

Light touch educational development: Co-designing connected learning at scale

Sandris Zeivots¹

Andrew Cram¹ and Dewa Wardak¹

¹ The University of Sydney Business School

Introduction. The importance of digital learning has led many universities to deploy resources, technologies and innovative strategies toward improving the course delivery. New standards of academic digital capability have been set in the post-COVID world (Aitchison, Harper, Mirriahi & Guerin 2020). While investigation of these standards and practices is pivotal, it still appears to be scarce.

Academics at [withheld] were challenged to reinvent their teaching for the new online mode. Following a co-design approach, the [withheld] team partnered with 36 subject coordinators to implement changes in alignment with the Connected Learning at Scale (CLaS) model adopted within [withheld]. ‘Light touch educational development’ project targeted how students connected with the discipline content (a core principle of the CLaS model) and included discipline-based workshops, 1:1 consultations, technology pilots and a design checklist.

Aims. The project had the following goals: (1) scale up innovative connected learning pedagogies; and (2) support selected academics to further develop their teaching practices as post-COVID program delivery continued to evolve.

Methods. The evaluation of the project involved student surveys (n=1,026), subject coordinator surveys (n=15) and teaching staff focus groups (n=11).

Results. ‘Light touch educational development’ project was deemed highly successful by involved stakeholders. Subject coordinators benefited from the design checklist, discipline-based workshops, while 1:1 consultations received overwhelmingly positive feedback. The results show that co-design support mechanisms provided academics with personalised assistance, academic capability development and in-depth consultations on new digital solutions and strategies. Students praised various technology pilots, including interactive introductory videos and chunked learning modules.

Discussion. Despite being termed ‘light touch’, the intervention offered tailored support and extensive innovative solutions to address unique educational and digital needs of the selected subjects. The presentation will discuss significant challenges and wins encountered along the way and indicate plans for future semesters.

Aitchison, C., Harper, R., Mirriahi, N., & Guerin, C. (2020). Tensions for educational developers in the digital university: developing the person, developing the product, Higher Education Research & Development, 39(2), 171-184.