutions' requirements and needs related with setting up new educational activities.
- There were many problems with regards to identifying the target group (executive audience or regular students).
- There were many problems with regard to the legal and financial framework of the project.

Lessons learned

It is difficult to launch top-down decisions without a sufficient supporting infrastructure at the level of academics. Development activities within the educational arena require a good framework for supporting academics and should include a clear incentive structure (which this programme did not have).

There is a clear potential for co-operation within the educational areas of innovation and entrepreneurship across the institutions, but not necessarily as a full masters programme with the envisaged target group of this first attempt.

There are many interesting aspects related to the development of joint masters programmes and the staff involved in this present project found it very useful to obtain knowledge about each others' institutions and each others' working practices with regards to teaching within the field of innovation and entrepreneurship.

However, the cocktail of problems encountered made it impossible to actually get together a full masters programme.

Appendix 3. Case study B

Evaluation and validation of WSL modules in the context of cEVU

by Saskia L. Hansen

In the late 1990s universities throughout Europe have integrated web-supported learning or fully web-based learning as one of its educational products. Competition from overseas educational providers and private companies has been a central factor in this development, but also the demands of students who are increasingly accustomed to using both computer and the Internet in their work and studies.

Discussions within the European Consortium of Innovative Universities about the new challenges posed by the introduction of web facilitated teaching led to the idea of a pilot project on the development of web supported teaching material. As the eLEARNING call for projects was launched about the same time, the ECIU decided to frame its work within the context of the overall project Collaborative European Virtual University in cooperation with other university networks in Europe.

Educational consultant professor Peter Powell was asked to make a feasibility study which should look into the potential for web supported material and also set up an action plan for how such a pilot project could be organised. Professor Powell recommended to the ECIU that it initially concentrate on Web Supported Learning (WSL)¹ rather than for completely web-based courses.

The ECIU consequently organised its contribution to the cEVU as a separate project called Web Supported Learning (WSL) and divided this into four separate module productions (the initial module is not included in the contribution to the cEVU):

- 1) A module identifying a common house-style and pedagogy, and delivery of a small quantity of learning material for evaluation.
- 2) A module for the transition level from school to university.

¹ Web-Supported Learning (WSL) involves the use of the Web (Internet) + browser to access materials in order to support deliberately-active student-centred learning in an orderly manner (definition made by Peter Powell in the report on 'ECIU Collaborative Pilot project: Web-Supported Learning, June 2001).

- 3) A module for a 'difficult' topic in a first year bachelor programme.
- 4) A module for a Masters level niche subject.

Work on the modules was to be done at residential workshops consisting of approx. 6 academic staff members (three competent and enthusiastic teachers, one IT specialist, one media specialist and one pedagogue).

Following the Action Plan written by Peter Powell, work on the WSL project started in late 2001 with the three main module productions taking place in 2002. The management of the WSL project was organised by a Steering Committee with representatives from five ECIU members. The Steering Committee's role was vital in overseeing developments and in securing synergies among the different workshop/module productions and also in informing the ECIU Executive Board and institutions about the development work. Niall Sclater, University of Strathclyde, was hired as "process manager" and was given the task to lead the project and the different module productions.

The present report aims at investigating what the results of the three modules were and attempts at giving some input regarding the issues of digital platforms, cEVU policies, language management policy and good practice. Due to the delayed start of the cEVU project, much work has been taking place in parallel meaning that no input from Work Package 1 working groups was available during module productions. This means that the module evaluation can only give hints and rudimentary input to the manual content, since the manual has been produced after the modules were completed.

The evaluation process

The evaluation has taken part in two steps; in autumn 2002 after the modules had been completed, all participants of the different module productions were asked to fill in a questionnaire. Likewise the WSL process manager, Niall Sclater, evaluated the whole project as such. In summer 2003 both staff participating in the module production, other staff members and a few selected students were asked to participate in an evaluation of the WSL modules though filling in a new questionnaire about module usage.

Alongside the written evaluations of summer 2003, one ECIU institution also managed to organise a meeting with an e-learning expert who took the time to discuss the modules and debate whether the intended objectives had actually been met.

It has turned out that so far almost no institutions have used the full modules (apart from the University of Aveiro where the e-moderating module has been used in a masters programme). The general picture however points at the fact that mainly bits and pieces of the modules e.g. animations have been integrated in other course settings and in this way been used as one item among many. The evaluation consequently mainly addresses general issues related to use of the ECIU web supported learning material and is not an evaluation of the full usage of all modules.

