

1996

## Adaption and use of PAGE materials for internal teaching

Don Lewis  
*University of Wollongong*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/overview>

---

### Recommended Citation

Lewis, Don, Adaption and use of PAGE materials for internal teaching, *Overview - University of Wollongong Teaching & Learning Journal*, 3(1), 1996, 11-20.

Available at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/overview/vol3/iss1/3>

---

## Adaption and use of PAGE materials for internal teaching

### Abstract

Since the inauguration of TV Open Learning in 1992 and PAGE (Professional and Graduate Education) in 1993 numerous undergraduate and postgraduate subjects have become available through television. Many of these subjects have been offered by departments in the Faculty of Commerce. Preparation of the video and written materials for these subjects involve many hours and cost thousands of dollars. Preliminary evidence suggests that the quality of students' learning is at least as high as those exposed to traditional internal methods involving lectures and tutorials. Nevertheless, only limited use of the multimedia material has been used for internal teaching.

---

*The plan was to replace lectures for internal students with the video and study guide developed for PAGE. The video was available via SBS and copies were given to each student. Weekly tutorials were replaced by four two-hour tutorials and students also had access to the lecturer through extended consultation hours email and telephone.*

---

## **Adaption and use of PAGE Materials for Internal Teaching**

**Don Lewis**

**S**ince the inauguration of TV Open Learning in 1992 and PAGE (Professional and Graduate Education) in 1993 numerous undergraduate and postgraduate subjects have become available through television. Many of these subjects have been offered by departments in the Faculty of Commerce. Preparation of the video and written materials for these subjects involve many hours and cost thousands of dollars. Preliminary evidence suggests that the quality of students' learning is at least as high as those exposed to traditional internal methods involving lectures and tutorials. Nevertheless, only limited use of the multimedia material has been used for internal teaching.

The purpose of this project was to:

- 1 adapt teaching materials developed for a PAGE subject (ECON918 Economics of Health Care) so that they could be used for internal teaching.*
- 2 trial the use the adapted materials for internal students in Autumn 1996, and*
- 3 evaluate the alternative delivery methods in terms of student learning and student preferences.*

Economics of Health Care has been taught on campus for the past ten years and was offered for the first time through PAGE in 1994. Traditionally the internal mode of delivery has consisted of one two-hour lecture and one one-hour tutorial per week for 14 weeks. The reading consists of approximately 35 journal articles and chapters from books. The external mode of delivery consists of 14 half hour video episodes transmitted via SBS, a 125 page study guide and the same 35 journal articles and chapters.

The plan was to replace lectures for internal students with the video and study guide. The video was available via SBS and copies were given to each student. Weekly tutorials were replaced by four two-hour tutorials designed to overcome the potential problems listed below. Students also had access to the lecturer through extended consultation hours as well as through email and telephone.

It was anticipated that the proposed changes would have several advantages including:

- students could view videos at time which was convenient to them rather than attend lectures at a set time,*
- students could proceed at their own pace by reviewing videos and repeating sections which they found difficult,*
- students had access to the study guide which could assist them in their understanding of reading videos,*
- students would learn more by working through the material on their own rather than being passive absorbers of information in lectures, and*

- *video and written materials which are costly to prepare will be utilised more widely.*

It was also anticipated that there might be possible disadvantages of using distance education materials for internal students. These include:

- *students would have less direct contact with staff and might feel dehumanised,*
- *students might find it difficult to adjust their learning techniques, and*
- *students might not have sufficient motivation or discipline to work through the video and study guide on their own.*

## Implementation of the plan

The proposed plan was implemented in the Autumn Session, 1996. Students attended the first lecture under the traditional format. They were given a choice of continuing with the traditional format and assessment (normal lectures were given for students enrolled in ECON317 and ECON917) or taking part in the innovative program. All students enrolled in ECON918 chose the new program. All of them were enrolled in postgraduate courses offered by the Department of Public Health and Nutrition and most were employed in a health related occupation.

### *Adaption of PAGE materials*

All teaching materials (videos, study guide and readings) were reviewed to determine whether and modifications or additions need to be made. Minor changes were made to the study guide and readings but revision of the videos was not necessary. A special introductory section was written to explain the purpose of the exercise to students and to identify potential difficulties they might face. Special material for the five 1.5 hour tutorials was also developed.

