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Paper 107 – Pecha Kucha

An integrated VLE and Social Network for Pre-induction

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Abstract

Successful transition from further to higher education is a key factor in student retention. The aim of this project was to support students prior to the onsite induction in the first week of term, helping to overcome the barriers and fears often expressed by new undergraduate students. A positive initial experience is important for self-esteem and confidence building, early contributory factors to later academic success. Pre-induction also allows academic staff to provide information ranging from course content to being able to answer frequently asked simple questions such as “what do I need to bring on my first day?”

Addressing the social media theme, this presentation explains how the University of Huddersfield used Blackboard 8.0 (the University’s VLE at the time of the project) and the social media network Ning to provide an integrated solution for pre-induction students to support transition. Combining the academic functionality of Blackboard with the social interaction available on Ning, a course based pre-induction site was developed. Consultation on the site was undertaken both internally and externally with university staff who had expressed an interest in pre-induction. From the review it became clear that a framework for consistent engagement with the students was required, allowing them to start building relationships with their fellow course members and academic staff who they would meet on campus, while simultaneously providing structured and reliable information.

The Pecha Kucha presentation will demonstrate the site’s structure and content, explaining how and why the particular tools were chosen. Examples of the interaction between new students, existing course members and staff will be provided along with student feedback which has been supportive of the pre-induction social network. Retention amongst the participating students will also be considered and the role the site had to play in the early student experience.