CSWE Online - an exciting option for AMEP students

AMEP Conference Presentation
by Susanne Gunning

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At Gold Coast Institute of TAFE we have a program catering for 241 AMEP students. Like all AMEP providers we take pride in offering a range of flexible options such as distance learning, home tutor schemes, ILC, on-campus classes and community classes because we want to do our best to satisfy the varying needs of our students.

A year ago or so we were struggling with declining AMEP numbers and we were in search of a way to better service the needs of our clients. In August 2005 we added CSWE Online to our offerings and I would like to share with you how we deliver this at GCIT.
Today a sea of technology offers new educational solutions.
Today, whether we like it or not our lives are filled with technology solutions for our everyday life – mobile phones, computers, wireless connections, internet, electronic games, e-mail, podcasting, blogging - I am sure you can name more.

From a sea of technology solutions, we can choose to use some of these to assist us to deliver English in the classroom. CSWE Online gives our students something new – the option to complete a Certificate II and / or a Certificate III at home using a computer and internet.

Many of our students are well equipped to use this technology, because they have computers at home with internet connections.

Before we started CSWE Online we surveyed our ESL students – 95% of the students surveyed had access to the internet at home.

The majority of ESL students had internet and e-mail skills.

A very large percentage of ESL clients said they would like to be able to access computer assisted learning programs from home. Many indicated that they would like to talk to their teacher, and access library resources and e-mail from home.
AMEP providers steer to satisfy students’ needs.

At the mosque

The Catherine Alexander Independent Learning Centre

The Migrant Centre

At Multicultural Families Inc
How do you satisfy your students’ needs?

Like GCIT you probably have services that resemble ours.

We have The Catherine Alexander Independent Learning Centre

And

Community Collaborations such as:

• ESL at the Mosque
• Computer Assisted Language Learning for members of the Gold Coast Islamic Society
• ESL at the Multicultural Families Inc
• We host and actively support the Gold Coast Multicultural Services Network
• and Provide office space to The Migrant Centre – a community based migrant support agency
Students can find face-to-face classes ‘rough-going’.

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We all have students who find it difficult to attend classes. Two weeks ago I enrolled five new students in one day to CSWE Online and they all had different reasons for not wanting to come to classes and wanting to enrol in CSWE Online.

Our first student – couldn’t attend classes because she is working part-time at the Sheraton and she wasn’t keen on classes anyway because she is very aware of her English weaknesses and the aspects of her English that she wants to improve, and she said classes don’t always address these needs.

Student number 2 – from Germany was finishing the term in class, but she wanted to get a job to start before the new term and so classes won’t be suitable for her.

Another student - from Bosnia had never been to our campus before and because she cares for her husband who is not well she does not want to attend classes.

A Russian man who I haven’t met sent me his enrolment form by e-mail – he is working and unable to attend classes.

And a Korean - is a single parent with two young children and does not have time to attend classes.
We offer flexible options to smooth the seas.

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So CSWE Online offers an exciting alternative for these students to learn English.

CSWE Online at GCIT is not a part of our face to face class enrolment. It is a separate enrolment to class enrolment.

At GCIT
- Some students only enrol in CSWE Online while others enrol in it on top of the classes they already attend.
- Providing students don’t have more than 6 hours of face-to-face classes they can also have a tutor.
Assist students to set sail with CSWE Online.
Students can choose from a variety of CSWE Online enrolments:

- A full Certificate II or III with 14 topics for each Certificate
- Core modules only
- Reading and writing modules only
- Speaking and listening modules

And they really can set sail because they can access CSWE Online from anywhere in the world.
The one year voyage requires a PC and an internet connection.
When students enrol they have the access to CSWE Online for one year and they just need a PC with speakers, an internet connection with Windows, and Internet Explorer.
We encourage students to use the program at home.
Our computer network at TAFE is sometimes slow and we actually recommend to our students that while they are allowed to use the computers in our ILC they are probably better off using their own PC at home where they will have a quicker internet connection, they can sit with bunny slippers up on the desk, sip a cup of tea and work online at a time of convenience in a relaxed learning environment. Please don’t get us wrong here ….this is a CSWE Online student studying at home ….not a home tutor – student relationship!!
Enrolment is ongoing and lasts for one year.
Students can enrol any day of the week and from the day they enrol we give them one year to access the program. So they can use it 365 days of the year, 24 hours a day without restriction.
Along the way, enrol, orientate, support and assess students.
As an online teacher I am on call at anytime – I divert my office telephone to my mobile so I can assist students at anytime with enrolment, getting started with the program, technology issues, course content, and assessment. This may sound demanding for the teacher but I find students don’t call unless they have an urgent need and if they do I can deal with it quickly …before it escalates into an overwhelming problem in their eyes. Students like to know I am there for them and it is my way of giving them the service they deserve. The course content answers most of their questions and usually they tend to email me rather than ring me with their queries.
Some students want enrolment and orientation away from campus.
We have students who live in Emerald (918 kms from Bris) and Innisfail (1719 kms from Bris) who have enrolled and started the program from a distance.

For remote students we contact them by telephone and fill out a new student form for GCIT.

If the student is already registered on ARMS as an AMEP client and has had an ISLPR rating within the last 6 months then we can assign the student to a Certificate level and e-mail them an electronic version of our AMEP offer of enrolment. This form includes the required consent that all AMEP students have to sign with regard to permission of disclosure of personal details. Students then e-mail these forms back to us.

If the student is not registered on ARMS we request them to send a certified copy of their visa and if it is an eligible visa then we rate their ISLPR using a combination of communications by telephone and e-mail.

If AMEP eligible we then follow the same procedure as we would for registered AMEP clients.
Some students want support and assessment away from campus.
At the end of each Unit in the course there is an Assessment section which informs students what is required for their assessment task. For speaking assessment – we can do that by telephone. For the listening, reading and writing assessments - I ask students to follow the instructions in the program, word-process their answers and submit them as the program directs to me. If students prefer they can make a time and come and see me to do their assessment.
To add to the adventure students have a home tutor and/or classes.

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We have enrolled 91 CSWE Online students

27% are studying Certificate II

73% are studying Certificate III

Of all of those students

40% are only enrolled in CSWE Online

40% have classes and CSWE Online

20% have a tutor as well as CSWE Online
Students need flexible delivery options for their voyage.

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I think we would all like to make sure that our AMEP students have a variety of options for learning English that will both satisfy their needs and help our organisations to maximize our student contact hours.
CSWE Online is an exciting option for AMEP students

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This is what one student - Sally had to say about CSWE Online at our program launch last year:

**Studying English at home is very convenient. I can spend time and concentrate on listening and learning for as long as I wish. The program is very good.**

**Even though I study at home it is easy to contact my teacher by e-mail or phone. I have been rewarded with a five day a week job with English speaking people, mainly due to studying English on the computer through the internet, it is great and suitable for me. Because I got the job it means I have to study at night time, which suits me fine.**
CSWE Online – English at a time and place to suit.

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If you would like to know more I would be happy to talk to you.

Or you might like to visit our website and have a look at a demonstration of the program.

Thank you.