### *Delivery*

Delivery was via 14 half hour videos, a study guide and readings materials (36 articles which totalled approximately 500 pages) which were given to each student. There were also five 1.5 hour tutorials which were optional.

### *Evaluation of student learning*

Student learning was assessed using four written assignments. Each assignment consisted of six essay

type questions and students were limited to a maximum of two pages (typed and double spaced) per question. There was also a final examination which consisted of 50 multiple choice questions (exactly the same questions as those used for internal and PAGE students in 1995) and three essay questions.

### *Changes in the plan in response to student feedback*

The first special tutorial was attended by about 16 of the 22 enrolled students. They suggested several modifications which were implemented. These were: (a) moving forward the remaining tutorials by one week so that they occurred 10 days before each assignment was due rather than 3 days, (b) setting up an additional tutorial just prior to the final examination, and (c) establishment of a voluntary list of students and their telephone numbers so that discussion amongst students could be facilitated. Thirteen students put their names on the list which was circulated to all students enrolled in the subject.

## Evaluation of the project

The evaluation of the project is in three parts: (a) performance of students, (b) evaluation by students and (c) evaluation by lecturer.

### *Performance of students*

We would like to answer two questions. Firstly, can internal students learn as much using videos and printed materials as students who attend conventional lectures and tutorials? Secondly, can internal students using the same distance education materials achieve the same standards as PAGE students? The second question is motivated by the observation that in previous years PAGE students using distance education modes achieved higher marks on assignments and examinations than internal students attending lectures and tutorials. If PAGE students can achieve a high level of understanding of the economics of health care using distance education materials, why can't internal students do the same?

The relevant grade distributions are shown in Table 1. They indicate that the students participating in the project did quite well (labelled ECON918-1996 in Table 1) Approximately 9.1% received High Distinctions, 18.2% received Distinctions and 36.4% received Credits. There was only one failure (4.5%)

and this person dropped out and did not sit the final examination. These results are similar to those of internal students who attended lectures and tutorials

3. *There is no difference between the performance of internal student (1996) who used video and other special materials and students enrolled through PAGE (1994-1996).*

<b>Table 1</b>			
<b>Distribution of Final Grades</b>			
	<b>ECON918/1994</b>	<b>ECON918/1995</b>	<b>ECON918/1996</b>
	<b>(n=34)</b>	<b>(n=16)</b>	<b>(n=22)</b>
	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
HD	0.0	0.0	0.0
D	26.5	12.5	18.2
C	47.1	50.0	36.4
P	14.7	31.3	31.8
F	11.8	6.3	4.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
	<b>ECON918 PAGE</b>	<b>ECON918 PAGE</b>	<b>ECON918 PAGE</b>
	<b>1994</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>
	<b>(n=10)</b>	<b>(n=5)</b>	<b>(n=7)</b>
	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
HD	20.0	20.0	14.3
D	60.0	80.0	28.6
C	10.0	0.0	57.1
P	10.0	0.0	0.0
F	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

in previous years (labelled ECON918-1994 and ECON918-1995 in Table 1).

The results for PAGE students are also shown in Table 1. Although the numbers are relatively small, it is clear that in each and every year, the PAGE students achieved better results than internal students. They are apparently brighter, harder working or more motivated than internal students.

These observations based on the data in Table 1 were tested formally using Chi-Squared analysis. The following hypotheses were tested:

1. *There is no difference between the performance of internal students enrolled in ECON918 who attended lectures and tutorials (1994 and 1995) and those who took part in the special program using videos and other special materials.*
2. *There is no difference between the performance of internal students (1994-1996 and students enrolled through PAGE (1994-1996).*

The first hypothesis could not be rejected (Chi-Square) with 4 degrees of freedom = 6.57 which is less than the critical Chi-Square at 0.10 level = 7.78). Thus students in the special program did as well as students enrolled in the same subject in previous years. They, in fact, did slightly better but the difference was not statistically significant.

The second hypothesis was rejected (Chi-Square with 4 degrees of freedom = 20.86 which is greater than the critical Chi-Square at 0.01 level = 13.28). Thus PAGE students achieved a significantly higher level of achievement than domestic students.

