

# **Flexible Learning in Action Case Studies in Higher Education**

**RACHEL HUDSON,  
SIAN MASLIN-PROTHERO  
AND LYN OATES**

**S  
E  
D  
A**

**Staff and Educational  
Development Series**



# **Flexible Learning in Action**

## **Case Studies in Higher Education**

**EDITED BY  
RACHEL HUDSON  
SIAN MASLIN-PROTHERO  
LYN OATES**

 **Routledge**  
Taylor & Francis Group  
LONDON AND NEW YORK

Published in association with the  
Staff and Educational Development Association

## **The Staff and Educational Development Series**

**Series Editor: Sally Brown**

*Assessing Competence in Higher Education*, edited by Anne Edwards and Peter Knight

*Assessment for Learning in Higher Education*, edited by Peter Knight

*Enabling Student Learning: Systems and Strategies*, edited by Gina Wisker and Sally Brown

*Facing up to Radical Changes in Universities and Colleges*, edited by Steve Armstrong, Gail Thompson and Sally Brown

*Flexible Learning in Action: Case Studies in Higher Education*, edited by Rachel Hudson, Sian Maslin-Prothero and Lyn Oates

*The Management of Independent Learning*, edited by Jo Tait and Peter Knight

*Research, Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, edited by Brenda Smith and Sally Brown

*Resource-Based Learning*, edited by Sally Brown and Brenda Smith

First published 1997 by  
Kogan Page Limited

Published 2013 by Routledge  
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN  
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of research or private study, or criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, this publication may only be reproduced, stored or transmitted, in any form or by any means, with the prior permission in writing of the publishers, or in the case of reprographic reproduction in accordance with the terms of licences issued by the CLA.

© Rachel Hudson, Sian Maslin-Prothero and Lyn Oates, 1997

---

### **British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

A CIP record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 0 7494 2391 9      ISBN 978-0-749-42391-9 (pbk)

---

Typeset by Kogan Page Ltd

# Contents

The Editors and Contributors	vii
Introduction	
<i>Rachel Hudson, Sian Maslin-Prothero and Lyn Oates</i>	1
 <b>Section I: Flexibility for Learners on Campus</b>	
Introduction	9
1. Teaching Business Writing Online: Towards Developing Student Learning and Responsibility in a Flexible Learning Environment	
<i>Robert Fulkerth</i>	11
2. Don't Lecture Me about Flexible Learning! Being Flexible in the Delivery of an Undergraduate Education Studies Module	
<i>Lesley Dunning</i>	17
3. Improving Independent Learning with Aural German Programmes	
<i>Susanne Mühlhaus and Martin Löschmann</i>	22
4. Peer Mentoring through Peer-Assisted Study Sessions	
<i>Angus Witherby</i>	28
5. Teaching by E-Mail	
<i>Chris Smith</i>	34
6. Using a Shell for Delivery and Support for Case-Based Learning in a Networked Environment	
<i>Kathy Buckner And Elisabeth Davenport</i>	39

7. Learning Via Multimedia: A Study of the Use of  
Interactive Multimedia to Teach Chemistry  
*Chris Smith, Keith Haddon, Edward Smith, Don Bratton* 44

## **Section II: Flexibility for Work-Based Learners**

- Introduction 49
8. Flexible Learning for Australian Club Managers  
*Helen Breen, Nerilee Hing and Paul Weeks* 51
9. Distance Learning in Post-Registration Nurse Education  
*Maggie Grundy, Sally Lawton and Armida Taylor* 56
10. Professional Development through Reflective Inquiry  
*Karen McArdle And Ian McGowan* 61
11. Workplace Learning: Removing the Barriers  
*Phil Askham* 67
12. Empowering School Managers through Flexible Learning  
*David Oldroyd* 73
13. Off the Cuff and On the Cusp: A Flexible Approach to  
Teacher Development  
*Philip Garner and Chris Longman* 80
14. Flexible Learning in Modular Programmes for Professional  
Studies  
*Lyn Shipway* 86
15. A Flexible Programme in Applied Studies in Education  
and Training  
*Andrina McCormack* 91

