STUDENT EVALUATION OF STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES IN E-LEARNING IN IRELAND

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Introduction

This report forms part of an investigation into student evaluation of student support services in elearning in four European countries: Ireland, Norway, Germany and Italy.

A scientifically designed questionnaire using a 5 point Likert scale was developed for application to students studying in eLearning courses today and is attached as an appendix to this report. The focus of the questionnaire was to ascertain student use of, student satisfaction with, and student need for system-rich eLearning student support services.

The data was collected in Ireland, Norway, Italy and Germany and from disparate groups of students: telecommunications students in Ireland, adult education students in Norway, university students in Germany and teacher education students in Italy. This gives a wide-ranging data base from various sectors in Europe for the joint report.

Questions on student use of student support services in their elearning courses seek information on the frequency of student use of this functionality in their courses and whether students use the functionality provided. Student satisfaction with student support functionality questions the quality of the services provided and whether they met students' study needs. Student need for system-rich support services questions the need for the provision of these services and whether a satisfactory learning experience can be achieved without them.

The question of the provision of student support services in elearning systems is an important one. Five aspects of this importance are addressed here.

1. The American commentator TH Davenport in his *Elearning and the attention economy: here, there and everywhere?* at http://www.linezine.com/7.2/articles/tdeatae.htm states 'The use of elearning is generally unsupervised by any instructor or training professional; this is one way it achieves economic efficiencies'. In distance education it was the provision of student support services that added cost to the system. The course, once developed, could be distributed without

change to thousands of students but the provision of student support services to each of the thousand students enrolled was an incremental cost. In elearning costs are again incurred by the provision of student support services, even if much of this is provided electronically.

2. In distance education, despite the importance of the course materials, it was the student support services which guaranteed the success of the system, provided the contact with the tutor and achieved the essential feedback on students' work in which the essence of the educational transaction is considered to occur. In elearning without student support services aspects of the essence of education and training might be considered to be absent.

3. Is there a human in the elearning system? Can student support services in elearning be provided totally electronically? It is possible to create an elearning system in which information and queries are answered by FAQs and in which feedback on students' work is provided electronically with email replies to each particular answer to a given question being triggered from preprepared banks of replies by the answer given by the student.

4. As elearning develops as a sector of education and training provision, nationally and internationally recognised university degrees, college diplomas and training certification are being awarded for elearning courses. The validity of these awards in the eyes of the community depends to a large extent on the quality of the student support services that support the granting of these awards.

5. Is there a division between corporate elearning courses and academic elearning courses? There is a tension between corporate elearning and university elearning and student support services are central to it. Corporate elearning courses tend to be short, technically orientated and focused on the provision of skills which demonstrate technical competence. Elearning courses for university degrees tend to be longer and to require reflection and judgment between a range of correct positions.

These are some of the issues in student support services in elearning which the questionnaire reported on here was designed to address.

The questionnaire: personal information

1. Are you? (please tick one)

Male	59%
Female	41%

2. What is your occupation? (please tick one)

Managerial	30%
Technical	15%
Teacher/Trainer	55%
Student	0%
Unemployed	0%

3. Which age group do you belong to? (please tick one)

24 or less	0%
25-29	30%
30-34	33%
35-39	15%
40-44	11%
45-49	4%
50+	7%

4. What is your highest level of education? (please tick one)

High school matriculation (or less)	7%
1-3 years post-secondary	15%
4+ years post-secondary	78%

The first comment here is that we are in the world of corporate elearning and not academic elearning. All the respondents (N=27) are employees of a large telecommunications company. None are students or unemployed and 78% have higher education qualifications in the fields of computing, engineering or telecommunications. It is anticipated that their responses will diverge from the data collected in Norway, Germany and Italy which comes mainly from academic sources.

User satisfaction and need for services

In this section we respondents are asked to rate, by ticking only one box, the need for, the student support services listed. Respondents are asked to provide this information regardless of whether they have ever used the particular service or not.

