




Keeping the finger on the pulse in the Digital Academic Literacy course for Nursing foundation students at UWC

A working paper prepared by Tahirih Mathee
For the First Year Experience
Stellenbosch University
September 2008




Tahirih Mathee Stellenbosch
University FYC Sept08

Introduction

- working paper
- a brief overview of the Digital Academic Literacy
- description of the teaching and learning process
- focus on the feedback received from students
- course evaluation which listed 28 structured questions and 1 open question,
- sharing of student views of the HIV/AIDS content in the course through a focus group discussion
- learn from the results to improve the teaching and learning experience for next cohort
- exposed to UWC's Learning Management System
- engage the relevant structures at the university in reviewing the Module Descriptor for Digital Academic Literacy 2010 cohort



Tahirih Mathee Stellenbosch
University FYC Sept08






ABOUT THE FOUNDATION NURSING COURSE

- Against the backdrop of the shortage of nurses in South Africa
- latter part of 2006 consultations started
- explore the various routes by which students could access the Nursing degree
- the 2008 cohort of students will be discussed in more detail,
- in 2010-2012 a comparative study of 4 foundation groups progressing into and through the degree programme
- The National Health Ministry has a keen interest in all initiatives that will result in many more well trained nurses in South Africa,




Tahirih Mathee Stellenbosch
University FYC Sept08






Student Data

- Language: 14 Afrikaans, 20 Xhosa, 2 English, 1 Zulu
- SERIOUS teaching and learning implications
- Gender : 9 males, but 6 enter and continued – 38 females, but 31 enter and 29 continue, therefore out of 47 recruited 35 complete the DAL course




Tahirih Mathee Stellenbosch
University FYC Sept08






Consultation, planning, implementation and analysis providing the basis for good training.

- Nursing Department administered the recruitment processes
- 47 students met the criteria but 37 students remained
- a need sufficient and "just-in-time" support;
- able to cope with requirements of all the other courses in the degree programme.
- DAL course was adjusted to suit the initial needs
- Course adjusted from 1 contact session per week to 2
- Teach at slower pace
- Repetition and revision
- One-on-one consultations available 5 periods daily to clarify
- No compromise w.r.t standard of assessments




Tahirih Mathee Stellenbosch
University FYC Sept08








Digital Academic Literacy content



- Foundation e-learning course
- Novice users enskilled in one semester
- Proprietary and FOSS
- Word-processing
- Email
- Internet for academic purposes
- Spreadsheets
- Presentation
- Learning Management System of UWC
- HIV/AIDS content
- Research data
- Giving life to e-learning strategy of UWC







Tahirih Mathee Stellenbosch
University FYC Sept08




 				
6. Were you employed before you registered for this course?				
A. Yes 32.3	B. No 67.7			
7. Are you currently using your computer literacy skills in any form of employment?				
A. Yes 29.0	B. No 61.3			
8. If your response in the previous question was yes, choose a category which best suits your current application of Digital Academic Literacy skills.				
A. Using word-processing skills only 12.9 B. Using a wide range of computer literacy skills 16.1 C. None of the above-mentioned 29.0				
9. Now that you have completed the Digital Academic Literacy course would you be word-processing your assignments?				
A. Yes 83.9 B. No 9.7				
10. Before you started this course, what experience of computers had you had?				
A. I had never used a computer 22.6	B. I had sat down in front of a computer a few times, but did not really understand them 22.6	C. I had used a computer regularly, but was not confident to perform basic tasks myself 25.8	D. I had used a computer regularly for work or school and was confident in basic tasks 16.1	E. I did formal computer courses 9.7
Tahirh Mathee Stellenbosch University FYC Sept08				