## **Section III: Flexible Approaches to Skills Development**

- Introduction 98
16. Flexible Maths  
*Sybil Cock and Poppy Pickard* 100

17. Profiling Study and Communication Styles for Non-Traditional Students <i>Jenny Ure</i>	105
18. Flexibility in Teaching and Learning Schemes <i>Philip Gillies-Denning</i>	112
19. But This Isn't How an English Class is Supposed to be... <i>William Macauley and Gian Pagnucci</i>	118
20. Student SkillPacks <i>Rosie Bingham and Sue Drew</i>	123
21. An Interactive Library Skills Workbook for Engineering Undergraduates <i>Clare Bainbridge</i>	130
22. Introducing Computer Networks as a Research Tool to First-Year Postgraduates <i>Richard Steward</i>	135

#### **Section IV: Institutional Strategies for Supporting Flexible Learning**

Introduction	140
23. Flexible Learning: Is it as Good for the University as it is for the Students? <i>William Lynch</i>	142
24. Adopting a Mixed-Mode Approach to Teaching and Learning: A Case Study of the University of Luton <i>Stephen Fallows</i>	147
25. Flexible Learning - Where Does the Library Fit in? <i>Tony Cavanagh</i>	153
26. Flexible Learning as a Management Issue <i>Patrick McGhee</i>	160
27. Flexible Access to Learning Resources through Electronic Course Delivery <i>Philip Barker</i>	165

28. An Open Learning Centre at the University of Bristol <i>Cathy Hole</i>	170
29. Staff Development for Flexible Learning at Stockport College <i>Jackie Robinson</i>	175
30. Establishing Flexible Learning in a Conventional Institution – Getting the Strategy Right <i>Sally Anderson</i>	180
31. The Flexible Learning Initiative at Loughborough University <i>Winnie Wade</i>	185
Conclusion	191
Index	195

## **The Editors**

**Rachel Hudson**, Open Learning Facilitator, Faculty of the Built Environment, University of the West of England, Bristol, England

**Sian Maslin-Prothero**, Lecturer, Department of Nursing and Midwifery Studies, Nottingham University, Nottingham, England

**Lyn Oates**, Learning and Teaching Support Manager, Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education, Cheltenham, England

## **The Contributors**

**Sally Anderson**, Flexible Learning Manager, Education Development Unit, Napier University, Edinburgh, Scotland

**Phil Askham**, Senior Lecturer, School of Urban and Regional Studies, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, England

**Clare Bainbridge**, Engineering Subject Librarian, University of the West of England, Bristol, England

**Philip Barker**, Professor of Applied Computing, School of Computing and Mathematics, University of Teeside, Middlesbrough, England

**Rosie Bingham**, Regular Visiting Lecturer, Learning and Teaching Institute/School of Education, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, England

**Don Bratton**, Principal Lecturer, Department of Chemistry, University of Central Lancashire, Preston, England

**Helen Breen**, Academic Co-ordinator, Centre for Professional Development in Club Management, Southern Cross University, Lismore, New South Wales, Australia

**Kathy Buckner**, Lecturer, Department of Communication and Information Studies, Queen Margaret College, Edinburgh, Scotland



*viii The Editors and Contributors*

**Tony Cavanagh**, Document Delivery Librarian, Deakin University, Geelong, Victoria, Australia

**Sybil Cock**, Maths Learning Development and Support, Department of Higher Education and Access Development, University of North London, England

**Maggie Challis**, Senior Lecturer, Learning and Teaching Institute, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, England

**Elisabeth Davenport**, Senior Lecturer, Department of Communication and Information Studies, Queen Margaret College, Edinburgh, Scotland

**David Davies**, Director, Continuing Education Unit, School of Continuing and Professional Education, University of Surrey, Guildford, England

**Sue Drew**, Senior Lecturer, Learning and Teaching Institute, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, England