Transition module

Module description

The transition module aims at a target group of either secondary school students who consider studying at university or first year students already at university. The module offers various tools that are envisaged to assist secondary school students in their thoughts and considerations regarding starting studies at a university. Furthermore the module addresses issues relevant to first year students e.g. about how to plan one's time and how to deal with prioritising between different tasks. The module aims at stimulating reflection among students regarding their new situation as university students.

Input from the evaluation

The participants at the Aalborg University evaluation meeting commented that since these target groups are somewhat different, the module is difficult to use in its present form. It looks attractive and the product is appealing due to its design, but it is difficult to use without further modifications. Due to the fact that the technology platform is fixed (using php), it is not easy to adapt the module e.g. with regards to the chosen language to a different technological context. However this technology was chosen in order to allow for interesting and appealing graphics and design. There is broad agreement that the module is presented in a very appealing way on the website.

The facilities/tools for testing and improving planning skills are not the easiest to use. There are difficulties in getting a proper feedback when e.g. setting up a list of goals and matching this with the time schedule. For both secondary school students and university students it is a "turn off" that the technology does not work 100%. These two target groups are presumably very good at using computers and various software programmes and will most likely not return to a given module/product, if it doesn't work perfectly.

However, evaluators agree that as a tool to support reflection, the transition module is useful, though it needs further adaptation by e.g. a study advisor at secondary school or at the first year of university studies in order to be focussed properly on the two different target groups. A suggestion for further usage is that parts of the module could be helpful when advising continuing education students who often have many questions about how to secure that they will have time enough along with their regular work to perform their studies etc. No proper tools exist for guiding the continuing education market and the transition module could be transformed into better supporting this.

Recommendations

If the module is to be used, it needs to be modified and integrated into settings, which are more precisely aimed at a well-defined target group. Specific adaptations at the different institutions using the module will be needed before items from the module can be used with success.

Ideas from the module could be used for advising the target group of continuing education.

Informatics module

Module description

The Web based Informatics Module covers two main themes: Recursion and Programming Paradigms. Within these themes there are a number of examples on how to deal with a given informatics problem. The module aims at demonstrating how by using animations one can give students an insight, which would not be possible via books and other written material.

Input from the evaluation

The participants at the Aalborg evaluation meeting found that the informatics module is a completely different product in comparison with the transition module. Associate professor in Informatics, Kurt Nørmark, took part in the development work on recursion, which he found very inspiring. Kurt Nørmark, has following the module completion used the animations, which he produced for the module in his own teaching and commented: *‘This type of teaching means is very useful when teaching difficult subjects’* and further comments in the written evaluation: *‘The main contribution of the recursion material is the animations. It would make good sense to integrate these in various teaching situations, because it takes a long time to make these. I think of the animations as reusable elements’*. Kurt Nørmark has consequently picked certain animations from the full module and is of the opinion that only bits and pieces can be used. There has been no separate follow-up regarding how his students like the use of animations since these were part of

the full course (which was evaluated separately). However Kurt Nørmark is convinced that he would have heard from the students if they did not like the animations.

The evaluators to a large extent agree that it is very difficult to integrate a full module into one's teaching. Due to the complexity of the module production many different opinions and ways of dealing with certain issues have been integrated into the full product (which may be too different from what the individual teacher is willing to integrate into his/her own teaching situation). However the animations are very costly to produce and it is great to have a central learning resource with animations, which one can pick and choose from depending on the various course settings.

The evaluators agreed that a central pool of animations works the best, whereas using a complete module would be almost impossible. There has not been enough time for staff to really develop a coherent module that would support a whole course curriculum – the lack of time given to staff who took part in the module production has resulted in a product which is a mixture of different inputs and are not really useful as an integrated whole. The evaluators also agreed that animations could almost solve the possible language problems, since animations can be used in all languages and instructions for usage of animations are easy to translate.

Recommendations

Kurt Nørmark comments that the main outcome of the module production was the process and the possibilities to have fruitful discussions with people from different educational contexts. Nørmark would not recommend the material to colleagues in its current form, but *'A material along the lines of the recursion example, but much more complete, would be worth warm recommendations to colleagues. But it would take many hours of cooperation, and probably at least two years of 'class room testing' to reach an acceptable level'*.

With regards to further development of web supported material, Nørmark concludes that the ECIU should find 3-4 institutions with actual and comparable need for materials, should ensure that the participants would have local funding for substantial development efforts and should ensure that there is a long term commitment by the participants. Developing 'building blocks' along the line of animations is a good idea in several respects both with regards to being time efficient and animations are relatively neutral with regards to language. Finally Nørmark states that standard and open technology should be used e.g. XML instead of proprietary formats.

