Example on the use of a forum to preview video conferences

During the project we have been connecting student groups between Masaryk UNiversity in Brno, Czech Republic and Aberystwyth University in Wales. We have also connected between students and our corporate project partners for simulation activities in business and industry.

The aim of our video conferences varies across different courses, which some users of this site will know from our discussions and presentations at conferences in the Czech Republic, UK, Finland, Norway, Netherlands and Spain (conference documents can be found by following the link to “Invite Project Homepage” and “Results”.

In one course the focus has been on the development of student teamwork projects and presentations. Students exchange information on their projects via forum and e-mail


Below is an example of how students exchange information before conferences:

- Send an e-mail to request membership
- Please include
  - Name
  - Organisation/institution
  - Main interest in video conferencing
This kind of preparation facilitates significant discussion time in the actual video conference connection, reducing the amount of one-sided presentation (time spent on this varies significantly). The video conference becomes a visual extension of the forum, reinforcing stronger social ties and fostering much greater interest in the work of other students and motivation to exchange and communicate ideas.

Motivation can be problematic among students, especially where learning outcomes are different between different courses. In the Aberystwyth side of the video link, students are from different European countries and are studying for up to one year in the UK on an Erasmus exchange programme. The course they study at Aberystwyth "Advanced Communication in English in an Academic Context" provides credits towards their degree, so there is a high expectation on the work they do. Academic projects conducted by Aberystwyth students via video...
Invite Video Conferencing

conferencing so far include:

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<td><strong>Death ceremonies in ancient Egypt</strong></td>
<td><strong>Food restrictions in Islamic cultures</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Problems in learning languages</strong></td>
<td><strong>Immigration and emigration</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Aristotle: his life, methods and science</strong></td>
<td><strong>Changes in behaviour and attitudes across generations</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Food customs and celebrations</strong></td>
<td><strong>Cultural differences between GB, Spain, Japan and Turkey</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Body language and non-verbal communication</strong></td>
<td><strong>Manufactured consent: or how to reclaim the media</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Global Warming</strong></td>
<td><strong>Renewable energies and alternative technologies</strong></td>
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Students at Masaryk University, develop similar teamwork profiles and negotiate project topics within their own courses, e.g. English for law. Topics may be expected to have a legal focus as it is a requirement of their course. During the exchange, however, students appear to benefit significantly from looking at their work from an authentic audience and participation perspective. Many of these topics are too specific for a general audience who has not studied in this area. The implication of this is that all topics have a general or social aspect through which we can interact with a non-specialist audience.

A good example of this is one of the Masaryk student projects on Czech government policy on school fees. For an outside audience, this would be a difficult topic to generate meaningful discussion from the outset. What the group decided to do though proved very dynamic, as they engaged Spanish, Finnish, German and French students in discussion on how much they pay for university studies in their own country.

It should also be mentioned here that the project topics presented above are part of the students' final course assessment in Aberystwyth, but for the video conferences they do not receive grades. At this stage we have decided to keep this as a social space within the course, due to lack of objective criteria from long term experience on how to mark, or give a grade for, a video conference discussion or presentation?

- How do you use video conferencing in your own institutions?
- Do you have criteria by which you could assess a video conference?

http://users.aber.ac.uk/jpm/invite/practice.htm

26/11/2008
Would you like to send us a short paper to include on these pages?
You can discuss these in our Google group "invite-vcv": topic "How do you use video conferencing?" or "Assessment for video conferences".