**Lesley Dunning**, Senior Lecturer in Education Studies, School of Education, University of Wolverhampton, Walsall, England

**Stephen Fallows**, Head of Educational Services Unit and Reader in Educational Development, Educational Services Unit, University of Luton, England

**Robert Fulkerth**, Assistant Professor, School of Technology and Industry, Golden Gate University, San Francisco, California, United States of America

**Philip Garner**, Senior Lecturer in Special Education, School of Education, Brunel University, Twickenham, England

**Philip Gillies-Denning**, Access Programme Manager, Centre for Learning and Teaching, Queen Margaret College, Edinburgh, Scotland

**Maggie Grundy**, Macmillan Lecturer in Cancer Nursing, Associate Faculty of Nursing, Midwifery and Community Studies, The Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, Scotland

**Keith Haddon**, Information Officer, Library and Learning Resource Services, University of Central Lancashire, Preston, England

**Nerilee Hing**, Lecturer, School of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Southern Cross University, Lismore, New South Wales, Australia

**Cathy Hole**, Staff Development Adviser, Department of Staff Development, University of Bristol, England

**Sally Lawton**, Lecturer in Nursing, Associate Faculty of Nursing, Midwifery and Community Studies, The Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, Scotland

**Christopher Longman**, Director, Academic and Professional Development Courses, School of Education, Brunel University, Twickenham, England

**Martin Löschmann**, Reader in Applied German Language, Department of Languages, Kingston University, Kingston-upon-Thames, England

**William Lynch**, Associate Professor and Director of Distance Learning, Department of Educational Leadership, The George Washington University, Washington DC, United States of America

**William Macauley**, Teaching Associate, Department of English, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, United States of America

**Karen McArdle**, Scheme Director, BA in Professional Development, Department of Community and Continuing Education, Northern College, Dundee, Scotland

**Andrina McCormack**, Senior Lecturer/DASET Programme Director, Department of Educational Studies, Northern College, Dundee, Scotland

**Patrick McGhee**, Associate Dean, Faculty of Arts, Sciences and Education, Bolton Institute, Bolton, England

**Ian McGowan**, Head of Department of Community and Continuing Education, Northern College, Dundee, Scotland

**Susanne Mühlhaus**, Teaching and Research Assistant, Department of Languages, Kingston University, Kingston-upon-Thames, England

**David Oldroyd**, Senior Lecturer, Department of Education, University of Bristol, England

**Gian Pagnucci**, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, United States of America

**Poppy Pickard**, Lecturer in Mathematics and Computing, School of Mathematical Sciences, University of North London, England

**Jackie Robinson**, Manager of Flexible Learning Services, Stockport College of Further and Higher Education, Stockport, England

**Lyn Shipway**, Teaching and Learning Adviser, School of Advanced Nursing, Midwifery and Interprofessional Health Studies, Anglia Polytechnic University, Brentwood, England

**Chris Smith**, Senior Lecturer, Department of Psychology, University of Central Lancashire, Preston, England

**Edward Smith**, Head of the Centre for Learning Technologies, University of Central Lancashire, Preston, England

**Richard Steward**, Computer Consultant, Henley-on-Thames, England

**Armida Taylor**, Course Leader BA in Nursing/BA in Community Nursing, School of Nursing, The Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, Scotland

**Jenny Ure**, Development Officer, Centre for Continuing Education, University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen, Scotland

**Winnie Wade**, Flexible Learning Co-ordinator, Flexible Learning Initiative, Loughborough University, Loughborough, England

**Paul Weeks**, Lecturer, School of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Southern Cross University, Lismore, New South Wales, Australia

**Angus Witherby**, Senior Lecturer, Department of Geography and Planning, University of New England, Armidale, New South Wales, Australia

