The Impact of the Read/Write Web on Student Writing

Context

In this research project we sought to ascertain the impact of Web2.0, or Read/Write web, activities on Student writing.

The research base draws on debates currently circulating in the field of academic literacies. Web tools such as Blogs, Wikis and Discussion forums are used in a variety of ways across the university. It is claimed that digital writing on a regular basis can provide benefits for students:

- Affords 'deep' learning of subject material;
- · Enhances writing skills
- Provides possibilities for self- and peer-assessment; and for reflective or creative tasks.
 However, there is also debate about the rigour and value of some tasks.

Therefore, this project investigates examples of the application and attitudes towards Web2.0 writing tasks, from different disciplinary perspectives.



Questions

What are the benefits and challenges of 'digital writing and communication for staff and students?

In what ways do staff and students orientate towards the use of different online writing tasks and collaborative activities?

Methods

Student evaluations: in-depth interviews, focus groups & survey at various stages;

- •Staff evaluations: in-depth interviews with staff before, during and after an implementation; and
- •An analysis of student writing

Findings

Confirm that when used appropriately to context, engagement in frequent, small amounts of writing can offer a complementary or alternative method of assessment, which embeds feedback and dialogue.

Web writing tasks

- •can motivate students and have a positive impact on emotional and cognitive development in learning
- •provide opportunities to embed reflective and critical thinking, alongside enhanced engagement with both theoretical and practice-based content
- •enable peer to peer development and social learning opportunities

Outcomes

Guidance materials & workshops for tutors in the use of the read/write web.

Internal project report
Paper presented at EduLearn09

What next?

Further dissemination through Journal Article and workshops to encourage academic teams to explore how emergent tools & approaches can be used strategically to enhance the way students learn and write.

Enable expertise in more long-term planning of graduated activities that can be embedded within in their own contexts.

Cross-faculty project team

Heather Conboy (Humanities) HConboy@dmu.ac.uk Richard Hall, (Quality Enhancement) Andrew Clay (Technology) Michael Powel (Art & Design) & Simon Mills (Humanities)

Benefits for students

- Enhanced digital writing activities
- Better understanding of student motivations, and concerns
- Enhanced guidance for students
- More diverse writing and learning activities

Benefits for staff:

Project deliverables will enable

- Positive Impact on academic practice & expertise
- Confidence in meeting University Learning and Teaching priorities,.

Benefits for the University:

- Development Workshops for staff
- Internal and external dissemination

