

Teaching Astronomy and Astrophysics online at the Valencian International University

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Abstract

In the last decade, the development of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has imply a significant change in the traditional distance learning and specifically in e-learning. The new tools developed are consolidating the online learning modality at the university level all over the world and in all disciplines. In this study, we present the case of the Master of Astronomy and Astrophysics which is running from 2010 in the Valencian International University (www.viu.es). Unlike other more consolidated distance universities in Spain, the teaching method which has opted in this case includes an element of presence via webcam. This method could be considered as a kind of blended learning, combining the advantages of traditional e-learning with the humanity of personal and direct contact with the students. The results of participation in the master beyond the initial expectations with 37 students enrolled, of which approximately 80% were Spanish and the other 20% were mostly from Latin American countries. The feedback provided by students in the first months of teaching appreciates favorably the presence component, while casting doubt on the usefulness of certain tools traditionally used in the field of e-learning.