# Introduction

*Rachel Hudson, Sian Maslin-Prothero and Lyn Oates*

## WHY THIS EDITED COLLECTION?

This publication originates from a piece of research supported by the Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA) which investigated the need for staff involved with flexible learning initiatives in higher education to network with each other (Campbell and Hudson 1995). The research revealed a wealth of innovative developments taking place in a wide range of subject disciplines and central services. Since staff from such a diverse range of areas would not normally have the opportunity to meet, this led to the formation of the SEDA Flexible Learning Network, which has the aims of sharing ideas, problems and best practice in flexible learning in higher education across the United Kingdom. In order to promote its aims, the Network formed an electronic discussion group, flexible-learning@mailbase.ac.uk. Similar electronic discussion groups have formed around distance learning in the United States of America (deosl@lists.psu.edu) and the Open and Distance Learning Association of Australia (resodlaa@usq.edu.au). The case studies in this book are drawn from the experiences of members of these three networks and are intended to reflect the diversity of approaches to incorporating flexibility in course design and delivery. The variety of responses detailed in these case studies also underlines the fact that there is no one way to provide flexible learning and that there is no single agreed definition.

## STUDENT-CENTRED, TEACHER-CENTRED OR BOTH?

There is a confusion in the minds of practitioners between the terms open, distance, flexible and resource-based learning, which the literature compounds. Often they are used inter-changeably, sometimes one subsumes the other:

The *A-Z of Open Learning* (Jeffries, Lewis, Meed and Merritt, 1990) highlights the problem: 'Flexible learning. This term has no universally accepted definition. It is perhaps best used to describe forms of education and training which have sought to become more open by responding to the specific needs (eg for materials, support or assessment) and aspirations of individual learners' (p.48).

The *Open Learning Handbook* (Race 1994) also refers to the problems of terminology: 'In some ways... "flexible learning" is the most satisfactory of the three terms [open, distance and flexible learning]. Both "open learning" in its broadest sense, and "distance learning" as a sub-set of open learning, involve giving learners some degree of choice and control. In other words, they introduce elements of flexibility into the learning process' (p.22).

In an unpublished paper, *Open Learning in Higher Education*, Roger Lewis reviews a number of innovations in higher education. He states that some of these studies prefer to use other terms such as resource-based learning, independent learning, self-managed learning and flexible learning. However, he concludes that: 'When defined broadly – as the provision of greater student access to, and choice over, learning – the term "open learning" acceptably covers all the cases described.'

In addition, the literature tends to define flexible learning both in terms of the elements of flexibility needed by students (ie from a student-centred perspective) and from the dimensions of flexibility to be provided (ie from a teacher- or institution-centred perspective). For example, Wade, (1994) defines flexible learning mainly in student-centred terms: 'Flexible learning... is an approach to university education which provides students with the opportunity to take greater *responsibility* for their learning and to be engaged in learning activities and opportunities that meet their own individual needs' (p.12).

MacFarlane (1992) takes a more teacher-centred approach: 'The term [flexible learning] has been used as a banner under which to promote a shift from formal, whole-class didactic teaching towards individual or group management of learning through the provision, by the teacher, of structured resource materials, together with opportunities for the negotiation of tasks (often through specific "learning contracts" drawn up to for-

malize requirements for the individual), self- and peer-assessment, and collaborative group work, often on “real-life” projects’ (p.5).

Thomas (1995) proposes a model for flexible learning which focuses on the dynamics of the learning process which take place between the expert, the learner and the learning resource. In this model the needs of the learner are just one of many elements which determine the dynamics of the learning process.

## **ELEMENTS OF FLEXIBILITY**

When we started collecting case studies for this book, we were looking to illustrate our view that flexible learning is essentially student-centred learning, and is about meeting student needs using whatever methods of teaching and learning are most appropriate. At the same time, we wished to dispel the commonly held view that flexible learning is concerned mainly with the use of specially prepared resource-based learning materials designed to replace tutor contact.

The brief for authors stated that we were looking for case studies which were aimed at improving access, giving students control and choice over what and how they learned, helping them take responsibility for their learning, and providing support appropriate to individual learner’s needs. These four elements:

- access;
- control;
- responsibility;
- support.

were identified as the key concepts underpinning flexible learning in a piece of cross-sectoral research conducted by the Scottish Council for Educational Technology (1993).

