

CETL-MSOR Conference 2015

Cormac Breen, Ciaran O'Sullivan and Damian Cox: Mathematics Learning Support across a Multi-Campus Institution: A Prototype of a Virtual Drop-In Service.

In this presentation, a study on Mathematics Learning Support that was undertaken across three institutions (Dublin Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology Blanchardstown and Institute of Technology Tallaght) intending to form the Technological University for Dublin is outlined. This study consisted of a survey that was circulated to both staff and students in each of the three institutes. The survey had two objectives. Firstly it sought to identify the students' needs for Mathematics Learning Support in each of the three institutes. Secondly, it sought to ascertain the preferred method of provision of Mathematics Learning Support, on a scale ranging from exclusively online to exclusively in person. A notable result arising from the survey was the difference in opinion between staff and students on the topic that students would most need Mathematics Learning Support with. Students across the three institutes picked Calculus as the main topic, while staff selected Basic Algebra. On the preferred method of provision of Mathematics Learning Support the main results of the survey were that the majority of staff (71%) and students (69%) surveyed were in favour of having MLS provided either exclusively or mostly in person. There was a strong preference among both staff (66%) and students (50%) that some portion of this Mathematics Learning Support be provided online. These results and others will be discussed in this presentation.

Following on from this survey it was decided to prototype a virtual Mathematics Learning Support drop-in service with students across the three institutes. The operational details of the prototyping of this virtual drop-in service, including a discussion of the technology used (Wacom Intuos tablets and the Adobe Connect software package), and the technical difficulties encountered will be presented. Finally, insights gained from the outcomes of the prototyping exercise will be discussed, focussing on how the detailed feedback obtained from the students involved will be used to develop a virtual Mathematics Learning Support drop-in service, which can be applied across the three institutes.