QMUL E-Learning Strategy

2016 - 2020

Introduction

This E-learning Strategy 2016 – 2020 has been developed by the E-learning Unit in collaboration with staff and students at Queen Mary University of London. The central aim of the strategy is to build on our existing strengths to enhance the overall teaching and learning experience at QMUL. The objectives seek to broaden the ways e-learning may be used, ensure that students have an effective and consistent online learning experience and to enable an informed, digitally literate staff with appropriate development opportunities and smart tools. This strategy does not currently address QMUL's ability to scale-up its wholly online provision.

This strategy should be read in the context of the institution's Strategic Plan[1] and the Student Experience, Teaching, Learning & Assessment (SETLA) Strategy[2].

The value of E-learning at QMUL

E-learning can be defined as '*learning facilitated through technology'*. At Queen Mary, that technology might include centrally or locally supported software such as QMplus (the Online learning environment), QMplus Hub (e-portfolios) or Q-Review (lecture capture) or apps on a mobile phone. It might also include other software and tools more widely available or specific to a particular discipline.

For our students

- E-learning complements and sometimes facilitates but does not replace personal contact between students and teachers;
- E-learning provides opportunities to develop the skills they require to realise their potential in the digital age;
- E-learning can enable our students to fit their learning into their lives more effectively than traditional approaches;
- E-learning offers opportunities for those studying in other countries to have a QMUL learning experience;
- It can provide fair and equal access to learning to all students.

For our staff

- E-learning extends the physical classroom to enable teachers to augment the face-to-face components of their programmes;
- E-learning can provide opportunities for staff to enhance their teaching practice by focussing on the design, communication and facilitation of educational experiences;
- E-learning is not a 'one-size-fits-all' approach – we accept that students learn in different ways and that staff have different approaches to teaching students. A diversity of online teaching approaches is encouraged;
- We recognise that to design and implement those approaches requires skilled and informed staff;

For QMUL

- E-learning can provide rich data on activity which can be used to guide students on a personalised journey and keep staff and faculty well-informed.
- A strategically aligned E-learning provision can enable delivery of aspects of the central college strategy.
- Effective E-learning helps to ensure QMUL delivers World class teaching and learning and meets high student expectations.

---

[1] Strategy 2014 – the next five years – QMUL Strategic plan
[2] Student Experience, Teaching, Learning & Assessment (SETLA) Strategy

by 2020 we will…

Students

ELSA 1: Ensure all students have access to high-quality online learning that extends and enhances their learning experience no matter where or how they are studying

Staff

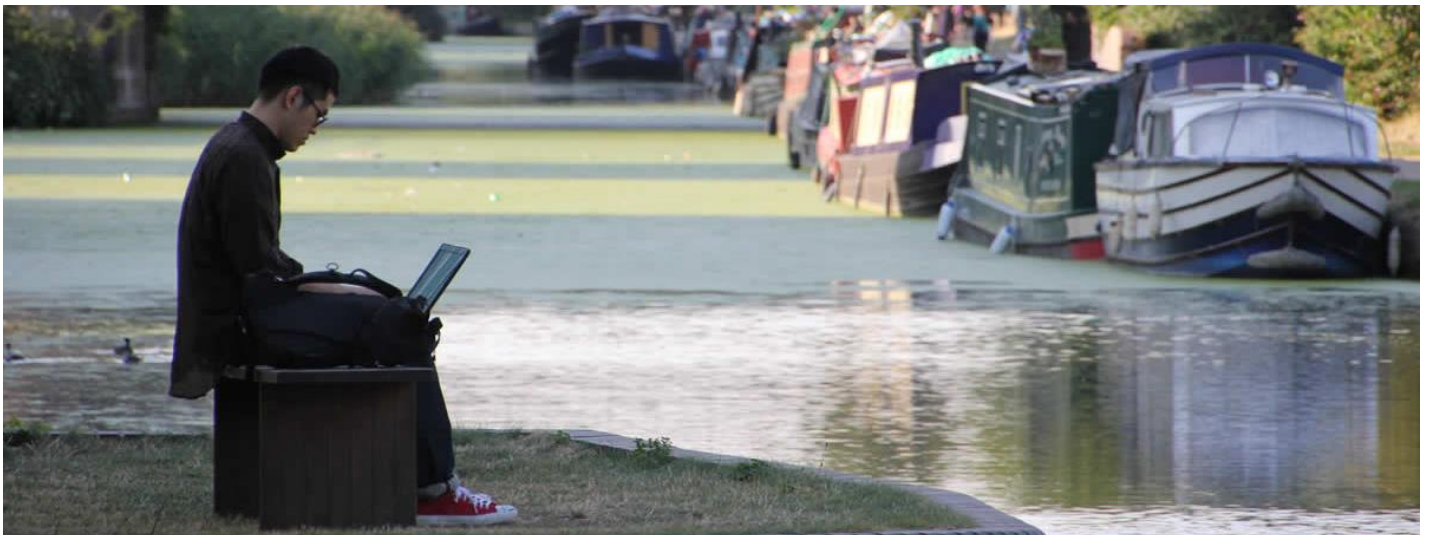ELSA 2: Provide staff with the tools, knowledge and recognition to teach effectively with technology