Not surprisingly, while emphasizing these important elements, the case studies described initiatives from both student-centred and teacher- or institution-centred perspectives. While they all had clear learning objectives and had been evaluated in terms of learning success, they also illustrated responses to a range of external drivers pushing for greater flexibility in course design and delivery.

## **DRIVERS FOR FLEXIBILITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Until this point, we had held the view that since flexible learning is about meeting student needs, the main drivers behind the increasing interest in flexible learning in higher education would be related to changes in the student body. Our case studies revealed a more complex picture.

### **Pedagogy**

The majority of case studies illustrate how lecturers have introduced greater flexibility in order to improve the quality of the student learning experience. Their aims have been to promote greater active learning, more experiential learning and to encourage reflective learning.

### **Cuts in funding**

Higher education is experimenting with a number of different teaching and learning methods at the moment, many of them driven by the need to be more resource efficient. There is a general belief that offering students greater choice through modularity and encouraging them to take greater responsibility for their learning are both initiatives motivated as much by resource constraints as by the desire to meet student needs. In addition, greater flexibility in course delivery is being introduced in a bid to find new markets and so increase or maintain income.

### **Increasing diversity of students**

Tremendous changes have taken place in the student population, and these have been charted in the recently published Institute for Employment Studies (IES) Report (Connor 1996). In the ten years preceding 1993/4, the number of people entering full-time higher education in the United Kingdom has increased by over 76 per cent. However, it is not just the increase in student numbers, but also the increasing diversity of students which has led to the need for greater flexibility.

There is now a broader range of acceptable entry qualifications for higher education and this has implications for the skills that students bring with them. One third of full-time first degree students enter with qualifications other than 'A' levels or Highers (Connor 1996). While school leavers remain a significant proportion of higher education recruits, they arrive with different learning experiences. Some will arrive with good information technology skills, often familiar with applications that are more up-to-date than those on the student computer network – but these new skills

may have been learned at the expense of others. There was a 203 per cent increase in the number of mature students (25 +) entering higher education between 1988/9 and 1993/4 (Connor 1996). They differ from the school leaver by usually having experience of work (sometimes at a managerial level), of raising a family and having good time-management skills. It is clear from this description that the individual members of a class of the late 1990s will have very different approaches to study. They will need targeted support to help them build on their different strengths and overcome their different weaknesses, and the opportunity to negotiate a programme of studies that meet their varied personal and professional development needs.

Today, many students have to juggle their studies with other major commitments. The cuts in student grants means that many full-time students have to find part-time employment and have reduced choice about where they go to university. Mature students often have dependent relatives to care for, and may continue to hold down a permanent job while studying part-time. Higher education courses need to be more flexible to help students cope with so many conflicting demands on their time. Students need more choice over the time, place and pace of their studies.

### **Equal opportunities**

The demand for flexibility is seemingly endless. The IES Report (Connor 1996) reveals that the current student body does not reflect the diversity of society as a whole. Most higher education institutions have equal opportunity policy statements committing themselves to improving access to their programmes. If these policies are to be implemented, courses will need to be designed and delivered in ways which meet the needs of all potential students, including those with disabilities, those from different ethnic cultures, residents of remote areas, shift workers, those who work in varying locations, and those who need to make one or more mid-life career changes, and so on.

### **Labour market requirements**

Students are changing, funding is changing, and so are the requirements of the labour market. Everyone is expected to continually update their knowledge and skills. No one expects a job for life. The aim of the European Year of Lifelong Learning (1996) was to raise awareness regarding the concept of lifelong learning and to develop initiatives at local, national and international levels (European Commission [EC] 1995). The emphasis of the EC is on the role of education and training in developing lifelong learning. The EC's accent is on lifelong education.



