

Weblogs in action!

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Blogging at Edinburgh

- For teaching and learning
 - WebCT bloggingtool
 - Restricted access
- Safe not exposed to the “whole world”
- Is it blogging? Does it matter?

Blogging in the School of Divinity

- Used at all levels:-
 - 1st year
 - 2nd year
 - 3/4 years
 - Masters

Main use

- Work in small groups
- Each week 1 student tasked with writing the blog (length and depth depending on year)
- Rest of class must comment on the blog
 - Both blog and comments are compulsory and assessed as part of course work
- Face-to-face discussion

Training/Support

- Lab session at start of session
- Etiquette rules explained
- Technical issues e.g. system down

Benefits of Blogging

1. Informal medium leads to accessibility, builds confidence
2. Different model meets unique learning styles
3. Personalized ethos establishes group identity
4. Conversational format teaches collaboration
5. First week feedback precedes marks late in the term
6. Weekly writing leads to more retention, better revisions

Challenges of Blogging

1. Potential dependency on computer staff
2. Possible learning curve for some students
3. Some subjectivity in assessment
4. Can be time-intensive if weekly assessed
5. Familiarity may lead to triviality
6. Loss of effectiveness if required in all courses

Improving the Use of Blogging

1. Potential dependency on computer staff
 - **Easy training of another member of course staff**
2. Possible learning curve for some students
 - **Actually found mature students were most competent**
3. Some subjectivity of assessment
 - **Transparency (1 comment/wk = 50; substantial = extra)**
4. Can be time-intensive if weekly assessed
 - **Mark at end of term**
5. Familiarity may lead to triviality
 - **Early or monthly staff involvement online**
6. May lose its effectiveness if required in all courses
 - **Coordinate with other departments**

Conclusions

- Proven to improve face-to-face interactions
- Proven to provide useful revision tool
- Proven to show to tutors and teaching staff how well the students are coping with the course content
- Worth the effort!!!!

Thank you!