

## **Case study title: SOCSI Online Essentials: Bespoke digital and information literacy support**

**Author names:** Christopher John, Geraint Evans and Sarah Puzey

### **Summary**

SOCSI Online Essentials are dedicated resources for School of Social Sciences (SOCSI) [students](#) and [staff](#) to access bilingual guidance and training materials on the technologies and information resources they most need to use for their learning and teaching from a single location.

The resources collate and link to existing materials such as those produced by the CEI and available on the Intranet as well as provide access to bespoke material created for the School.

Online Essentials is relatively new and a benefits assessment is due to be carried out in spring 2017 but anecdotal feedback is positive and analytics drawn from the platform indicate a high volume of usage. There has been a corresponding reduction in enquiries coming into SOCSI support teams.

### **Background**

SOCSI is a large school with over 160 staff and around 1000 students. In addition, hundreds of students across Wales and Singapore undertake distance learning programmes and never visit the campus. Many study through the medium of Welsh.

There is a need to be able to provide bilingual support to these students in using the technologies and information resources which support their studies, 24 x 7. SOCSI Essentials provides easy access to support information, from a single location at the point of need, therefore helping to address common enquiries and support requests received by the SOCSI eLearning Team and the Library.

A further aim was to increase awareness of the tools available to academic staff to support teaching and learning and provide useful information to help them get started.

### **Approach**

SOCSI Online Essentials are openly available resources developed by the SOCSI eLearning Team, delivered through Learning Central. This solution was chosen as:

- at the time, the School did not have access to the Intranet
- it enabled the eLearning Team to have complete autonomy over the content and
- it offered the opportunity to make the content publicly accessible to support distance learners and be visible to future students.

Online Essentials has been developed to work offline and when there is no internet connection, providing flexibility of access for people with poor internet connectivity and not relying on or excessively using a person's mobile internet data.

The resources have also been developed with accessibility at the forefront. Online Essentials is available in both English and Welsh and will retain a person's language preference and automatically default to it in the future. Similarly the resources remember a person's preference

for background and foreground colour schemes and all video materials, produced by the School of Social Sciences, include an English and Welsh transcript. Some video materials may also include a separate Welsh language voice-over.

Work on Online Essentials for Students began in summer 2015, and the staff version in summer 2016. Content includes guidance and training on:

- Using the Intranet to access email and file store
- Learning Central tools such as wikis, discussion boards, Turnitin and Grademark
- Panopto, Mahara and Xerte
- Tools to support distance learners such as Collaborate and Adobe Connect
- Finding and referencing information
- IT skills
- Learning and teaching mobile apps available at the University.

The team re-used relevant content already available across services such as the Intranet and the [Information Literacy Resource Bank](#). They also developed bespoke content for the School in response to common queries received. For example, the eLearning Team and Subject Librarian often receive queries from SOCSI staff on linking to electronic resources from reading lists and Learning Central modules. The Subject Librarian provided guidance and information on creating links to eBooks and journal articles for the Staff Online Essentials.

[Online Essentials for Students](#) is embedded into every Learning Central module, but can also be accessed independently of Learning Central, meaning Online Essentials can be used to resolve student support requests if the student is currently experiencing Learning Central access issues.

Online Essentials is available at:

