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Document title:	Report on Study Visit to The University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom
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HR participants:	Zoran Bekić, University of Zagreb, project coordinator Prof. Blaženka Divjak, University of Zagreb, project expert Lucijana Leoni, University of Dubrovnik Branimir Barišić, University of Rijeka Sandra Kučina Softić, University of Zagreb Jasna Tingle, CARNet
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I GENERAL REMARKS

Study visit to The University of Edinburgh is the last visit of Croatian partners to the EU universities participating in project Eqibelt. The purpose of all the visits was for Croatian partners to obtain the insight into policies and practice of e-learning in EU universities, including the opportunity to observe day-to-day operations in their e-learning efforts.

The program of the study visit was proposed and coordinated by Jeff Haywood who invited staff members from different departments to present and discuss their work in the field of e-learning. This included IT professionals from University Information Services whose job is to provide infrastructure for e-learning but also included teaching and administrative staff from different schools and colleges who implement e-learning in their work with students:

- **Jeff Haywood** (Acting Vice Principal for Knowledge Management): Introduction, Closing session
- **Charlotte Waelde** (Co-Director of Research Centre for Studies in Intellectual Property and Technology Law): Distance education in Law
- **Hamish Macleod** (Senior Lecturer, Higher & Community Education, member of the Teaching, Learning & Assessment Centre) and **Brian Martin** (Head of Higher & Community Education in School of Education): MSc in eLearning – new programme offered by distance education
- **Simon Marsden** (Director of Applications Division in Information Services): Digital architecture
- **Robert Chmielewski** (Member of eLearning team in Information Services): E-portfolios and personal development
- **David Dewhurst** (Director of College of Medicine & Veterinary Medicine's Learning Technology Section): Development of the EEMeC & EEVeC
- **Nora Mogey** (Head of eLearning team in Information Services) and **Wilma Alexander** (Member of eLearning team in Information Services): Review of VLE/MLE
- **Morag Watson** (Member of Digital Library team in Information Services) and **Liz Stevenson** (Member of Digital Library team in Information Services): Integration of online systems and use of digitised texts in e-learning

- **Jessie Paterson** (Computing Officer for School of Divinity): E-learning in the School of Divinity
- **Simon Bates** (Senior Lecturer Physics): The use of technology in lectures and groupwork

It is greatly appreciated by Croatian partners that the selected persons provided different perspectives on e-learning, from very enthusiastic to slightly reserved approach. This enabled a fruitful discussion about potential advantages and about difficulties in organization and management of e-learning in a large, traditional university, such as University of Edinburgh or University of Zagreb.

All presentations were held in the working environment of the presenters, in a non-formal atmosphere. The presenters enquired about the work of Croatian partners and focused on the issues of their utmost interest.

II FACTS FROM PRESENTATIONS & REFLECTIONS ON DISCUSSIONS:

Jeff Haywood (Information Services): **e-Learning in Devolved University (Introduction)**

Facts & figures about University of Edinburgh:

- 3 big colleges: Humanities and Social Sciences, Medicine and Veterinary Medicine, Science and Engineering
- 3 support groups: Information Services, Corporate Services, Policy and Planning
- 20.000 regular students
- 15.000 lifelong students
- 50% students from Scotland, 50% from UK and abroad (15% international students)
- 4000 new students every year (out of 45.000 applications) – high entry qualifications.
- High exit qualifications, high employability
- University is managed by Senior management team, Senior academic body and Oversight group
- University mission is determined at the top level, but implementation approaches are devolved
- Quality assurance – for the last 10 years
- Top level objectives: excellency in education, research and knowledge transfer

Development and support for e-learning

- E-learning is included in the University Strategic plan and in the Knowledge management plan.
- E-learning strategy was established as a formal document after the teaching staff started enquiring if it was mentioned in any formal university document that e-learning is expected.
- Central services (within Information Services) provide types of support intended for everybody in the University. In general university recommends using WebCT and provide support for it. Therefore Central Services take care of the WebCT Vista license (unlimited) and automatically enters all students, all teachers and all courses, whether they use it or not. Some departments do not like WebCT and have developed their own VLEs (Medicine, Veterinary, Math) but they must take care of their own support and they are doing so (they receive some support from the Principal fund)
- Principal's e-learning fund – (5 mil GBP) is just running out. It served as a very good motivation for some Schools to start using e-learning, it supported about 50 projects (small and big ones).

