

AS Applied ICT Level Introductory Moodle Collaborative Summer Course to establish research skills and knowledge for Unit 1 ‘The Knowledge Worker’

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It is acknowledged that all students will have registered for the ‘AS’ Applied ICT course before the summer holidays and their teacher/facilitator will introduce the students to a new distance learning tool/ web-based learning environment that they will need to use over the ‘long’ holidays (note the GCSE students will have over twelve weeks!!!) They will be told that they will need to follow a short course to introduce themselves to this collaborative research methods that they will need for the first module of their ‘AS’ course. They are all given a brief run down of how the web-based learning environment works and are quickly taken through a brief example course.

Scenario 1 – Sherif

Sherif is a 16 year old prospective 'AS' Applied ICT student at El Alsson British International School Cairo. He is a very eager GCSE student expecting to receive an A* in his exam and coursework this year. His recent final GCSE project was to produce a theme for a Moodle course, in which he was able to design and update the theme and enable a course to be run. He is ultra keen and has already asked whether there will be an 'AS' Applied ICT course next year and is it possible as it is module based to do more than the three basic modules in one year. He tends towards an erratic way of learning that often leads to full enthusiasm for a week and a large amount of progress followed by weeks of relaxation.

Situation:-

Sherif logs onto the web address that has been given to him. It's a busy opening page welcoming any ICT students from the school to the page. He clicks on the online vote, and chuckles to himself that he voted that the schools ICT department is only okay in its provision of ICT. He reads a little of the online news, and the looks at the latest links at the bottom of the page on technology. They are interesting as they are labelled RSS feeds and seem to change. He clicks on one of the links, which as a Firefox user he opens in a tab in the background. While doing this he notices at the bottom of the page in the corner a 'chatbox' and types in *hello* to see if anyone is around to his surprise 'drtech (his teacher/facilitator)' types back *hello* and they have a small conversation before Sherif is prompted to click on the link to Moodle and start his course.

The screen shows introductory news specific to the ICT department and the development of other online courses over the next year. Along with a calendar, course titles, links to forums and a variety of other things that seem of mild interest to Sherif. There is a welcoming note in the news about his particular course and Sherif dutifully clicks on the link for the course. Sherif logs into his course, he uses his name and user number from school which he was told by his teacher/ facilitator would work. He fills in his data related to email address and name etc.

The course is laid out in chronological order over six different units. There is some introductory collaboration *waffle* which Sherif skips over and proceeds to the first unit which has six sections titled: introduction, forum, information on social bookmarking, video tutorial 'del.icio.us', things to do to complete section, quiz on terminology. He doesn't read the introduction, why should he? And goes straight to the forum where he reads an opening post explaining how he should conduct himself in the forum and that he should post an opening message introducing himself to the course. He posts a 'jokey' message about himself and that he is a little confused to what this is all about, even though he has setup themes as a project for a web-based learning environment for one of his teacher/ facilitators as a GCSE project. He finishes his posting and heads back to the course page to see what else seems fun. He clicks and reads the information on the topic of social book-marking but again it seems full of waffle, and then sees that there is a video practical presentation so aims straight for that. He has just started watching the video, when his mum calls him down to eat so he leaves the computer on and goes downstairs. *Hollyoaks* is not on the television, so he watches the *Bold and the Beautiful*.

Sherif returns to the VLE about two weeks later, and immediately and quickly finds his way to the video tutorial on setting up 'del.icio.us'. He chuckles at the non-American voice (e.g. from his teacher/facilitator) on the video demo and immediately in a second Firefox tab sets up an account and follows the instructions to upload five

bookmarks related to a topic he will later study for his Applied ICT called 'The Digital Divide'. He posts his link to his social bookmarks and heads back to the course summary and attempts the last part of the first unit entitled *terminology quiz*. Hmm... he has a go and realises that he has not read any of the background information or links and so finds it difficult and only scores 50%. He decides its only a silly quiz and heads to Unit 2, he hopes there is more practical tasks there.....TO BE CONTINUED

Scenario 2 – Mona

Mona is another 16 year old prospective 'AS' Applied ICT student at El Alsson British International School Cairo. She is a very hardworking student but would be known as a *'plodder'* She will achieve well in her upcoming GCSE another A*, but her coursework has mainly consisted of adequate but well documented projects in applications like PowerPoint. She has expressed that she would like to continue on to do an 'AS' Applied ICT course but it will be her fourth and hopefully 'easy' choice.

Situation:-

Mona takes a while to begin the course; she is enjoying her holidays, but about 4 weeks in is a little bored and decides to check what it is all about. Mona logs onto the web address that was given to her. She finds the opening page interesting if a little too much, what has this got to do with next year she wonders. She heads straight for the link to the VLE for the 'AS' Introductory course, the sooner I finish this the better she thinks.

The opening page to the VLE seems much clearer to her, there are some opening news items and welcomes and immediately she sees the link to her course and clicks on it. She types in her name and user number from school and is able to log into the course, and fill in her details.

