



香港城市大學  
City University of Hong Kong

專業 創新 胸懷全球  
Professional · Creative  
For The World

# CityU Scholars

## Learning through Blogging Graduate Student Experiences DAVISON, Robert

**Published in:**  
eLearn Magazine

**Published:** 01/01/2008

**Document Version:**  
Post-print, also known as Accepted Author Manuscript, Peer-reviewed or Author Final version

**Publication record in CityU Scholars:**  
[Go to record](#)

**Published version (DOI):**  
[10.1145/1361075.1361081](https://doi.org/10.1145/1361075.1361081)

**Publication details:**  
DAVISON, R. (2008). Learning through Blogging: Graduate Student Experiences. *eLearn Magazine*, 2008(2), 3 - . <https://doi.org/10.1145/1361075.1361081>

### **Citing this paper**

Please note that where the full-text provided on CityU Scholars is the Post-print version (also known as Accepted Author Manuscript, Peer-reviewed or Author Final version), it may differ from the Final Published version. When citing, ensure that you check and use the publisher's definitive version for pagination and other details.

### **General rights**

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the CityU Scholars portal is retained by the author(s) and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights. Users may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain.

### **Publisher permission**

Permission for previously published items are in accordance with publisher's copyright policies sourced from the SHERPA RoMEO database. Links to full text versions (either Published or Post-print) are only available if corresponding publishers allow open access.

### **Take down policy**

Contact [lbscholars@cityu.edu.hk](mailto:lbscholars@cityu.edu.hk) if you believe that this document breaches copyright and provide us with details. We will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

© ACM 2008. This is the author's version of the work. It is posted here for your personal use. Not for redistribution. The definitive Version of Record was published in eLearn, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1145/1361075>.

## Learning through Blogging: Graduate Student Experiences

Robert Davison

Associate Professor

Dept of Information Systems

City University of Hong Kong

isrobert@cityu.edu.hk

Communication is a fundamental part of learning. As instructors, we communicate with each other, as well as with our students, who also interact with us and each other. Indeed, we can go further and assert that communication is a fundamental aspect of the human experience. It is not surprising therefore that a wide variety of IT-based communication tools have been developed, and that many of these have found application in the context of learning.

Nevertheless, it is also true that, at least in more traditional ‘chalk-talk’ forms of ‘learning’, participating (or chatting) by students is discouraged or prohibited. Furthermore, even when IT-supported communication is accepted in the andragogical space, the ‘older’ tools such as email tend to dominate, with recently developed tools such as instant messaging and weblogs relegated, perhaps by virtue of their perceived informality, to a less preferred status. However, over the last few years, I have successfully incorporated a blogging assignment into the coursework component of my graduate level (MBA and similar) classes. What happens is as follows:

These courses typically include a substantial coursework requirement (in addition to examinations). Roughly 1/3 of the coursework marks come from the weblog. First, I set up a class blog (usually at Xanga). Then, each student in the class is required to create his/her own blog, also on Xanga. Next, I, as the owner of the class blog, ‘subscribe’ to all the student blogs – so that I can see what they are all writing (unless they mark it as ‘private’) – and they can also, through the class blog, see each other’s entries, though of course they may also subscribe to one another’s blogs. Each student is required to write 4-8 entries (the exact number depends on the class) of at least 200 words during the course of the semester. In each entry, they should reflect on their learning in the class and explain how this learning can be applied to their organisational context (all students study part-time, working full time in the day). In reality, most students write many more entries than the minimum required. They also read each other’s entries, and comment on them, as do I as the instructor. While the blog writing is motivated as a class assignment, student enthusiasm for the activity is contagious: once a critical mass of active student bloggers is established (and of course, there are some who steadfastly refuse to have anything to do with it, incentives and penalties notwithstanding), off they go!

The learning that occurs is at least bi-focal. Firstly, by getting the students to reflect on what they have learned in class, they are in the position to extract some of their tacit understanding and explicitly document it in the form of a blog. That this reflection is at least in part organisationally focused is an extra benefit, because the students often pepper their entries with details about their work contexts and why (or why not) a particular IT application would be appropriate. Better still, if, say, we have been discussing ERP systems implementation, they will come back with examples of how their own company failed dramatically (and expensively) to implement ERP.

Secondly, by both reading and commenting on others’ blogs, so they start to learn from each other – without the instructor being too directly involved. Of course, I do read and comment on each blog entry as well, independently of the students, giving constructive and positive

feedback where possible. This can be a time taking exercise, depending on the size of the class. It is best to check the blogs every few days or less in order to prevent an overflow of unread, uncommented new blog entries from building up.

A hidden benefit of these blogs is in class itself. Generally, the rooms I teach in have a PC for each student, but no software explicitly designed to support brainstorming. Weblog tools like Xanga, however, are ideal brainstorming applications: simply create the discussion topics as entries in the class blog, and then ask everyone to login and go to the class blog. They can see the discussion topics – and submit their brainstorm ideas as comments. They can also comment on each other. For quieter students, of whom there are many in Hong Kong, this provides a much less threatening opportunity for them to communicate and share ideas – at their own pace. It is all down to communication – and finding the right tools for the right people at the right time and for the right task. But blogs are versatile and definitely deserve greater attention in the classroom.