Using WebLearn to support tutors and students

Department of Biochemistry

Background

The Department of Biochemistry (Medical Sciences Division) has been using WebLearn from the time that the VLE was implemented (Old WebLearn), and was one of the early adopters in moving to New WebLearn in 2009. The department uses WebLearn extensively to provide information and resources to tutors and students alike.

Departmental WebLearn structure

The department’s local WebLearn coordinators, Dr Mark Wormald and Julian Jordan have set up the department’s presence in WebLearn in such a way that anyone, including school teachers and potential applicants can see the main page of each course (first page of each sub-site). The resources (such as uploaded files) are only available to those with a Weblearn login account and are not accessible to the general public or potential applicants. Each course or lecture series has its own sub-site in WebLearn. Each individual course organiser or lecturer is in control of their own area, and is responsible for keeping the material relevant for their courses/lectures up-to-date.

Mark pre-configures each site in an initial state, using a home page with links to the respective folders and files in Resources. The secret is to make it as easy as possible to update the information.

Mark says “That’s what having ‘Options’ at the top of the home page does for you — it’s like an ‘Edit’ button that allows for easy editing of the home page”.

An illustrated quick guide on how to update lecture information in WebLearn is available to users: “Editing lecture course information in New WebLearn”.

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Using WebLearn for Teaching

Another valuable use of WebLearn is to provide training and support for new teachers within the department. A WebLearn site is devoted to Tutors—resources which includes guidelines and useful information such as tutorial sheets, worked answers and notes for tutors. External links provide support for new lecturers and in a separate WebLearn site: Tutors—courses, tutors can access materials and information about a two-stage professional development course. The WebLearn site includes all the course details, resources and exercises on marking and offering tutorials.

Calendaring and Timetabling

The department maintains an SQL database of all the critical information about courses, lecture times, lecturers, venues etc. Julian Jordan is the Web & Macintosh officer in the department. He explains that the principle is to hold all the information in one central database, from where it can be accessed and presented in various formats for different purposes. The departmental timetable is maintained in the database, and can be fed into WebLearn sites, WebLearn calendars, and mobile devices.

http://weblearn.ox.ac.uk

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