In the next section respondents are asked to indicate, by ticking only one box, satisfaction with the student support services provided, in the eLearning course(s) studied.

For the purposes of this report the replies to the questionnaire are grouped into five phases:

- The information phase
- Information related to course pricing and grants

- Support services for enrolment and registration
- Learning phase
- Feedback.

The information phase

An essential student support service for students seeking to enrol in an elearning course is information about the availability of the course. This question is posed at three levels of complexity. Information can be provided on the availability of the course (level 1), then about the content of the course or module that the student is considering enrolling in (level 2). Information about course content is vital for an informed enrolment decision to be made. Information can then be provided on the program (e.g. the degree or diploma) to which the course belongs so that the student considering enrolment can be aware of the nature of the award and the length and complexity of the program he or she is enrolling in (level 3).

1. Information regarding course availability.

Very important	48%
Important	48%
Don't know	0%
Unimportant	4%
Not important at all	0%

Information regarding course availability.

Very Satisfied	18%
Satisfied	74%
Dissatisfied	4%
Very Dissatisfied	0%
Never used/Unavailable	4%

Information about course availability is a student service that is highly valued. 96% of corporate respondents consider it very important or important – exactly the same percentage as that recorded by the Norwegian academic students. 92% of respondents express themselves satisfied with the information received – again exactly the same percentage as the Norwegian academic students.

2. Information regarding the course or module content.

Very important	70%
Important	30%
Don't know	0%
Unimportant	0%
Not important at all	0%

Information regarding the course or module content.

Very Satisfied	22%
Satisfied	70%
Dissatisfied	4%
Very Dissatisfied	0%
Never used/Unavailable	4%

Information about course content is clearly highly prized – 100% of respondents considering it important or highly important, even higher than the 96% of the Norwegian academic respondents. A high 92% express themselves satisfied or very satisfied with the information received – the Norwegian percentage is 100%.

3. Information relating to the larger program (e.g. degree, diploma etc.) to which the course belongs.

Very important	35%
Important	54%
Don't know	8%
Unimportant	3%
Not important at all	0%

Information relating to the larger program (e.g. degree, diploma etc.) to which the course belongs.

Very Satisfied	12%
Satisfied	50%
Dissatisfied	8%
Very Dissatisfied	0%
Never used/Unavailable	30%

89% consider information about the program to which the course belongs to be important or very important, again exactly the same proportion as in the Norwegian sample. For the first time there is divergence between the Irish and Norwegian data with a massive 30% of corporate respondents replying Never used/Unavailable compared with 0% in Norway. It is a pity that the questionnaire did not distinguish between Never used and Unavailable as there is a considerable difference between Never used but available and Unavailable.

The reasons why the corporate respondents did not use the information, after saying that it was important to have it or very important, probably lies in the nature of the elearning courses studied. Many of these would have been short courses for technical competence which did not form part of a program. Alternatively the enrolment may have been required as a corporate requirement or chosen by a personnel manager, so that the viewing of a course as part of a program has less relevance.

Information related to course pricing and grants

An important dimension of student support services for elearning is information about the price of the elearning course. Whether or not the student enrols will depend in large measure on the price that has to be paid, so that the provision of this information is vital. Related to this is information about grants, discounts or contributions available to pay for the course in whole or in part. Many countries offer subsidies for adult learners for vocational programmes, and many have grants for military personnel or recently demobilised troops wishing to reenter the workforce.

4. Information relating to course or module pricing.

Very important	30%
Important	63%
Don't know	8%
Unimportant	4%
Not important at all	0%

Information relating to course or module pricing.

