

## Poster presentation

# Extra skills needed when teaching online

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## Abstract

This poster outlines a range of skills that academic staff have to develop Hofman (2003) in order to teach in the new learning environment. Academic staff will need to move beyond their comfort zone to produce a successful online course, even courses produced using a virtual learning environment (VLE).

## Computer skills

The development and implementation of new technologies has meant academic staff members have had to face the challenge of this new technology for fear of being left behind. Among the skills that it is necessary to develop are:

- Office software skills
- VLE software skills
- File management skills
- Search skills
- Typing skills
- Keyboard shortcuts

## Pedagogical skills

Academic staff hopefully have good pedagogical skills for teaching in the classroom, however there are a number of attributes that are unique to the online learning environment. Among the skills that it is necessary to develop are:

- Online pedagogy
- E-moderating skills
- Online community development skills

## Administration skills

The increased use of technology has resulted in an increased administration burden for academic staff. We need to practice time saving tips and tricks to counteract this increased workload. Among the skills that it is necessary to develop are:

- Email management (e.g. filters and folders)
- VLE administration time saving strategies.
- Re-use of resources
- Efficient data management (e.g. saving gradebook from VLE and importing into Excel)

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## Website design skills

An online course is a website and as such it should follow the rules of good web design if it is to be successful. Among the skills that it is necessary to develop are:

- Site organization (hierarchy) skills
- Micro-content authoring
- Text formatting skills
- Graphic design skills (including use of colour)
- Including images
- Deep linking
- Cross-linking

## Hyperdisc

We have created a website that publishes a number of useful time-saving tips and tricks for creating a successful online course. The website seeks to encourage a community of practice and can be found at: <http://hyperdisc.unitec.ac.nz/blackboard/>

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the title 'Elements of a good webpage - Mozilla'. The address bar shows 'Blackboard Learning System TM (Release 6)'. The page content is as follows:

- Page Contents**
  - Sub-headings
  - Lists
- Useful Links**
  - Unitec New Zealand Blackboard @ Unitec
  - Hyperdisc @ Unitec Blackboard website
- Tips**
  - HTML you need to know
  - Content Items
  - Borders & Backgrounds
  - Deep-linking
  - Standard Announcements
  - Raising Announcements
  - Inline Images
  - Table of Contents
- Page Heading**

All pages should start with a big bold heading surrounded by plenty of white space. The purpose of this is to instantly reassure the user that they have come to the correct page. The <h1> tag is perfect for this. It can easily be styled using Cascading Style Sheets (CSS).

**Branding:** Every page should indicate which site it is part of. Usually this is accomplished by adding the logo to the top-left corner.
- Sub headings**

The page should be broken up with sub-headings to facilitate scanning the page while scrolling. The <h2> and <h3> etc. tags are perfect for this. They can easily be styled using CSS.

It is a good idea to use **emphasised text** and **bold text** to highlight key words and phrases. This also facilitates scanning the page. Remember that **hyperlinks are also highlighted**.
- Lists**
  - Bulleted lists are much easier to read than paragraphs.
  - Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet.
  - Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet.
- Font face:** Paragraphs should be in an easily read font size and style. Research shows that users prefer Arial or Verdana.
- Information chunking:** Ideally there will be no more than one idea per paragraph. Content should be split into appropriate chunks.

## References

- Hofman, J. (2003). Be an Active and Participative Instructor. ASTD: Learning Circuits. [verified 14 Oct 2004] <http://www.learningcircuits.org/2003/dec2003/hofmann.htm>
- Young, J.R. (2002) Online teaching redefines faculty members' schedules, duties, and relationships with students. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 31 May [verified 14 Oct 2004] <http://chronicle.com/free/v48/i38/38a03101.htm>
- Shank, P. (2003). Making sense of online learning. Learning Peaks. [viewed 10 Jul 2004] <http://www.learningpeaks.com/>