The third hypothesis was also rejected (Chi-Square with 4 degrees of freedom = 10.86 which is greater than the critical Chi-Square at 0.05 level = 9.49). Thus external or PAGE

students do better than internal students even when they exposed to the same teaching methods (videos and study guide) and assessment techniques.

The composition of marks for the various types of students are shown in Table 2. Over the three year period, PAGE students had a higher average on assignments than internal students (85.7% versus 75.0%), a higher average on the multiple choice questions on the final examination (74.5% versus 63.9%) and a higher overall average (78.4% versus 68.0%). All of the above differences in means are statistically significant at the 0.01 level. PAGE students do significantly better than internal students on all components of the assessment.

The students participating in the trial project (ECON918-1996) performed at about the same standard as previous internal students (ECON918-1994-1995). They had a slightly higher mean on the written assignments, a slightly lower mean on the multiple choice and essay components of the final

<b>Table 2</b> <b>Composition of Marks (in %)</b>						
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Number Enrolled</b>	<b>Assignments</b>	<b>Final Exam</b>		<b>Total</b>
				<b>Multiple Choice</b>	<b>Essay</b>	
ECON918	1994	34	73.1	64.2	68.5	67.6
ECON918	1995	16	72.9	67.3	61.3	67.0
ECON918	1996	22	79.4	61.1	61.5	69.3
Weighted Mean			75.0	63.9	64.8	68.0
ECON918 PAGE	1994	10	84.1	74.2	73.0	77.8
ECON918 PAGE	1995	5	86.8	78.0	76.6	81.1
ECON918 PAGE	1996	7	87.1	72.4	69.1	77.4
Weighted Mean			85.7	74.5	72.6	78.4

examination and a slightly higher overall average. None of the differences in the means was significant at the 0.10 level. Internal students performed at the same standard whether using the traditional format (attending lectures and tutorials) or the special format (use of videos and other materials developed for distance education).

*Student evaluations of the trial project*

Internal students who took part in the trial performed well on all phases of their academic assessment. The next question is whether or not they enjoyed the experience and found it worthwhile compared to traditional modes of instruction. To answer these

questions a confidential survey was distributed to students at the end of session. Sixteen of the 22 students officially enrolled in the subject completed the questionnaire and returned it in the prepaid envelopes which were provided.

A comparison of responses to questionnaires in previous years is shown in Table 3. The results in 1996 (the year of the trial) and 1994-1995 (when traditional methods were used) are quite similar. For example, the clarity of the videos was assessed as being of a similar high standard as the clarity of traditional lectures. Knowledge of the tutor and the amount of stimulation were judged in a similar manner under the two regimes.

<b>Table 3</b> <b>Direct Comparison of Student Evaluations</b> <b>(1994 and 1995 Conventional Mode of Delivery) (1996 Innovative Mode of Delivery)</b>			
<b>Question</b>	<b>Mean Response*</b>		
	<b>1994</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>
11. Lecture material has been presented clearly	4.1	4.3	
8. Rate of clarity of the video presentations			4.4
23. This tutor has demonstrated understanding of the subject	4.4	4.6	
22. Did the tutor know the material?			4.2
20. The lecturer stimulates me to think about the subject	3.8	3.9	
36. Did the format stimulate or hinder independent thought?			3.7

\* Five point scale: 5 = most favourable, 1 = least favourable.

Student responses to other key questions are shown in Table 4. Students clearly liked the videos and the study guide (Questions 9 and 12) and found the assignments helpful (Question 25). Most indicated they would recommend the subject to others (Question 33) and gave the subject a high overall rating (Question 38). The responses were not as uniformly high for questions in which the students were asked to compare the trial format with that of conventional subjects (Questions 13, 17, 33 and 39). These questions had a mean response between 3.7 and 3.8 which is considerably lower than

the responses to the other questions which had mean responses between 4.2 and 4.8.

