



## Effective Practice: LAMS @ Macquarie

### Submitting Institution:

Macquarie University

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### Subject Terms:

CMS , E-Learning , Instructional Technologies

### Background/Challenge:

Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia has a strong record of innovation in e-learning. LAMS (the Learning Activity Management System) is a new generation of e-learning software based on the concept of "Learning Design." LAMS has been under development at Macquarie since 2003, and after a number of individual course implementations in 2004/2005, an year long enterprise-wide rollout of the system was begun in mid 2005, with a likely second year follow-on project after an evaluation of the first year in mid 2006. This project, LAMS @ Macquarie, is investigating the issues associated with rollout, training, and adoption of a Learning Design system across a typical university.

### Practice/Solution:

LAMS is a system for creating, managing, and delivering sequences of collaborative learning activities. Instructors use a visual authoring environment to design a sequence of tasks, then set this up to run for students, and use a monitoring environment to track their progress. LAMS can run as a stand-alone system, or be integrated with a Course Management System. In the LAMS @ Macquarie project, LAMS is integrated with WebCT, allowing Single-Sign-On from course pages to LAMS activities. Educational support for LAMS includes training, one-on-one advice to instructors, guides/FAQs, and a series of workshops and information sharing sessions. A private community within the LAMS Community website is used for online discussion and sharing of sequences. LAMS is being used in a wide range of disciplines, including teacher training, innovation and entrepreneurship, Japanese language courses and statistics.

### Benefits:

Instructors report that the use of LAMS, particularly the visual authoring environment, leads to reflection on their teaching practices. Instructors who are in the process of new course development, or course redesign, report that LAMS is particularly effective in assisting with development of student tasks. Students report enjoyment of the system, and find the sequence of tasks easy to use and understand. In some teacher training courses, students have been given authoring rights to create their own LAMS sequences and to describe their rationale as part of course assessment -- this has resulted in some outstanding student sequences that are now available through the LAMS Community website.

### Shortcomings:

- As a system that is under ongoing development, there have been bugs and software problems that have sometimes had negative impacts on instructors and students -- these have been reported and addressed in subsequent development.
- Adoption of the system has been more rapid in the case of course redesign/new course development than in existing courses that are not undergoing change.
- The time investment required to reconsider existing teaching practices for adaptation into LAMS is not always possible for busy staff.
- Some staff have reported confusion/uncertainty about how the features in LAMS relate to the features in WebCT - this has been addressed by further training about how the sequencing functionality of LAMS provides features that are not available in WebCT (or any other CMSs).

### Future Plans:

At the end of the first year, an evaluation of the rollout project will be conducted, and following this, a second year of further

