Speaker 1

How do you use technology now?

Speaker 2 (Dr Leigh Ellen Potter)

We have face to face workshops that run each week, but all of the rest of the course material is delivered online. This means that when the students are actually in their workshops, they are expected to have whatever they need with them to access the course material virtually, and to interact with the workshop and complete the exercises as they go. There are, however, a group of students within the course who take the course in fully online mode, so we run virtual workshops for those and we have run Wimber sessions and the technology is through Learning Griffith to engage those students without ever having to step into a classroom.

Speaker 1

How embedded are the distance students into the cohort of students who are having a blended experience?

Speaker 2

As much as possible. What I’m finding happening is that there a number of students who attend the face to face workshops, but they’re coming along to the online workshops as well. Where the two groups separate is in terms of their assessment, because they conduct group based assessment throughout the year, so obviously the students who are fully online have to interact with the other fully online students, and we provide a range of tools online to facilitate them completing their assessment. But in terms of interaction with the face to face body, because we’ve got these other students who are coming along, they have that interaction happening within the virtual classroom. We also provide a series of resources through the core site, such as discussion boards and so forth, where the students can actually talk to each other. Perhaps not in real time, but as close to it as we can, so that I can ask questions of the students and I can get the entire student body responding.

Speaker 1

What skills will be required by an academic recruited in 2020?

Speaker 2

For me, it’s flexibility and adaptability. They would have to be the two core skills, simply because technology changes at a rate, it just seems to get faster and faster, and particularly as we academics get older and older it just, it really does seem to speed up. But an enjoyment of those tools, and a real understanding of the capabilities that it can
bring to you as an academic, as a teaching academic. It gives me flexibility and scope that I never had before. The traditional classroom model of the lectures and the tutorials and the exercises and everything being very much paper based, the way it was when I went through as an undergrad. It was an amazing experience then, but when I look at what I can do with my students now. One of the things that I’m currently trying to implement, the technology isn’t quite where I’d need it to be, one of the things I’m trying to implement is a framework that will actually respond to the students’ needs. We have students with vastly different skill levels within the courses, obviously, and I’m trying to implement technology that will actually address that and give the workshop assessors and instructors feedback as to how their individual class is going. Now, that’s a capability that we didn’t have with the old paper based system, so academics coming to the table now, to have an understanding of what technology can do for them, and a passion and, for what they can now do, and an understanding that the adaptability and the flexibility that technology gives them really can extend their own practice.

Speaker 1

What will be the impact of technology on research practice in 2020?

Speaker 2

It’s not just about how I’m using technology as part of my research, because it is a critical part of what I’m doing, but it’s what technology can allow me to do in conducting my research, which I think has a wider application to the broader academic community, who may or may not be directly involved with IT. Technology is enabling me to collect information far faster and more easily than I ever could in the past. The introduction of the new tablet computing, well, it’s not new, but it is now being taken up far more broadly within the community, and of course smart phones. We now are at a point where smart phones are overtaking standard phones in terms of their take up within the Australian community. Far more mobile phone holders will now have a smart phone rather than the old technology. That brings forth a whole new level of tools that are available to an academic as a researcher to gather information from people, regardless of what their own particular research area is.

Speaker 1

Should we now be thinking about how technology is shaping learning and teaching?

Speaker 2

I think one informs the other. I think the best practice that we have in research should definitely inform how technology is developing, the tools that will support us. But it’s not just a single sided equation. Technology is now providing new facilities that we never had, and we would be foolish to ignore the capabilities that technology provides.

[end of recording]