

## Cheap laugh #1. Suggest opening up courseware just a little.

The other day I attended a Moodle developers' co-op group at USQ. Over lunch we were kicking around ideas for what USQ could do to improve our learning and teaching.

Two things I said sent one long-standing member of staff into gales of laughter.

First, I said, we should let all the students **access and search all the courseware** (with the exception of course readings that are licensed for enrolled students only). That way they (a) might find answers to their questions (b) catch up and revise, even if they didn't study the prerequisite subject with us and (c) find new courses they'd like to do. Hilarious, apparently. (This was in the context of people wanting to add access to pre-requisite materials into courses, for students who needed to revise or catch-up, which apparently involves lecturers bootlegging course materials instead of the rational approach, which would be to just link to the other course).

Second, encouraged by this comedic success, I said that we should also offer a bonus to any staff member who could **source and adapt open courseware** instead of writing and/or maintaining a USQ study book, thus saving USQ money. Same reaction.

Getting a few laughs is good, as I play to a very tough audience at home, and there's very little levity in the serious business of writing software<sup>1</sup>.

I'm interested if others think this is funny. Here it is once more:

1. I reckon if the **default search** in our Moodle learning management system **showed materials from other courses** than the ones you happen to be enrolled in then that should help drive return business (and it if helped a student to decide NOT to enrol then that's probably better than having them show up and discontinue or fail). This would be dead simple to implement, and would have the added benefit that our own staff might be able to areas of overlap or synergies between courses. (My team is working on a proof-of-concept repository which would be able to support this).
2. And while we have been very slow as an organisation to publish our own materials under open licenses, surely the **benefits of cutting course development costs** would be worth looking at. After all, our main business is not selling courseware. USQ has (or should that be 'is'?) a 'relationship brand', Yes we're famous for our courseware, but more famous for [Providing the highest quality educational experiences to students irrespective of their location or lifestyle](#). It's the **experiences that matter**, and the less we spend writing the same Basket Weaving 101 course as every other distance educator on the planet the more we could devote to the experiential side.

(Depending on how this post goes I might see if I can work up a one-man show on USQ and Open Courseware).

Copyright Peter Sefton, 2010. Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.5 Australia.  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5/au/>



This post was written in OpenOffice.org, using templates and tools provided by the [Integrated Content](#)

I Duncan Dickinson has recently introduced 'stand up' meetings to the ADFI Software R & D lab. I was hoping that would turn out to be something Seinfeldish, but sadly I was thinking of the wrong kind of standup, and the meetings aren't [about nothing](#), either.

[Environment](#) project and published to WordPress using [The Fascinator](#).