

FLEXIBLE LEARNING PROVIDES CLASSROOMS WITH INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION



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ABSTRACT

2011 heralds new opportunities for current and past Wide Bay Institute of TAFE water students. Using the global industry networking website, LinkedIn, and TAFE QLD web conferencing technology, iConnect; water students now have the ability to discuss their industry with local and international experts in their field of study through active, real time discussions. Students in Term 1, 2011 have participated in discussions with presenters from Queensland, Syria, Jordan and California. These 30 minute industry collaboration sessions are scheduled monthly to broaden the learning experience for all Water Operations students who are enrolled with Wide Bay Institute of TAFE across Australia. iConnect is a web conferencing tool which allows the use of a shared whiteboard, VOIP (voice over the internet protocol), instant message texting, instant polling for surveys etc which when facilitated effectively, immerses the students in their learning. Sessions of interest are also recorded for later viewing. This technology supports teaching methods used by Higher Education, and will be the focus of delivery for new qualification options of NWP40107 Certificate IV in Water Operations and NWP50107 Diploma Water Operations released for enrolment this year.

1.0 Introduction

Wide Bay Institute of TAFE has a long and established history of providing quality online learning to the water sector in Australia. These qualification courses have been developed in close consultation with industry and are regularly reviewed. These fully online courses have grown to deliver online training to over 300 water industry employees over a range of 7 different career pathways in order to accommodate thin markets and a broad range of training needs.

Part of the success of these programs has been the development of a unique 360 degree support structure for the online student, employer and trainer. This model has been successfully replicated in other industry areas of online delivery within TAFE Queensland:

- *Online orientation* – to the online environment, the training organisation and to the program
- Personalised self-paced *training plans*;
- *Workplace E-Coaching* tools;
- *Traineeship* information;
- *Literacy and Numeracy quiz* with links to further support;
- *Resource area* for students;
- Student feedback *surveys*;
- *Teacher Share Space*;
- *Industry review* access;
- *Just for fun* area including e-games;
- *RPL online*;
- Participation reports for employers with trainees; and
- *Developer Share Space* (for course structure review).

Despite for the third year in a row, student feedback surveys found over 95% of students

would recommend their Internet training to others in their industry this support, feedback from senior managers in the industry was that more face to face interaction was desired. This is based on a recognition that workplace support training activities can be of varying quality, and that remote students needed more vocal and practical interaction with peers and teachers to build a sense of learning community. This feedback has been addressed in 2 ways.

1.1 Web conferencing brings online students into the classroom and sustainability into the workplace

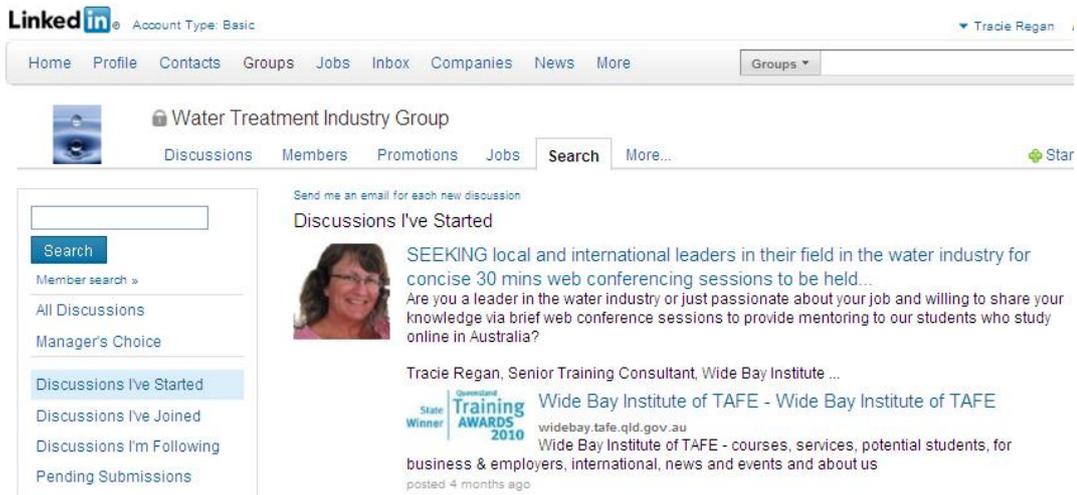
TAFE Queensland recognised this trend across online course delivery, and brought web conferencing (iConnect) into the blend of flexible learning options.

