Chapter 6
Current and Emerging Tools for Flexible Remote Learning

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ABSTRACT

Distance learning is becoming increasingly common in the higher education sector. Student flexibility and inability of students to access education in remote regions are the main drivers of remote learning. There are many tools available that enable remote learning to reach geographically isolated and remote students as well as to provide extra flexibility to local students. This chapter explores current and emerging tools for flexible remote learning. Specifically, this chapter looks at current and new tools used in remote learning as effective tools for university students as well as graduate continuing learning. The tools, benefits, and models of remote learning are discussed. The objective of the chapter is to discuss the current and emerging tools in remote learning and its importance in emerging technologies and work-integrated learning in allied health.

INTRODUCTION

Remote learning, or distance learning, is becoming an increasingly popular mode of study in many tertiary educational programs including allied health. Remote or distance learning is the delivery of teaching material and the fulfilment of course work from remote locations. This allows students and teachers to interact and communicate without face to face contact. New technologies and tools have made

remote learning as an effective and flexible learning environment for students (Thompson, 2016). Remote learning is a mode of study that heavily depends on information and communication technology (ICT). Remote learning is considered as a flexible and interactive learning environment through which students acquire knowledge and complete entire tertiary degrees without having a face to face contact with their teachers. Tools such as virtual classrooms have enabled students and teachers to have a mutual interactive media experience where they can have video conferences, video lessons and other stimulating learning activities.

Information and communication technology has changed significantly over recent decades. The increased application and accessibility of internet based technology has expanded the learning and teaching tools available to universities and education providers. Computers, smart phones and tablets are more powerful, support and contain many different applications that can be used to facilitate learning, their ability to connect teachers and students to each other remotely has allowed students to complete tasks, receive feedback and interact with class mates.

Internet based learning and teaching applications such as Blackboard, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), Moodle and other interactive systems allow universities to reach regional and remote students. Similarly, students who are unable to be physically present in the traditional class room due to employment, family commitments or physical geography will have access to the same teaching experience as the students in the traditional class room. Research studies show that student outcomes were enhanced by the use of learning and teaching tools by providing greater flexibility (Kemp & Livingstone, 2006; Martin, 2008). Furthermore, working allied health professionals completing studies via distance education setting performed significantly better than undergraduate and graduate (Williams, 2006). Universities have recognised the importance of student flexibility and therefore many universities offer courses that are online can be completed via distance education. Furthermore, the advances in internet and its application, it is now possible for allied health professionals to participate and complete continuing professional development without travelling great distances.

This chapter discusses current and emerging tools that are available to teachers and students to support their teaching approaches. Specifically this chapter will look at current and new tools used in remote learning as effective tools for university students as well as graduate continuing learning. The tools, benefits and models of remote learning will be discussed. The objective of the chapter is to discuss the current and emerging tools in remote learning and its importance in emerging technologies and work integrated learning in allied health.

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