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# Report on the survey of e-learning centres

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E-LEN: a network of e-learning centres

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# Report on the survey of e-learning centres

## This document

This document is a component part of workpackage 1 of the E-LEN project. E-LEN aims to create a Network of E-Learning Centres and leading organisations in the field of learning technologies. One of the primary activities of this project is the survey, analysis and evaluation of existing e-learning centres. The survey has been undertaken to inform the development of a set of pedagogical and organisational guidelines on best practice in implementing an e-learning centre. The guidelines will be made available to all interested parties to help them in forming their own learning centre in a systematic way.

The aim of this document is to report on the outcomes of the survey of established e-learning centres. There are five main areas covered by this report:

- 1 An introduction to the survey, including a rationale for the survey, and a note on the research methods used
- 2 An account of the survey instrument and the gathering of data
- 3 The analysis of the data gathered, based around a typology of four kinds of e-learning centres
- 4 The development of a web-based survey to augment the questionnaire/interview data
- 5 A section on the development of guidelines for implementing an e-learning centre (the project deliverable)

This report also aims to act as a working document and is being made available for comment to partners in the E-LEN project. It is also being made available to members of the EU Minerva EQUEL project for their comments at the invitation of the project coordinator, Dr Vivien Hodgson. Feedback from E-LEN and EQUEL partners will be used to further develop this report but particularly to augment and complete our work on the guidelines for implementing an e-learning centre document (E-LEN project deliverable).

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## Acknowledgements

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We would especially like to thank Alice Jesmont who has carefully transcribed all our interviews and assisted locally with project administrative matters.

### Project Summary

The E-LEN project was designed to create a Network of E-Learning Centres and leading organisations in the learning technologies. The E-LEN network has a strong capacity for developing and delivering pedagogically-informed technology for effective e-learning experiences and has been disseminating these experiences to other institutions.

There are three main objectives for the project and these are:

1. to establish the necessary infrastructure and organisational structure for the network of e-learning centres,
2. to identify and gather best practices, “design patterns”, research roadmaps on e-learning and to enhance the dissemination of such results
3. to produce guidelines on best practice for establishing e-learning centres

For the purposes of this project we have defined **e-learning** as:

*E-Learning is the systematic use of networked multimedia computer technologies to empower learners, improve learning, connect learners to people and resources supportive of their needs, and to integrate learning with performance and individual with organisational goals*

The following definition of an **e-learning centre** has also been used to inform our research work:

*An e-learning centre is established for serving the learning needs of students, faculty and staff of an educational/training organisation, for the deployment of innovative curriculum pedagogy and state-of-the-art learning technology in real courses, and for the development of new learning technologies guided by theory and validated by observation of practice*

### Survey of e-learning centres

Lancaster University, UK is the Work Package (WP) leader for WP1 in the E-LEN project. The WP1 activities focus on a survey of existing e-learning centres leading to the development of guidelines for implementing an e-learning centre.

The primary activities reported in this document are the E-LEN project’s survey, analysis and evaluation of existing e-learning centres. The survey of existing e-learning centres has been designed to identify common issues met and to look at how problems faced are resolved. A review of recent literature on implementing an e-learning centre complements the survey findings. The survey is the basis for the other main activity of WP1: namely the guidelines document, which is intended to be a practical guide for implementing an e-learning centre, as a physical entity.

### Potential beneficiaries of the guidelines on best practice

The potential beneficiaries and clients of the guidelines on setting up e-learning centres will be educational institutions wishing to set up an e-learning centre starting from scratch or intending to further develop an existing e-learning centre within their own institution in a systematic way. This will include:

(a) the higher education sector (because new learning centres will be established with the aid of the existing ones and faculty members will be informed about R&D trends, best practice etc in the e-learning field); and

(b) large companies and public sector organisations which are setting up their own e-learning centres, in order to support greater and better use of e-learning for internal training and performance improvement purposes.