The full distribution of responses to the comparative questions are shown in Table 6. For each of the questions a response of 1 indicates the strongest preference for the conventional methods while a response of 5 indicates the strongest preference for the trial methods (videos, etc.). The number of respondents in each category are shown in the body of Table 6. For each question the majority of students preferred the methods used in the trial (responses of 4 or 5) while a few preferred

<b>Table 4</b>	
<b>Student Evaluations: Responses to Key Questions</b>	
<b>Question</b>	<b>Mean Responses*</b>
9. Overall, how would you rate the videos?	4.8
12. Overall, how would you rate the study guide?	4.8
13. How would you rate the 1/2 hour format with traditional class lengths	3.8
16. Rate your satisfaction with the presentation method	3.8
17. Do you prefer it to other traditional forms?	3.7
24. Overall, how would you rate the tutorials?	3.8
25. Did the assignments assist in understanding the subject material?	4.4
33. How much did you learn compared to other subjects?	3.8
37. Would you recommend the subject to others?	4.6
38. Overall, how would you rate the subject?	4.2
39. All things considered would you prefer the format used (videos, study guide, etc.) or a more conventional format?	3.8

\* Five point scale: 5 = most favourable, 1 = least favourable.

<b>Table 5</b>						
<b>Distribution of Responses to Comparative Questions</b>						
<b>Question</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>					<b>Mean</b>
	<b>Prefer Conventional</b>		<b>Prefer Trial</b>			
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	
13. How would you rate the 1/2 hour format with traditional class lengths	0	3	4	3	6	3.8
17. Do you prefer it to other traditional forms?	2	0	4	5	5	3.7
33. How much did you learn compared to other subjects?	1	2	3	4	6	3.8
39. All things considered would you prefer the format used or a more conventional format?	2	2	1	2	8	3.8

conventional methods (reposes 1 and 2) and a few were indifferent (response 3). In question 39 students were asked, "All things considered would you prefer the format used (in the trial) or a more conventional format?" Ten students indicated a preference (two students) or strong preference (eight students) for the trial format while four students indicated a preference (two students) or strong preference (two students) for the conventional

format. One student was indifferent to the two approaches. In summary, the majority of students (66.6%) preferred the trial format using video and the study guide while an important minority of students (26.7%) preferred the traditional approach involving regular lecturers and tutorials.

Students were also asked two open ended questions designed to elicit responses concerning what they liked

**Table 6**  
**Selected Responses to Open Ended Questions**

**40. What did you like about the subject/lecturer/format?**

- \* Subject was useful and applicable!
- \* I thoroughly enjoyed the subject and found the format much easier for me. I liked being able to study the video/subject at time that was convenient for me. I feel I have a much more thorough understanding of this subject than previous subjects I have studied.
- \* The videos and study guide were well organised and material presented matched with the objectives. This resulted in the good marks achieved in assignments.
- \* Because the subject was interesting it was very easy to watch the videos, complete the recommended readings and complete assignments.

This subject has been one of the most enjoyable and appropriate subjects for my situation. I have become much more aware of the economics of health and the economics associated with the hospital environment. Wastage in hospitals and lack of knowledge by nurses is an issue that should be addressed.

- \* Format: The videos were presented very well and I was able to choose the time I watched them. That is I didn't have to wait until they were presented on SBS, they were available. Subject: Links in very well in Health Care Management. Gives a better understanding of the 'big picture'. Lecturer: Presentation on video well done. Quite an interesting speaker.
- Good time management for me, being a part-time student and working full-time. Being able to watch the video presentation a number of times helped my understanding of difficult concepts. Study guide an excellent revision tool for the exam. Good lectures, well planned and flowing material. Interesting and relevant material for course. Material straight forward and most concepts had good practical examples and relevant to health. I wish the other subject had been as straight forward and structured as well!!!!
- \* Economics of Health Care is an interesting subject. It broadened my outlook on health care issues. Don is an excellent lecturer and has a nice, friendly and informative approach. His analogies helped to clarify various points.
- \* The ease at studying at home, in our time frame etc. was, for me, excellent. I thoroughly enjoyed and gained a great deal from ECON918. I feel conventional lectures would not have stimulated me as much nor would I have felt in control of my study hours. Thank you for the opportunity to study this course subject in this way. Lets hope more subjects change to this way of teaching/learning for postgraduate students.
- \* I like the subject because the topics that are taught in the subject relate to my work in the health industry and it is a very good course to study. I wish to commend the lecturer for his lectures, presentation in the videos were satisfactory and I preferred the format used in videos and study guide.

and disliked about the subject, the lecturer and the trial format. The responses provide insight into why some preferred the new format while others prefer the conventional format. Some of the more illuminating responses are given in Table 6 and Table 7.