Enhance practice

ELSA 3: Diversify QMUL's online teaching approaches to encourage more interactivity and learner empowerment

Infrastructure

ELSA 4: Provide a sector leading, reliable and enabling technical and support infrastructure

1 STRATEGY AIM 1

> **Ensure all students have access to high-quality online learning that extends and enhances their learning no matter where or how they are studying**

THE CURRENT SITUATION

- All Queen Mary students on taught programmes have used QMplus to support face-to-face and fully online teaching since 2013/14.
- Most students will now have the opportunity to watch their lectures online again for review or revision purposes (Q-Review).
- Some students are actively engaged in reflection, evidence gathering and groupwork in an e-portfolio (QMplus Hub).
- Effective use of QMplus in teaching is now incorporated into module evaluation.
- Evaluation of core systems in recent years indicate students want greater consistency of use across modules and programmes, better informed teachers and more lecture capture.
- Students also ask for seamless integration of services and simple, easy and clear navigation and support for mobile learning.

CHALLENGES

- QMplus module templates and minimum standards now reflect the state of play in 2013/14 and are not well known or applied by all staff.
- Growing numbers of our students are studying outside the UK but require an equivalent learning experience as local students.
- Some students have been involved in evaluation and development of e-learning with great success but insufficient funding has held back expansion.
- A lot of student data exists in various places but it is not always linked together to deliver better experiences for students.
- Our E-portfolio offering has lacked development focus, visibility and therefore usage.

HOW WE WILL ADDRESS THESE CHALLENGES

1.1 Develop minimum standards, agreed at faculty level and tweaked at school level to ensure adherence to a set of quality guidelines and provide a coherent online student experience.

1.2 Provide access to a range of online tools and learning materials that facilitate individual learning styles and cater for those who study across programme, disciplinary or physical boundaries.

1.3 Encourage involvement by students in the development of e-learning services and the production of e-learning resources.

1.4 Introduce personalisation options across our suite of in-house e-learning tools.

1.5 Extend opportunities to capture evidence of achievements and reflection on learning.

1.6 Expand the availability of appropriate recorded materials.

2   STRATEGY AIM 2

> **Provide staff with the tools, knowledge and recognition to teach effectively with technology**

THE CURRENT SITUATION

- Staff at QMUL are provided with an up-to-date suite of supported tools that they can use in their teaching and support roles.
- Many staff are actively engaged in the development of the online component of their teaching and contribute to college-wide e-learning networks and events as well as a growing database of case studies.
- Many schools have adopted policies around e-assessment, marking and administration.
- Responsibility for building and enhancing teaching with technologies lies with individual staff and is supported by local e-learning support and the central team at the Mile End campus in London.
- Development of staff takes place on an ad hoc basis via workshops, training sessions, one-to-ones and drop-ins.

CHALLENGES

- Competing demands on academic staff time mean online learning development or enhancement can be deprioritised.
- There is no visible incentive to develop one's skills in online or blended teaching.
- Many staff are unaware of development opportunities in e-learning.
- There is a lack of alignment of e-assessment processes and tools.
- Learning technologies move, change and advance quickly making training and development more challenging.
- The ambitions of staff can often be greater than the resource available.

HOW WE WILL ADDRESS THESE CHALLENGES

2.1 Provide staff who teach or support learning with development opportunities to ensure they can make active decisions about how they implement blended learning.

2.2 Provide assessment tools which align with business practice & processes and plug gaps in our assessment toolkit. e.g. mobile, lab groupwork etc

2.3 Partner with academic staff to pilot emerging technologies, technology-enriched teaching spaces and teaching approaches to evaluate their effectiveness.

