THE DEVELOPMENT OF ON-LINE PROVISION FOR STUDENTS OF ACADEMIC ENGLISH

Summary Report

Introduction

This presentation outlined the development of a resource of on-line self-study materials for students of EAP at Queen Mary University of London (QMUL). The presenters discussed the background to the project, demonstrated the tools used to create the materials, presented example materials, reported on the trialling process, and outlined future developments.

Project background and context

This project is underpinned by the QMUL strategic plans, the Language and Learning Unit e-Learning strategy and the “Learning Object Creation (LOC) Tool”. The QMUL strategic plans identify increases in students studying at a distance and the need to promote high quality e-learning. In 2009 the LLU set up a working party that identified areas of need in EAP on-line provision, and the materials’ authors undertook training at the University of Southampton in the use of the Learning Object Creation (LOC) Tool, which enables teachers to rapidly create e-learning content.

Software tools: demonstration

In addition to the LOC tool, the applications used for materials’ authoring were Hot Potatoes, Tanida Quizbuilder, RunRev rapid application development tool, Flash and code editors. Each of these authoring tools afford varying degrees of flexibility for the materials’ author, from the relatively restricted, template-based environments of the LOC Tool and Quizbuilder, to the highly flexible development environments of RunRev and Flash. This spectrum of flexibility was matched to the degree of customisation the authors wished to obtain within the different components of the learning material.

Materials: overview and demonstration

A representative sample of materials was presented to illustrate the core content areas available so far: Academic Writing, Grammar and Seminar Skills. This exemplified materials created with each of the authoring tools above, including learning objects, quizzes and games.

Trialling: process and results

Data collated from the trialling of materials with students indicated that the materials meet learners’ needs, are appropriately structured, clearly laid out, relevant to students' areas of study, easy to use and navigate, suitable for self-study, and provide reliable information and helpful feedback. Student feedback comments also highlighted areas for improvement, such as greater elucidation through the provision of further examples. And there was clear desire for the materials bank to be expanded.

Future plans and developments

The materials are still under development and due for official launch at QMUL in September 2010. The materials are currently being added to, and we are working on improving the accessibility requirements and adapting alternative versions that function without JavaScript and Flash.

Martin Barge and William Tweddle. QMUL. June 2010