## Evaluation by lecturer

A majority of internal students have indicated that they prefer using material developed for distance education (videos and study guide) to traditional methods such as weekly lectures and tutorials. They have also demonstrated that they can learn as much using distance education materials as they can using traditional methods. They learn as much as measured by formal methods of assessment, assignments and examinations. But these formal methods can only measure some aspects of the knowledge and skills that students obtain. For example, students attending lectures and tutorials have greater opportunities to meet with other students and to exchange ideas about

their own work environments and information acquired in other formal studies. They are also more likely to develop networks which can be useful after their formal studies. Finally, they may develop a greater capacity to work with others, an attribute that is seen as highly desirable by most employers. Students in the trial did circulate their names and telephone numbers to each other to facilitate peer contact but this facility was used infrequently by the majority of students.

On the other hand, students studying without the assistance of lecturers and weekly tutorials may develop compensating skills. They develop better organisational skills and the capacity to learn independently. They may also discover the benefits of reflective thinking.

In the summary, students exposed to different modes of instruction are likely to develop different skills and learn different concepts which are not assessed through normal assignments and examinations. At least some of these differences are potentially measurable

**Table 7**  
**Selected Responses to Open Ended Questions**

### 41. What did you dislike about the subject/lecturer/format?

- \* I prefer the conventional format. Work/home commitments made the subject difficult to include in time management. As subject was reclassified as external at work, loss of study time made it difficult i.e. 3 hours per week lost. Tutorials - sorry! Due to work commitments it was not possible to attend. The loss of the interaction between fellow students and lecturer was very difficult to overcome. Fellow colleagues stated what an interesting subject ECON918 is, but I really did not gain much from the subject. The presenter was brilliant! but I always kept thinking of the loss of interaction. Although it was clearly stated that any problems contact the lecturer, but only work time distracted from this. Study routine was completely disrupted and at the beginning study manuals were not even opened. I would like to keep the videos as a resource for future reference. Time allocated for each assignment was basically a weekend to watch videos, scan resource material. Variation in question/results in assignments demonstrates pitfalls in my learning as an external student. Not appropriate for myself! Please note, resources were excellent but this approach for myself was not appropriate.
- \* Format: have a young baby hence difficult to allocate time for videos, whereas people work around you if you have to go to a lecture. Work also not committed to study leave for distance education whereas they are 'for' on campus. Hence lost study time both ways . . .
- \* I am not a fan of correspondence courses. The PAGE external student program provides for those students who favour this method. I would not like to see video instruction expanded to other courses or departments.
- \* My only (small) problem with this type of learning was the ability to question some of the issues raised in the videos. However I was able to agree/disagree with these issues in the assignments. Any queries I had with formulae or economic viewpoints, I was able to discuss with other students. I'm sure I've understood a great majority of video content . . . we'll see in the exam I suppose.

but beyond the normal evaluation techniques used in this subject. However, without empirical evidence there is no objective basis for concluding that one mode of instruction is more likely than the other to develop these peripheral skills.

Developing materials for distance education in an interesting and challenging experience. However, I found the actual teaching of students using these materials less satisfying than using traditional methods. There is less contact with students and much of the excitement from teaching comes from working with students on an individual basis, responding to their questions and witnessing the learning that takes place.

In my experience, once the distance education materials are developed, there is less work involved on the part of the lecturer. Direct teaching time (lectures and tutorials) is eliminated or greatly reduced and, on average, there is probably less contact with individual students outside of class. Students attending lectures are more likely to speak to you just after class or during consultation hours than students who are watching videos. They are more likely to seek clarification and to challenge your ideas. Thus, greater use of materials developed for distance education in classes for internal students can be resource saving as well as educationally sound.

In summary, the use of distance education materials to replace normal lecturers and tutorials for internal teaching can increase efficiency but, in my personal experience, the process is less rewarding. In the future I intend to give students enrolled in ECON918 an option. They can either attend lectures and tutorials in the normal way or they can rely exclusively on the videos, study guide and a small number of

special tutorials. The materials developed for distance education teaching will be made available at cost to all undergraduate and postgraduate students enrolled in the Economics of Health Care.