Very Satisfied	12%
Satisfied	50%
Dissatisfied	0%
Very Dissatisfied	0%
Never used/Unavailable	38%

A very high 93% consider that information about prices is Very important or Important – this is even higher than the 82% of the Norwegian academic students. Compared with 15% from Norway stated that they never used the pricing information, a massive 38% of the Irish corporate students are also in the never used category. The 15% in Norway is explained as students who seem to have their courses paid by their employer. In a similar way the 38% of corporate respondents would have their elearning course paid by their employer or are uninterested in pricing for similar reasons.

5. Information relating to course costs / grants etc

Very important	22%
Important	63%
Don't know	11%
Unimportant	4%
Not important at all	4%

Information relating to course costs / grants etc

Very Satisfied	11%
Satisfied	37%
Dissatisfied	8%
Very Dissatisfied	0%
Never used/Unavailable	44%

83% of corporate respondents state that information about grants and subsidies is important or very important against only 71% in Norway. When it comes to use and satisfaction 44% state that they never used the information against 30% in Norway. The reason for this, after 83% stated that the information was important, is probably that the elearning course was paid for them by their company as in Norway and therefore the question of grants is irrelevant – with the concept that grants and subsidies for courses are 'a good thing' and that few would vote against their availability.

Support services for enrolment and registration

The provision of student support services at the time of enrolment and registration can be of great importance. This may be the first contact between the student and the institution and satisfactory progress at this stage can be crucial.

Four aspects of the enrolment and registration phase feature in the questionnaire:

- Availability of contact with the institution or course vendor
- Availability of a Frequently Asked Questions facility for resolving problems related to registration, course access, course costs and technical problems
- Access to real time technical support services
- Availability of support regarding passwords, registration forms and registration dates.

6. Ability to contact course organisers / vendors by phone, email etc.	
Very important	30%
Important	48%
Don't know	14%
Unimportant	4%
Not important at all	4%

Ability to contact course organisers / vendors by phone, email etc.	
Very Satisfied	22%
Satisfied	44%
Dissatisfied	8%
Very Dissatisfied	0%
Never used/Unavailable	26%

The need for contact with the institution or the course organisers or the course vendors is considered important by 78% of the respondents and 66% express satisfaction with this. These figures are considerably down on the Norwegian academic figures which are 93% and 90%. In addition the Irish corporate

respondents have 26% for never used which is not a feature of the Norwegian figures.

7. An FAQ section relating to registration, access issues, course costs, technical issues etc.

Very important	37%
Important	52%
Don't know	0%
Unimportant	7%
Not important at all	4%

An FAQ section relating to registration, access issues, course costs, technical issues etc.

Very Satisfied	15%
Satisfied	52%
Dissatisfied	3%
Very Dissatisfied	0%
Never used/Unavailable	30%

89% of the Irish respondents feel that a FAQ section is a needed or a normal part of elearning course provision with 67% expressing satisfaction. The Norwegian figures are 72% and 71%. A large 30%, however, state that they never used the service. The Norwegian figure is high too at 22%.

8. Access to real time technical support services.

Very important	33%
Important	63%
Don't know	0%
Unimportant	0%
Not important at all	4%

Access to real time technical support services.

Very Satisfied	15%
Satisfied	41%
Dissatisfied	3%
Very Dissatisfied	0%
Never used/Unavailable	41%

A huge 96% consider that access to technical support services is important. The Norwegian figure is 85%, with 7% don't knows and 9% not important. 41% of respondents, however, have not used the service. This may reflect the technical competence of the respondents but the Norwegian students contain a massive 60% in the never used category.

9. Support regarding registration issues, e.g. completing registration forms, registration dates, password issues etc.

Very important	37%
Important	59%
Don't know	0%
Unimportant	4%
Not important at all	0%

Support regarding registration issues, e.g. completing registration forms, registration dates, password issues etc.

Very Satisfied	19%
Satisfied	48%
Dissatisfied	0%
Very Dissatisfied	0%
Never used/Unavailable	33%

96% consider support regarding registration and passwords important compared with 82% in Norway where 16% felt it was unimportant. Only 67% are satisfied, however, with 33% not having used this service compared with a 94% satisfaction rating in Norway.