 				
1. How was your class attendance? (Please answer honestly!)				
A. Missed no class 61.3	B. Missed one class 22.6	C. Missed two classes 9.7	D. Missed three or four classes 3.2	E. Missed more than four classes 0.0
2. Did you make use of the Consultation service offered by staff?				
A. Never came 25.8	B. Came in a few sessions 29.0	C. Could not attend any of the sessions due to timetable 3.2	D. Attended some consultation sessions 29.0	E. I had no need to attend sessions 12.9
3. Did you find the consultation sessions useful?				
A. Very helpful; comment was clarified for me 29.0	B. Helpful; I picked up some extra tips 35.5	C. Quite helpful; and I consolidated my understanding 6.5	D. Not that helpful 12.9	E. Not at all helpful 0.0
4. In which computer lab did you receive your computer literacy lessons most of the time?				
A. Thutana training lab 93.5	B. Bof 3.2			
5. Did you find the lab room well equipped and organized?				
A. Very well 58.1	B. Well 25.8	C. Adequately 9.7	D. Poorly 6.5	E. Very poorly
Tahirh Mathee Stellenbosch University FYC Sept08				

 				
1. Was the course well organized?				
A. Very well 58.1	B. Well 38.7	C. Adequately 3.2	D. Poorly 0.0	E. Very poorly
2. Was it clear to you what would be expected of you during this course?				
A. Totally clear 35.5	B. Mostly clear 41.9	C. Average 22.6	D. Poor 0.0	E. Unacceptable
3. Did the tutors present the course clearly?				
A. Very clearly 41.9	B. Clearly 32.3	C. Adequately 22.6	D. Poorly 3.2	E. Very poorly 0.0
4. Was there adequate assistance given to you in class by the tutors and assistants?				
A. Always 74.2	B. Almost always 19.4	C. Mostly 6.5	D. Sometimes 0.0	E. Never
5. Did you purchase the cd with reference notes and open source software?				
A. Yes 51.6	B. No 45.2	3.2		
6. If you did not purchase the cd, did you and a friend share a copy of the cd?				
A. Yes 22.6	B. No 71.0			
Tahirh Mathee Stellenbosch University FYC Sept08				

 				
7. If you did not purchase the cd, did you and a friend share a copy of the cd?				
A. Yes 22.6	B. No 71.0			
8. If you did not purchase the cd, did you photocopy the reference notes from the copies provided on short-loan in the library?				
A. Yes 12.9	B. No 77.4	6.5		
9. Did you find the course material (Reference notes) clearly written and easy to understand?				
A. I did not have a copy of the reference material 16.1	B. Very clear 32.3	C. Clear enough 32.3	D. Not clear 9.7	E. Unacceptable 6.5
10. Was there enough time in class to practise the one concept before moving on to the next one?				
A. More than enough 22.6	B. Enough 38.7	C. Usually enough 22.6	D. Sometimes enough 12.9	E. Never enough 3.2
Tahirh Mathee Stellenbosch University FYC Sept08				



 				
1. Do you think more topics should be covered in this course?				
A. Yes I need to know much more, and the course was too easy 22.6	B. I would like the course to cover a few more topics 38.7	C. A few additional tips would be useful 22.6	D. The amount of topics covered is about right for 20 weeks 12.9	E. No, too much was covered 3.2
2. Will you now feel confident and able to word-process a document?				
A. Very confident 54.8	B. Confident, but I need to practise first 32.3	C. Quite confident, but I will need help 12.9	D. Not confident 0.0	E. Would not know how to start
3. Do you think this course has been of practical use to you, and will help in your working life and academic work?				
A. Very useful 67.7	B. Useful 25.8	C. Fairly useful 3.2	D. Some things were useful 3.2	E. Not useful at all
4. Which of these descriptions of the course do you believe fit the course best?				
A. Everything that I learnt was valuable, and I now feel able to use a computer effectively and learn more skills myself 51.6	B. The course was a good start, and I found most of the lessons helpful 25.8	C. The course was mostly helpful, but some of the lessons were confusing 19.4	D. I learnt some useful things in the course, but many of the lessons were confusing 0.0	E. I did not learn much that was new to me in this course, and many of the lessons were too easy and a waste of my time
Tahirh Mathee Stellenbosch University FYC Sept08				

 	
<h2>Main Findings</h2>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DAL a positive experience questions 16-19, 27, 28 • 75% of students novice / inexperienced users of technology • Class attendance generally good • 66% made use of consultation sessions • 9.7% indicated they will not be word-processing their work (Is this perhaps an indication of access/technophobia?) 	
	