Challenges

- How to balance the aims of Corporate services (successful financial operations) with the innovation being a part of the University's mission?

- How to enable and encourage innovation in production of courses when duplication is cheaper and easier?
- How to match teachers' autonomy with the need for student experience consistency (for ex. same students attending courses that use different VLEs)?
- How to ensure interoperability, the implementation of standards…?
- Main challenge for Information Services: speed of response vs. reliability of service.
- Which particular VLE to select as a central one for the whole university when the current WebCT licence runs out (in 2010): WebCT, Sakai, Moodle,…?

Charlotte Waelde: Distance education in law

- "Innovation, Technology and the Law" – first online and distance master's course in the University Edinburgh (first offering 2005/2006).
- With funds from Principal's fund School of Law developed online materials for the new programme and a new VLE (in cooperation with Medical School). Developing VLE took 9 months and 1 dedicated person with help from colleagues from Medicine. Law still has one full time person for support (technology should be easy to use).
- The idea was developed with much enthusiasm in relatively short time and with some opposition.
- The programme had 30 (15+15) students from all over the world and several online tutors (teachers from the School of Law, who have extra 2h per week for online tutoring).
- The delivery of the programme is self sustained (from the students' fee of 10500 GBP per person).

Hamish Macleod and **Brian Martin: MSc in eLearning**

- The School of Education has just developed a new online masters programme: MSc in eLearning. New features are still being added.
- A student can take three or more courses as part time or full time.
- The programme is delivered in WebCT but many other tools are used (blogs, wikis…).
- The goal of the programme is to stay on top of technological development and in line with students' interest for new technologies.
- "Second Life", a virtual world, is also being used in the programme as a simulated environment in which the training activities are taking place. By downloading it, each student or tutor becomes a "resident" of Second Life ant can interact with other residents. The possibilities for use in education are still being explored.

Simon Marsden: Digital architecture

- University information system is very complex, which is understandable considering the size of the operations (30+30 staff).
- Graphical presentation shows three layers:
  - data entered into the system (about staff, students, visitors, alumni and organisational structures)
  - "Identity management service" (IdMS) as the central part of the system (home made solution but commercial solutions can be found)
  - systems to be integrated (VLEs, student portal and authentication service)
- This type of structure with IdMS in the middle ensures that every access to the system is checked by the IdMS and, depending on the permissions assigned, access is allowed to particular information. For example, when students log into the student portal their login data are checked by the IdMS and after that they are automatically allowed to access any of the VLEs they are using or any of the other services intended for students.

- However, each piece of information is only placed in one part of the system and this is the only place where it can be edited ("golden copy" principle). As many copies as needed can be produced from that original.

Robert Chmielewski: E-portfolios and personal development

- E-portfolios have been very popular in recent years, although there are different interpretations of their definition and purpose.
- Rather than a collection of materials, in University of Edinburgh portfolios are perceived as a tool for personal development planning, a way to display learner's work, plan personal development and prepare for career (experience + evidence = learning → marketing).
- It's important to attract students to start using them and to explain the benefit of their use (why and what for). Students in each UK university must have some PDP scheme (personal development planning).
- E-portofolio – student's private archive; easy to save documents from WebCT to e-portofolio. When students start using it they prefer it to be highly structured, later they want to create their own as they like it.
- Portfolio Tool is an addition to WebCT, it allows access to portfolio owner, guests with editing permissions (for eg. designer) and other guests (for eg. reviewers or potential employers). University information system is very complex, which is understandable considering the size of

