

**University of Toronto Online Learning Project
Pilot Courses Fall 2011
Executive Summary of Evaluation Results**

Courses redesigned for online delivery for Fall 2011 project included:

- FAS - Slavic Languages: Russian for Russians (SLA210)
- UTM – Environmental Science Intro (ENV100)
- UTSC - International Development Communication (IDSSB10)
- OISE – Psychological Foundations of Learning and Development (EDU3506)
- Engineering – Alternative Energies (MIE515)

An evaluation phase of the project was undertaken with the goal of gathering data on attitudes toward and perception of institutional support for online courses prior to and during delivery. Data was gathered from a range of stakeholder groups involved in the process regarding all aspects of their experience and participation. This included online instructors, students and educational technology support staff.

The purpose of the evaluation was to achieve a better understanding of how existing infrastructure and support services can be improved. Outcomes of the data analysis have informed the Office of the Vice Provost Academic Programs with regard to strategic resourcing of institutional support for online learning.

Support to Learners

A sample of 181 students was analyzed. These students have taken 5 different online courses: 46.4% have taken ENV100, 34.3% have taken MIE515, 8.3% - EDU3506, 7.7% - IDSB10H3, and 3.3% have taken SLA210. Selected key findings from the overall results of the evaluation process are as follows

- More than 57% of students gave ‘Above average’ to ‘Excellent’ ratings to effectiveness of various technical components used to deliver online courses these components.
 - The area with the highest ranking was use of video content. (75%)
 - The area with the lowest ranking was use to real-time online-conferencing tools. (57%)
- Only 53% of respondents ranked the availability of general academic support services for online students as ‘Above Average’ to ‘Excellent’
- Overall, more than 70% of students evaluated technical support and resolution of technical difficulties for the online courses as ‘Above average’ and ‘Excellent’.
 - The area with the highest ranking was use of convenience of registration procedures. (74%)
 - The area with the lowest ranking was reliability of the technologies used to deliver this course*. (65%)
- 85.8% of students stated they would take another online course.
- 70% of students indicated that flexibility in scheduling was their strongest motivator to take an online course.

**In addition to centrally supported platforms, faculty used divisionally supported discussion tools, lecture capture and video management applications. Web 2.0 environments such as wikis were used as well as Skype.*

Support to Faculty

Seven faculty members directly involved in the pilot online course delivery responded to a survey and participated in a focus group related to support and infrastructure needs.

- Faculty generally reported a desire to have more variety in tools and software options for online teaching
- The lowest level of satisfaction occurred in the categories of access to “faculty development for online course design” and “ability of technical support to resolve issues”.
- Faculty reported anecdotally on the need for individual coaching specific to their course design needs and local technical support, including a designated liaison as first point of contact.
- When asked for their input on ideas for improvement of institutional support to faculty the suggestions provided by the respondents emphasized the value in having support more ‘custom-tailored’ rather than generic workshops.
- Support for assessment processes was also noted as an area of high priority during focus group discussions.

Instructional Technologist Perspective

Feedback was also gathered from five instructional technology professionals located in the divisions where the pilots occurred. Common points of concern coincided with those noted by students and faculty. Educational technology staff reported the need for:

- More clearly structured educational technology service models to support towards users who are negotiating between central and local services.
- Improvements to support for faculty development in the area of course design.
- Integration of the pedagogical support with technical support.

Further details regarding the evaluation project are available on request. Please contact laurie.harrison@utoronto.ca.