Tahirh Mathee Stellenbosch University FYC Sept08	





Student	Responses as recorded from the open comments slot on DAL course evaluation form
247	This is a good course and the reason is in today's life you have to be computer literate. I feel more confident to use the computer now. Thank you
248	Yes, some of the tutors were so aggressive towards learners e.g., when we want help they say how I can help are questions of one hour for 5 minutes and we end up leaving the class without gaining anything. But our tutor IRAJ was so excellent and straight forward.
249	This course was absolutely brilliant. I enjoyed it thoroughly. I had no concept of a computer. I just saw it and knew it existed but never had an opportunity to use one as I did not have access to a computer. I more fully equipped and eager to go onto a computer and work on it. It is very interesting and will be very useful in my future career. Thank you for having patience with me, I really appreciate it.
250	This course was very useful to me. When I came here for the first time, I did not know how to use computers, but now I am confident. I know almost everything especially those we did in class.
251	Time was always an issue. I felt that lecturers sometimes went too fast. We are in a foundation for a reason. Not all of us have a computer at home.
252	Our lecture was too fast so I didn't understand most of the time; in fact I did understand some of the things. Please don't be too fast next time Iraj, it was nice being with you.
253	If there can only be much and enough time and the lecturer could not speed up during the class, well then I can clearly say that the course was good because it does not help to rush and cover the work while the people you are teaching do not know anything. And revision will be good.



Tahirih Mathee Stellenbosch
University FYC Sept08










254	This course was very helpful to me. It viewed topics that I needed to know when using a computer. I honestly feel more confident to use a computer now. Thank you so much.
255	Our tutor was fine but some of the assistants were not friendly (rude), I've learnt a lot in the class because I was clueless about the computer
256	First of all I would like to say, the course was of great help, apart from some of the rude tutors who expect us to do some of the things perfect. That is why we do this course, we want to learn, so don't expect us to be like you guys. But all in all it was great
257	No, I do not have any comment but I learnt a lot.
258	I have no comments based on this course.
259	I don't have any comment. The course was very good and the lecturers were so caring. They never get bored when you ask them questions.
260	I have no comments for now but the tutor was too fast and especially in the 2nd term
261	Yes, I do guys I did a computer before but I left early because the tutorials were boring. When I came and I was told that you are going to do a computer I said what!!! Guys you changed my mind and you cleared every word. May god be with you in each and every day especially IRAJ.
262	I didn't know anything about computer until now. I learnt a lot but some of the lessons were complicated, like PowerPoint. I know now how to open a computer. I can type my own assignments thanks to DAL.
263	The course was much help to me because it was my first time to operate a computer. What I like most is that a computer can rectify your mistake.







Tahirih Mathee Stellenbosch
University FYC Sept08

- 
- 
- ### Main points from comments in question 29
- Most of the 16 students who completed this section expressed general satisfaction with the course
 - Not all tutors appeared to be compatible with a group who required a slower pace of course delivery. In the DAL recruitment phases for tutors there is clearly a need to address these types of experiences, although no complaints were lodged with staff, hence an opportunity lost in terms of amending matters
 - Problems with the computers although discussed with lab managers continued, and contributed to the learning experience in a negative way. The relevant structures at the institution need to find effective ways of changing this into a positive experience for novice users of technology.
 - Although this group received double the contact time in relation to mainstream groups, some still appeared to need more tuition time. This is a cause for some concern, in that extra teaching was set up through the consultation lab with consultants daily on duty. This does raise the question as whether such students would cope with the academic demands of the degree programme in 2009/and or whether the DAL team needs to tweak its approach a bit more.
 - It is interesting to note that not one of the students made any reference to the computer and its use in the kinds of institutions that they would be engaging in as professional people 4 years later
 - The issue of access remains a challenge in a country where the digital divide is real and in an institution of higher learning very apparent.
- Tahirih Mathee Stellenbosch
University FYC Sept08

- 
- 
- ### Focus group discussion [1]
- Student 4 highlighted HIV/AIDS fatigue and felt that there is a need to focus on other diseases such as diabetes etc. The tutor clarified that the reason for using the "your moves" cd, DVDs and the internet information was so that students would appreciate the scale of the challenge and understand that there is a pandemic.
 - Students 3 and 7 both felt that the CDs and DVDs were much better than someone lecturing to them.
 - After the tutor prodded for anything negative about the CDs, one of the students agreed with the tutor that very little is mentioned about abstinence as an option.
 - Student 3 immediately cautioned that abstinence perhaps was not an option for all, so that those who choose to be sexually active, should do so safely.
- 
- Tahirih Mathee Stellenbosch
University FYC Sept08


