

**The Business School
University of West London**

**Feed Forward for Informed Learning Project
(FFIL)**

Evaluation Report - User experience of project materials

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The paper reports on user experiences of materials developed by students for students and is produced as part of project FfIL funded through the JISC Embedding Benefits Programme

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Executive summary

This report gives students' views on the usefulness of dedicated on-line interactive materials integrated in a first year module as study support. The resources were produced as part of a JISC funded embedding benefits project Feedforward for Informed Learning (FfiL). The FfiL project delivered an additional 'station stop' on the JISC funded ALLE Learner Journey (<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/elearning/ltig/alle.aspx>) specialising in Feedback and Feed Forward learning materials to support learner understanding of the variety and different developmental purposes of these important activities in developing their future academic performance. A team of University of West London (UWL) students were empowered and supported to design and develop the digital resources, lead the project Wiki (<http://helpthestudents.com/>) and engage directly with the wider UK student body.

Evaluation of the project sought to identify if the students had used the resources, explore if they perceived the resources to be useful in supporting their studies and identify what personal technologies they owned.

The feedback from learners who used the resources as part of their studies has been largely positive. There was a particular emphasis by respondents on the value of the YouTube media clip designed to support essay writing skills (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0X3WE6orEdw>).

Key Findings:

- The online resources have been used by business students at the University of West London and were found to be useful in their studies
- 92% of the respondents viewed the YouTube media clip 'The Highlighter Exercise'.
- 86% of students who viewed it wanted more YouTube media clips like 'The Highlighter Exercise' to support them in their studies
- Only 7% said that they visited helpthestudents.com
- Only 7% said they used 'The Ask a Question' facility
- 43% of students said that they used the Learner Journey and found it useful
- Dell was the most popular type of laptop used by the students
- The most commonly mobile Phone used by students was Blackberry.

1.0 Background and context for the Evaluation

This report gives students' views on the usefulness as a study support of on-line interactive materials produced as part of a JISC funded embedding benefits project Feedforward for Informed Learning (FfiL). The FfiL project delivered an additional 'station stop' on the JISC funded **ALLE Learner Journey** (<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/elearning/ltig/alle.aspx>) specialising in Feedback and Feed Forward learning materials to support learner understanding of the variety and different developmental purposes of these important activities in developing their future academic performance. A team of UWL students were empowered and supported to design and develop the digital resources, lead the project Wiki (<http://helpthestudents.com/>) and engage directly with the wider UK student body.

The concept behind the original learner journey was to support digital learning literacy development and acquisition as either a formal experience, or a personalised 'pick and mix' model. Designed as a sequential and linked learner journey, quality reusable learning objects were used to create a set of individual, granular resources to provide bite-sized scaffolding for individual learning literacy concept acquisition (e.g. learning to learn, meta-cognition, academic practice, study skills; information literacy; communication and collaboration skills; media literacy), accessed by the learner as required. Learners can undertake the digital journey as a complete learning experience as many times as desired, or select individual components of the journey when appropriate for their individual learning. The journey thus enables 24/7 access to structured learning literacy support. The ALLE project sought to make effective delivery of the sector 'best' pedagogy knowledge and resources. In the spirit of Open Educational Resources (OERs), learning objects selected or created for the learner journey had to be eligible to be freely used, reused and repurposed, thus making the learner journey available for adaptation and re-badging by other institutions, both nationally and internationally. Tutors can make use of the learner journey as it stands, or they can adapt it and the contents of the individual resources contained within it to suit the needs of their students. This is made possible because the resources have been created using the GLO Maker learning object authoring tool developed by LTRI at London Met (www.glomaker.org). GLO Maker is free to download, and enables tutors, learning technologists, etc. to make changes to the resources. An individual resource is simply opened in GLO Maker, and then it can be edited and re-packaged for use.

The FfiL student project team approached the design and development of the additional station stops in the same manner as described above. Firstly a scoping case-study was undertaken to identify the variety, types and purpose of feedback and feed forward activities. Having identified what they considered to be most important the student team tested their ideas on peers. They then developed a discrete set of generic custom built digital resources to support learner understanding of the variety, types and purposes of feedback and feed forward activities that they had identified as most relevant. The individual outputs are as follows:

- Three reusable learning objects –
 - What is feedback
 - what to do with feedback
 - Assessment principles
- YouTube media clip 'The highlighter exercise'
- Dedicated student support wiki – 'helpthestudnets.com'

The learning objects were created in the same way as previous learning objects on the existing Learner Journey. The YouTube media clip was put on the YouTube site. The digital materials were placed on the dedicated web site where the student project team would be available to answer questions posted by other learners. The site was designed to act as an hub for learners to interact through asking questions. All the sites and materials

were available to all students so they would have access to materials and 'student to student' support any time and any place, thus placing them at the heart of their learning experience. The site and the materials can be viewed here:

<http://helpthestudents.com/learnerjourney/learnerjourney/journey%203%20-feedbackstuff.html>.

