POSTER PRESENTATION

Building a Distributed, Asynchronous Learning Environment

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Abstract

The UniCafé project was established by a partnership between the University of Surrey (primarily the School of Educational Studies and the School of Management Studies for the Service Sector), four Further Education colleges, a Telecottage, the local library service and Tesco plc. The project aims to provide open, supported learning at a variety of traditional and non-traditional locations through electronic delivery.

The courses available aim to enhance personal and management development in particular for employees or potential employees in the retail and distributive trades.

In designing and implementing the technology, the different (and evolving) needs of the various stakeholders in the project had to be taken into account. The final solution therefore addresses the requirements of:

Academic Course Providers
e.g. Two alternative technological approaches desired for delivery support of course material.

Delivery Partners (the UniCafé sites)
e.g. Little or preferably no specific maintenance required for UniCafé machines.

Technical Staff
e.g. Seamless integration of technologies to simplify administration.

Students
e.g. Simple user interface with one password access to all course material.

This poster presents a case study of the UniCafé experience and is primarily concerned with the technical solution adopted to support all the needs of the UniCafé project. The chosen infrastructure, based upon a Lotus Domino server, provides open access to promotional material and taster courses and security for a choice of two different methods of course delivery – including one-to-many and one-to-one communication.