2.4 Ensure that all our major e-learning tools and practices are supported by a set of readily accessible policies which provide clear guidance on usage.

2.5 Establish resource to assist staff in designing and developing e-learning modules or materials.

2.6 Provide e-learning accreditation to reward development, training, design and pedagogy.

3   STRATEGY AIM 3

> **Diversify QMUL's online teaching approaches to encourage more interactivity and learner empowerment**

THE CURRENT SITUATION

- There are a wide variety of great examples of online learning and teaching at QMUL and academic staff have even been recognised externally for their achievements in delivering online.
- A growing number of modules and programmes are moving beyond baseline provision and implementing a range of diverse online teaching activities including student initiated and student driven projects.
- Some staff are carrying out evaluation of their teaching practice.
- There is now dedicated local learning technology working in eight schools and e-learning administrative support in almost all.
- Staff can access some basic reports from their module areas in QMplus and from their Q-Review recordings.

CHALLENGES

- New academic staff and those teaching new modules do not always understand the basic ways in which e-learning should be used at QMUL;
- Motivating staff to understand the benefits and engage with e-learning remains a challenge, particularly with competing demands on precious time.
- QMplus is often used as a document store rather than an empowering and interactive extended classroom.
- Challenges still exist around the ability to audit the pedagogical uses of e-learning systems in meaningful ways for staff and management.
- Other university regulations/processes can undermine efforts to enhance teaching with technology.

HOW WE WILL ADDRESS THESE CHALLENGES

3.1 Promote opportunities to share good practice and develop e-learning skills with practitioners across the institution.

3.2 Establish qualified e-learning resource in all schools, departments and institutes and formalise their relationship with the ELU.

3.3 Incorporate technology-enhanced learning principles into the module and programme design process.

3.4 Empower staff to be more responsive with their teaching by providing relevant reporting information from all centrally supported systems.

3.5 Develop a culture of scholarship in online teaching by encouraging publication of work and dissemination activities.

4   STRATEGY AIM 4

> **Provide a sector leading, reliable and enabling technical and support infrastructure**

THE CURRENT SITUATION

- Exponential growth in online module provision has led to increased use of our core technologies and this has had a positive effect on student satisfaction and learning outcomes;
- Q-Review, our lecture capture service can now record teaching across all large teaching spaces and default recording policies have been adopted in most schools;
- Our core systems have an ongoing programme of design and development aimed at integrating them into college processes most effectively;
- Some integration has been achieved between e-learning and core university systems e.g. SITS and QMplus, timetabling and QMplus, Q-Engage and QMplus.
- Design and development is driven by user request and feedback;
- Technical support is provided via the ITS-helpdesk via email, phone or face-to-face.

CHALLENGES

- Different software platforms do not easily communicate with each other with a subsequent loss of time, patience and productivity.
- We are unable to easily tailor views of our e-learning systems to different audiences e.g. students, administrators etc.
- QMUL's teaching portfolio develops quickly and it is challenging to ensure that technical solutions meet all the requirements of new teaching contexts.
- Current technical assistance is not sufficient to support learners working remotely, outside normal UK working hours.
- Insufficient expertise and funding to maintain and develop systems to ensure we have the best systems possible to support teaching and learning at the college.
- It is difficult to provide lecture recordings in smaller teaching rooms.

HOW WE WILL ADDRESS THESE CHALLENGES

4.1 Invest in reliable e-learning tools with the flexibility, functionality and design to meet the diverse needs of QMUL users at local campuses and abroad.

4.2 Provide flexible classroom recording capabilities that cater for a variety of teaching contexts and styles.

4.3 Follow sector-leading design and accessibility standards and provide usability driven interfaces to all our e-learning systems.

4.4 Provide effective integration between university IT systems and e-learning systems to remove barriers and increase productivity.

4.5 Provide effective tools to support online study and collaboration in distance teaching.

4.6 Maintain a high quality support function which serves the user community in a timely and effective manner, including 24/7 helpdesk provision.

5 FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- The E-learning Steering group (which has representatives from all faculties, professional services, IT services, the Student Union and the E-learning Unit)
    - o Oversees implementation of the strategy
    - o Agrees on any updates to the strategy

- A detailed implementation plan will be drawn up by the E-learning Unit to accompany this strategy. The implementation plan will explain who has operational responsibility for the aims of the strategy and have targets and dates for the achievement of these. An overview plan is available in the next section.