E-moderation

Module description

The Effective e-Moderating Online Course was created to provide teachers with a new range of skills. Its purpose is to prepare professionals capable of planning, designing and moderating online communities, promoting not only the understanding of pedagogical issues involved in online teaching/learning, but also of technological advantages and constraints.

The e-moderation module is an example of one complete course package, which is intended for usage as a whole rather than as a pool of separate resources.

There are guidelines and instructions for installation and usage are provided on a self-contained basis.

Input from the evaluation

Professor Fernando Ramos from the University of Aveiro was in charge of the module production process and makes the following comment in his evaluation form; ...*'the module is a whole and was not designed to be divided into several individual elements'*. However, evaluators from the Aalborg meeting do find the module very useful as a resource and inspiring with regards to how a focus on e-moderation may be introduced in other master programmes. Even basic information such as literature lists is useful for staff from other institutions.

The programme is to be translated into Portuguese over the coming months (summer 2003) and will be used in the teacher training programme to be deployed at the University of Aveiro in 2004. The module has already been used in a Master Course in Multimedia in Education. It has not been possible to get student feedback regarding this specific use of the e-moderating module.

The evaluators from other institutions comment that it is clear that the people in charge of the production had a very good idea as to the context in which the package should be used. This may however cause some difficulties for “outsiders” who may not know about the broader context and to whom it might be easier with the “pick and choose” method rather than using the complete module.

Several evaluators mention that very good elements in the module are the guides and the suggestions for literature. This is very helpful with regards to integrating a focus on e-moderation

e.g. in the further education of regular teachers both within the university and from the secondary school sector.

Recommendations

Carlos Santos from the University of Aveiro comments that the resources for this module could be integrated in a SCORM compatible package for even easier installation. Some of the multimedia presentations could be improved with audio. Carlos Santos further writes in his evaluation form that *‘The guidelines for the production of this kind of materials should be reinforced. The experience of developing this module with different partners from different countries was very good and I hope it could continue in the future. I believe that the final quality of the module would be very difficult to achieve without the collaboration of the different partners...’*. Similarly professor Fernando Ramos comments that *‘More modules should be produced; the diversity of backgrounds and experiences of the different ECIU partners provide a good way to achieve better products. However, detailed specifications/guidelines must be produced (based on an update of the existing guidelines) and strict compliance to them must be guaranteed’*.

The view of the process manager

WSL process manager Niall Sclater points out that benefits for the participants have been that a considerable number of people have been involved in developing the three modules and the Guidelines. Around thirty academic and technical staff and eight students worked on the products while various others attended the WSL Spring Conference in Chalmers. The ability to exchange ideas and share experience in developing online modules collaboratively in an international context is one of the most beneficial outcomes of the initiative. Products specified by a cross-institutional team of subject experts are likely to be of significantly higher academic quality than those developed in a single institution. It is hoped that participants who have been enthused by their experiences will also be able to act as WSL champions within their own institutions.

Academics who participated found it interesting and fun as well as frustrating at times but most were happy about the overall programme and individual workshops. They would however have liked the other participants to be more active and communicated more between workshops. Some participants stated that their knowledge of the subject area had been enhanced. Several mentioned that they hoped to use similar processes in the future for the development of online modules in an international context.

cEVU manual recommendations

Digital Platforms / Technology

Several staff members underline that it is very important to use standard and open technology when developing the modules. E.g. the transition module has been based on one specific technology (php) and it is difficult to adapt this to other technical platforms.

Language

Several institutions can only use modules, which are presented in the language of the country in question. This means that the ECIU WSL modules have to be translated into e.g. German, Portuguese, Spanish and French. The smaller countries such as Denmark and the Netherlands find it easier to present material in English to their students. Modules containing a lot of animations will be less costly in terms of translation costs, since only little written introduction will be needed.

General policy issues

The WSL module productions show that staff from different countries and across cultures get a lot out of simply cooperating on product development. However, in order to achieve products of a very high quality, one cannot rely on staff commitment only and own institutional funding: there has to be additional resources to e.g. give each participating staff member a substantial amount of hours to do the development work. With regards to general policies for a Virtual European University, there consequently has to be a clear structure of incentives in order to attract staff to do further work on web-supported or web-based learning material.

