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Pioneering graduates stake claim for the future of online learning

Three Manukau Institute of Technology graduates have made history by stepping into the future of learning, through achieving a new teaching qualification.

Merle Lemon, Sonja Petkovic and Shannon Novak are the first recipients of MIT's Graduate Certificate in Applied eLearning, which they believe will help them launch pioneering careers in online teaching.

The Level 7 qualification is awarded by MIT, but is a joint initiative between the institute and the Tertiary Accord of New Zealand (TANZ). The programme was developed and is taught by TANZ members, which include MIT, Universal College of Learning (UCOL), Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology and Otago Polytechnic, as well as former member The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand.

The course is taught online and is designed for teachers, lecturers, educators and trainers from all educational sectors who use technology to support teaching and learning.

All three graduates agree online learning is the way of the future and say the qualification will enable them to reach the next level of teaching in the information age.

Auckland City resident Shannon has already put what he learned into practice as he designs and develops e-learning offerings remotely for the Practical Education Institute in New Plymouth.

"The qualification recognises that I have ability in delivering e-learning solutions," he says. "It has also provided a foundation and understanding for further study."

Shannon is currently working towards a Master of Education, specialising in e-learning.

Sonja, meanwhile, teaches at Howick College where one of her Year 13 classes contains an online component. "This is the future of learning and teaching. It is where everyone will go. I hope all secondary schools will see the benefit of e-learning."

Sonja studied and worked full time to complete the 600 learning hours required for the certificate within a year, and enjoyed the experience despite the hard work.

For Merle, a part time business and communications lecturer at MIT, the qualification was an opportunity to combine her love of technology and teaching. She also foresees a great future in online learning.

“There are so many people, such as those living in isolated regions, who want to learn, but who cannot attend classes on site. With e-learning the material is ready and waiting online and people can study in their own time.”

Oriel Kelly leader of the eLearning programme at MIT says the students delivered outstanding projects as part of their coursework.

“The programme is practical and very applied, so we have seen some exciting and innovative courses designed by the students to use for themselves. The collaborative online environment meant students were interacting with, and learning from, each other as well as the teaching staff, so they went far beyond what we imagined could be done.”

During the graduation ceremony MIT chief executive Dr Geoffrey Page hailed the students and lecturers as pioneers and said online teaching is important for the future of the institute.

For more information on the Graduate Certificate in Applied eLearning contact MIT's Learning Technology Centre 968 8000 ext 8793 or email eLearning@manukau.ac.nz



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