Evaluation Report for the Vista Help Course

Executive Summary

In response to faculty members' request for some kinds of help and the growing of the frequently asked questions, the department of technology-enhanced learning initiated the project for developing the Vista Help course in the summer of 2007. The course consists of help requests and the frequently asked questions.

The Vista Help course is intended for faculty members at UNCW who are currently delivering course in the Vista learning management system. The evaluation for the course was requested to assess the usability and adequacy of the existing Help items to faculty members while at the same time make any course improvements and recommendations under the continuing development of the Help items within the Vista Help course.

Data collected through a survey with ten items, eight items with a 5-point Likert scale and two open-ended items. The recipients of the survey were faculty members who once asked some kinds of help, a total number of 215.

The analysis results of data shows that the Help items are really useful and worth continuing development. Based on the results, some recommendations both in improvement of existing Help items and for construction of future Help items are made below:

- Clarify the purpose of the Help items to differentiate them easily
- Avoid any jargon within the instruction for Help items to make them understandable
- Use 'text + visual' instruction for Help items as possible to facilitate faculty members' following
- Distinguish the Help item title and its description in vision, e.g., font size, font style.
- Make consistent among and within the Help items as possible by applying the principles of Contrast, Alignment, Repetition, and Proximity (CARP)
- Take the above recommendations into account when developing the future Help items
- Classify the Help items into relevant folders with a precise description within the Help course
- Expand the scope of the Help course to the student that involved in faculty's online course teaching.
- Develop various delivery formats of the Help course to reach out more faculty members in need, for instance, the Captivate format
- Respond proactively to the interventions of emerging technology into the learning management system

Introduction

The department of technology-enhanced learning was instituted to support online course delivery across the campus. With the popularity of online course delivery among faculty members and students, the online course offerings at UNCW are growing fast recently. However, the staff in the department remains constant, two professionals plus two part-time graduate assistants. To delivery adequate technical support with such a limited staff, the department of

technology-enhanced learning is moving towards be proactive to the situation. The initiation of the Vista Help course project is one of the steps.

The Vista Help Course is developed for the faculty teaching web-based and/or web-enhanced course via Vista across the campus. It consists of the frequently asked questions and the helps requested by faculty members, and the questions anticipated by the department (all called the Help items below). The frequently asked questions were collected through remedy tickets via email or phone. And sometimes they cannot be answered effectively just using a couple of words via email or phone. The Vista Help Course, on the one hand, makes relevant vista supports available and handy 24/7 to faculty at the same time. On the other hand, it saves limited human resources in the department of technology-enhanced learning while at the same time enables the limited human resources to commit other service for faculty. The ultimate purpose of the course is to make faculty members be able to solve some questions on themselves by visiting the help items.

The evaluation objectives of the Vista Help Course are: (1) to assess adequacy of the Vista Help items in answering faculty members' questions related to online course teaching through Vista; (2) to make improvements in Vista Help items; (3) to make recommendations in the following development of the future Vista Help items, which arise with the continuing use of Vista in faculty teaching online course.

Data Collection and Methodology

Data were collected through a survey with ten items, eight items with a 5-point Likert scale and two open-ended items. The 5-point Likert scale is the type of agreement (Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1)). The survey was delivered electronically to a total of 215 faculty members in Vista on Nov 6, 2007. These faculty members asked some kinds of help to the department of technology-enhanced learning. So far, there are just five responses returned. According to the department of technology-enhanced learning, the key reasons for the low return rate are:

(1) The Help items for the Vista Help course are still under the development.
(2) They have not started to do a lot of advertisements yet.
(3) Majority of faculty members feel comfortable with the existing Help items.

On the other hand, the evaluation at the beginning of the Vista Help course is to measure the currency and adequacy of the Help items that have been developed. From the perspective, the department of technology-enhanced learning thinks that data from just five respondents are still valuable and worthy to be analyzed and reported

Data Analysis and Findings

In the section, data from the first eight items within the survey are analyzed and reported separately from the last two open-ended items. Based on data collected, the data analysis results of the survey are reported below.

The first eight items within the survey

Frequency Distribution Table

	Strongly Agree 5	Agree 4	Neutral 3	Disagree 2	Strongly Disagree 1	# of Respondents
1. Help items are easy to	1 (20%)	1	1 (20%)	2 (40%)	0	5
2. Help items are easy to find.	1 (20%)	1	0	3 (60%)	0	5
3. Help items are related to course development.	0	4 (80%)	0	0	1 (20%)	5
4. Help items answer my question.	0	3 (60%)	1 (20%)	1 (20%)	0	5
5. Relevant visuals are included when necessary.	1 (20%)	0	2 (40%)	2 (40%)	0	5
6. Help instructions are correct.	1 (20%)	2 (40%)	2 (40%)	0	0	5
7. Additional resources are still needed.	2 (40%)	3 (60%)	0	0	0	5
8. The Help course is useful.	1 (20%)	3 (60%)	1 (20%)	0	0	5

Item one: two (40%) respondents agreed that Help items are easy to understand, one (20%) respondent hold a neutral stand, and two (40%) respondents disagreed the item statement.

