

INFORMATION ABOUT FLEXIBLE LEARNING

This information is provided to suggest some of sources of information to assist Pathfinder projects, who are embarking on flexible delivery for the new provision of courses to meet employer demand.

HEIs themselves have a huge wealth of in-house expertise in these aspects which should be called upon.

Description

FLEXIBLE LEARNING

Flexible Learning includes aspects of open learning and distance learning.

'The pressures of global competition and the diversity of needs met by HE mean that the sector has to be increasingly flexible and responsive ... We are encouraging and providing incentives for provision that offers learners flexibility about when and where they study, including part-time and workplace learning, and harnesses new technologies to support learning wherever and however it occurs.' (Hefce Strategic Plan, page 21)

There is a plethora of definitions and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) tools and resources available for flexible, distance or online learning.

DISTANCE LEARNING

In its broadest sense distance learning means that you study on your own, at home or wherever suits you.

OPEN LEARNING

Study in your own time.

E-LEARNING

An abbreviation of 'technology enhanced learning' - a generic term that refers to all the ways a student may use communications and information technology to support their learning. The Government e-learning strategy defines e-learning as any learning that uses ICT. For HE this will encompass flexible learning as well as distance learning and the use of ICT as a communication and delivery tool between individuals and groups, to support students and improve the management of learning (HEFCE strategy for e-learning).

E.g. Here are a few examples which give an insight into the potential of e-learning

Virtual College - <http://www.virtual-college.co.uk/elearning/elearning03.asp>

News University - Innovative online training through self-directed modules, eSeminars and faculty-led courses that target all types of media and all levels of experience
<http://www.newsu.org/>

BLENDED LEARNING

Blended learning is a combination of e-learning materials with more traditional "face-to-face" learning and teaching activities, including lectures, tutorials, laboratory classes and field trips

E.g. http://celt.glam.ac.uk/Blended-Learning-at-Glamorgan/?c=about_BL

MOBILE LEARNING

A general term that refers to the general delivery of e-learning materials on a variety of portable devices including laptops, Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs), mobile phones or MP3 players.

ONLINE LEARNING

A specific form of e-learning in which students use the Web to access resources or participate in collaborative activities such as online discussions

E.g. http://www.vam.ac.uk/about_va/online_learning/index.html

VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS (VLES)

A VLE is a comprehensive collection of innovative learning and teaching tools that can be used to develop courses for small group work, collaborative learning, independent learning and much more. It can be used for assessment and assignments that also incorporate timely feedback. It can also be developed to follow many different pedagogic models and accommodate many teaching styles.

E.g. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virtual_learning_environment

WIKI

This is a form of website that enables the online collaborative authoring of web pages. Typically, one author will write and upload a document, and subsequent authors can then edit the document online. The best known example of a wiki is the Wikipedia, at <http://en.wikipedia.org>

WEB 2.0

There is an emerging body of technologies in which the Web is becoming a medium for the collaborative creation of online content, rather than just a repository for obtaining information. Wikis, blogs and podcasts are all examples of Web 2 technologies, as are social networking sites such as MySpace or Facebook. E.g. Here you can find explanation and examples about social software and learning

http://www.futurelab.org.uk/resources/publications_reports_articles/opening_education_report_s/Opening_Education_Report199/

E-PORTFOLIO

Portfolios, in education and personal or professional development are collections of documents and other objects that can be shown as evidence to support claims a person makes about what they know, what they have achieved, and what they can do. Portfolios came into common use in UK education in the 1980s for assessment of coursework with the introduction of the GCSE and for the assessment of competency-based vocational qualifications. Portfolios have become the standard means of evaluating prior learning and prior experiential learning. As for e-portfolios, they are simply electronic versions of physical portfolios that contain digital objects instead of physical objects. Examples and case studies at <http://www.rsc-northwest.ac.uk/content/blogcategory/129/205/>

Innovative UK e-learning initiatives

The following gives a general illustration of the types of flexible online tools and materials developed by different organisations to support teaching and learning.

Futurelab!!!

Futurelab portal provides a wealth of ideas about transforming the way people learn through innovative technology and practice

<http://www.futurelab.org.uk/>

The Higher Education Academy is providing subject-specific support for enhancing the student learning experience through our nation-wide network of 24 Subject Centres at

<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/networks/subjectcentres>

OpenLearn website has been developed by the Open University (OU) and gives you access to free online learning resources and modules which you can study at your own pace

<http://www.open.ac.uk/openlearn/home.php>

Becta

Becta works with the industry to ensure the right technology is utilised to improve learning

Here you can find advice and guidance on developing digital learning resources covers educational and instructional design, inclusion and accessibility, interoperability, curriculum issues and more at <http://industry.becta.org.uk/display.cfm?catID=1826>

Learndirect

Learndirect contributes to government key strategic economic, learning and skills objectives. Previously known as University for Industry, learndirect primarily operates at the level of basic skills and pre-higher education, determines the market needs and commissions learning materials to meet those needs and which must be prepared to a common set of technical and quality skills <http://www.learndirect.co.uk/>

Further Reading

1. **E-learning centre** provides links to examples of interesting online courses, learning materials and other e-learning solutions for business, schools, higher and continuing education as well as for general interest at <http://www.e-learningcentre.co.uk/eclipse/showcase/index.html>
2. **Theory and Practice of Online Learning**, edited by Terry Anderson and Fathi Elloumi, is concerned with assisting providers of online education with useful tools to carry out the teaching and learning transactions online. This book is free to download at http://cde.athabascau.ca/online_book/contents.html
3. **E-learning journals and magazines** publishing in the area of e-learning and the use of technology in teaching and learning <http://www.e-learningcentre.co.uk/eclipse/Resources/journals.htm#j>
4. **Guide to using online discussions** http://perseus.herts.ac.uk/uhinfo/info/blu/blu/resources/online-discussions/online-discussions_home.cfm
5. **Moving from 'training push' to 'learning pull'** discussion paper at http://www.epic.co.uk/content/resources/epic_think_tanks/learner_think_tank.htm
6. **The International Centre for Distance Learning (iCDL)** - Here you can find a database containing bibliographic information on over 12,000 books, journal articles, research reports, conference papers, dissertations and other types of literature relating to all aspects of the theory and practice of distance education <http://www-icdl.open.ac.uk/>
7. **The Encyclopaedia of Educational Technology (EET)** is a collection of short multimedia articles on a variety of topics related to the fields of instructional design and education and training - <http://coe.sdsu.edu/eet/>