Top web conferencing benefits to the workplace include:

1. Maintaining productivity: as like other online learning programs, attending a web conference can be scheduled to fit in with work priorities. If the student misses a class session they can simply watch the recorded session when more convenient. You also do not lose productivity for key personnel, who when traveling to conferences then have to 'catch-up' 'lost' work requirements that built up as a result of being away.
2. Sustainable practice: Try calculating your carbon footprint to drive 200klms to attend a class. Now multiply this by 100 students. Now assume they all attend 10 classes each year. (see end of paper for this result)
3. Saves time: there is a recognized saving in travel time when you can attend a class or conference session from your desk.
4. Cut travel costs: There is an ever increasing pressure on training budgets for getting maximum results. Web conferencing has a certain economy of scale where over 100 attendees can all attend a session without leaving their usually workplace.
5. Consistency of message: As with other online products, web conferencing allows you to send a consistent message to all attendees. Easy to update, and retain recorded sessions for later refresher training opportunities.

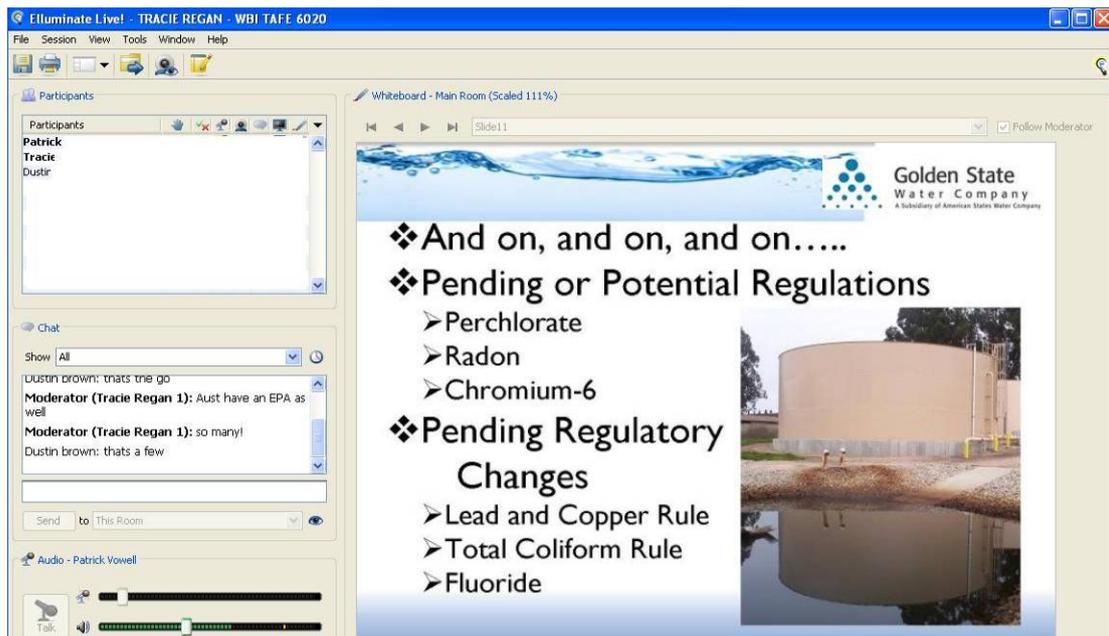
New opportunities using web conferencing

Web conferencing also brought new learning and collaboration opportunities into the mix. Using the global industry networking website, LinkedIn, and TAFE QLD web conferencing technology, iConnect; water students now have the ability to discuss their industry with local and international experts in their field of study through active, real time discussions.