Over 300 first-year business students were invited to use the dedicated 'helpthestudents' learner journey at UWL from October 2012 to February 2013: 174 BA Business Studies, and 126 BA Accounting & Finance students taking a core 1st year module. The Learner Journey is integrated and scaffolded within the curriculum as part of weekly activities undertaken independently between f2f sessions.

2.0 Methodology

The purpose of this evaluation was to explore whether or not learners had used and felt they had benefited from the resources created by the JISC FfIL student project team. The team additionally wanted to take a snapshot of what personal technologies were owned by students. Therefore the evaluation objectives were to:

1. Identify if learners had used each of the resources developed as part of the project;
2. Explore whether learners had perceived the on-line resources as useful in supporting their studies;
3. Identify what personal technologies were owned by the learners.

Evaluation was designed as a mixed method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data to give both a detailed and broad depiction of the use of the resources (including the wiki), and gain feedback. Data was gathered from students after using the Learner Journey using a questionnaire. One of the main aims of the questionnaire was to uncover the type of resources used most and how these were received. The questionnaire also provided an insight into student response to 'student to student' support and the current ownership of digital technologies.

2.1 Sample

Evaluation data was collected from students after they had studied the module and had an opportunity to use the materials as part of their studies. During the penultimate week of the semester all 300 Business Studies students were invited to complete the questionnaire. This was collected manually in the last week of the semester by a student intern during the f2f seminar sessions throughout the week.

Of the 300 possible respondents 153 were completed and returned. This high response rate might be due to a number of reasons; tutor request followed up by student collection which ensured anonymity; students wanting to assist students, were among the reasons given verbally to the tutor at a later date.

3.0 Results and findings

As discussed above the respondents were drawn from the entire first year undergraduate population of The Business School courses. Of a total population of 300 possible respondents there were 153 respondents who completed and returned the questionnaire.

Eleven questions were asked in total. Each of these questions is now presented with the responses gathered.

3.1 Question 1 - *What type of mobile phone do you own? If you do not own a mobile phone please put - none.*

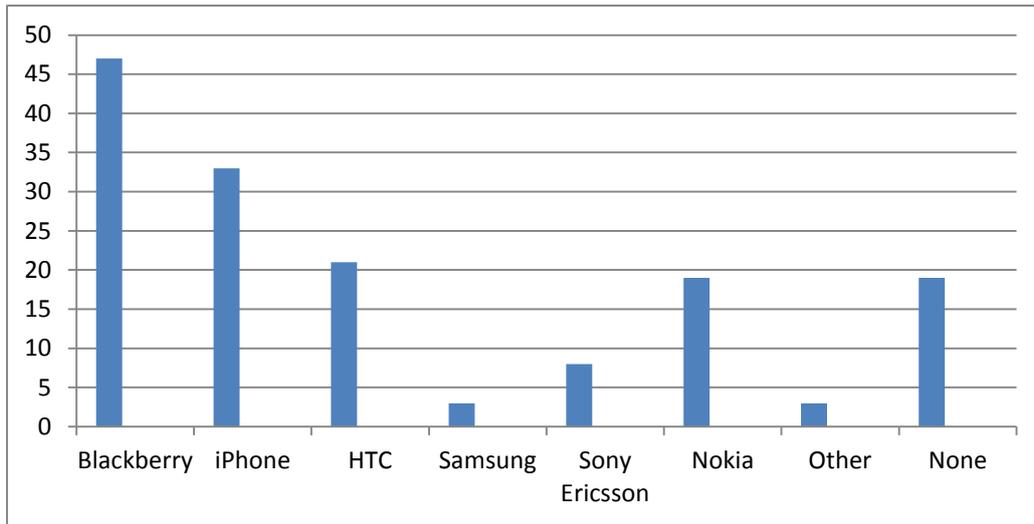


Chart 1 – Student ownership of mobile phones

Chart 1 addressed the question of mobile phone ownership. The most popular type of phone was Blackberry, with a total of 47 students currently using a Blackberry, and the second most popular was the iPhone with 33..