#### *Caveat*

We have tried to control for as many factors as possible in comparing the results of students in the trial with those who studied in the conventional format. Specifically, the method of assessments were similar, the markers of assignments and essay questions on the final examination were the same as those used in previous years and there was a core of multiple choice questions which were the same in all years. Nevertheless, it is difficult to generalise on the basis of a small sample. Only 22 students took part in the trial and the results were compared with those 50 students

## UPGRADE YOUR TEACHING SKILLS

The Introduction to Tertiary Teaching subject (ITT) is offered by Academic Development Services and The Faculty of Education. This subject provides all academic staff, and general staff who have teaching responsibilities, with the opportunity to further develop or refresh their teaching skills in a collegial learning environment.

The ITT subject is an approved 8 credit point course in the Faculty of Education schedule and is offered free of charge to University staff. After completing the ITT subject staff may enrol in the Graduate Certificate of Higher Education. This course requires the study of two additional subjects; *Curriculum & Instructional Design and Assessment & Evaluation*. Staff may then proceed into the Graduate Diploma in Adult Education and Training and a Master of Education degree if they so desire. Several have already taken these courses and graduated from the Faculty.

In the ITT subject participants are introduced to a range of basic skills of university teaching. They are encouraged to consider implications

for student learning and devise strategies to facilitate student outcomes. They investigate the planning, implementing and evaluating of a range of teaching methods, especially those relevant to their particular disciplinary and personal needs. The principles and practices of subject and course design are introduced as a means of integrating the various components of the subject. Attention is also directed to lecturer-student relationships and the feedback role, both of which are crucial to the teaching-learning process in the University. Ultimately the subject should lead staff to an awareness of avenues for continuing professional development and a desire to continue the refinement of their teaching capabilities.

Autumn semester participants will meet on Thursday mornings from 9.30am - 12.30pm commencing in Week 1. Information is available from Max Gillett, phone 4277, and from Maureen Bell, phone 3946. Application forms are also available from Michael Long, Academic Development Services, 3618.

who did the same subject in the previous two years. All of these students are quite homogeneous; all are mature postgraduate students with significant work experience in the health industry. Similar results may not be found for students in other subjects. The success of the trial depends in part on the maturity of the students and the quality of the distance education materials. These will be different for other subjects.

## Principal findings and recommendations

For the past three years ECON Economics of Health Care has been offered through PAGE to external students using materials and teaching methodologies specifically designed for distance education. These materials included 14 half hour videos and a detailed study guide. The purpose of this study was to trial the use of these materials for internal students. Videos, the study guide, and five special tutorials replaced 28 hours of lectures and 13 hours of tutorials. The content of the subject and methods of student assessment were unchanged.

The principal findings of the trial were:

1. The 22 students in the trial performed as well as students exposed to traditional methods in all objective measures of learning (assignments, multiple choice and essay questions on the final examination). Their overall mean mark of 69.3 was slightly above that of students in previous years (67.2) who had access to traditional lectures and tutorials. The difference, however, was not statistically significant. Internal students performed at the same standard whether using the traditional format (attending lectures and tutorials) or the special format (use of videos and other materials developed for distance education).
2. A clear majority of the students (66.7%) preferred the new approach while a significant minority preferred the traditional approach (26.7%).
3. Materials developed for external students such as videos and the study guide were judged to be very useful and were much appreciated by students.
4. External students enrolled through PAGE performed at a higher level on assignments and

examinations than internal students. The superiority of external students is statistically significant and they surpass internal students who attended lectures and tutorials in 1994 and 1995 as well as those who use distance education materials in 1996.

The following recommendations follow from this analysis:

1. Materials developed for distance education should be used more widely for internal students. There is clear evidence that they can contribute to the learning process. In the future I plan to make the videos and study guide available to all undergraduate and postgraduate students enrolled in the Economics of Health Care.
2. Where feasible, internal students should be given the option of studying subjects in distance education mode. That is, students should be given the option of attending lectures and tutorials in the normal way or using videos, study guides and other materials developed for external students.
3. When preparing materials for distance education, educators should keep in mind the potential for their use by internal students. This will improve the quality of the materials and help to justify their high fixed cost.

## CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO OVERVIEW

Articles on any aspect of tertiary teaching are welcome. We suggest a maximum size of 2000 words but will consider longer papers if they are in line with the purpose of Overview which is to provide practical and relevant articles on teaching. Short articles on specific teaching techniques are also welcome as is information about conferences, networks and other resources.