Item two: two (40%) respondents agreed that Help items are easy to find, and while three (60%) respondents thought that Help items are not easy to find.

Item three: four (80%) respondents agreed that Help items are related to course development, and just one (20%) respondent didn't think so.

Item four: three (60%) respondents agreed that Help items answer the question, one (20%) respondent neither agreed nor disagreed with it, and one (20%) respondent responded with 'Disagree'.

Item five: just one (20%) respondent thought that relevant visuals are included when necessary, two (40%) respondents checked 'Neutral', and two (40%) respondents disagreed the item statement.

Item six: three (60%) responses indicated that Help instructions are correct, two (40%) respondents answered 'Neutral'.

Item seven: all respondents (100%) thought that additional resources are needed.

Item eight: four (80%) respondents thought that Help items are useful, and one (20%) respondent was in the middle.

Summary of the above findings: Four (80%) respondents strongly agree or agree that the Help items are related to online course development and the Help items are useful. This shows that the Help items are related and useful. Three (60%) respondents strongly agree or agree that the Help

items answer the question and the Help instructions are correct. This indicates that the Help items are explained adequately. Five (100%) respondents strongly agree or agree that additional resources are needed. This reveals that faculty members need more resources for help with online course teaching. But for item one, there are two respondents who disagree that the Help items are easy to understand and one respondent who neither agree nor disagree the item statement. This indicates that additional work is needed to make the Help items more understandable. Two (40%) respondents neither agree nor disagree that relevant visuals are included when necessary, and two (40%) respondents disagree that relevant visuals are included when necessary. This shows that relevant visuals for instructions are not adequate. For item two, there are three (60%) respondents disagree that the Help items are easy to find. This reveals a badly-organized structure within the Help items.

The last two open-ended items

Item nine: If you visited the Help items and you didn't find the answer to your question, please specify your question

Of five respondents, four respondents responded this item and three respondents specified their question, ".ink files… sometimes they occur in assignments and cannot be viewed or printed… what instructions should be given to the students to eliminate this issue. Also students with new computers (Window Vista) how can the word files be converted for viewing in assignments", " Seemed like I had to keep trying different approaches to find out how to upload and transfer an assessment from one course shell to another. It finally explained but it took a lot of time searching", "I was not able to attend the help session on the use of Wimba. Is there another opportunity for me to do this?"

Three (60%) respondents expressed Help items that have not been developed in existing Help course.

Item ten: To make future Help items more useful and more effective for you, please make one or two suggestions about the Help items, including current and/or future construction.

Four (80%) respondents answered the question, and of them, three (60%) respondents made one or two suggestions. One responded "Allow the page open so that you can see the page as well as the help information. You cannot open multiple pages in Blackboard… why?" Another responded "putting the tutorials (video) in the help course would be useful. Also, creating some practice activities with captivate might be useful. " The last one responded "help tab would be better and if there was an area of FAQ that would help a lot as well."

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Based on the data analysis results and summary of findings, it is evident that we can draw a conclusion that the Help items are useful to faculty teaching web-based course and/or web-enhanced course through Vista and worth developing the following items in the future. 100% respondents expressed that more additional resources are needed. To serve and extend the function of the course, I have some recommendations for the department of technology-enhanced learning below:

Recommendations in improvement of existing Help items

- Clarify the purpose of the Help items to differentiate them easily
- Avoid any jargon within the instruction for Help items to make them understandable
- Use 'text + visual' instruction for Help items as possible to facilitate faculty members' following
- Distinguish the Help item title and its description in vision, e.g., font size, font style.
- Make consistent among and within the Help items as possible by applying the principles of Contrast, Alignment, Repetition, and Proximity (CARP)

Recommendations in construction of the Help course

- Take the above recommendations into account when developing the future Help items
- Classify the Help items into relevant folders with a precise description within the Help course
- Expand the scope of the Help course to the student that involved in faculty's online course teaching.
- Develop various delivery formats of the Help course to reach out more faculty members in need, for instance, the Captivate format
- Respond proactively to the interventions of emerging technology into the learning management system