How Good is the Online Professor?  
A Proposed Strategy for Online Teacher Evaluation

This brief paper suggests a framework and a process for evaluating the good online professor or teacher, and compares several initial evaluations using this process with student feedback on online teacher performance.

There is a range of literature identifying the characteristics of an effective teacher (for example Feldman, 1988). Effective online teachers are a subset of this group of effective teachers, with extra skills, attitudes and actions which are uniquely required by the online learning environment. Several profiles now exist of the effective online teacher (for example Illinois Online Network, Graham et al, 2001 and Hayes, 2002). These profiles are useful in evaluating online teacher/lecturers, but the problem remains of how to collect the data. Where an effective teacher/lecturer in a face-to-face setting may have their teaching processes observed and evaluated by a colleague or professional development staff by ‘sitting in’ on a class, this may be obtrusive in an online environment. The software capabilities of some VLE software means that it is possible to produce a portfolio of printed material – discussion postings, chat session logs, email messages. This portfolio, together with a short questionnaire on how the lecturer/teacher uses the design of the course to engage students, provides a comprehensive overview of the teacher/lecturer and can be evaluated. These evaluations can then be compared with student feedback to give a profile of the lecturer/teacher’s performance in the online environment with no intrusion or disruption to the online learning process. Two examples of the use of this portfolio approach will be outlined with some comparisons to student feedback for the online courses the lecturer/teacher taught on.

References