3.2 Question 2 – *‘What brand of computer do you have? If you do not own a computer please put - none.’*

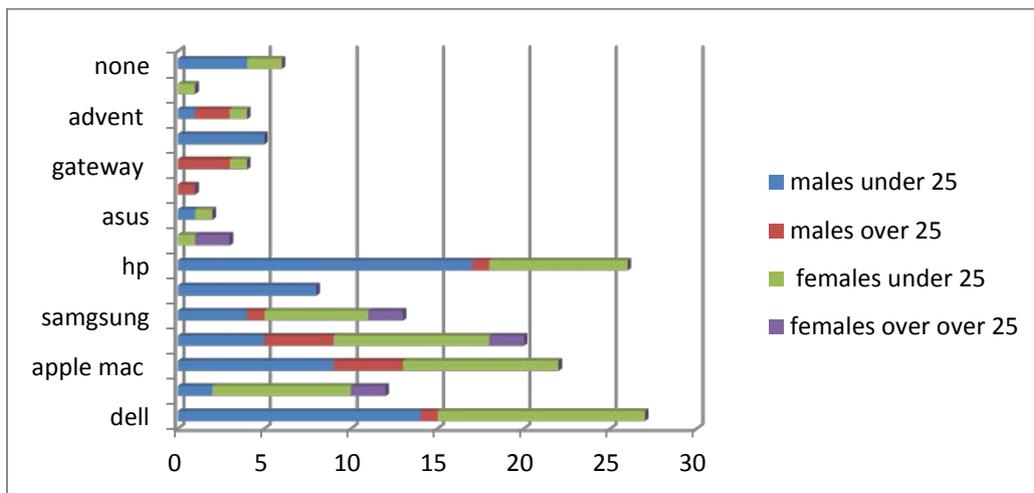


Chart 2 – Student ownership of computer by brand

The most popular computer was Dell followed by HP. Six students didn't own a computer or laptop. We didn't explore reasons for this but it is worth noting that when this question was

posed in the ALLE project in 2011 (http://hermes.uwl.ac.uk/learnerjourney/files/Final_report_ALLE_Aug2011.pdf) 82% of the Business School first year students had their own computer, which has now increased to 94% in this study.

3.3 Question 3 – ‘Did you view the YouTube media clip ‘The highlighter exercise’?’

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OX3WE6orEdw>

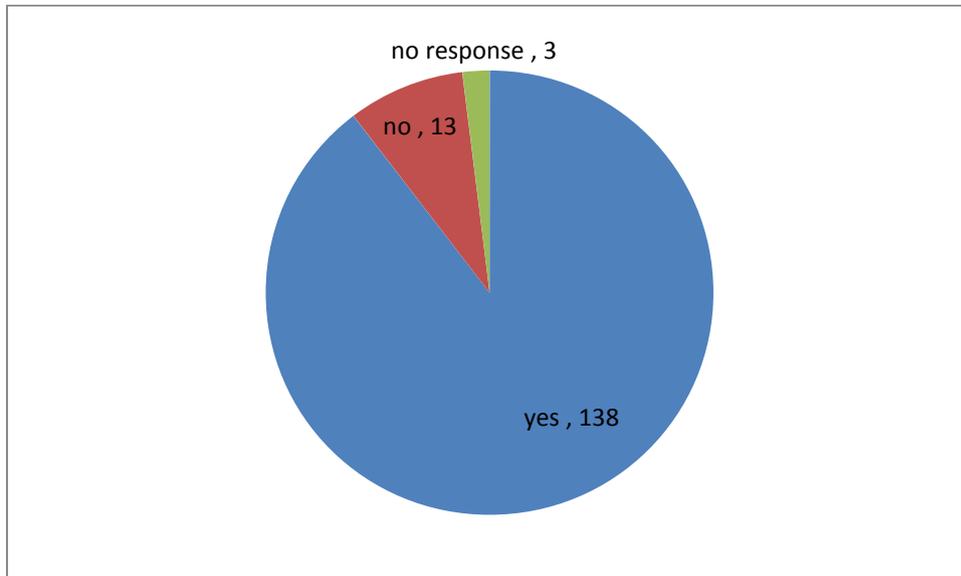
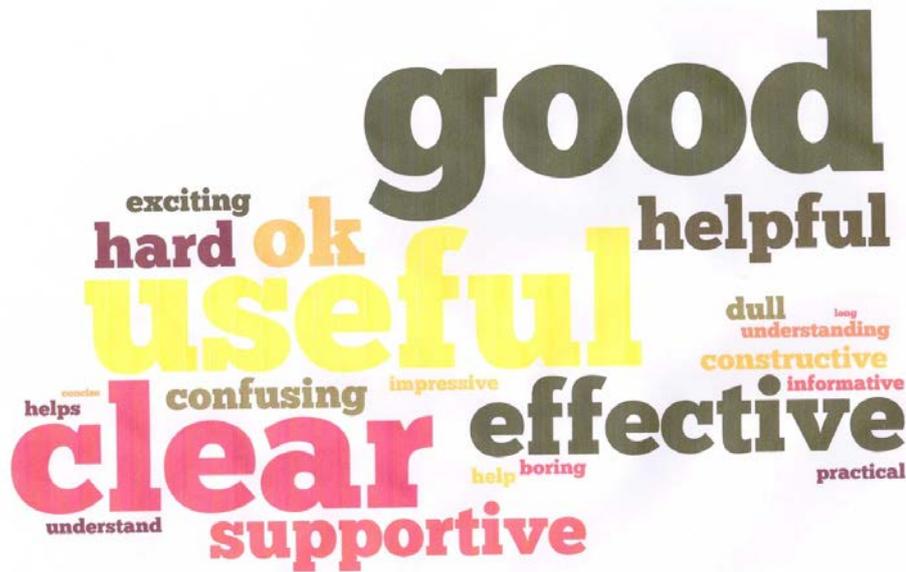


