Project History

e-Tasks was started in 2003 by two faculty from Abu Dhabi Men's College, with 180 students on a single WebCT site. After two years it was taken up by Abu Dhabi Women's College in early 2005. It has since extended to Dubai and Sharjah, with more than **1600** registrations in 2006/7, of both male and female students. It continues to be managed from one campus by the project leaders.

Course Design

Students are given a programme of tasks, with a weekly or fortnightly schedule throughout the semester and work on completion of e-Tasks in their own time, enabling them to work at a pace suitable for each individual.

All tasks are either chosen or written with our students in mind, taking into account their needs, interests, and styles of learning. Students decide the order in which they complete their tasks and many take the reading quizzes more than once in order to improve their scores.

The colorful interface with animated graphics allows for quick association to content without detracting from the learning process. Learners are never more than two clicks away from content. Students comment that e-Tasks is easy to use, the site is easy to navigate, and they find e-Tasks an enjoyable learning experience.

Interaction & Collaboration

Students are required to post a specified number of messages on the discussion board, for which they are also encouraged to contribute topics. Two written assignments per week must be emailed or posted to tutors. Two authentic reading tasks a week must also be completed. To date, **40,024** individual readings have been undertaken.

So far, we have had over **44,110** discussion board messages posted in 3 years. Many students post far more than required, and some read all postings. The discussion boards are dynamic, interesting and very popular with the students, who seem to make more effort towards the quality of their postings for their peers.

Discussion board topics are selected to give students the chance to discuss issues that are important to them; for instance friendship, family, culture and traditions, Shaikh Zayed, Ramadan and Eid.

Technology

Using WebCT as a host and management system we link to a number of different sites for listening, reading and speaking practice. Quizzes are produced in-house using Respondus and Hot Potatoes. Teacher-produced writing tasks are uploaded in Microsoft Word for printing or emailing.

كلِّيـات التقنية العليا
HIGHER COLLEGES OF TECHNOLOGY

**Welcome to Semester 5 e-Tasks @HCT
Independent, directed online study for English**

OPEN 24 HOURS

Tuesday 17 October 2006

e-Tasks Schedule (to print)   e-Reading   My Grades   e-Discussion

e-Listening   e-Grammar   e-Writing   English-Arabic Dictionary

We can track usage, monitor study habits, and check grades. The structure of WebCT is appropriate for our approach to course organisation and means we are able to provide weekly progress reports to all 50 teachers on six campuses.

The discussion board usage is observed, providing at the same time insights into our students' interests and attitudes and stimulating ideas for new tasks.

Assessment

A percentage of English coursework marks are allocated for e-Tasks and completion is compulsory. e-Tasks has a variety of assessment and reporting procedures. Some tasks are automatically marked, and some are trackable; writings are corrected by the teacher, while some tasks require self-assessment.

Students are responsible for compiling a record of work done, and marks attained, encouraging responsibility and organizational skills. Contributions to the discussion board are neither corrected nor graded, allowing the students freedom of scope and encouraging fluency and genuine communication.

Learner Support

e-Tasks encourages independence and gives the students the satisfaction of being able to complete a considerable amount of work alone. Initially one class period a week is allocated to e-Tasks, but eventually the students will be working in their own time. They seek little help from their teachers, and treat them more as consultants, turning a good deal more to their peers.

We have incorporated students' FAQs into a student online guide. We have included previous students' work to serve as writing models.

Many students proceed beyond the prescribed syllabus, completing the optional extra reading and writing tasks that are available.

Project Evaluation

Being web-based, e-Tasks offers 24-hour access and it is normal to find students logging from home at weekends and in the early hours. Some cohorts have been able to continue studying English through e-Tasks while on work placement.

Since its inception, we have received over **1,605** student responses to our integrated online survey with overwhelmingly positive reactions and great appreciation from our learners:

- **93%** said they found e-Tasks useful
- **88%** felt their English had improved by doing e-Tasks
- **82%** said they enjoyed e-Tasks
- **83%** said the e-Tasks instructions were clear
- **81%** said they found e-Tasks easy to use
- **73.5%** said that e-Tasks were at the right level
- **61%** said the discussion board was good writing practice
- **57%** said e-Tasks was a lot of work

What students say about e-Tasks:

"Personally I encourage e-Tasks work because:
- It gives students the chance to share their thoughts and ideas.
- It puts all students in equal circumstances by giving them the chance to do assignments any time and any day that is suitable for them as long as there is a deadline for submitting.
- It gives the students a chance to be more creative.
- It saves lots of time for both students and teachers.
- It's easy to contact teachers by e-mail.
- With e-Tasks students won't find any excuses for not doing the homework.
- It prepares students to be more responsible and act maturely.
- Moreover, its combination between using computer skills and practicing English helps them to build both.
That's why I like e-Tasks"

Salama, Abu Dhabi Women's College - May 2005

What teachers say about e-Tasks:

- The response from students in terms of their motivation to do the work has been better than with any previous online activities.
- e-Tasks …….. have easily been the most successful of all the WebCT-delivered English programs. It is pedagogically sound, well organised, reliable, and very motivating for students…..
- It's something that makes the students feel good about themselves.
- It promotes students to become independent learners through meaningful tasks, with instant feedback measuring their progress.
- e-Tasks hold the students' attention

Awards

Finalist
'Best Teacher Project'
UAE Educational I.T. Challenge **2004** & **2006**

Chair Academy's International
Exemplary Leader Award **2006**

More information

For further information, please contact the Project Leaders:

Sheila Andon
☎ 00971 2 4048328
▤ 00971 2 4451571
✉   sheila.andon@hct.ac.ae

Peter Waters
☎ 00971 2 4048386
▤ 00971 2 4451571
✉   peter.waters@hct.ac.ae

كلِّيـات التقـنية العليا
HIGHER COLLEGES OF TECHNOLOGY

e-Tasks
for English

Project Aims

e-Tasks is a programme of independent, directed online study, designed for pre-intermediate learners of English. Activities direct students to the internet, offering numerous opportunities for a hands-on learning experience and English language practice and development.

The aims of the project are:

- To give the students the chance to interact with and experience much more English than allowed for by their scheduled class hours.
- To enable further practice of the various reading, writing, speaking and listening skills.
- To help build a bridge towards self-directed study.
- To foster the learning strategies of organising study time, planning and self-pacing; checking and correcting, assessing own performance; choosing the level of difficulty at which to work.
- To introduce students to a variety of resources where they can find appropriate, professional practice and skills development tasks beyond the e-Tasks syllabus.

Independent, directed online study