

Policy on the use of digital and mobile technologies to support learning

This paper sets out the University's position on the use of digital and mobile technologies to support learning and includes a set of guiding principles related to mobile learning and 'exploiting your own device' (EYOD).

A. BACKGROUND

The University recognizes that mobile smart devices can enable or assist any number of tasks including communication, collaboration, data storage, video and audio recording and more.

Mobile learning can be defined as the experience and opportunity afforded by anywhere-anytime learning enabled by instant, on-demand access to a personalized world filled with the tools and resources for creating knowledge; collaborating with others; and blurring the lines between formal and informal learning.

Westminster students will have opportunities to develop their confidence and digital, technical, analytical and social skills to help make them highly employable independent, and able to compete in the global knowledge economy.

Mobile learning has two important aspects:

1. Mobile learning should focus more on mobility and its unique affordances, than on technology per se
2. Mobility denotes not just physical mobility, but the opportunity to overcome physical constraints by having access to people and digital learning resources, regardless of place and time. Thus mobile learning can happen in the classroom, and beyond classrooms, enabling non-formal, informal, personalized and relevant learning.

The University sees the successful integration of mobile devices into learning as not retrofitting existing classes but, rather, re-defining them in terms of student participation and scope. It means creating innovative lessons that would otherwise be impossible without mobile devices, by taking advantage of their capabilities and features where creativity with technology and content expertise can help define new ways of promoting active participation.

The University seeks to take advantage of the increasing numbers of students who bring their own devices to class, whether these are laptops, tablets or smartphones. By connecting to the Wi-Fi network, students can access resources, create content and collaborate with peers.

B. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

B.1 EMPLOYABILITY-FOCUSED CURRICULUM

The nature of work today is inherently team-based and collaborative, often on the move, virtual and geographically distant, dependent upon social skills and technological competence, time pressured and mobile, with co-working practices being adopted more and more widely. Our students will be professional leaders and lifelong learners. Employers seek creative, collaborative and dynamic staff, therefore the student of the future needs to

graduate with instantly productive skills and abilities. This is underpinned by the recognition of twenty-first century skills, such as online communication, collaboration and emerging digital literacies (including language, as well as social interactions, on mobile platforms).

University of Westminster graduates will be able to demonstrate expertise in their subject, and disciplinary engagement and display characteristics of active lifelong and T-shaped learners, entrepreneurial and resilient professional leaders and engaged global citizens. We will provide a vibrant, global learning environment inspiring the next generation of world citizens.

B.2 INCLUSIVITY AND FLEXIBILITY

Learning technologies offer the potential for higher quality learning experiences, greater flexibility of access to learning and thereby greater inclusivity, improved communication and collaboration. The biggest concern with any 'exploiting your own device' programme is equity, since it cannot be assumed that all students have access to appropriate devices. To ensure equity, the University is committed to ensuring all students have devices of comparable quality whilst leveraging the affordances of EYOD. The University will support access to mobile devices for those that need them through voucher schemes or equipment loans.

B.3 TEACHING AND SUPPORTING LEARNING

Proficiency in the use of digital and mobile technologies to support learning will be promoted as an essential capability for staff. The University recognises that in an information-abundant society, the core role of the academic is no longer 'knowledge transmitter' but more 'learning facilitator', the need to provide guidance to students on how to access, analyse and critically evaluate information is crucial. To enable academics to incorporate mobile devices into classroom pedagogy, teach digital literacy and manage possible disruptive student behaviour, the University will offer continuous professional academic development to its staff to ensure any academic's professional skills stay up to date and remain relevant to the University 2020's vision.

B.4 LEARNING COMMUNITIES

The University will provide opportunities for academics to participate in face to face and online communities of practice, where they can share resources and experiences with peers and academic developers and supporting staff such as educational technologists.

B.5 LEARNING SPACES AND CONTEXT

Academic staff are encouraged to integrate multimedia elements including images, sound, animations, models and videos into both classroom and online activities. Creative, purposeful use of interactive elements can stimulate students to think more critically about the subject matter, leading to a more meaningful learning experience. With mobile smart devices learning can be situated, facilitating a learning experience which can be personalized and flexible in terms of when and where it happens. The University believes that one of the essential components for engagement is increased interactivity in the classroom and encourages the use of technology to help focus time on specific tasks and support the provision of immediate feedback.

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