Students in Term 1, 2011 have participated in discussions with presenters from Queensland, Syria, Jordan and California. These 30 minute industry collaboration sessions are scheduled monthly to broaden the learning experience for all Water Operations students who are enrolled with Wide Bay Institute of TAFE across Australia. Presenters are given facilitation support and receive a Certificate of Appreciation for their efforts. Attending students also receive a Certificate of Attendance to add to their Portfolio.

An example screen is shown here:



1.2 EDUPOV brings strength to assessment of practical demonstration of competency

During 2010 Wide Bay Institute of TAFE piloted the use of EDUPOV technology with funding support from the Australian Flexible Learning Framework. EDUPOV is the acronym for Education Point of View. These tools come in a range of options, and we used safety rated glasses with a web cam and mp4 recording device. Ours were purchased from <http://www.edutechstock.com/pages/about-us>

These were used for RPL purposes as one part of the RPL assessment strategy, but have

since been recognized as useful for both learning and teaching. Succinct skills can now be vodcast (video-cast) so demonstration is clarified, and the online student can replay until understood, then copy this in a practical situation under supervision in the workplace.



These EDUPOV glasses are valuable when assessing confined spaces; trench work; high risk chemical usage etc.

For real time video, the web conferencing program allows the use of web camera, and this brings be an added dimension to workplace learning.

1.3 'E-Learning' is really just 'learning'

These new online learning and assessment opportunities have been maximized for Wide Bay Institute of TAFE's new NWP50107 Diploma in Water Operations (Hydrometric Monitoring); which offers a customized training plan for a specific client. This group of students attend weekly web conference classes where action learning projects are discussed via the shared whiteboard in real time. Further readings are provided using the QLD TAFE Learning Management System, My.TAFE. This site also contains forum discussions and the assessment tools.

Students log in from their workplaces in Canberra, Queensland and Victoria. Their lead teacher also logs in from Canberra Institute of Technology and the support teacher from Wide Bay Institute of TAFE logs in from Hervey Bay, Queensland.

ICconnect provides opportunity for increased participation from the student, more direct teaching direction from the teacher and sessions are recorded for later refresher tutorial needs.

This new blend of flexible learning sessions can be accessed from work or delivered in a classroom environment under the direction of a support teacher. This means the 'e' is removed from e-learning and the technology is shifted from being the driver for learning to being the *tools* for delivery of learning.

Learning is returned to the classroom as a discourse between the teacher and student and applied within a workplace setting. When training adults in the workplace through online and e-learning technologies, it is important to understand that adults like to do things, they like to be self-paced, however, they do not like to do it all on their own. The teaching therefore needs to be of a much higher standard to communicate and understand the technology.

This interactive *learning-centered* model of delivery will be replicated across our new Certificate IV in Water Operations (Water Treatment) and Diploma Water Operations

(Water Treatment) programs scheduled to begin this semester. Expressions of interest are now being taken for enrolment. A Fact Sheet will be available at the end of this presentation.

1.4 Carbon Footprint calculation

0.03 metric tons CO₂: 200 km in a petrol vehicle doing 7 L/100km*100 students*10 sessions = 30 metric tons of CO₂ saved each year for a short course of 100 students!

2.0 REFERENCES

Websites accessed 29 April 2011

<http://ezinearticles.com/?Top-5-Benefits-of-Video-Web-Conferencing&id=3869669>

<http://www.carbonfootprint.com/calculator.aspx>

<http://www.linkedin.com/>

Read more on the EDUPOV 2010 Australian Flexible Learning Framework project or download the interactive Case Study: <http://trainingo2.net/eli/teamprofile2010.php?pid=10250>
http://www.tvetaustralia.com.au/quality,_equity_and_innovation includes a review of these programs.