Learning phase

The next series of questions deals with the learning phase or with 'learning support' as opposed to 'learner support'. The major features of learning support are addressed: online study techniques, tutor contact, contact with other students, discussion forums, online tutorials. This area poses important problems focused on the need for or absence of contact with tutors and other students and whether there is a need for humans in an elearning system or whether all can be done electronically.

10. Information regarding online learning techniques.

Very important	19%
Important	63%
Don't know	3%
Unimportant	15%
Not important at all	0%

Information regarding online learning techniques.

Very Satisfied	19%
Satisfied	37%
Dissatisfied	22%
Very Dissatisfied	0%
Never used/Unavailable	22%

Should an elearning course system give instruction on how to study online? Can the didactic strategies for online study as opposed to other forms of study be isolated and form the basis for instruction? 21% of Norwegian respondents felt

that this provision was unimportant and 15% of the Irish grouping agreed. 22% of the Irish students expressed dissatisfaction with this and a further 22% had never used it for a total of 44%.

In Norway 19% were dissatisfied, 4% very dissatisfied and 23% had never used it. The Norwegian analysis was able to identify that the students who were most dissatisfied came from the lowest education group and put it forward as a priority that a course on the techniques of studying online should be developed. In Ireland, with 93% having completed some years of post-secondary study the characteristics of the respondents are different and the need for courses on online study techniques is less important.

11. Ability to contact tutors via email, telephone etc.

Very important	15%
Important	73%
Don't know	8%
Unimportant	4%
Not important at all	0%

Ability to contact tutors via email, telephone etc.

Very Satisfied	11%
Satisfied	37%
Dissatisfied	0%
Very Dissatisfied	0%
Never used/Unavailable	52%

Despite 88% stating that contact with tutors is important a massive 52% have never contacted a tutor or believed that contact with a tutor was unavailable. This is an important finding and suggests that contact with a tutor is not felt to be needed by corporate students. In contrast to the 52% never contacted rate in Ireland, the Norwegian academic students gave a 94% rating for satisfaction with tutor contact with 2% stating that they never used it or it was unavailable.

12. Ability to contact other students via email, telephone etc.

Very important	11%
Important	37%
Don't know	19%
Unimportant	33%
Not important at all	0%

Ability to contact other students via email, telephone etc.

Very Satisfied	7%
Satisfied	23%
Dissatisfied	7%
Very Dissatisfied	0%
Never used/Unavailable	63%

Only 48% consider that the ability to contact other students in an elearning course is important and 33% rate it as unimportant. In Norway the figures are 55% important, 4% don't know and 41% not important or not important at all. In Norway a majority of those who might have used the possibility of contacting fellow students expressed that they were satisfied. This is in contrast with the Irish figures where a massive 63% would never use this facility and clearly believe that when you are studying an elearning course contact with your fellow students is unimportant and unnecessary.

13. Discussion forums / Bulletin boards

Very important	19%
Important	44%
Don't know	8%
Unimportant	26%
Not important at all	3%

Discussion forums / Bulletin boards

Very Satisfied	8%
Satisfied	23%
Dissatisfied	4%
Very Dissatisfied	4%
Never used/Unavailable	61%

26% feel that discussion forums are unimportant but 63% feel the contrary. This last figure may, however, be a general feeling that discussion forums and bulletin boards are 'a good thing' and it would be wrong to rank them as unimportant. Only 31% are, however, satisfied with their use while 61% have never used them, indicating that for corporate elearning courses discussion forums are not needed and will be little used if provided. In Norway the emphasis is on assignments for submission and communication based on assignments and comments/feedback than on discussion and collaboration in groups.