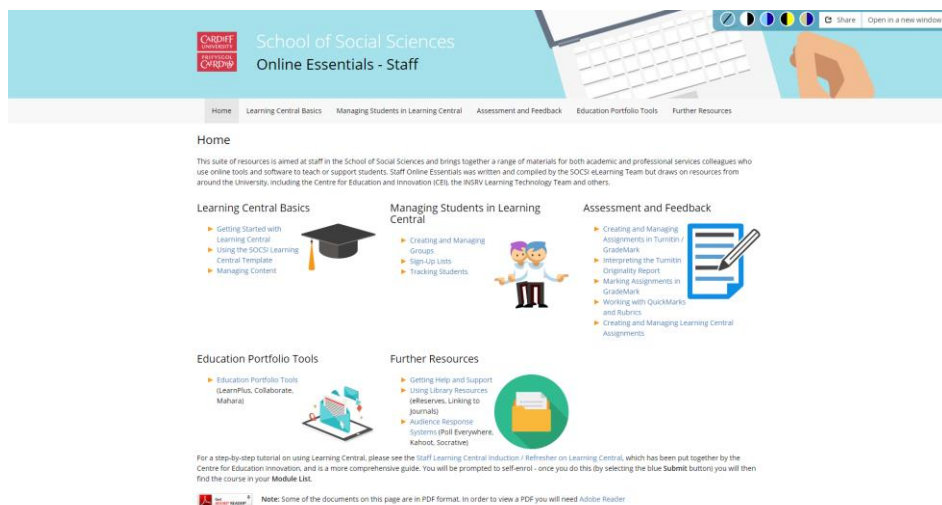
Online Essentials for Students:

<https://learningcentral.cf.ac.uk/bbcswebdav/institution/Social%20Sciences/elearning/online-essentials/index.html>



## Online Essentials for Staff:

<https://learningcentral.cf.ac.uk/bbcswebdav/institution/Social%20Sciences/elearning/online-essentials-staff/index.html>



The resources have been promoted to SOCSI students and staff via induction days, posters and emails. The team has also shared their work with the wider University via Yammer and the CEI blog. SOCSI has made the template used to create Online Essentials open-source and available to anyone to re-use at:

<https://github.com/SOCSIELEARNING/BlackboardBilingualSinglePageTemplate>

## Outcomes

Online Essentials enables the eLearning Team and the Library to provide streamlined, bespoke, bilingual support for key technologies and information resources to support staff and students' work at the point of need.

Resources can be updated to respond to specific enquiries quickly, and in a way which benefits the whole School. For example, during submission periods, students were raising a number of queries around online submission of assessment and the eLearning Team were able to provide bespoke resources via Online Essentials to improve support in this area.

In response to referencing queries and feedback from SOCSI students submitting their first assignments, the Subject Librarian asked that tutorials providing guidance on citing and referencing (created by the Library) were added to the Online Essentials for Students.

If a solution to a query exists within Online Essentials, the team can just send a link directly to its location, saving time and offering students and staff a consistent support experience.

## Student feedback

A full benefits assessment is due to be carried out in Spring 2017 but very positive anecdotal feedback has been received from staff and students.

Analytics from the Student Online Essentials show a large increase in usage when comparing September/October 2015 and September/October 2016:

- September/October 2015 there were 171 users / 358 page views
- September/October 2016 there were 1702 / 4616 users.

The increase is thought to be due to the fact that in September 2016 the student version of Online Essentials was embedded in all SOCSI Learning Central modules, increasing its visibility, and also the result of an improvement in the range of content available. The amount of usage early in the new semester, shows that the Online Essentials provided a valuable service during induction and that the content is useful.

### **Learning points and insights**

Top tips gained from our experience are:

- Where possible re-use existing resources but ensure they meet the specific needs of your learners. It will sometimes be necessary to create bespoke resources
- Keep the content as bite-size as possible so that it is more easily re-usable and is more accessible for users
- Developing such resources requires a lot of partnership working to gather in and maintain content developed by a range of providers. For example, information literacy content needs to be regularly updated and the eLearning Team and the Subject Librarian communicate regularly to keep the resources up to date
- If possible, make the content publicly available to enable others to benefit and to show the support the School provides to prospective students
- Surface your site or resource in as many locations as possible to ensure it has a high profile, is easily accessible and therefore well-used.

Future plans include a content review of the Staff and Student Online Essentials to ensure that information is current. This will then be followed up with an evaluation of the benefits conducted with stakeholders in SOCSI which is due to commence in Spring 2017.