Chart 3 – Students who viewed the YouTube media clip ‘the highlighter exercise’.

Question 3 focused on the YouTube media that had been produced by the team. During the semester it had been noticed by the team that this media had received a large number of viewings whilst the number of questions being posted on the ‘Helpthestudents’ site were few. This appeared to suggest that learners were selecting this media over others. The responses in the evaluation exercise confirmed that this media was used by a clear majority of our respondents.

3.4 Question 4 – ‘Please tell us what you thought of the media clip ‘the Highlighter Exercise’



Wordle of students' responses to the Highlighter exercise on YouTube

The Wordle above shows the students' responses to what they thought about the YouTube media. The larger the word appears, the more times it was used by the respondents. Despite some respondents signalling that they found the media clip hard or confusing it is clear that the majority liked the material. It is clear from the prominence of positive words that overall students felt that the 'Highlighter exercise' was a help and was perceived useful by many of the students that used it.

3.5 Question 5 – ‘Would you like more media resources like The Highlighter Exercise?’

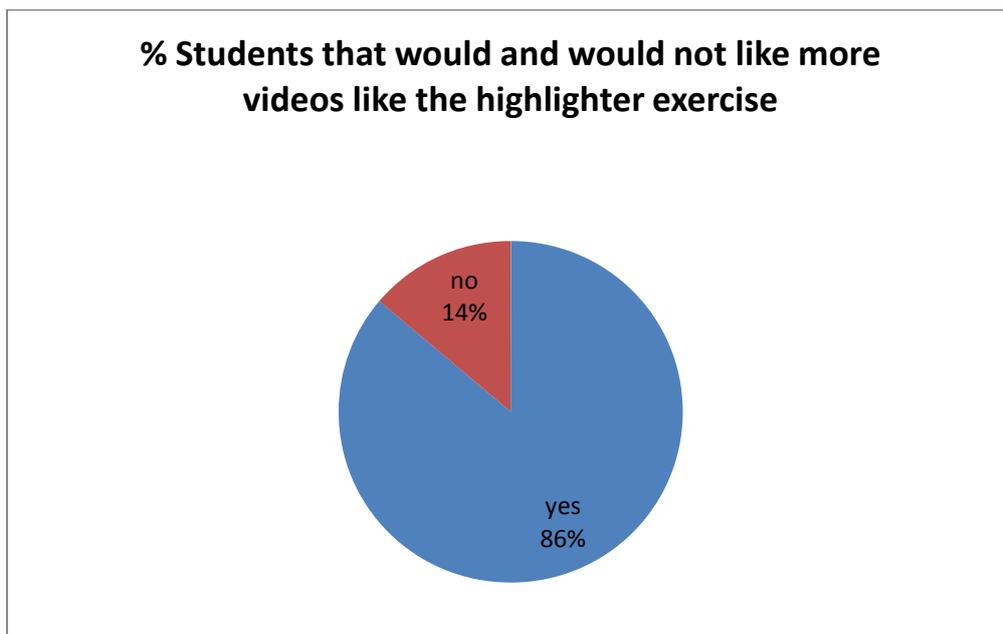


Chart 4 - Number of students who would like more media clips as learning sources

The question whether or not they would like more of this type of media elicited a demand of 86% overall wanting more. It is clear from the above responses learners would like more YouTube resources.