As a quality instrument, international cooperation works well with regard to bringing together best practice from various institutions. However, finding a compromise with regard to the specific pieces of learning material which should be integrated in the products requires that enough preparation work has been done and that there is a clear view of the needs of both teachers and students for any given piece of learning material. Further module or animation productions should consequently have clearer aims and objectives from the outset than what has been the case with the ECIU WSL modules.

General recommendations for the cEVU

Based on the evaluation of the modules, the participants of the evaluation point out that²:

² Not all participants in the evaluation agree with all the points listed, since there is a clear division between evaluators who believe that complete modules work very well, and others who find it more useful to take out bits and pieces and integrate this in ones own teaching situation.

- Developing learning material in an international setting is very useful, since it both provides additional inspiration and may provide a higher level of quality with regard to the specific outcome.
- A pool of resources which one can pick from is better than a full module since it is easier and quicker to use.
- It is more attractive to use animations which can be used in almost all languages without problems
- Animations are an attractive supplement to the students' regular studies and are an opportunity of learning things in a different way than what regular text books and normal teaching can offer.
- There has to be support at the various institutions in order to secure that teaching staff without technical expertise easily can integrate bits and pieces from broader modules in their own teaching (while there should still be room for staff who are competent programmers to set up their own course material using e.g. animations from a central pool of resources).
- It is inspiring to develop learning material in an international setting (but there is not enough energy to actually do much work unless the academics are given time to spend on the development work. The products will only be of a high quality if the staff members participating actually have time to do a proper job).
- Academic staff in different countries uses a different terminology with regards to e-material. It would be worthwhile to make definitions of e.g. e-texts in order to ensure that people mean the same with the words used.
- The most important lesson from the WSL project has been the opportunity for academics to learn and become wiser about the use of WSL material, rather than the actual products themselves.

Since only minor parts of the WSL modules had been integrated in actual teaching and not as isolated parts, but as bricks in a larger whole, it is difficult to get an overview as to how the students have found the WSL materials.

However, with teaching staff being happy about introducing animations as a supplement to textbooks etc., we can have the assumption that the students have found the animations from the WSL material very helpful.

Students' comments:

A group of students has been asked to look at the modules and see how useful they find e.g. the animations, but without comments so far. However, unless staff from the other institutions have actually used elements from the modules in their own teaching and have an impression as to how their students liked it, it will be difficult to get a firsthand impression of the students' perception of the functionality and usefulness of the products.

The information below stems from an evaluation made in autumn 2002 with participants from the various module productions.

The individual productsDevelopment process

Participants in the workshops were asked how well organised the processes of module development and communication between the host university and the participants were. For two out of the three modules participants were satisfied with the process, whilst there appear to have been problems with lack of participation and some miscommunication in the development of the *e-Moderating* module. Communication during the workshops was good after initial misunderstandings were cleared up. Before and between the workshops communication was mixed. It is always difficult for academic staff to find the time to contribute to such developments, hence the need for the face to face workshops.

Quality

Participants were asked what technical and organisational requirements are necessary to install their module in an institution. Most said that these were minimal technically but would require more effort organisationally. Some said that their product would be unlikely to fit a course without adaptation while others said the module could be used as it stood. There was a further question about whether or not the products would be sustainable or would require future updating. Most said, encouragingly, that there would be minimal need for updating content but that adding further content would be desirable. Further evaluations will be required to ascertain the usefulness of the products for the students themselves.

Impact of product

According to those institutional contacts who have so far responded to the survey, *Transition to University* has already been used or is planned for use by five of the partners, as are *Informatics* and

Effective e-Moderating. The WSL contacts are absolutely critical in building awareness about the products in their institution and helping to identify courses in which the products could be deployed. Some of these contacts are more responsive than others and institutions should ensure that they have someone in place who is well-connected within their university and motivated to ensure that WSL is a success. Where institutions have supplied a delegate to workshops it is much more likely that this delegate will have an interest in using the product they have contributed towards. The concrete availability of the latter two modules should make it much easier to raise awareness about them; understandably, people who have not been involved in the development process will be wary about giving a commitment to using the modules until they have seen them.

Institutional contacts report intending to use the products either in the Spring of 2003 or at the start of the next academic year. It is unfortunate that the latter two modules were not ready as planned by the start of this academic year but it proved difficult to get participants together for second workshops during the summer and there were then further delays in finalising the products.

Institutional contacts and participants were also asked to state how many students they thought would be using the products. This varied from 5 to 300 per module at each institution which responded. Again, it will be easier to determine numbers once institutions have had a chance to examine the products.