14. Online tutorials

Very important	26%
Important	56%
Don't know	15%
Unimportant	3%
Not important at all	0%

Online tutorials

Very Satisfied	22%
Satisfied	41%
Dissatisfied	4%
Very Dissatisfied	0%

Never used/Unavailable	33%

82% of the Irish respondents feel that online tutorials are important and 63% express satisfaction, with 33% having never used this possibility. This probably reflects the technical nature of the Irish respondents and their satisfaction with online activities.

Feedback

In face to face education and instructor led training contact with the tutor or instructor is central to the educational context and feedback on work submitted or assignments is central to the process in which the act of education is considered to occur.

In distance education the role of the tutor and the provision of feedback is central to student support services and distinguishes distance education courses from Teach Yourself Books and packages. These student support services in distance education guarantee the accreditation process and justify the awarding of university degrees, college diplomas and training certification by distance systems.

The elearning philosophy of NKI in Norway is clearly expressed in the report *The students' need for and satisfaction with student support services* as 'access to a tutor is perhaps the element that most clearly distinguished online distance education from "Teach yourself e-learning packages". It is thus expected that students who have chosen to register in and also pay for e-learning as offered by NKI as distance learning on the Internet consider the tutor to be important.'

In spite of this evidence from face to face education, from distance education and from NKI elearning the question remains: can all of these services be provided electronically?

Three questions comprise this section:

- The availability of tutor access
- Feedback on assignments submitted
- Advice on accreditation and further study after the completion of the elearning course.

15. Tutor access

Very important	27%
Important	65%
Don't know	4%
Unimportant	4%

Not important at all	0%

Tutor access

Very Satisfied	8%
Satisfied	26%
Dissatisfied	0%
Very Dissatisfied	0%
Never used/Unavailable	66%

92% of Irish respondents consider tutor access to be important but this may just reflect that it is considered 'a good thing' like fried bread and few would vote against it. It is significant that 66% have never used it. The figures for Norway are 99% important and 91% satisfaction. There seems to be a clear indication that corporate students consider that satisfactory elearning courses can be conducted without tutor access.

16. Feedback on assignments submitted

Very important	48%
Important	40%
Don't know	4%
Unimportant	4%
Not important at all	4%

Feedback on assignments submitted

Very Satisfied	18%
Satisfied	18%
Dissatisfied	0%
Very Dissatisfied	0%
Never used/Unavailable	63%

100% of Norwegian academic students consider feedback on assignments submitted to be important and 96% express satisfaction. Although 88% of the corporate students consider it to be important only 36% express satisfaction and the remaining 63% have never received feedback. This would seem to suggest that the assignments in the corporate courses consisted of quizzes and multiple choice questions which were corrected online without feedback or comment from a tutor. The Norwegian report states clearly that 'in the NKI development philosophy for elearning assignments and tutor comments, evaluation and feedback on assignments are seen as one of the most important elements'.

17. Advice on accreditation and further study

Very important	26%
Important	48%
Don't know	15%
Unimportant	8%
Not important at all	3%

Advice on accreditation and further study

Very Satisfied	7%
Satisfied	26%
Dissatisfied	11%
Very Dissatisfied	0%
Never used/Unavailable	56%

74% acknowledge importance but only 33% satisfaction. 56% have never used such a service. This probably indicates that the courses were short and the question of accreditation and of further study was not central to the corporate students as such decisions would be made by management or the personnel department.

Conclusions

Responses to the questionnaire have been analysed from corporate students in Ireland and academic students in Norway.

The responses from the two groups to the series of questions on the usefulness of the various student support services detailed are remarkably similar. This may, however, be just the recognition in an educational or training context that major features of a training system are ‘good things’ and that few would wish to rank them as unimportant or not important at all.