Please send contributions to Richard Caladine at Academic Development Services by email or internal mail. The deadline for the next edition is March 14, 1997.

# INNOVATIONS

## LIBRARY SUPPORTS TEACHING AND LEARNING

### **The Research Edge**

During 1996 Library staff presented a new research and information retrieval skills course, known as the Research Edge. This was originally designed with funding made available from a University Teaching Development grant and targeted postgraduate students. In response to requests from academics, the course was later presented to teaching staff in Creative Arts, Nursing and Sociology. The course aims to familiarise participants with the range of information sources and services available, with an emphasis on sources relevant to their subject area. Department presentations for academic staff are coordinated by the appropriate Faculty Librarian and are tailored accordingly. Although initially designed as a three day course, shorter versions have been negotiated with academics in departments.

The course includes a large percentage of 'hands on' learning in addition to theory and a folder of support material is provided to participants as a continuing resource. Sessions included cover material ranging from traditional sources such as citation indexes to searching electronic information resources as well as electronic discussion groups, the Internet and personal bibliographic management systems.

Further courses are planned for early 1997 and a follow-up survey has been sent to postgraduate participants who attended in 1996. For additional information, please contact Helen Mandl, x4637.

### **Faculty Librarians in the Faculty**

For some time now various Faculty Librarians have been spending time in their respective departments or faculties to assist academics retrieve information for their research needs. As an increasing number of resources become available electronically from the desktop, teaching staff have been seeking assistance in accessing these effectively. Having library staff present while they work through procedures for connecting to information resources from their own workstations has saved time and frustration. An increasing number of appointments for assistance at the academic's own desktop highlighted a demand for this service. Faculty staff welcomed an arrangement whereby Faculty Librarians could spend regular weekly time visiting them. Currently librarians spend weekly periods in the faculties of Education, Creative Arts and Health and Behavioural Sciences.

For assistance please feel free to contact the following Faculty Librarians:

- Arts, Catriona McGurk, Ext 3332
- Creative Arts, Elizabeth Peisley, Ext 4867
- Engineering, Craig Littler, Ext 4501
- Informatics & STS, Helen Mandl, Ext 4637
- Science, Deirdre Jewell, Ext 3334
- Commerce, Susan Jones, Ext 3334
- Education, Keith Gaymer, Ext 3334
- Health & Behavioural Science, Chris Faricy, Ext 3536
- Law, Elizabeth White, Ext 3184

### **arts101 electronic discussion list**

During 1996, students in ARTS101, Analysis, Research and Technical Skills in the Arts, participated in an electronic discussion list. This aspect of the subject was designed to allow students to:

- gain experience of participation in an electronic forum
- use an electronic forum for sharing reflection on the subject
- use an electronic forum for sharing specific problems and solutions related to the subject

In the first week of each session students were given instructions for subscribing, unsubscribing and posting messages. Besides the usual mailing list chat whereby some students were naturally more vocal than others, all students were required to submit a minor assignment task which involved posting a message successfully to the group by mid-session. This was a message of reflection on a particular learning experience with electronic resources. Another message posted later was an opportunity to inform instructors and other students how they had applied skills and knowledge learned in ARTS101 to other subjects. This contrasted with presentation of similar assignment tasks through a reflective journal in the previous year. Students used the electronic medium to great advantage in this instance; their postings had an immediacy and spontaneity and often used a humorous approach that wasn't present in the written journals of 1995. Those who were concerned about writing in a reflective style lurked for a little and soon saw enough diversity in style to give them the confidence to use their own!

A brief evaluation of the discussion list in the last class showed that students appreciated the list as a communication tool which also offered easy access to instructors and other students to help with problems. As one student stated on the evaluation form: 'it was an easy way to ask for help rather than have to find the time to locate someone's room and find them etc.'. And another student: 'great for keeping in touch with course-mates, especially when they encounter problems for their problems may sometimes be yours as well'.

Besides adding to the technical skills of the students, the exercise taught them much about discussion list netiquette. It certainly taught me various list management skills, in particular related to the list management programme Majordomo. My thanks to Steve Cliffe of ITS for his patience in explaining the bounced messages I received at times! In general, however, the management of the list was straightforward and I would thoroughly recommend this kind of forum though only for fairly small groups of students.

Catriona McGurk (x3332)