Blogging in Higher Education

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What is a blog?

- Abbreviation of “Web-Log”
- Reverse-chronological posting of news items
- Links to third-party sites
- Readers can subscribe using RSS
- Readers can comment on posts
- Relatively unstructured format
How can I use blogs?

- As an academic professional
- As a member of staff
- As a teacher
- As a student
Some Uses of Blogs in Education

**Writing Blogs**
- Blogs as eportfolio, both for institution-wide assessment and to establish professional credibility and reputation
- As group discussion or coordination tool
- Course based journals for assessment
- Personal Reflective journaling
- As knowledge mgmt tool for their own learning & studies
- Class Administration Blog
- Annotated links blog for students and for personal knowledge management

**Reading Blogs**
- Others’ blogs as groupwork or part of class ‘dialogue’
- Discipline-specific feeds as coursework
- Instructor’s administrative blog
- Personal journal or KM-base
- Student’s blogs as coursework
- Ed tech and pedagogical practice blogs as P.D.
- RSS feeds from learning object repositories to keep abreast of latest instructional objects

**For Rest of the Net**
- For Other students
- For Instructor
- For Self

**For Self**
- By Self

**By Rest of the Net**
- By Other students
- By Instructor
- By Self

**For Students**
- By students

**For Other Instructors**
- By Other Instructors

**For Rest of the Net**
- By Rest of the Net

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*Scott Leslie, October 8, 2003*
Why use blogging for learning?

- To harness the students’ existing practice in social networking (Murray and Sandars 2008)

- Support the *process* of learning to write critically and reflectively (Clegg, Moon, Sinfield et al).

- To address particular demands in the curriculum such as PDP

- To support students on placement/work based learning/year abroad in group work or preparing for other high stakes assessment such as a dissertation or presentation
What’s in it for students?

- It facilitates peer learning and gives students an audience (critical friend) for their learning process.

- It helps students to develop their ‘voice’ in writing (Hughes, 2008).

- It provides students with a record of their development so that they can ‘see’ their learning.

- It enables students to use pictures and video clips creatively to stimulate reflection (Gauntlett, 2008).
What’s in it for academics?

- It is a way to get to know students and can help to achieve greater student engagement.

- It changes the relationship between student and academic.

- It is initially demanding of academics’ time but once students are in the habit of supporting each other it enables the tutor to step back. (Hughes, 2008)
What is the tutor’s role?

- Be led by the curriculum not the technology
- Start small
- Set up the netiquette for example boundaries and standards of academic literacy.
- Manage student expectations of how often blogs will be responded to etc.
- Scaffold and support students’ development by asking questions and providing academic input.
Examples

- University of Wolverhampton PGCE, to support students’ reflection on practice
- University of Leeds Medical Education Unit, to support students’ reflection on practice
- London Met University Student Learning Centre to support students’ writing process
Useful Resources

Ireflect web resource
http://www.ireflect.leeds.ac.uk/Home/tabid/262/Default.aspx
Conference paper. Letting in the Trojan mouse: Using an e-portfolio system to re-think pedagogy


Web resource HEA
http://escalate.ac.uk/

Open source blogging software designed for educational use
http://edublogs.org/
What tools are available?

- **Internal services**
  - blogs.kent
  - Moodle
  - PebblePad

- **External services**
  - Blogger/Blogspot
  - LiveJournal
  - WordPress
  - Edublogs.org

- **Software**
  - Microsoft Word
  - WordPress application
  - Google Gears
Currently Piloted
Any member of staff can request a blog
19 blogs currently exist
Visible to the world
Commenting available
Types
- Individual
- Joint
- Department/Group
Moodle

- Personal Blog for each user
  - Visible to entire site
  - Not visible to the world
  - Commenting not available
- Blog functions can be mimicked in Forums
  - Visible only to module/group
  - Commenting available
  - Non-linear structure
  - Posts can be limited
What is Microblogging?

- **Twitter**
  - 140 characters
  - Designed to provide status updates – a broadcast medium
  - Users invented their own way of responding to other users - @
  - Users “follow” other users
Any Questions?
References

- TED Talks - Evan Williams on listening to Twitter users
  [http://www.ted.com/talks/evan_williams_on_listening_to_twitter_users.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/evan_williams_on_listening_to_twitter_users.html)
- Leslie, S. Matrix of some uses of blogs in education