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Abstract

**Distance Teaching and Learning without Walls:  
Developing academics' skills in video-conferencing in the  
CREO Project at the University of Sydney**

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In March 2003, The University of Sydney expanded the range of course offerings to its undergraduate students at its Orange campus, located 260 km west of Sydney in the Central Tablelands of NSW. Along with the existing courses of the Faculty of Rural Management, students at Orange can now begin courses in Liberal Studies, Pharmacy and Computer Science without leaving home and moving to the city to do so.

This expansion of course offerings has been managed and monitored as a special project through University's 'Centre for Rural Education: Orange' (CREO) Taskforce group. A key focus of the teaching and learning design in these distance-based courses is the use of video-lecturing, supported by local tutors, as well as online learning activities and print-based distance education materials.

This paper reports on the first phase of the Videoconferencing Training and Development Program (October 2002 - March 2003) that supports the CREO Taskforce initiative. The program represents a commitment on the part of the University to ensuring the provision of a quality distance education experience for the students in Orange.

The program is designed to assist the Sydney-based academic staff in developing their skills and confidence in video-lecturing, streamed lectures and online study modes. The lecturers, most of whom were very accustomed to on-campus, face-to-face teaching, have had to adapt quickly to new teaching practices and, in particular, to 'best practice' in video-lecturing at a distance and in online distance education.

The activities and outcomes of the academic development program will be described by reference to evaluation data and material collected from sources that structure the program (evaluation surveys, academic network meetings, network mailing list postings).

The presentation will conclude with some reflections on the outcomes of the program to date and an overview of how the program is being adapted to support the expansion of teaching and learning via videoconferencing across other faculties and campuses of the University.