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## Rationale for the e-learning centre survey

For the purposes of providing a realistic boundary around the project's work, we have defined an e-learning centre as:

*An e-learning centre is established for serving the learning needs of students, faculty and staff of an educational/training organisation, for the deployment of innovative curriculum pedagogy and state-of-the-art learning technology in real courses, and for the development of new learning technologies guided by theory and validated by observation of practice*

In order to achieve the third objective of the E-LEN project relating to establishing guidelines for the implementation of e-learning centres, the project has the following intermediate goals:

- to survey the administrative, managerial, pedagogical, technical, research and developmental characteristics of existing e-learning centres
- to review current literature and partner experiences on establishing e-learning centres and thus
- to derive a set of organisational and pedagogical guidelines to all interested parties on forming their own learning centre in a systematic way

There are several emerging needs to justify the project's undertaking of a survey of existing e-learning centres and the succeeding production of a set of guidelines on best practice in the implementation of an e-learning centre. The first to mention is the need to learn about the know-how, best practices, rules of thumb of implementing e-learning when new organizations, enter the e-learning field. Despite the progress that has been made in the last five years in the use of information and communication technologies in education, many institutes/organisations that think of taking the step to implement electronic learning environments, face the problem of not knowing where to start from and what to do. Instead of re-inventing the wheel they could take advantage of the expertise and know-how of existing e-learning centres.

Secondly, there is a need to identify, share and disseminate the know-how, best practices, rules of thumb of e-learning between various organizations, already involved in e-learning. E-learning is currently a growing market and a field of rapid continuous development throughout the world. (According to the market survey by Urdan & Weggen the e-learning market is expanding from \$550 million in 1998 to \$11.4 billion in 2003, an annual growth rate of over 80%.<sup>1</sup>) It is expected that the labour market requirements of the new knowledge economy will force higher educational organisations to extend the skills of students in respect to knowledge work, "information handling" and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. To make effective use of e-learning methods, and to meet these changing educational needs, groups of universities and other educational and training organisations will have to find ways of identifying and sharing best practices, collaborating in the exchange of competence, experiences, 'lessons learned', tools and materials, etc.

The third need is to establish more e-learning centres and enhance the existing ones. Higher educational institutes and training centres have started to establish e-learning centres to serve the learning needs of students, to aid faculty and staff in the deployment of innovative curriculum pedagogy and state-of-the-art learning technology in real courses, and to develop new learning technologies guided by theory and validated by observation of practice. This is happening in each of the member states, and in all of the countries of Europe, though at very different rates of progress. There is an explicit need to create more of these e-learning centres in each educational institution, corporate company or other organization in order to serve the ever-increasing demands of the new economy. Furthermore existing e-learning centres need to be changed for the better by adopting best practices from their peers, in order to enhance and adapt to the changing e-learning demands.

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<sup>1</sup> Urdan, T. and Weggen, C (2000) *Corporate e-learning: exploring a new frontier*, WR Hambrecht & Co

The survey of e-learning centres has been conducted with seven established centres. The e-learning centres that have participated in the survey are as follows:

- a) Learning Technology Unit, Lancaster University, UK
- b) Learning Lab, Maastricht University, NL
- c) NewMedia in Education, University of Lugano, CH
- d) TISIP, Sor Trondelag University College, NO
- e) Learning Technology Unit, University of Aberdeen, UK
- f) Learning Technology team, Liverpool University, UK
- g) e-Learning Innovation Support Unit, Glasgow Caledonian University, UK

## Research methods

The methods for conducting the survey included preparation of a questionnaire schedule which was circulated by email to E-LEN partners. Partners were invited to complete the questionnaire document and return it to Lancaster. The leader of the e-learning centre at Lancaster University was interviewed face-to-face. The leaders of the centres at Maastricht University, Glasgow Caledonian University and Liverpool University were each interviewed over the telephone. A focus group was used for the interview with centre staff at Aberdeen University, following an initial completion of the survey questionnaire by the centre leader. Recordings were made of all interviews with centre leaders and centre staff, and transcriptions were made of all recordings.

The web sites for each of the participating e-learning centres were also examined. The data produced from the interviews and questionnaires and from the web sites has been analysed. We have undertaken a comparative analysis around a set of thematic questions.

In each of the institutions participating in the survey, we wanted to find out background information about the context, including about the size and structure of the organisation; its student numbers; and its strategy for use of e-learning. Much of this was covered in the interviews themselves or drawn from the institutional web sites.

Seven aspects were used to organise the survey questionnaire and these were:

- Services and activities of the e-learning centre
- Resources, including staff
- Administration, management and financing the centre
- Quality Assurance mechanisms
- Success stories
- Problem areas
- Growth and future plans for the e-learning centre

In the following sections we outline what areas were covered within these seven aspects relating to an e-learning centre.

