The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland selected Enovation Solutions to support the roll-out of Moodle campus-wide

As a training institution the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) has always been very progressive in its adoption of new technologies for teaching and learning. It was one of the first colleges to provide laptops for every student and currently places heavy emphasis on e-learning in the curriculum. It was with this ethos in mind that the Moodle project was initiated in early 2005.

RCSI, in connection with the Open University, had already been using a virtual learning environment to support their post-graduate surgical training course while the undergraduate curriculum was supported by a bespoke system.

Timing was also a major factor. Around the same time that the RCSI were considering Moodle the College was in the process of replacing the traditional term-based curriculum with a semesterise curriculum.

Therefore, with the curriculum already under review this was the perfect opportunity for the college to redefine its approach to teaching methodologies and enhance current e-learning practices.

Added to this was the fact that the Dean of the college was committed to change. The Dean was completely behind the project and put the project team in place with a view to having Moodle implemented before the start of the next academic year in October 2005.

Why Moodle?
Moodle was the product of choice mainly because of its ease of use and open source flexibility during evaluation.

'We had heard about Moodle through online communities focused on teaching and when we downloaded it from the web it worked straight away. It was ideal for basic activities like assignment uploads and discussions,' said Eric Clarke, Moodle project team. 'It also allowed us to easily map the newly developed semesterised curriculum.

Technology Partners
RSCI engaged with Enovation Solutions on the project following an assessment of their integration, development and support capabilities in relation to Moodle.

'Enovation Solutions provided a valuable external influence that helped RCSI to evaluate and modify Moodle for our needs. Their experience in supporting and developing Moodle for other educational institutions was important and this helped us

Roll-Out

Enovation Solutions installed Moodle on the RSCI server and worked to integrate it with their existing infrastructure, including their LDAP server.

'We drew on our experience as Moodle partners to advise the RCSI on the most useful features,' commented David Kerrigan, solutions manager at Enovation Solutions. We also spent a considerable amount of time customising and developing the product to suit their individual e-learning needs.'

Support was also a key element of the service; Enovation Solutions provided platform and general operational support to the RCSI, which included:

1) Monitoring the server on an on-going basis.
2) Dealing with issues through a helpdesk function.
3) Extending Moodle to incorporate new features and to ensure a smooth upgrade path.
4) Constantly monitoring Moodle's development globally to identify relevant new features.

In terms of training, Enovation Solutions gave the RCSI lecturers some initial training on how to structure the course content for the new environment.

Positive Feedback

The Moodle project team have had predominantly positive feedback from all Moodle users. At the beginning of the year they hosted a survey in Moodle and found that overall the students at the RCSI enjoyed using Moodle and found it easy to use and useful in their studies. The study also found that Moodle has enhanced students' teaching and learning experiences.

In the same survey the project team found that 93% of students access Moodle while not in RCSI, 84% log into Moodle at least once a day and 62% downloaded lecture notes once a day or more.

According to Eric, 'We never anticipated the effect Moodle would have on the students. It is never empty and you cannot have a conversation at the college without someone mentioning it. Interactions have improved at all levels.'

The Future

Moving forward Enovation Solutions will continue to help the RSCI realise the full potential of Moodle by integrating it deeper into the administration of the college and by adding new features and customisations to enhance usability.