- 
- 
- ### Focus group discussion [2]
- Student 6 felt that the party scene in the game tends to highlight drinking alcohol, and this tends to promote the idea of only having fun with alcohol
 - Student 6 also felt that more students at the university should be playing this CD game, and not just the DAL students
 - The tutor clarifies that the CD is available at various computer labs and that it is really up to the students to view it
 - Student 6 was also very vocal about women's sexuality and felt that it was inappropriate for the man to be seen as more passive and the woman more active
 - Student 7 continues with the thought that women have to be more responsible as they are the mothers of Africa.
- 
- Tahirih Mathee Stellenbosch
University FYC Sept08

- 
- 
- ### Focus group discussion [3]
- This leads to support from student 6 who believes that in general people should act more responsibly
 - Student 1 then gives a lengthy explanation of values and morality starting at home, and that in the African context people would be taking care of friends and not standing by and watching a friend getting into trouble at a party, hence emphasising true friendship
 - Student 3 points the discussion to the need for good parenting
 - The tutor points out his own experience with Muslim parents who only became more open to such discussions once the scale of the HIV/AIDS PANDEMIC became more common knowledge recently. For a long time the subject was closed in the family
- 
- Tahirih Mathee Stellenbosch
University FYC Sept08




Focus group discussion [4]

- Student 6 again refers to the ways of doing in Western cultures such as the USA, where materially the society appears to be advanced, and the modelling and copying that tends to take place in other so-called developing countries. Young people in South Africa may wish to emulate such lifestyles, but possibly are not ready for the responsibility that comes with living with partners
- Student 3 refers to the peer pressure that this leads to as some may not have steady relationships at 18 years
- Although the tutor refers to couples possibly finding out their hiv/aids status, no one in the group responds
- Student 1 makes a drastic suggestion by stating that there should be images of people with full blown AIDS, but the tutor cautions on the sensitivities of such action.




Tahirih Matthee Stellenbosch
University FYC Sept08




Focus group discussion [5]

- Student 7 states that because full blown AIDS is a fact we will not be able to run away from the reality
- The tutor offers a way forward in the discussion by stating that the diseases is transmitted in a number of ways, therefore appropriate education should continue, stigmatisation should stop and more support should be offered so that communication can be more open, and that the dying should be cared for without fear
- Student 7 ends by saying that there is a need to be responsible, and to acknowledge that the pandemic is real with the number of deaths as a clear proof of it.




Tahirih Matthee Stellenbosch
University FYC Sept08




Recommendations

- Based on the DAL course results, course evaluation of 28 structured questions, open comments and the focus group discussion between 8 volunteers at the end of the course, the adapted course for foundation students in 2008 can be regarded as a success, and with some improvements around tutor induction, adjustment of the delivery pace, can be recommended for the 2009 cohort of students.
- A more vigorous marketing campaign could yield a much larger cohort of students in 2009, providing an excellent opportunity for education for those who are talented , willing and able to sustain a career in nursing.




Tahirih Matthee Stellenbosch
University FYC Sept08




Conclusion

The success of the 35 students who remained in the foundation nursing DAL course bears testimony to the general commitment of staff in bringing life to the e-learning strategy of UWC, and to allow for the space to learn of new ways to deliver courses in a South Africa still struggling to find herself in an era of the digital divide where all things are not equal for all. Through innovative and creative approaches, the higher education sector will for some time still grapple with levelling the playing fields so that more opportunities are generated for the next generation of the country's professionals, as in this case, our nurses. The next four years will indicate to UWC's Nursing department the fruits of this approach in collaboration with the Digital Academic Literacy team of the E- Learning Unit.




Tahirih Matthee Stellenbosch
University FYC Sept08



Thank you...

Your comments and questions are most welcome



Tahirih Matthee Stellenbosch
University FYC Sept08