## **Transferable skills**

Students need to be employable. The rapid pace of change has meant that employers have pushed for a change in emphasis from 'knowledge' to the development of the skills of the 'knower' so that companies can become more innovative and flexible and can act effectively in a changing world. Organizations are now seeking a multi-skilled, responsive and adaptable workforce who are prepared to be lifelong learners, adapting and changing as required by the organization (English National Board 1994). Since the concept of a job for life no longer exists, so people need to be self-motivated and make conscious decisions about their futures.

## **STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK**

This book has been structured to show the diversity of initiatives that are taking place in higher education in response to the drivers outlined above.

### **Flexibility for learners on campus**

The majority of students in higher education are 'campus-based'. The case studies in this section illustrate a range of ways in which greater flexibility is being offered to these students. Most describe flexible developments which are taking place at a module or unit level. For example, computer-assisted learning packages, e-mail and resource-based learning materials are being used to give students more choice about when and where they learn. Students are being offered choice in their assessment schedule, and in one example, can select a 'judicious mix' of self-study materials, lectures, tutorials and seminars. Several of the case studies involve the use of technologies such as the World Wide Web, computer conferencing and e-mail to give students greater flexibility over when and where they study. While many students are still using the universities' computing facilities to take part in these modules, several have been able to communicate from home.

## **Flexibility for work-based learners**

Perhaps because the case studies in this section are concerned with students who are identifiably different from 'traditional' full-time students, they take a more student-centred approach. These case studies refer to the need for negotiated learning to ensure relevance to the students' working situation; the need to build in reflection-on-practice and experiential learning; and to the development of assessment methods such as portfolios and profiling to aid reflective learning and professional and personal development.

## **Flexible approaches to skills development**

The case studies in this section illustrate a range of flexible modes of delivery adopted by higher education institutions in order to meet the challenge of developing students' transferable skills and skills for lifelong learning. For example, the use of handbooks and tutorials to ensure that postgraduates can make effective use of campus computer facilities for research; the development of a wide range of resource-based learning materials for a campus-wide programme aimed at developing effective learning skills. The case studies also illustrate ways of identifying and overcoming barriers to lifelong learning. For example, by establishing partnerships with the community from which the learners are drawn; by including confidence building activities; and by establishing a range of mechanisms to ensure appropriate support, including mentors, drop-in sessions and student networks.

## **Institutional strategies for supporting flexible learning**

Several of the case studies in this section concern initiatives which have been supported because the institution wishes to learn more about the benefits of 'new' teaching and learning methods, perhaps in the hope that they will help them cope with reduced contact time. Nevertheless, the emphasis of most case studies, while not being wholly student-centred, is essentially on meeting the needs of students. Thus, the final section, on institutional strategies, describes a series of initiatives to provide a framework in which flexible learning can take place, and reflects the importance which higher education is placing on flexible learning. The case studies include examples of a mixed-mode modular programme, local and remote access to electronic learning resources, and an institution-wide strategy for learning skills development.

## REFERENCES

- Campbell, F and Hudson, R (1995) 'Flexible Learning in Higher Education: Effective Methods of Staff Networking', in: Percival, F; Land, R and Edgar-Nevill (eds) (1995) *Aspects of Education and Training Technology XXVIII: Computer Assisted and Open Access Education*, Kogan Page, London
- Connor, H *et al.*, (1996) *University Challenge, Student Choices in the Twenty-first Century*, IES Report no. 306, Institute for Employment Studies, Brighton
- European Commission (1995) *European Year of Lifelong Learning. Guidelines*, European Commission, Brussels
- English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting (1994) 'Creating Lifelong Learners: Partnerships for Care'. *Guidelines for the Implementation of the United Kingdom Central Council Standards for Education and Practice Following Registration*, ENB, London
- Jeffries, C; Lewis, R; Meed, J and Merritt, R (1990) *The A-Z of Open Learning*, National Extension College, Cambridge
- Lewis, R (1996) *Open Learning in Higher Education*, Unpublished
- MacFarlane, A (1992) *Teaching and Learning in an Expanding Higher Education System*, The Committee of Scottish University Principals, Edinburgh
- Race, P (1994) *Open Learning Handbook – Promoting Quality in Designing and Delivering Flexible Learning*, Kogan Page, London
- Scottish Centre for Educational Technology (1993) *The Co-ordination of Flexible Learning in Scotland – A Cross Sectoral Perspective*, SCET, Glasgow
- Thomas, D (1995) *Flexible Learning Strategies in Higher and Further Education*, Cassell, London
- Wade, W; Hodgkinson, K; Smith, A and Arfield, J (eds) (1994) *Flexible Learning in Higher Education*, Kogan Page, London