3.6 Question 6 – ‘If yes, describe the type of topics you would like as a YouTube media?’

• CV and Cover Letters	• Harvard Referencing
• How to use UWL Blackboard	• How to plan an Essay
• How to lay out an Essay	• Citation
• How to create arguments	• How to evaluate
• How to make presentations	• How to do a Literature search
• How to write a report	

Table 1 Suggestions and materials that students would like covered in other Videos (in no order of preference)

All of the topics listed above are introduced to the learners as part of the curriculum in the compulsory core 1st year module. Each of these areas already has materials associated with it, either interactive on-line learning objects as part of the existing Learner Journey or traditional paper-based information available through the VLE. It is interesting that the learners have specified these areas as wanting YouTube type materials.

3.7 Question 7 – ‘Did you visit helpthestudents.com?’

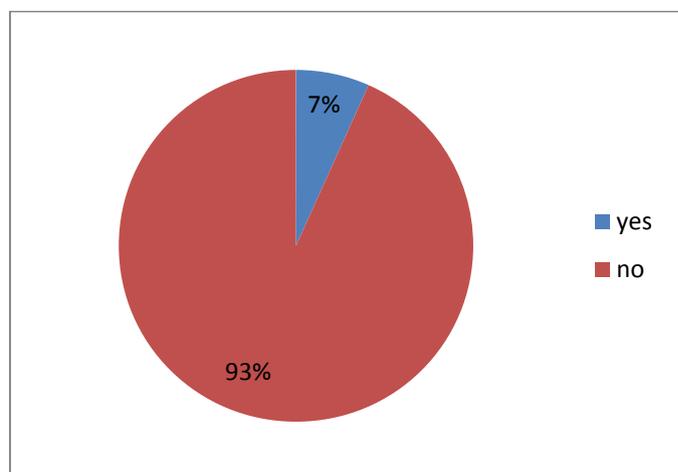


Chart 5 – Students who visited the ‘helpthestudents’ site

The overwhelming response was that students did not visit the student supported website. They were made aware of this site in the same way as the other materials yet they did not visit this dedicated student supported site. A total of 7 respondents had visited the site. It would be worth exploring further why students chose not to visit the site supported by students.

3.8 Question 8 – ‘Did you use the ‘ask a question’ facility?’

Of the 7 respondents who visited the ‘helpthestudents’ site, all of them used the ‘ask a questions’ facility.

3.9 Question 9 – ‘What did you think of the question facility?’

Table 2 shows the comments from the 7 students who used it.

Student Comment
Reliable
Useful
Helpful
To help widen knowledge
Good feedback
Easy to use
Informative
Helped in citations and referencing
Excellent