- All schools will develop either a local action plan in association with the E-learning unit which will outline how they will address those aspects of the plan that are relevant to them.

- Schools will be asked to report progress against their plan annually.

- The E-learning Unit will produce an annual report to highlight progress against the strategy.

5.1 E-LEARNING STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN OVERVIEW

Aim 1:

Ensure all students have access to high-quality online learning that extends and enhances their learning no matter where or how they are studying

Action items	Owner(s)	Timeline			
		16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20
1.1 Develop minimum standards, agreed at faculty level and tweaked at school level to ensure adherence to a set of quality guidelines and provide a coherent online student experience.	ELU/ Faculty/ Schools & Institutes	■			
1.2 Provide access to a range of online tools and learning materials that facilitate individual learning styles and cater for those who study across programme, disciplinary or physical boundaries.	ELU / ITS	■	■	■	■
1.3 Encourage involvement by students in the development of e-learning services and the production of e-learning resources.	ELU/ Faculty/ Schools & Institutes	■	■	■	■
1.4 Introduce personalisation options across our suite of in-house e-learning tools.	ELU / ITS		■	■	
1.5 Extend opportunities to capture evidence of achievements and reflection on learning.	ELU / ITS	■	■		

Provide staff with the tools, time, knowledge and recognition to teach effectively with technology.

	Action items	Owner(s)	Timeline*			
			16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20
2.1	Provide staff who teach or support learning with development opportunities to ensure they can make active decisions about how they implement blended learning.	ELU		▓	▓	▓
2.2	Provide assessment tools which align with business practice & processes and plug gaps in our assessment toolkit. e.g. mobile, lab, groupwork etc	ELU / ITS		▓	▓	▓
2.3	Partner with academic staff to pilot emerging technologies, technology-enriched teaching spaces and teaching approaches to evaluate their effectiveness.	ELU		▓	▓	▓
2.4	Ensure that all our major e-learning tools and practices are supported by a set of readily accessible policies which provide clear guidance on usage.	ELU	▓	▓	▓	▓
2.5	Establish resource to assist staff in designing and developing e-learning modules or materials.	ELU/ Faculty/ Schools & Institutes		▓	▓	▓
2.6	Provide e-learning accreditation to reward development, training, design and pedagogy.	ELU			▓	▓

Aim 3:

Diversify QMUL's online teaching approaches to encourage more interactivity and learner empowerment.

	Action items	Owner(s)	Timeline			
			16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20
3.1	Promote opportunities to share good practice and develop e-learning skills with practitioners across the institution.	ELU	███	███	███	███
3.2	Establish qualified e-learning resource in all schools, departments and institutes and formalize their relationship with the ELU.	ELU/ Faculty/ Schools & Institutes			███	███
3.3	Incorporate technology-enhanced learning principles into the module and programme design process.	ELU / FAC / VP?			███	███
3.4	Empower staff to be more responsive with their teaching by providing relevant reporting information from all centrally supported systems.	ELU/ Faculty/ Schools & Institutes			███	███
3.5	Develop a culture of scholarship in online teaching by encouraging publication of work and dissemination activities.	ELU/ Faculty/ Schools & Institutes	███	███	███	███

Aim 4:

Provide a sector leading, reliable and enabling technical and support infrastructure.

Action items		Owner(s)	Timeline			
			16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20
4.1	Invest in reliable e-learning tools with the flexibility, functionality and design to meet the diverse needs of QMUL users at local campuses and abroad.	ELU / ITS / FAC		■	■	■
4.2	Provide flexible classroom recording capabilities that cater for a variety of teaching contexts and styles.	ELU / ITS		■	■	
4.3	Follow sector-leading design standards and provide usability driven interfaces to all our e-learning systems.	ELU	■	■	■	■
4.4	Provide effective integration between university IT systems and e-learning systems to remove barriers and increase productivity.	ELU / ITS		■	■	■
4.5	Provide effective tools to support online study and collaboration in distance teaching.	ELU / ITS		■	■	■
4.6	Maintain a high quality support function which serves the user community in a timely and effective manner, including 24/7 helpdesk provision.	ELU / ITS		■	■	■

- *Timeline indicates the year in which we will first measure progress*