

Title: **Building engagement online in distance learning courses**

Presenter: **Caroline Coles**
De Montfort University

Abstract:

Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- Review the benefits and challenges of using Web 2.0 tools to encourage a community of learners
- Review elements of design for effective online exercises to engage students

Session Outline

Key issues to be addressed are:

The growth of distance or work based learning creates challenges for learners, divided across space and time. These challenges also affect full time learners forced in the economic climate to merge study with employment thus reducing the traditionally natural creation of a learning community. This creates difficulties for deeper learning (Marton and Saljo (1984), Ramsden (2003)) and leads to poor levels of student retention. Modern learning methods, grounded in a sound pedagogy, need to adapt to encourage effective online engagement: dreary online discussion boards and powerpoint with sound are insufficient (Rossett 2002). Creative materials (as encouraged by the NACCE report) are required to stimulate the distance learner and provide a true experiential learning (Kolb 1984). Teaching and learning exercises need to be designed specifically for this medium and the modern learner (Maharg (2007) Cubric (2007), Salmon (2004)).

The presenter has had 11 years teaching experience at post graduate level and 5 years working with online materials. The presenter has used a mixture of online podcasting and wiki for 3 years specifically designed to encourage engagement and build a community of student and increase deeper learning. She is a fellow of the HEA and regularly presents to the annual conferences of the HEA subject centre for law , the UKCLE.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

The session will involve

- a demonstration of the use of a wiki as a collaborative web site by post graduate distance learning law students and some examples of skills exercises on a variety of wikis (approx 10 minutes),

- a discussion of the presenter's research on student perceptions on the use of wikis (approximate 10 minutes)
- an interactive exercise and discussion concerning the appropriate use, design and assessment of wiki exercises (approx 20 minutes)

References

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Maharg,P. (2007) Transforming Legal Education, Ashgate Publishing

Marton, F and Saljo, R (1984) Approaches to Learning in F.Marton, DJ Hounsell and NJ Entwistle (eds) The Experience of Learning,Scottish Academic Press.

NACCCE (1999).All Our Futures <http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/hmiepcie.html>

Ramsden,P.(2003).Learning to teach in higher education (2nd edn) RoutledgeFalmer

Rossett,A.(ed) (2002) The ASTD E-learning Handbook, New York: McGrawHill

Salmon,G. (2004) 2nd edn. E-moderating: the key to learning and teaching online.London .Taylor and Francis