# SECTION I

## *Flexibility for Learners on Campus*

---

### INTRODUCTION

Since the majority of students in higher education attend a university campus for many of their learning activities, this section features a number of case studies designed to introduce greater flexibility into campus-based learning. All the case studies involve no more than a single unit or module – sometimes less – so it is probably fair to assume that in the majority of cases the students' overall learning experience remains much less flexible.

In most cases, the modules or units featured have been taught on previous occasions, using more conventional methods, but a range of factors have led to a shift away from traditional patterns of learning and to the introduction of greater flexibility. All the changes were introduced with the aim of improving the quality of the learning experience and being more responsive to student needs. For example, peer-assisted study sessions were introduced to try to overcome high failure rates and help students develop effective learning strategies (Witherby, Chapter 4). In another case (Dunning, Chapter 2), it seemed 'bizarre' to lecture about flexible learning. Sometimes the need for greater flexibility arose because of the changing nature of the students, for example, independent learning strategies were introduced because students with very different language abilities selected the same language module (Mühlhaus and Löschmann, Chapter 3).

Most of the case studies aim to give students greater control over the time, pace and place of their studies. They also aim to give students greater control and choice over what and how they learn, often by giving them access to a wide range of learning materials and helping them to develop effective learning skills. Some of the benefits of increased flexibility have been extended to staff – for example, the introduction of e-mail has meant that lecturers can choose the time when they respond to student queries (Smith, Chapter 5).

Several case studies clearly have some experimental aspect to them – the departments or institutions wish to learn more about the benefits of

these new methods of delivery: whether greater flexibility will enable them to recruit more overseas students (Dunning, Chapter 2) or whether multimedia is an effective method of teaching (Smith *et al.*, Chapter 7).

While some of the case studies make clear reference to diminished resources as a driver for change (e-mail 'came to the rescue' when there were no available rooms or staff to teach 72 psychology students (Smith, Chapter 5) and 'the few contact hours now available' for the language module could no longer be used for teaching content (Mühlhaus and Löschmann, Chapter 3)), most are less specific. In almost all the case studies it seems that in order to introduce greater flexibility, resources have been redeployed rather than reduced. The lecturers' time has been spent developing learning materials, running workshops to improve students' learning strategies, responding to e-mail queries, and marking reflective journals, rather than on transmitting content via lectures.

Increased flexibility for students has led to a change in the role of the lecturer. By giving students more control over when, where, what and how they learn, lecturers are spending less time presenting information, and more time as learning facilitators: progress checking, motivating students, developing students' learning strategies, establishing peer support, holding 'remedial' workshops or lectures in response to student problems.

In all the case studies, the overall timescale for studying the module remains inflexible, and much of the assessment remains non-negotiable. It seems likely that the constraints of organizing a modular programme for full-time students are responsible for this lack of flexibility. Dunning (Chapter 2) states that students welcomed the fixed timescale and clear direction regarding the assessment.

In several case studies, increased flexibility has been offered by the use of e-mail, computer conferencing and the World Wide Web, for example Buckner and Davenport (Chapter 6). As students gain access to the Internet, this will mean that essentially campus-based students now have the opportunity to study almost an entire module from home. This could eventually lead to the blurring of the distinction between 'campus-based' and 'distance' learners. However, as the online 'Business Writing' course shows (Fulkerth, Chapter 1), many students do not have access to computers or the Internet at home, and must rely on using the computer labs on the university campus.