There are, however, striking differences between the corporate students and the academic students when asked about their satisfaction with the various elements of the student support services. In particular the series of answers from the corporate students which record large percentages in the never used/unavailable category is significant:

Information relating to the larger program	30%
Information relating to pricing	38%
Information relating to costs and grants	44%
FAQ section on registration	30%
Access to technical support services	41%
Support regarding registration	33%
Ability to contact tutors	52%
Ability to contact other students	63%
Discussion forums	61%
Online tutorials	33%
Tutor access	66%
Feedback on assignments	63%
Advice on further study	56%

There are marked philosophical differences between the design of the courses for the academic students and the corporate students. The design for the academic students clearly states: ‘The elearning philosophy of NKI in Norway is clearly expressed as ‘access to a tutor is perhaps the element that most clearly distinguished online distance education from "Teach yourself e-learning packages". It is thus expected that students who have chosen to register in and also pay for e-learning as offered by NKI as distance learning on the Internet consider the tutor to be important’ and again ‘in the NKI development philosophy for elearning assignments and tutor comments, evaluation and feedback on assignments are seen as one of the most important elements’. It can be stated that such preoccupations do not characterise the courses prepared for the corporate students.

Five major questions about student support services in elearning were posed at the start of this report and the data collected is applied to them:

1. ‘The use of elearning is generally unsupervised by any instructor or training professional; this is one way it achieves economic efficiencies’. In distance education it was the provision of student support services that added cost to the system. The data collected, especially the listing above of the high percentages of never used/unavailable, would seem to give impetus to those who see student support services as an additional cost centre in elearning and encourage designers to reduce or eliminate student services.

2. The absence of tutor contact and essential feedback which are needed for the creation of a valid education or training environment does not seem to cause problems for the corporate students. They reply 66% never used tutor access and 63% never used assignment feedback but still believe they have received a satisfactory learning experience. The philosophical necessity of contact and feedback for the creation of an educational context does not seem to convince the corporate students.

3. Is there a human in the system? Can elearning be conducted totally electronically? The academic Norwegian students seem to reply no; the corporate Irish students yes. Human contact when available is not used by the corporate students who appear satisfied with electronic course materials, electronic student support services, electronic quizzes, multiple choice questions and assignment, and electronic feedback.

4. In the world of distance education accreditation of courses and the award of degrees at a distance was a constant challenge and the full acceptance of the award of university degrees in distance systems was only achieved with the provision of comprehensive student support services. In elearning the award of degrees and accreditation seems to have been achieved

already and without the provision of comprehensive student support services.

5. There seems to be a chasm developing in the world of elearning between the corporate sector and the academic sector. The provision of comprehensive student support services is clearly an integral part of the business model of NKI in Norway for its academic students. It is central to its promotion and advertising and highlighted on its web pages. The business model of corporate elearning seems to be based on the virtual elimination of human actors in the systems and the provision of electronic feedback when assignments and questioning are provided.

Appendix

Section 1. Personal Information

1. Are you? (please tick one)

Male
Female

2. What is your occupation? (please tick one)

Managerial
Technical
Teacher/Trainer
Student
Unemployed

3. Which age group do you belong to? (please tick one)

24 or less
25-29
30-34
35-39
40-44
45-49
50+

4. What is your highest level of education? (please tick one)

High school matriculation (or less)
1-3 years post-secondary
4+ years post-secondary

Section 2. User Satisfaction

In this section we ask you to indicate, by ticking only one box, your satisfaction with the student support services provided to you, in the eLearning course(s) you studied.

