

## University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education ICE Online

### Aims and implementation

ICE Online ([www.iceonline.cam.ac.uk](http://www.iceonline.cam.ac.uk)), the Virtual Learning Environment of the University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education (ICE), was redesigned and re-launched in September 2011 to encourage the development of an online 'community of scholars' that would support and inspire our part-time adult students. We redesigned and adapted the open source VLE Moodle to serve not only as a central source of information and learning support but also to encourage channels of communication between students, students and tutors and indeed amongst all at ICE who participate in or support teaching and learning.

When they first log in, all users of the VLE see a list of all their courses with clear links to useful resources. Courses also have their own online classrooms for course-related information and discussion. Students will retain access to their course areas and the open discussion forums for two years after their course is completed to enable them to reflect and refer back to their course work and continue to explore their subject area by maintaining contacts with the ICE community.

As well as supporting our face-to-face teaching, where students meet weekly in term time, ICE Online enables a blended course delivery where students come together less frequently and teaching is delivered both online and face to face. In 2012, the Institute will also launch a new suite of wholly online courses via ICE Online, enabling a wider audience to join our community and access learning led by Cambridge experts.



Our purpose online is to promote interaction, emphasising community learning within the student cohort to overcome feelings of isolation, which can develop when learning as a part-time student and 'at a distance'. The use of multiple communication channels, both synchronous and asynchronous and embedded within ICE Online, is key to our approach. Teaching materials include podcasts and video lectures as well as slide presentations with commentary as a basis for structured learning and subsequent tutor-led discussion, either via asynchronous forums or utilising collaborative software to bring together geographically-diverse groups.

We have developed standardised templates for teaching materials, allowing us to rapidly repurpose existing material and generate new material in response to student needs and to contemporary developments and events.

### Promoting and explaining ICE Online

The concept of ICE online is explained to prospective students on our open site <http://open.iceonline.cam.ac.uk> where we are now also able to offer 'tasters' of forthcoming courses.

Our redesigned and repurposed virtual learning environment is a key element in the building of a supportive and inspiring community at ICE for our students and all the staff who interact with them and support their study. This model is adaptable to different subjects and different levels of blended delivery, supporting students studying for personal interest or professional development and at different academic levels. These learning principles could be employed within any learning platform to provide an appropriate supportive and inspiring environment for any group of learners.

