Abstract.

General.

COAL FACE: Preparing academics to teach in multi-campus and multi-mode courses to build Communities of Active Learner who are Flexible Adaptive Connected & Engaged

(Showcase presentation)

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Topic Areas

- ● Embracing challenges and opportunities for higher education in a globalized world
- ● Preparing graduates for a globalized world
- ● Capitalizing technology in higher education for a globalized world
- ● Transforming leadership of higher education in a globalized world
- ● Re-thinking higher education research, professional development and evaluation in globalized world

Content

Keywords

Abstract (250 words)

James Cook University (JCU) is a regional university committed to providing a quality learning experience and offers the Bachelor of Nursing Science course in both internal and external mode, and on 5 campuses which are separated by more than 1700 km at its extremes. Students who study in their own local, supported community experience greater success in completing their studies and also tend to remain or return to rural or remote locations during their career. Challenges faced by Universities such as JCU include the need to provide active learning experiences for all students, irrespective of mode or location, and to mitigate the impact of the very different affordances of the learning spaces, technology and resources available to learners at each site and via each mode.

The OLT Project: 'At the COAL-FACE (Community of Active Learners – Flexible, Adaptive, Connected and Engaged) builds on the Spaces for Knowledge Generation research on learning space design (Souter et al, 2011) and seeks to adapt the seven principles of learning space design for a multi-campus and distance education context. The COAL-FACE project aims to enhance the student learning experience and teaching staff readiness to work across sites and in different technology afforded spaces to support active, constructivist learning. The project uses a large and geographically dispersed Bachelor level course as a case study to describe strategies that may enhance student learning in such an environment. The presentation describes the project, the context of the environment, the development of strategies to improve the students' learning experiences in the physical and virtual environments, implementation strategies and the planned measures of intervention impact.
Reference: Souter, K., Riddle, M., Sellers, W., Keppell, M., (2011). Spaces for knowledge generation. ALTC Project final report.
Retrieved 20 September, 2013, from http://www.olt.gov.au/project-spaces-knowledge-generation-la-trobe-2008

Addressing the conference themes

The COAL-FACE project is funded by an OLT Extension Grant and builds on the ALTC 'Spaces for Knowledge Generation' (SKG) Project (Souter et al, 2011) that looked at on-campus learning spaces. At a conceptual level the research is breaking new territory. One outcome of the SKG Project were the CAFÉ BAR principles for physical learning spaces: Comfort, Aesthetics, Flow, Equity, Blending, Affordances and Repurposing. These were systematically applied to the physical and virtual learning environments that staff and students inhabit in the undergraduate program. The extension of the Principles in this way provides a new framework for designing learning experiences in complex, dispersed learning environments.

The practical findings from this research have the potential for global application. The diverse multi-campus environment at James Cook University is a microcosm of the range of situations that can be found across the world. Noteworthy issues include tight institutional budgets, leading to inequities in technology and physical resources in different learning environments; professional body accreditation requirements constrain the content and the way in which students can be taught; attracting academic expertise to remote and regional areas is difficult and staff shortages require the sharing of expertise across campuses. Upgrading technology and physical learning spaces and redesigning the curriculum is desirable, but not always achievable in the short term. The project takes a practical approach to identifying necessary changes to the physical and virtual (online) learning environments and teaching and learning and support strategies that can be used to improve student learning outcomes.

Optional Comments

The presentation will be given by the contact author only.