She wonders how long this will all take, there seem to be six units but at least the introductory explanation says this will all be part of her 'AS' Applied ICT marks, she wonders if her teacher/ facilitator has lied at all? She studiously begins to read the introduction, and follows the instructions to click on the button clearly marked forum. What is a forum she wonders? However she is surprised to see some posts already there from Sherif and Mennah. She likes this – communicating with friends – she hasn't seen her friends from the class for almost four weeks and Mennah is in Sweden at the moment, so she writes a long introduction and chats a little about what she has been doing over the holidays.

She returns to the course descriptions and tries out the first task, its about social book-marking and as she has read all the information understands when she watches the demo video what it is all about...She tries to do the task but fails first time, and is relieved she is able to watch the multimedia video a few more times so she understands the process. She takes a while but there is no rush and eventually decides to post her problems in the forum. She returns to the task a few days later and is pleased to see that Sherif has suggested what the problem might be even if it is written in his usual arrogant geek speak. She manages to setup her book marks in 'del.icio.us' and posts the link to the forum.

She is about to try the quiz, but then does not remember where she will receive the score and if it will be recorded. She remembers that there is a section of the environment that has a course will examples and tutorials. She checks this first but it seems a little complicated. So she posts a message to the main forum on that course, hoping that her tutor will answer promptly. The online quiz she think she passes with a 100 % and then decides that's enough for a while.....TO BE CONTINUED

Scenario 3 – Mennah

Mennah is the *star* of her GCSE class. Before she started her GCSE she was very anxious about using computers with little experience but is now an accomplished independent learner and has produced advanced work in applications such as Dreamweaver and Flash. She is very interested in starting an 'AS' Applied ICT course next year, and is concerned that she wants to be able to get a good grade all the way through to 'A' Level so she can go to a European University. She goes away to Sweden for the whole of the holidays as she used to live there and her father still has work in Gothenburg.

Situation:-

Mennah is bored almost immediately at the start of the holidays and relishes the idea that she can be doing something interesting over the holidays (hmm would you believe it?) and after only a few days logs into the opening webpage. It's full of information but she finds a lot of it interesting, she tries the chatbox but no-one seems to be around. She uses her own email to tell a friend from school that she will be working a lot on her ICT work and she can come and visit her on this page. She sees a link entitled *Dr Tech's Blog*, and decides to click on this and finds her ICT teacher/ facilitators own blog most of the information is about his own studies but she likes the layout of it and the silly pictures. She links through to the page which says RSS feeds and likes the way that all the links keep changing and seem to be based on her teacher/ facilitators own bookmarks and studies.

She has had enough for today and returns the next this time after a brief look noticing that in this page there are changing links to called RSS feeds at the bottom of the page. However, she clicks on the main link to the 'AS' Applied ICT VLE. She reads the introductory information and again is impressed with the information, but wants to see what the course is all about this time so clicks on the obvious link to the 'AS' Applied ICT Introductory course.

She sees the simple chronological layout, and is pleased that there seems to be a lot of interesting topics that will help her next year in her studies and in other research work for other subjects. She follows through the first unit quickly on social book-marking noting that only Sherif has attempted any part of the course yet. She starts the second unit entitled 'Bloglines and Aggregators'TO BE CONTINUED

Scenario 4 – Nada

Nada is another GCSE, 15 year old prospective 'AS' Applied ICT student at El Alsson British International School Cairo. She is a student who does work hard but likes to find shortcuts to getting a good grade. She has little interest in ICT itself, and has opted for the simple project briefs enjoying anything that is easy but then is able to gain full grades within the projects due to being able to document the project well. When the 'AS' Applied ICT was mentioned she said she would like to do it as a fourth 'AS' Level if it is easy and that she would not be willing to do work over the extensive summer holidays.

Situation:-

Nada tries once to do that summer work on the computer her teacher/facilitator had asked her to do. She feels that is enough and manages by phoning another friend on the course to type in the web address for the homepage. She looks around the page and sees the link to the Applied ICT course along with contact details if there are any problems and the chatbox, where she can see Sherif, Mennah and Mona have all chatted over the past few weeks as it keeps a simple history. Nada clicks on the link and it opens the main web-based learning environment page where she tries to logon to the 'AS' course but can't remember her user number. The page gives her a link to be able to email and contact her course tutor /teacher to which she clicks and sends an email asking for her user number. However she then forgets to check her mail all summer. Oops...

Nada as you can imagine has a great summer. She returns after summer and after much consideration has decided she wants to still do Applied 'AS' ICT and arrives at the first lesson. The rest of the 7 students have participated in the summer introduction distance course, and are chatting about it at the beginning of the lesson. They all managed to keep in touch, and say they have learnt a great deal. Many of them have used there new web-research and collaboration skills to start work on the first module in the 'AS' Applied ICT course, the last of the six units on the introductory course outlined briefly areas what the students will have to research into for their first module: - *Digital Divide, Online Services and Six Individual Users Viewpoint on how ICT affects them.*

The teacher/facilitator sits down with Nada, and talks her through the first section of the summer course and suggests she has a week to complete the online course. More than anything she will need the skills so that she can do the rest of the course as the VLE will be used alongside classroom teaching for each of the modules. The rest of the group suggest they continue with producing a body of knowledge that they can all use for the Digital Divide study, and propose they extend the Wiki they had begun producing in Unit 5 of the summer course.....TO BE CONTINUED