The Google / ALT "Apps in Learning and Teaching" competition

During the 2011 ALT Conference Google announced that it would work with ALT to seek out and celebrate examples of excellent uses of Google Apps in learning and teaching.

The winners and commended entries were announced at the ALT Conference in Manchester in September 2012.

Overall Winner

Gary C. Wood from the University of Sheffield, for All About Linguistics, a website designed and built using Google Apps by first-year undergraduate students at the University of Sheffield. The site formed the students' assessment for an introductory module in linguistics, and encouraged them to work as independent groups to investigate a topic in detail.

The panel was very impressed with the entry, for two main reasons. Firstly, the panel judged the product (a public web site to promote linguistics – as the scientific study of language – to prospective students currently studying for their A-Levels, by first-year undergraduate students at the University of Sheffield) to be extremely effective. Secondly, and much more importantly, the panel was very impressed with how linguistics students had designed, built, and launched the site using Google Apps, as a major piece of assessed undergraduate course-work, through which students had deepened their understanding of linguistics alongside gaining skills in project management, team working, use of web-based systems, and communication and collaboration tools. The panel considered that the approach taken would have wide applicability in other disciplines and at other academic levels.

Apps used included: Sites, Docs (including Forms), Google+ (especially Hangouts), Maps, YouTube, Calendar.

Highly Commended

Mark Kerrigan, Rita Headington and Simon Walker from the University of Greenwich, for Map My Programme, a tool that enables individual teachers to insert course design data and then view the resulting assessment and feedback experience of students by 'playing' a simulation that represents the academic workload over time.

The panel was very impressed with the Map My Programme tool, its functionality, its ambition, and with the elegant way in which it allows the assessment regime for a particular course to be viewed – using Google Motion Charts – alongside those of other courses, thereby enabling course planners to spot conflicts, and course designers to ensure balance in the types of assessment used across courses. The panel commends the Map My Programme team for the thoroughness of their approach, including for the steps they have taken to ensure the tool is properly supported with documentation and a community of practice; and we were impressed at the planned widespread use of the tool within the University of Greenwich, the encouraging signs of uptake elsewhere in the UK and internationally, and at the team's plans properly to evaluate the tool's long term impact on student learning.

Apps used included: Sites, Docs (including Forms and RSS tracking for Forms), Motion Charts, Apps for Spreadsheets, YouTube, Analytics, Google+.

Commended

Stuart Graves and Sharif Salah from the University of Portsmouth, for Myport, a new portal for University of Portsmouth students that will allow 22,500 students to access their most essential services, including their timetable, assessment marks, email, printing account balance and many other useful things, all in one place and easily accessible via their PC, Mac or smart device.

The panel was particularly impressed with the technical achievements of this entry – the Myport student portal – because it clearly demonstrated how Google Apps could be used successfully to underpin a large-scale outward-facing institutional system, with extensive integration with internal information services and between the portal and personal systems such as calendars and email. The panel welcomed this entry despite the fact that Myport is only now due for full roll-out, believing that the beneficial influence of Myport will be felt during the forthcoming academic year, especially if it can also be used to support teacher/learner interaction such as that exemplified by Manish Malik whose Examopedia entry (also from the University of Portsmouth) was also commended by the panel. The panel considered that Myport, and the human and technical processes behind its development, can serve as a model/pattern that other institutions interested in cloud-based portals can emulate.

Apps used included: Sites, Docs (Forms and Spreadsheets), Calendar, University of Portsmouth Mail (Gmail), Analytics, App Engine, Apps APIs (OpenID, OAuth and Gadgets), Feed Server.

Manish Malik from the University of Portsmouth, for Examopedia, a technique to introduce peer support into the revision process, thereby both reducing the isolation of revising students and making the revision process more pedagogically effective.

The panel commended Manish for his sustained and successful efforts – centred on Examopedia – in encouraging first- and second-year undergraduate electronics students to engage in peer-supported revision during the stressful pre-examination revision period. We liked the pared-down simplicity of Manish's use of the commenting facility on Google Docs Documents to support posing and responding to revision questions. We noted the measurable improvement in examination performance that Examopedia appears to have brought about. The panel encourages Manish to discuss with Stuart Graves – whose Myport entry (also from the University of Portsmouth) was also commended by the panel – opportunities to develop Examopedia on a broader basis within the University of Portsmouth.

Apps used: Docs (including Forms).

Shortlisted

John Woodthorpe and Mike Richards of The Open University, for their use of Google Apps on the OU's "My Digital Life" module.

The judging panel

- Martin Hawksey, Learning Technology Advisor, JISC CETIS
- Martin Hamilton, Head of Internet Services at Loughborough University
- Sarah Horrigan, Learning Technologies Manager at the University of Sheffield
- Kevin McLaughlin, Primary Teacher, Google Certified Teacher, and Apple Distinguished Educator
- Seb Schmoller, Independent Consultant
- Yetunde Folajimi, Lecturer, Department of Computer Science, University of Ibadan, and Visiting Fellow at the Centre for Computational Intelligence, De Montfort University
- William Florance, Head of Education Google Edu for Europe, the Middle East, and Africa

Google

Google's mission is to organise the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful. Beginning in 1996, Stanford University graduate students Larry Page and Sergey Brin built a search engine that used links to determine the importance of individual web pages. By 1998, they had formalised their work, creating the company that you know today as Google. From offering search in a single language, we now offer dozens of products and services in scores of languages. Google Apps for Education – used by more than 15 million students – offers a free (and ad-free) set of customisable tools that enable teaching staff, other staff and students to work together and learn more effectively.

www.google.com/apps/edu

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