



## **e-Learning in a Devolved University** Strategy & Practice at the University of Edinburgh

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## **Nature of the University**

- a large traditional research-rich university offering a wide range of subjects, especially professional, in a campus setting
- strong focus on research-oriented training
- international in nature with staff and students from all over the world
- high entry and exit qualifications
- much postgraduate and continuing professional development education
- dominance of didactic approach to teaching
- importance of historically “successful” approaches



## Structure of the University

- 3 Colleges (Humanities & Social Science, Medical/Vet, Science & Engineering) with 21 Schools = **income generators**
- 3 Support Groups (Information Services, Corporate Services, Policy & Planning) = **spenders!!**
- ~7500 staff; ~25,000 students; ~€600M turnover
- Senior management team (PSG), senior academic body (Senatus), oversight group (Court)
- Mission statement – **objectives at top level**
- **Very devolved implementation approaches** + coordination
- Quality Assurance (for learning & teaching) processes in place for many years – regular external audits & reviews (one currently!)





## Developing & supporting e-learning

- Central services
  - within Information Services
  - major elements are in e-Learning Service, IT service, Library
  - WebCT / Vista – all courses, all students, all staff access – use rising; e-assessment; chat; assignment submission; anti-plagiarism; e-portfolio; etc
- College & School services & activities
  - Medicine & Vet Learning Technology Section (own VLE called EEMeC / EEVeC);
  - Education; Physics; Maths; Divinity
- Principal's e-Learning Fund
- Aiming for high quality / enhancement throughout



**The unresolved:**

***“what do we do about that???”***



## Challenges in the expansion of e-learning

- E-learning as innovation vs e-learning as corporate service
- Reducing cost of duplication vs supporting innovation
- student consistency of experience vs teacher autonomy
- VFM vs rising costs (proprietary or OS)
- Standards, interoperability, modularity.....
- Supporting on-campus but also off-campus – dist ed, mobility etc
- local determination of needs vs centralised quality control
- Speed of response vs reliability of services
- Next generation VLE/MLE – approaching 2010
- Pedagogy vs tradition – promoting change – Web 2.0 etc