About the University of the West of England

Located on three campuses, UWE Bristol ranks among the largest providers of higher education in the United Kingdom. The university offers more than 600 courses at undergraduate, postgraduate, professional and short-course levels on subjects that include business and law, computing, engineering, the built environment, health and applied sciences, creative arts and education. More than 30,000 students from all parts of England and 140 countries study with UWE Bristol, which employs more than 3,400 people.

University of the West of England relies on lynda.com for institution-wide, on-demand instruction

Like many academic institutions, the University of the West of England (UWE) Bristol increasingly prepares students, faculty and staff for a digitally advanced future. Underpinning this effort, the university's recent and comprehensive Strategy 2020 visioning and planning process set in motion a broad range of campus-wide technology initiatives to "revolutionise what we do and how we do it at every level of the organisation."

As a result, administrators are challenged to find new ways to keep faculty and staff up to speed on the latest computer skills, to provide staff and students an on-demand resource that ingrains online learning into the campus culture, and to ensure students are tech-savvy and prepared to succeed in the workforce after graduation.

"We have put an emphasis on technology, and there's a massive need to have skilled staff who can support that," said Cathy Rex, director of library services at the Frenchay Campus Library. Moreover, "If you are a member of our staff, or a student, and you get stuck trying to do something, what happens? It could be 10 o'clock at night, or 2 o'clock in the morning. Or you might be on a train somewhere. How do you get access to immediate help?"

In addition, "We want to ensure that students, when they leave the university, have the skills that industry requires," Rex said.

To meet these challenges, UWE Bristol needed an online instruction solution that teaches a wide range of software, creative and business skills. And the university needed instructional content available 24/7—a virtual help desk to support students, faculty and staff when and where they need it.

Solution: lynda.com

Rex learned of lynda.com during a 2012 visit to another college in London. At the time, some individuals at UWE Bristol already had personal lynda.com accounts. In 2013, and after reviewing several online training options, the

BENEFITS

• Supplements curricula

• Helps prepare students for the workforce

• Supports professional development of faculty and staff

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Cathy Rex, director of library services, Frenchay Campus Library, University of the West of England

university purchased lyndaCampus, which provides all students, faculty and staff access to the lynda.com course library.

"We couldn't find anything else that offered the comprehensive content of lynda.com. It doesn't just teach you how to press buttons," Rex said, noting that lynda.com instructors emphasise concepts and explore ways to apply software or other skills to real-world problem solving.

"Those were selling points, as was the fact that lynda.com teaches not only software but also increasingly business skills," Rex said.

To promote adoption and make lynda.com easily accessible, UWE Bristol provides links to the service from its human resources training portal, student library website and other sources. Faculty members also are encouraged to integrate lynda.com into their Blackboard® modules.

In addition, UWE Bristol created a lynda.com steering committee comprised of key faculty and staff members. This has helped to maintain buy-in and encourage the promotion of lynda.com within groups and departments. Email announcements and reminders are being sent to build momentum around the solution and spread the word.

Result: on-demand instruction for faculty, students and staff

One big advantage is that faculty using the lynda.com playlist feature can assign online videos as homework that supplements classroom learning, which makes class time more efficient, Rex said. "Rather than spending a lesson teaching students how to use software, the professor can say, 'I will expect you to have looked at the lynda.com tutorial.'"

"I can say to students, 'Here is a three-hour course, but the middle 30 minutes is what we are interested in, and it's broken into five short pieces,'" said Senior Lecturer Daniel Buzzo. "I can direct them to it, ask them to review the material in advance of a lecture, or in support of a lecture that I've just given, and know they have material they can refer to that's good quality, that's easy to use."

"I love having access to lynda.com," said Tom Buckley, learning technologist. "I can see its benefits in staff development, and for shortcutting digital skills progression among our students."

From leadership and project management to presentations and spreadsheet tutorials, lynda.com provides faculty and staff with a wide range of professional development opportunities, and it prepares students for future careers.

"Every student pretty well these days has to do some sort of presentation," Rex said. "With lynda.com, students can learn how to use PowerPoint and other applications by themselves. They're not necessarily dependent on the university, but we can support them by actually pointing them to the online training. With lynda.com, we're giving them a tool to use."

Because of this, "lynda.com supports independent learning, which is what education at a higher level is about. It's supporting the idea that, you know, you identify a need, you find out a way to fill that need and you go and meet the challenge independently."

Another benefit is the availability of time-coded lynda.com course transcripts, which let users search the course library for quick answers to questions as they arise, Rex said. "You can search at the point of training for the particular function that you are struggling with, and you'll get a quick snippet explaining what you need to do."

For administrative staff members, lynda.com training is convenient. Yet it doesn't have to replace live training sessions, Rex said. "We do have an HR training wing that offers training in Microsoft Excel and other applications. But they're offered at a certain time, and seats are limited. There are often no-shows for those sessions, because something's come up and the staff member can't go. So lynda.com offers people alternatives."

And if someone does attend a live training session—and later forgets what they learned? "They can refer to lynda.com," Rex said. "It gives them an easy-to-use reminder tool."

lyndaCampus lets users download courses to their mobile devices, a great benefit for commuters, Rex said. "So, again, it's offering alternatives. The flexibility of being able to download courses is great. If you are on a train journey, instead of taking a novel to read or the paper to read, you can do some personal training."

And lynda.com benefits IT staff, Rex said. "Once they got over the feeling of, 'This is going to take my job away,' and realised that, 'Actually, this could be absolutely wonderful and free me up to do stuff that I haven't got the time to do now,' they started to get me more excited about it."

Looking ahead

As lynda.com evolves at UWE Bristol, administrators will look for ways to increase online access points for students, faculty and staff, Rex said.

The lynda.com steering group will continue to meet regularly, and will monitor lynda.com usage reports; they can use these to find ways to boost end user adoption.

And at some point, UWE Bristol will likely create a lynda.com users group to complement the steering committee, Rex said. "We'll want to increasingly connect with people who are using the service."