



The importance of user engagement to the success of any training project is not underestimated by UCL, however having invested in a range of development tools the advantages offered are much more than an improved user experience.

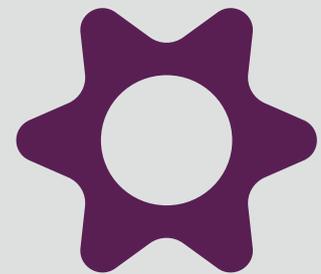
University College London (UCL) was established in 1826 to open up education in England for the first time to students of any race, class or religion. Based in the heart of London, UCL is ranked seventh in the world's top ten universities by the AQ World University Rankings.

The Background

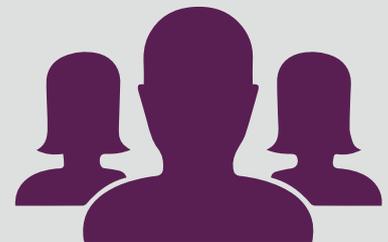
Training at UCL is offered to both students and staff, and covers commodity software, e.g. Microsoft Office and Adobe products, bespoke UCL systems, for processes such as student records, as well as technology, i.e. programming and networking.

The Information Services Training Team has a full time complement of four staff and draws on further expertise from eLearning specialists and developers.

UCL's choice of content development tools is eclectic and includes Oracle's User Productivity Kit (UPK), Adobe Captivate, TechSmith Camtasia and Stepshot. Collectively, these tools are multi-faceted end user experience and as a result maintain interest and improve understanding. Although the combination of tools is both high and low end in terms of the eLearning market, all offer value and have a specific remit for either system or non-system based content development.



Technical



Training

The Challenges

The Training Section within the Information Systems Division at UCL comprises Developers with instructional design and technical content development skills.

Previously this Team spent time embedded in projects early with the Subject Matter Experts, working through processes, etc. to develop raw records. The Developers would then take these raw records and enhance them, refining the processes, adding media and supporting documents, ready for the SME to review for sign off. This process was not a good use of either party's time. The SMEs were overstretched and co-ordinating time with the Developers resulted in frustration on both sides.

The Solution

By utilising the different content development tools that the Training Section has available, they were able to streamline this process.

The approach that UCL now follows is:

- A set of learning objectives and deliverable learning objects is agreed between project teams (including business and service owners) and the Training Team.
- A basic screen grab tool (either Screenshot or Problem Steps Resolver) is provided to the SMEs. This tool is simple to use and enables the SMEs to easily record the process from start to completion. Often this can result in processes of several hundred 'frames' but this is not an issue for the Developers as the overall purpose is to capture the SME's knowledge (system, management training, organisational approach, governance / compliance) in one sitting, at a time and place that suits them.

- This content is then sent to the Training Team who review the entire content and apply their proven instructional design standards, ensuring standards are consistently maintained, in terms of the look and feel.
- The end result provides comprehensive end-to-end processes comprising small 'bites' of learning content as the Developers are able to utilise the various development tools matched to 'learning bites' to ensure user engagement. Knowledge checks, tests and assessments are incorporated and the content is assigned to user groups ready for deployment.
- The finished 'product' is then forwarded to the SME for final review and sign off prior to deployment.

UCL's Training Section is seeing many benefits to this approach, not least of which is the accelerated raw record times, combined with a reduced time commitment for the SMEs.

The simple and inexpensive content development tools are being used by SMEs 'out-of-the-box' with little or no training and support required. This leaves the Developers to invest their time to learn, utilise and gain experience in the powerful and high value development tools that offer the functionality to deliver a professional end result.

The recent move to UPK as the standard for content development was facilitated by support and training from Larmer Brown, who are also advising UCL about transition from desktop installations of UPK to the commissioning of a client server environment.

UCL plan to extend the approach to all in-house IT projects. They also intend to strengthen the approach by providing project teams with early intervention presentation about instructional design and the specification of learning objectives.