## Services and activities of the e-learning centre

Under this heading we asked about the purpose and goals of the e-learning centre and attempted to gain a picture of its kinds of activities and the services offered. We asked questions to gauge the scale and scope of the centre's activities and to determine who were its main users. We were keen to understand the pedagogical purposes informing the centre activities and whether centre staff perceived educational value(s) for their work. We were also interested to find out about the day-to-day running of the centre and organisation of its work. We asked about the physical location of the centre and its facilities for staff and users.

## Resources, including staff

Within this aspect we asked questions about staffing and their skills and areas of expertise. We were keen to understand the relationships between: the kinds of skills and areas of expertise of centre staff; the institutional goals for e-learning; and the espoused purposes or goals of the e-learning centre. We were also interested to know more about the nature and maintenance of the centre's physical and electronic resources, such as whether resources were produced in-house or bought in.

## Administration, management and financing the centre

Under this broad heading we asked about the management and administrative functions of the centre and how its ongoing work and staffing are funded. Understanding financing processes was useful to determine ways of structuring project work and related activities within the e-learning centres.

## Quality Assurance mechanisms

We were interested to know how the centre and its activities were evaluated and what reporting mechanisms were in place. We were interested to know how feedback from users was gathered and how staff acted upon such feedback.

## Success stories

We wanted to gather centre staff perceptions' on where they felt the e-learning centre work had been successful and on particular success stories that might be used as examples of good practice.

## Problem areas

We were very keen to hear from e-learning centre staff about problems they had faced, issues to be addressed and potential challenges facing their centre in the near future. We believed their comments in response could be useful for the guidelines document as examples of pitfalls and problems that should be avoided if possible, or of issues about which to be mindful.

## Growth and future plans for the e-learning centre

Under this aspect we were trying to identify how the centre saw itself in the (near) future and we were encouraging centre staff to share their own goals and aims with us.

Our initial findings from analysis of the data gathered have already proved useful in the development of the guidelines and we are confident that our final guide will benefit directly from the research we have conducted.

## **Organisation of the rest of this report**

In the next section of this report we give an account of the survey instrument and our methods for gathering data. This is followed by our analysis of the data and we introduce the notion of a typology of kinds of e-learning centre. In section 4 we give an account of the quantitative web-based survey that will be conducted to augment the qualitative data gained from the in-depth interviews. Finally, an outline of



the guidelines document is given. A literature review has been used to augment the critical themes and aspects identified and explored in the survey of e-learning centres. The guidelines document will draw upon data from the survey to present example scenarios and to develop organizational design patterns for e-learning centres, fitting with the other main aspect of the ELEN project: namely the work on the development of design patterns for e-learning.



The e-learning centre survey instrument was designed to be used to gather data on the critical aspects involved in implementing an e-learning centre. The instrument was organized to ask questions around seven aspects relating to an e-learning centre. These aspects were as follows:

1. The purpose and kinds of activities of the e-learning centre
2. The resources of the centre, including staff
3. The administration and management of the centre
4. The quality assurance mechanisms in place
5. The success stories of the e-learning centre
6. The problems facing an e-learning centre
7. The likely challenges facing the e-learning centre and its plans for future development

The questionnaire was first issued by email to all E-LEN partners for completion about their own institution's e-learning centre. There are 10 partners in the E-LEN project and 4 partners were able to respond by completing the questionnaire. This was done by email for two partners and by telephone and face-to-face interview for the other two partners. Through our own network of contacts to other UK-based e-learning centres, it has also been possible to interview a number of other established UK e-learning centres. The leaders of three UK e-learning centres in higher education institutions have been interviewed. Two were conducted by telephone and the third involved a preliminary email for completion of the questionnaire, followed by a face-to-face focus group meeting with the centre leader and members of her staff.

All interviews have been transcribed and the data from the transcription of the interviews have been analysed by two researchers. We have conducted a comparative analysis of the data, using the seven aspects of the questionnaire, as identified above. A number of critical themes have emerged from the analysis and these have been used as organizing questions for our reporting on the findings. A typology of kinds of e-learning centre has begun to emerge and we have also used these kinds of centre to structure the presentation of our findings.

A copy of the interview questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1.

A review of relevant research literature has also been conducted to augment the critical themes and aspects identified from the survey of e-learning centres.

