Flexible Models of Course Delivery

Summary

This paper highlights some flexible models of course delivery which have occurred or are currently occurring at City University London. Flexible delivery models provide some unique opportunities (such as building on the strength of City's reputation internationally, with City ranked as the 7th in the world for proportion of overseas students). As with any course, there are operational and educational questions that need to be considered during the planning stages of such a programme, as well as considerations around resourcing and delivery.

An examination of some of these considerations are provided in this paper. It also outlines a variety of models, identifying examples of programmes running at City that align to a given model. All models are examined from an operational and resourcing point of view in particular, with the City Law School LLM and Cass MSc in Global Finance given greater depth.

The purpose of this paper is to inform discussions about our current flexible and distance learning offering and plans to offer and support further flexible learning at City. The paper asks a number of questions relating to resourcing to consider in relation to increasing the number of distance and flexible learning courses on offer at City.

Recommended action

Education & Student Committee is asked to:

(i)   **review** the Flexible Models of Course Delivery at City University London report

Flexible Models of Course Delivery

This paper highlights some flexible models of course delivery that enable students to live and/or study at a distance from our London campus, either for all or part of their degree time. These types of delivery often to post graduate or CPD students, for whom campus community has less of an impact on their completion outcomes, and to students with disabilities, who may find accessing a campus challenging. Below is an explanation of the main delivery models, with named instances of where they occur at the University.

Type of Delivery Model	Brief Definition	Example Instances at the University
Adapted Model	Uses a combination of scheduled lectures, study materials, and managed discussion to create a course that is familiar in structure and 'feel' to a fully campus-based course. A **High-Resource** model typically contains high-quality multimedia and online resources and synchronous, managed discussions. The design stage is resource-intensive. A **Medium-Resource** model involves multimedia resources that are less labour-intensive, such as Lecture Capture, with some degree of managed discussion. **Lower-Resource** uses static study material, assessments, and some degree of discussion.	**High-Resource***:* Cass MSc in Global Finance, CLS LLM in International Business Law **Medium-Resource**: SASS MSC Food Policy **Lower-Resource**: the former SASS Diploma in Translation
Satellite Campuses	The University operates a distant campus (either in the UK or abroad) with lecture practices and tools that echo the lecturing that occurs at the main site.	Cass EMBA in Dubai, SMCSE MSC Maritime Operations and Management in Greece, CLS LLM Maritime Law in Greece
Block Days	Modules have a small number of on-campus taught days, which are scheduled in blocks. Students can therefore live and study at a distance for most of their time, and only come to campus during taught days.	LEaD's MA in Academic Practice, Cass MICL
HyFlex Model	Students choose (or are scheduled) to attend lectures physically, online, or a combination of the two. Enabled by live delivery of lectures and synchronous communication tools so students can participate at a distance.	None at the moment, former examples in the School of Informatics. Remains within the University's potential.
SPOC	Small private online course. Uses MOOC type technology for cohorts of 20-30 and widely used for high end executive education.	Already being proposed for Cass Executive Education Clients
Promotional Model (MOOC)	Large taster courses that students can sample, but are not obliged (or not given the option) to participation in assessments.	None, and would take considerable monetary and staff investment

Cass MSc in Global Finance and CLS LLM in International Business Law

Two programmes at the University have been designed to be delivered entirely from a distance. These are the City Law School's LLM in International Business Law and Cass's MSc in Global Finance. Both fall under the above definition of a High-Resource 'adapted' style degree.

LLM In International Business Law

This course received stage 2 approval in Oct 2013, and was launched in May 2014. The first group of students successfully completed the LLM in September 2015. The course was designed by Dr Steven Truxal (the course director) and Prof Jason Chuah (Head of Academic Law) with City Law School (CLS) colleagues and external consultants contributing to written course content. The modules all contain high quality video resources of lecturers explaining core content, as well as structured course material, podcasts, formative exercises, and online tutor time. The core of the course runs on Moodle, with other educational technologies used to provide the materials and deliver an innovative learning experience.

The course was built collaboratively between LEaD staff members and CLS academics. A part-time course officer post was approved and subsequently taken up in March 2015 to support the administration of the course. As additional modules are needed, CLS and LEaD will continue to work together to develop and create high-quality materials (either with LEaD creating some of the more technically-advanced video content, or with LEaD supporting lecturers to develop the skills to create their own materials). There are currently more than 50 students on the course. There are three intakes per year (January, May and September). At current recruitment rates, Dr Truxal anticipates that between 40 and 60 new students will join the course in 2016/2017, and so on. As this is a distance learning course, it lends itself nicely to up-scaling.

Cass MSc in Global Finance

This MSc went through Stage 2 approval in December 2015, with the intention of welcoming the first intake of students in mid 2016. The development of the course is being lead by Sam Brenton, Cass Business School's Director of Digital Learning and the Course Director is Professor Andrew Clare, Associate Dean for the MSc programme. The development phase involves an instructional designer and an online learning developer supporting Cass academics in the production of modules. During delivery, online tutors will support module leaders in the day to day moderation of discussions and the facilitation of learning activities. Modules are broken down into weekly topics which feature: academic **content** (ex: micro-video lectures, readings, narrated presentations, etc.); **activities** (where students apply knowledge in practice through e.g. a scenario-based group task, a reflective exercise, etc.) and **feedback** on their learning (automated or provided by peers, tutors or module leaders). Administratively, the course will be supported with an Admissions and Course Officer, online Careers advice and digital Library access. Learning Success and Mental Health & Counselling have also agreed to provide a level of service to the online students. LEAD have been involved throughout the approvals process and will also be involved in training and educational development of delivery staff.

The course is 100% online, and will be delivered through City's Moodle. There are three intakes a year. The intention is to create a high volume, high quality online course with a steady state of 200+ students after two years, with no maximum limit on numbers. The degree will take two years to complete while studying part-time, with students having to complete within five years.

Resourcing implications for flexible course delivery models

All delivery of education has resourcing implications of staff (academic and professional service), spaces, and systems. Flexible courses also share these concerns, but as the models of delivery differ, the possible ways in which they impact resources can differ as well. Any future shifts toward adopting more distance learning will have to be done in conjunction with careful consideration around resourcing implications.

For students at a physical distance for most or all of their degree, one of the biggest questions to confront the University is around operating hours. Can we still function as a (primarily) 9-6 University if we have a growing number of students who might reasonably be studying outside our normal operating hours? Other concerns are more specific to individual departments:

- How can students access the range of **Library** holdings when not all of them are accessible online? What kind of research and subject support might they be entitled to?
- How might students seek help from **Learning Success**? What kind of **Mental Health and Counselling** could they engage in from a distance? What considerations would there be around disabled students receiving 'reasonable adjustments'?
- Should **Timetabling** be involved in scheduling of online-only degrees?
- If more courses adopt a HyFlex model, what is the net impact on our **Estates** and lecture rooms, in terms of volumes of students and teaching equipment? How many more students could **Programmes** accept, knowing they would never come on to campus?
- What extra support would **Course Officers** expect to offer, if they are one of the most immediate points of contact for students?
- If weight is shifted from the physical estate toward the virtual estate, how would our **IT systems** fare with this increase of usage? What would this mean for systems upgrades and downtimes? What support could we offer students facing problems with their own computers?
- How many high-resources courses would **LEaD** be able to design and create in a given calendar year, given current resourcing and staff structures? How many of other varieties of distance learning courses could LEaD help develop annually, and what professional development would **academic staff** need to teach on these courses?
- How might the **Student Centre** and **Students' Union** approach the idea of a distant student community?

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