



# Supporting first year teaching: Physics tutorials and WebLearn

**WebLearn not only enables sharing of information and resources with students, but also provides a single environment for tutors to consolidate their teaching materials, and easily update them each year.**

“WebLearn enables me to coordinate all aspects of the tutorials, including: students signing-up to tutorials, supplying questions, offering reading lists, communicating between face-to-face sessions, and working with students to build a growing resource of online articles and videos.”

Prof Paul Jeffreys, Director of IT Risk Management, IT Services, and Professorial Fellow, Keble College

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### Introduction

Professor Paul Jeffreys is a Professorial Fellow at Keble College and a Professor of Computing. He is also Director of IT Risk Management in the IT Services Department at the University of Oxford. Paul’s teaching and IT interests meet in his WebLearn site to support teaching first year Physics undergraduate students at Keble. He was inspired to explore using WebLearn to support his tutorials, so that he could confidently recommend the virtual learning environment to other academic staff.



Paul teaches four pairs of undergraduates during Michaelmas Term, and then again as a group revision class in Trinity term a few weeks before the students take their examination. Paul finds that his use of WebLearn has many benefits not only for his students, but also to expedite his own teaching. The site has been successfully running for three years and Paul can easily update it before the start of Michaelmas term each year.

### The Challenge

Paul tutors first year students in their first term at Oxford, so they are very new to the Oxford system. It can seem overwhelming when there is so much for them to learn and master within a short space of time. They require a supportive and easy to access learning environment, with resources that can be drawn on successfully during the revision period. The tutees are required to present their solutions to Physics problems on the whiteboard during the face-to-face tutorial sessions, so it is important that they have the questions, preparatory materials and other resources in advance.

Paul’s tutorial responsibilities repeat every year, so it is also essential to keep resources together in one place, to be easily accessed and improved for the following year’s tutorials. Contributions from the students are stored on the website so that each year it becomes a richer resource.

### The Innovation

The most important function of Paul’s WebLearn site is to collect together everything his students will need – WebLearn integrates everything into one central learning and teaching environment.

**Welcome to Keble Special Relativity**

tunnel: 800 feet long in rest frame

sliding door

sliding door

train: 1,000 feet long in rest frame

**This area is for Keble SR tutorials in MT2012**

Paul uses the **Resources** tool to deliver tutorial question sheets in advance and to make tutorial notes and model answers available after the face-to-face tutorial sessions. He uses the WebLearn **timed release function** to upload materials in advance of when they will be required, and have them automatically released to students on a specified date. The **reading lists** Paul provides are connected to the SOLO library search, and automatically provide a link if the texts are available online, or show availability information of books in a particular library location. The **Sign-up** tool allows the pairs of students to choose their time slots each week, and has the flexibility to allow them to switch their time up to an hour before the tutorial. This has proved to be a very popular facility.

-  **Model answers**  
Model answers as discussed in tutes:-
-  **Questions**  
Questions for tutorials in Michaelmas Term, 2012
-  **SR Videos**  
Here there is a collection of SR Videos which help explain the concepts  
send the URLs to Paul.Jeffreys@it.ox.ac.uk
-  **Tutorial Notes**  
Notes given out in tutorials
-  **Useful web links**
-  **Reading List**

The site is also a communication space between Paul and his students. He uses the WebLearn **Email Archive** tool so that all exchanges are delivered to student email addresses and archived for future reference. He experienced a significant benefit in that fine nuances often emerge from individual face-to-face sessions, and he can post a reinforcement or summary message to all the students later.

Paul is building on WebLearn's potential as a portal to link to relevant outside resources, such as useful videos and past examination papers. He invites students to find relevant videos or open educational resources, which they can either send to him to upload into WebLearn, or he can grant them permission to upload items themselves and in that way contribute to their own learning.

Paul's WebLearn site functions as an extension of the face-to-face tutorial learning environment. His students have continuous access to his teaching materials and advice, instead of discrete, weekly windows of contact. The intention is that wherever and whenever student learning is taking place, the group can be in contact with each other, and when necessary, with Paul.

### Feedback

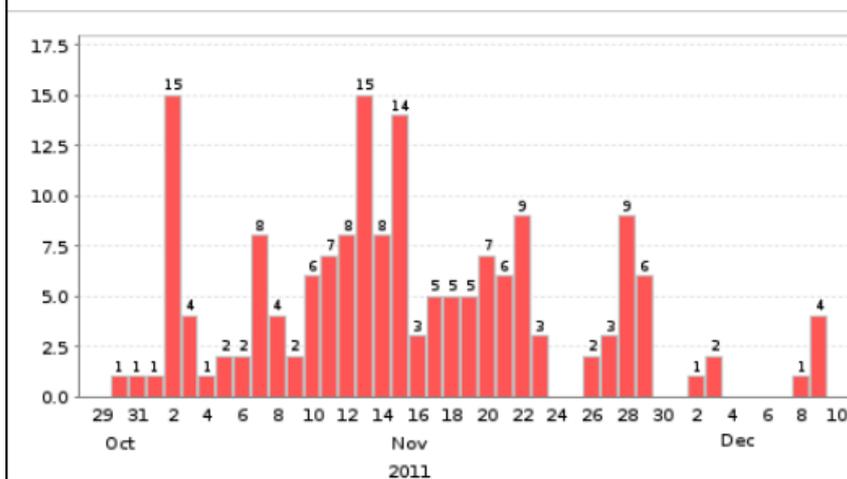
Paul's use of WebLearn prompted the IT Services WebLearn team to produce **site templates**, so that tutors, lecturers and administrators face a reduced learning curve instead of starting with a 'blank slate'. Three templates are now available through and can be perused on the WebLearn Guidance site.

### Top Tips for Success

1. Take advantage of the central online location that WebLearn offers. Keeping everything in one place is of great benefit for both academics and students .
2. Remember that setting up a WebLearn site is an investment, with some initial planning and work that will lead to subsequent benefits. Using WebLearn in this way is best for those delivering more than one year of teaching, so that you can capitalise on the initial investment of time and effort.
3. Try things out, even if they initially meet with limited uptake. Which tools are successful may vary in each year and with each new generation of students.

### Report

**Site:** "Paul Jeffreys Tutorials"  
**Activity type:** Visits  
**Time period:** 01-Oct-2011 00:00 - 31-Dec-2011 14:22  
**User selection type:** All  
**Report date:** 31-Aug-2012 14:25



https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk

See the WebLearn blog post:

["Using Templates to Create New Sites"](#)

*Paul Jeffreys and Jill Fresen, August 2012*