David Dewhurst: Development of the EEMeC & EEVeC

- 2000 undergraduate students in Medical School
- 1000 other students
- 6000 staff, many of them are in research or in health service (university hospitals)
- E-learning unit in Medical School was established in 1999 (until then many lone rangers in Medical School created their own e-learning materials and courses)
- The unit has 9 staff, 2 of whom are financed by the Medical School and not by the University
- Medical School has initiated 12 e-learning programs, 9 of them at the masters level (not completely at distance)
- WebCT is not suitable for Medical School as it only supports separate modules, while in medicine is important for courses to stay open to students for several years (vertical, programme based knowledge architecture). EEMEC and EEVEC are new platforms, home made for Medicine and Veterinary studies (with some adaptations used in Law). The Medical School would like to try Sakai if funds are made available.
- Funding through developing of LMS for other courses.
- Other tools in use: ERUS authoring tool (used in Medical School for developing 1200 e-learning materials), LABORANT (virtual patients for problem-based learning), QuestionMark Perception (for generating multiple-choice questions, but they developed their own tool for other types of questions), Oscar (to perform assessment), Adobe Breeze (presentation and voice-over), tool for room-booking needed.
- The Medical School would be able to develop courses on profit basis.

Nora Mogey and **Wilma Alexander**: **Review of VLE/MLE**

- The e-learning team in Information Services makes sure that development and maintenance is in line with pedagogy.
- http://www.elearn.malts.ed.ac.uk/egallery/projects.html all e-learning projects at the Unviersity – from full programs to e-learning enhancements to classroom courses

- In favour of small changes in classroom courses which improve teaching and learning, such as Classroom Clickers, online assessment, e-portfolios, Turn-it-in (to check on possible plagiarism)
- Not in favour of e-learning completely at a distance before it is thoroughly prepared and all support ensured. Also, distance e-learning only if distance education is at all in the University strategy. For example, overseas students in Law did not have access to all the resources needed for studying at the start of the programme. Problem was solved by using EZ proxy, which means that wherever they were in the world, students' computers had the IP address assigned as if they were physically in the University. This allowed them to access even the vendor's databases.
- Organized online course for staff: "Introduction to e-Tutoring" (6 weeks), but they usually work in partnership with teachers rather than through training.
- Plagiarism detection service – at the University level – it compares the submitted work with their own and the international database, it gives results in percentage of similarity with other work/s.

Morag Watson and **Liz Stevenson**: Integration of online systems and use of digitised texts in e-learning

- Integration of traditional library with online access to e-resources.
- E-journals and e-books are very much used by students.
- Variety of options for licensing digital materials, new is that University can have a pilot license – 3 years. For up to 1 article from the book license is free.
- Variety of formats (scanned copies, pdf,…)
- Libraries negotiate with copyright licensing agency
- All past exams are online for students

Jessie Paterson: E-learning in the School of Divinity

- Communication tools integrated with online materials – ideal for subjects in Divinity
- Online materials are appendix to classical teaching (Monday, Tuesday – face-to-face teaching, Wednesday –online assigment) –online teaching in intervals.
- 2 people in the School of Divinity for e-learning support.

Simon Bates: The use of technology in lectures and groupwork

- School of Physics: 600+200 students, 60 staff, small e-learning team
- E-learning in use for 10 years now
- Own CMS in use for creation, authoring and management of their own courses (because maths and physics require specific features for authoring formulas, creating assessment, etc). Developed materials could be entered into WebCT or other VLE. Materials can also be printed, slides can be produced from them, or can be used in other formats.
- Technology is implemented in the group-work for 1st year students in the School of Physics. Traditionally they had lectures, tutorials and laboratories, now they have workshops (groups of 5 use one pc and work on problem-solving tasks related to that week materials).

Jeff Haywood: Closing

- Standardisation is impossible in such big, traditional and diverse university, only harmonisation.
- Research university, such as University of Edinburgh is, should minimize teaching to only 150 hours per year (this is for professors to be present at university). Support developers are enabling this change to take place.
- Changing of VLE is not possible in the duration period less then a 2 year
- For sustainability of E-learning Centre crucial are:
    - independence
    - financial resources from university budget
    - staff are employed half time at the university and half time at E-Learning Centre.
- Staff from E-learning Centre helps colleges in employing people in charge of e-learning who should have 1 degree in the subject matter and 1 in computer sciences or similar (job description, qualification, selection of people)