

Recommendations for good quality web-based course in WebCT Tartu University

The following case study describes quality criteria for web-based courses in Tartu University. This is available in Estonian on the web page of Tartu University e-University (www.ut.ee/e-ylikool)

Competition in distance education increases. More and more e-learning courses with different content and quality are offered, from which potential students can make their choice.

Therefore web-based course-creators and developers are enforced to fulfil the quality requirements to ensure the courses correspond to their clients (students) requests and expectations. From the students point of view, it is important to be aware of the results of learning process.

The second important thing is organisation of learning process, what assignments/activities are used and what resources are used to create learning materials.

Some suggestions of making the WebCT courses more efficient and to improve their quality level, are given below.

1. To have an information page of the course that includes:
 - the course title with code and the number of credit points given
 - the lector/tutor
 - a short overview of the course
 - dates of the course
 - target groups (if it is meant for all people interested in this course or for certain target group only)
 - student prerequisites
 - contact information for further information

2. Course learning environment includes:
 - WebCT guide (how to navigate in WebCT and use WebCT tools)
 - syllabus, including study guide for self-directed learning
 - study materials
 - links for additional web resources
 - communication tools (discussions, mail, chat)
 - other WebCT tools accordingly to planned activities such as selftest(s), test(s), assignments, groupwork, dictionary, image database etc

3. Designing of course learning environment:
 - appropriate background
 - usage of banner, textblocks and hit counter
 - layout of icons
 - access to all important information from homepage
 - usage of organizer pages if necessary
 - links of essential tools in course menu

4. Study materials are:

- appropriate for particular educational objective and knowledge of target groups
- of high quality and interesting
- adequate and easy to learn
- appropriately structured and well designed
- illustrated with graphics, figures and images
- completed with different audio and video materials

5. Communication:

- clear guidelines for interaction with students
- convenient structure of discussion forums
- interesting topics of discussions
- planned actions how to activate students
- providing information and acknowledgment feedback

6. Well-planned individual and groupwork assignments:

- interesting and feasible
- clear and understandable work instructions
- explanation how to approach the exercise, what problems should be avoid and what final results are expected
- fixed dates
- giving feedback

7. In student assessment the following aspects are considered:

- participation activity in discussions
- submitting assignments (essay, project etc) in due time and the results of assignmnets
- attendance in group work
- performing the tests
- taking part in face to face learning activities (seminars, practical works, audio-conferences)

8. Student support:

- technical support
- various information about course available (timetable, guide for self-directed learning, WebCT guide)
- tutor (s)

9. At the end of course the feedback will be asked about:

- course content
- effectiveness of learning process
- exploitation of technology
- communication
- assignments
- tests
- student support
- action of teacher/tutor during the course