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Help

In 2013 Libraries and Learning Innovation (LLI) was asked to lead a project group to create two Masters level core content modules on Research Practice and Project Management.

What are Core Content modules?

VLE modules that have a clear structure and design, containing generic materials to support the subject. Also known as wrapper or shell modules.

What academic staff have said:

- “I think it looks great - extremely useful!”
- “Very user friendly succinct and streamlined.”
- “What I have been waiting for - just right.”

Project Background

Research Practice and Project Management are taught across a wide range of disciplines in the University, and traditionally designed and populated by individual course teams. The project's aim was to create new generic modules, providing a range of high quality, up-to-date content that can be easily inserted and contextualised within the curriculum. The modules are intended as a way of freeing up academic staff time to work on other areas of the curriculum and to avoid duplication of effort.

The project group consisted of representatives from the University's Centre for Teaching and Learning, academic staff, learning technologists and academic librarians, and was chaired by the Associate Director of LLI.

Designing the Modules

The group designed modules consisting of a front page with six buttons highlighting different areas of the subject. The resources were then organised into sub-topics, and annotated individual resource links were added into one of three categories:

- Activities
- Print resources
- Online resources

The academic librarians set to work finding a wide range of high quality materials, including resources from the Library's collection and resources produced by other institutions, such as OERs. The group sought out contributions from academic staff for the activities section, including online quizzes, PowerPoints, and examples of in-class activities.

Collaborative Consultation

After the modules had been created and uploaded to the University's VLE, they were circulated for initial feedback to selected academic staff, including those directly involved in research support, and to staff working on Project Management course teams. Staff were asked to feed back on the usability of the module, the topics selected for inclusion and on the types of resources recommended. The feedback received was very positive, and useful suggestions were made on how the design of the modules could be improved. These suggestions were considered and changes were made.

The modules were then circulated to a larger group of academic staff for a second round of feedback before they were ready to promote to the rest of the University.

Promoting the Modules

After completion of the modules, the project team advertised a series of workshops and academic staff were invited to come along to a hands-on session and demonstration. Staff who attended were asked for feedback via an embedded form built using Google Forms. Staff were enthusiastic and asked for several colleagues to be given access to the module soon after the workshops. These requests were so numerous that the decision was made for all members of academic staff to be given access.

The group was also asked to present at the University's annual course leaders' conference in July 2013 where the modules were also well received. Attendees gave useful suggestions for further resources and several asked for assistance in copying resources into their existing modules.

Feedback from Academics

The modules have been extremely well received, with very positive feedback given in the promotional workshops and in subsequent meetings and events. Several academic staff have already used the Research Practice module as the basis of their own research modules, and it has also been adopted by a new course for distance learners as the core of their Research Practice module.

A member of academic staff involved in the MSc in Strategic Project Management has proven to be an extremely useful collaborative partner and is working with the team on re-purposing a number of his own materials to augment the Project Management module.

Future Steps

The project team have now moved on to developing the next two modules:

- Introduction to Marketing
- Introduction to Strategic Management

The modules are not intended to be static, but to continuously develop and act as showcases of high quality content from both within and outside Leeds Met. Academic staff will need to be assured that the content they are using and recommending to their students is current and accessible so it is vital that the modules are kept up to date by LLI.

This has been a very rewarding experience for the project team and it has led to the development of a set of resources which will be of real worth to the academic community.