Table 2 – Students’ views of the ‘helpthestudent’ site

3.10 Question 10 – ‘Did you use the learner journey?’

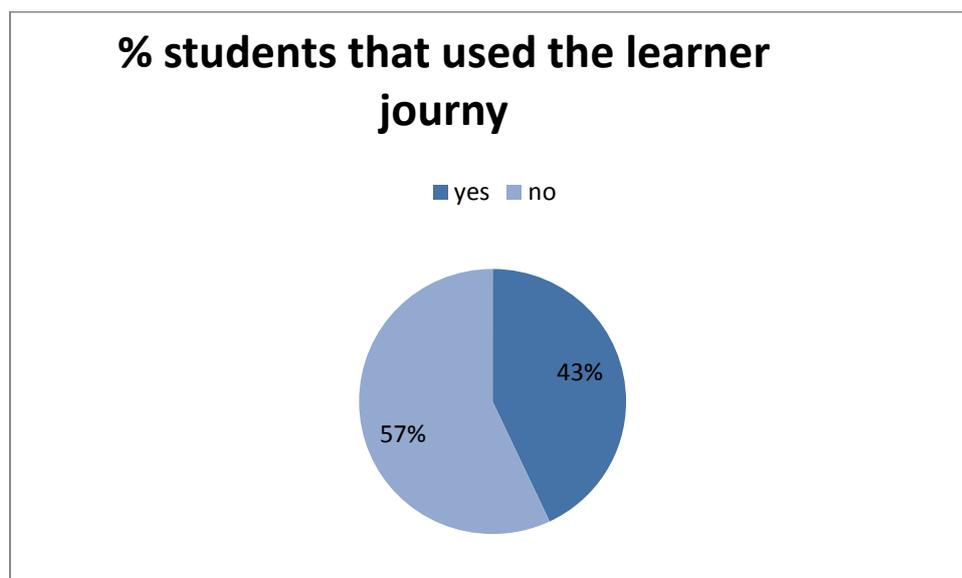


Chart 6 – Students who used the Learner Journey

43% of students used the learner journey when studying with 57% not using it. Given that it is integrated into the curriculum as part of the study support this was a surprising finding. A number of reasons might apply and informal discussions in the seminar groups suggested that the YouTube media clip ‘The Highlighter Exercise’ was favoured and seen as sufficient by the learners in this cohort to understand what was required in their essay.

3.11 Question 11 – ‘How useful to you was the Learner Journey as a study resource?’

Positive comments	No. of students that repeated the comment	Negative comments	No. of students that repeated the comment
Helpful	4	Confusing	2
Useful	7	Long process	1
Easy to use	1	Not very helpful	1
Good site for referencing	2	Difficult to use	1
Helped plan learning	4		
Good site for citations	8		
Good for academic writing	1		
Productive	2		

Table 3 – Comments made by learners in response to using the Learner Journey

The table above shows the comments respondents made about their experience of using the Learner journey. There were less negative comments than positive in relation to how useful the resource had been but it should be noted that there were less comments in total for this on-line resource than the YouTube media clip. The use of this on-line resource as support by students was low compared to the YouTube media clip. There is scope here to explore why this was the case.

4.0 Conclusions

The purpose of the evaluation was to explore whether or not learners had used and felt they had benefited from the resources created by the JISC FfIL student project team. The team additionally wanted to take a snapshot of what personal technologies were owned by the students.

Evaluation was designed as a mixed method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data to give both a detailed and broad depiction of the use of the resources (including the wiki), and gain feedback. Data was gathered from students after using the Learner Journey using a questionnaire. One of the main aims of the questionnaire was to uncover the type of resources used most and how these were received. The questionnaire also provides an insight into student response to ‘student to student’ support and the current ownership of digital technologies.

How many learners had used each of the resources developed as part of the project?

All the resources developed as part of the project were used by the respondents in the evaluation. Students who used the Learner Journey were largely positive about it, with student views being that it is useful, particularly for understanding citations and referencing. However the YouTube media clip was the most popular. It was the most positively received resource of this sample. The YouTube media clip ‘The highlighter exercise’ was used by a large majority of the sample with students commenting that it was “good”, “clear”, “effective” and “very useful”, with almost all the students stating they would like more YouTube media clips like it. However, some others also found it hard to follow. In comparison the project wiki and the ‘Ask us’ question page were visited and used by a very small minority of the students and must be considered as the least used resource developed.

Did learners perceive the on-line resources as useful in supporting their studies?

Whilst some students had found the resources confusing or hard to understand the majority of comments were positive and students explicitly requested more YouTube media clip type materials.

What personal technologies were owned by the learners?

This picture had changed since we last captured the information in 2011 with an increase in ownership of both mobile phones and computers. There has been an increase in ownership of personal technologies in the last two years.

Key findings

- The online resources have been used by business students at the University of West London and were found to be useful in their studies
- 92% of the respondents viewed the YouTube media clip 'The Highlighter Exercise'.
- 86% of students who viewed it wanted more YouTube media clips like 'The Highlighter Exercise' to support them in their studies
- Only 7% said that they visited helpthestudents.com
- Only 7% said they used The Ask a Question facility
- 43% of students said that they used the learner Journey and found it useful
- Dell was the most popular type of laptop used by the students
- The most popular Mobile Phone used by students was Blackberry.

This evaluation has raised more questions than it has answered. For instance; why was the student to student support site not more utilised? What was so appealing that students went onto the YouTube media clip but not on the 'Helpthestudents' site? Did the YouTube media clip answer the learning needs of the students so fully that they didn't need to use the other resources? These are all areas that are worthy of further investigation.

Links relevant to the Report:

Highlighter exercise	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0X3WE6orEdw&feature=youtu.be
Help the students	http://www.helpthestudents.com
Learner Journey	http://hermes.uwl.ac.uk/learnerjourney