



UNIVERSITY EDTECH SUPPORT

the nexus of pedagogy and technology



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ABSTRACT

Unexpected issues can arise when technology is used in university courses. In these situations, faculty may not know where or who can assist them on the effective use of educational technologies. Even defining the issue might be problematic: a pedagogical problem could be a technical issue. At the University of Toronto, an educational technology support unit exists within a defined organizational framework that is a nexus of pedagogy and educational technology support. This poster provides an overview of this Edtech support, and its goals to enhance teaching and learning at the university.

DECENTRALIZED SUPPORT SERVICES

Research shows that university organizations have many challenges when supporting faculty adoption of technology in teaching including inadequate technical support for course projects and technology uses, and support services that do not address individualized needs, abilities or interests (Ali, 2003, p. 52; Zhu, 2008).

While support systems are in place (e.g., IT help desk and faculty development office), these groups often work separately. The University of Toronto has 21 divisions, many of whom have educational technology support teams that are structurally working in isolation. In some cases, faculty members do not know who to contact for course support. They may not be able to identify their own support needs when they are introduced to new technology tools, or recognize the benefits of effective learning strategies when they integrate educational technology tools in their teaching and may not seek assistance because they do not know where to begin (Johnston & McCormak, 1996, p. 38).

CTSI & ITS PARTNERSHIP

At the University of Toronto, the Academic & Collaborative Technologies team (ACT) was formed out of a partnership between the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation (CTSI) and Information Technology Support (ITS) to provide both pedagogical and technology support. "ACT provides strategic and tactical leadership in the development of information technology services that support the academic mission for the university as a whole" (Academic & Collaborative Technologies, n.d.). This institutional educational technology support infrastructure connects pedagogy and pedagogy-driven instructional technology support with information technology services.

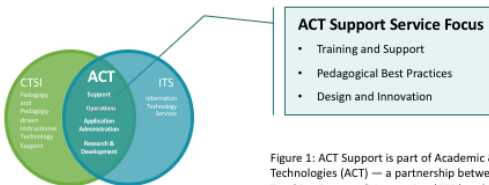


Figure 1: ACT Support is part of Academic & Collaborative Technologies (ACT) — a partnership between the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation (CTSI) and Information Technology Services (ITS)

THE NEXUS: ACT SUPPORT

ACT Support offers a variety educational technology support and training services that are both pedagogical and technical (e.g., online informational/ self-directed guides, videos, modules, training). Individualized faculty member support is often in collaboration with educational technology peers across the university through consultations, course design projects, and seed funded course projects.

Collaborative Support Model

Ongoing systematic support is a major factor that determines the successful adoption of technology by faculty in teaching (Ge et. al., 2010; Johnston & McCormak, 1996; Moser, 2007; Nworie, 2006, p. 38; Raphael & Mtebe, 2016; Zhu, 2008). In order to facilitate the faculty support process ACT Support has developed a workflow, illustrated in Figure 2, that interfaces central pedagogical and technical support services with departmental/ divisional support structures and their educational technology support staff. This workflow follows an educational development service management model (see Figure 3 below) that merges faculty development support processes with an IT help desk service management model.

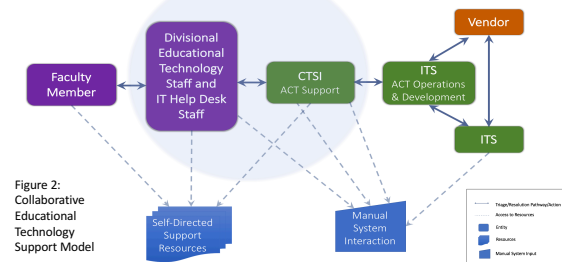


Figure 2: Collaborative Educational Technology Support Model

Educational Technology Service Management

ACT Support has created an educational technology service management process for managing support requests between central pedagogical and technology staff and departmental/ divisional structures. All ACT Support staff are skilled to respond to pedagogical and technical questions, triage/ assign questions to the appropriate departmental contact, and provide consultations to faculty members and course staff on teaching with technology. With this model, ACT Support staff can provide faculty members and local departmental/ divisional support colleagues with continuous, flexible training opportunities in a variety of formats on multi-disciplinary teaching approaches, effective cognitive strategies (critical thinking or problem-solving skills) and technological skills development (Zhu, 2008).

Educational Technology Support Triage Process:

- Informational/ Self-Directed Help
- Administrative
- Pedagogical
- Advanced System Administration
- System Integration
- Vendor

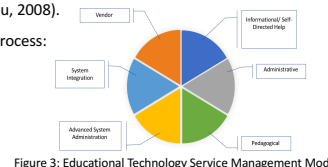


Figure 3: Educational Technology Service Management Model

CAPACITY BUILDING

The institutional partnership between CTSI and ITS for educational technology support at the University of Toronto blends the strengths of both centralized and decentralized support services. Centralized support services manage educational technology operations and build capacity with educational technology peers across the university to support teaching and learning. By maintaining a decentralized model, departments/divisions identify their unique teaching needs. Through ongoing communication and collaboration with ACT Support both central and decentralized groups coordinate educational technology support services that address individualized faculty member teaching needs, abilities and interests.

Collaboration between central and departmental/ divisional support structures are necessary for many reasons:

- Impossibility that a single unit can offer dedicated, individualized support at a large university
- Collaborative consultations provide coordinated and continuous pedagogical and technology support needed for projects and technology uses in teaching (Zhu, 2008, p. 314, 317)
- Assist faculty members as they identify their support needs and encourage the benefits of effective learning strategies when teaching with technology
- Connect faculty members and educational technology staff with communities of practice
- Support seed funding and award projects that include the scholarship of teaching and learning

“ Educational technology support requires more than simply stringing together standard services... A successful program to support educational technology encompasses a well-rehearsed set of scalable support offerings, customized consulting, and fostering a community involving various faculty and various support groups (Moser, 2007, p. 69).

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Continue to provide faculty members a variety of support resources, training schedules and support formats for all phases of technology adoption
- Create effective communication channels with educational technology peers
- Provide capacity-building training opportunities for those who support teaching (e.g., educational technologists and instructional designers) to strengthen pedagogical best practices and teaching with excellence (CTSI, 2016, p. 8; Moses, 1985, p. 87)
- Evaluate impact of multifaceted support activities

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