1. Information regarding course availability.

Very Satisfied
Satisfied
Dissatisfied
Very Dissatisfied
Never used/Unavailable

2. Information regarding the course or module content.

Very Satisfied
Satisfied
Dissatisfied
Very Dissatisfied
Never used/Unavailable

3. Information relating to the larger program (e.g. degree, diploma etc.) to which the course belongs.

Very Satisfied
Satisfied
Dissatisfied
Very Dissatisfied
Never used/Unavailable

4. Information relating to course or module pricing.

Very Satisfied
Satisfied
Dissatisfied
Very Dissatisfied
Never used/Unavailable

5. Information relating to course costs / grants etc

Very Satisfied
Satisfied
Dissatisfied
Very Dissatisfied
Never used/Unavailable

6. Ability to contact course organisers / vendors by phone, email etc.

Very Satisfied
Satisfied
Dissatisfied
Very Dissatisfied
Never used/Unavailable

7. An FAQ section relating to registration, access issues, course costs, technical issues etc.

Very Satisfied
Satisfied
Dissatisfied
Very Dissatisfied
Never used/Unavailable

8. Access to real time technical support services.

Very Satisfied
Satisfied
Dissatisfied
Very Dissatisfied
Never used/Unavailable

9. Support regarding registration issues, e.g. completing registration forms, registration dates, password issues etc.

Very Satisfied
Satisfied
Dissatisfied
Very Dissatisfied
Never used/Unavailable

10. Information regarding online learning techniques.

Very Satisfied
Satisfied
Dissatisfied
Very Dissatisfied
Never used/Unavailable

11. Ability to contact tutors via email, telephone etc.

Very Satisfied
Satisfied
Dissatisfied
Very Dissatisfied
Never used/Unavailable

12. Ability to contact other students via email, telephone etc.

Very Satisfied
Satisfied
Dissatisfied
Very Dissatisfied
Never used/Unavailable

13. Discussion forums / Bulletin boards

Very Satisfied
Satisfied
Dissatisfied
Very Dissatisfied
Never used/Unavailable

14. Online tutorials

Very Satisfied
Satisfied
Dissatisfied
Very Dissatisfied
Never used/Unavailable

15. Tutor access

Very Satisfied
Satisfied
Dissatisfied
Very Dissatisfied
Never used/Unavailable

16. Feedback on assignments submitted

Very Satisfied
Satisfied
Dissatisfied
Very Dissatisfied
Never used/Unavailable

17. Advice on accreditation and further study

Very Satisfied
Satisfied
Dissatisfied
Very Dissatisfied
Never used/Unavailable

Section 3. Usefulness

In this section we ask you to rate, by ticking only one box, the need for, the student support services listed. We ask that you provide this information regardless of whether you have ever used the particular service or not.

1. Information regarding course availability.

Very important
Important
Don't know
Unimportant
Not important at all

2. Information regarding the course or module content.

Very important
Important
Don't know
Unimportant
Not important at all

3. Information relating to the larger program (e.g. degree, diploma etc.) to which the course belongs.

Very important
Important
Don't know
Unimportant
Not important at all

4. Information relating to course or module pricing.

Very important
Important
Don't know
Unimportant
Not important at all

5. Information relating to course costs / grants etc

Very important
Important
Don't know
Unimportant
Not important at all

6. Ability to contact course organisers / vendors by phone, email etc.

Very important
Important
Don't know
Unimportant
Not important at all

7. An FAQ section relating to registration, access issues, course costs, technical issues etc.

Very important
Important
Don't know
Unimportant
Not important at all

8. Access to real time technical support services.

Very important
Important
Don't know
Unimportant
Not important at all

9. Support regarding registration issues, e.g. completing registration forms, registration dates, password issues etc.

Very important
Important
Don't know
Unimportant
Not important at all

10. Information regarding online learning techniques.

Very important
Important
Don't know
Unimportant
Not important at all

11. Ability to contact tutors via email, telephone etc.

Very important
Important
Don't know
Unimportant
Not important at all

12. Ability to contact other students via email, telephone etc.

Very important
Important
Don't know
Unimportant
Not important at all

13. Discussion forums / Bulletin boards

Very important
Important
Don't know
Unimportant
Not important at all

14. Online tutorials

Very important
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15. Tutor access

Very important
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Don’t know
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Not important at all

16. Feedback on assignments submitted

Very important
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Unimportant
Not important at all

17. Advice on accreditation and further study

Very important
Important
Don’t know
Unimportant
Not important at all