Minimising the distance, maximising the learning: Successful selection and implementation of an online virtual whiteboard for tutorial sessions

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The need ...

How to improve the teaching of the methodology of mathematical problem solving to Distance Ed students in a Genetics Theory unit?

– disparity between on-campus and Distance Ed tutorials
– direct participation in problem-solving tasks
– timely practical support for their learning process
On-campus:
Student tutorials focus on working through the mathematical problems collaboratively every week.

Distance Ed:
Students complete problems individually and then work through 5 weeks of problems collaboratively on one on-campus day.

Design brief:
To find an online interactive learning space which has:

– interactive whiteboard, with drawing tools
– audio facilities
– no cost
– text chat area
– ability to upload and download documents
– session times between 1 and 2 hours
The process ... finding the best tool

1. Needs analysis
2. Research and test the possible solutions (9)
3. Trial the possible solutions (4)
4. Demonstrate final contenders
5. Pilot with lecturer and student (3)
6. Choose final solution
7. Prepare for first online tutorial
Student evaluation

Feedback from students was very positive. Comments included:

• Good interactive tutorial with ability to hear other students and draw on whiteboard.
• They helped reinforce the problem sets and provided an opportunity to work through any questions I was struggling with.
• To go through worked examples together was handy and useful.
Modifications for next time

Feedback from students indicated:
• accessibility issues for one student i.e. computer at work could not access Scribblar
• timing issues i.e. dinner time for young family, working hours
• length of session shortened i.e. to one hour
• minor tech troubleshooting during sessions

Use of Scribblar with Macquarie Distance Ed students:

http://www.vimeo.com/13724941

YouTube demo movie of Scribblar:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ByZenK hLVRg