## Towards a typology of kinds of e-learning centres

E-LEN has been using the following definition for an e-learning centre:

*An e-learning centre is established for serving the learning needs of students, faculty and staff of an educational/training organisation, for the deployment of innovative curriculum pedagogy and state-of-the-art learning technology in real courses, and for the development of new learning technologies guided by theory and validated by observation of practice*

In our analysis of the data gathered from conducting the survey, we have identified four distinguishable kinds of e-learning centre, based around the purposes that respondents identified to us for an e-learning centre. The analysis of the survey data is therefore organised around four kinds of e-learning centre. In order to highlight the distinctions between these different kinds we have briefly termed the four kinds as follows:

1. Type A: having a support or service of e-learning role
2. Type B: having a support of innovation in e-learning role
3. Type C: having an e-learning course development role
4. Type D: having a remit for research on e-learning role

Before we present each of these types it is useful to make a brief overview for comparison between e-learning centre types A, B, C and D

Type A has a strong emphasis on the support of academic staff in the use of learning technology within faculties through providing assistance and advice and by developing applications and resources. Types B and D support integration of e-learning processes across faculties focusing on research, development of learning technology tools and evaluation of e-learning experiences. Type C develops and delivers courses online on a national scale through structured modules. Types B and D are distinctive from type A in the sense that they have a stronger research remit as they work on long-term projects and they have a broader role in integrating e-learning into the curricula. Type C, although it functions mainly as a course provider, has a research element oriented towards keeping up with the latest technological developments while meeting students' needs. In contrast, type A institutions having a weaker research element and tend to work on short-term projects in collaboration with academics towards developing learning driven technology solutions. In that sense, type A institutions work closely with academic staff enabling them to re-think how to use technology in order to meet learner needs and to improve quality. In a similar way, types B and D are working towards meeting staff needs in creating learning environments, but their role is much more extended in having a more strategic role in terms of supporting innovation of the educational system through integrating e-learning processes into the curricula. Type C functions mostly off campus whereas types A, B and D function mostly on campus. Clearly, the activities of all four types of e-learning centres take place both within and outside the institution. With the exception of type B, which works only with academic staff, the remaining three types work with academic staff and they have links with students. However, these links are weaker in the cases of types A and D.

### 3.2 The themes explored in relation to the types of e-learning centres

The analysis has been organised around a number of questioning themes to enable comparative analysis across the selected e-learning centres interviewed. These themes on e-learning centres were as follows:

- What are the purposes and activities of the e-learning centre, and how are they organised?

- Where does the e-learning centre operate?
- For whom does the e-learning centre operate?
- What underlying pedagogical principles inform the e-learning centre's work?
- What are the educational benefits of the e-learning centre's work?
- What kinds of skills and expertise do e-learning centre staff have?
- What is the role of research in the e-learning centre's work?
- How is the work of the e-learning centre evaluated?
- What kinds of funding models are operated for the e-learning centre?
- What organisational structures are in place?
- What challenges or issues does the e-learning centre face?
- What future developments are planned or likely to occur?

Below, we briefly outline the kinds of questions and aspects we were looking at in relation to these themes.

What are the purposes and activities of the centre, and how are they organised?

In this theme we were exploring the aims and objectives of the e-learning centres, that is the goals and mission as related to us by the centre head or staff. We were interested to know about the kinds of activities undertaken and how these were organised.

Where does the centre operate?

Under this theme we wished to identify the physical location of the centre since we believed the organisation of the centre's physical space might be influential in how it functioned and how it would be used by its main users. Under this theme we also explored the kinds of resources available within the centre for its staff and users.

For whom does the centre operate?

We were interested to know whether the centre and its resources were mainly used by academic staff or also by other groups such as students, administrators or other support staff across the institution.

What underlying pedagogical principles inform the centre's work?

In this theme we were seeking to identify whether the centre and its staff were committed to a particular pedagogical approach. We also wanted to know if this was shared among the centre staff. If there was a specific pedagogical approach identified, then we were keen to understand where this might have come from. For example, we wanted to know whether the centre's pedagogical approach was purely shared among centre staff and/or one that was being externally imposed through an institutional strategy such as a Learning Teaching and Assessment (LTA) strategy or as part of a strategy for e-learning.

What are the educational benefits of the centre's work?

In this theme we were asking centre staff to tell us about the kinds of values held for the centre's work. This theme explored the benefits that centre staff could see from their work but also the benefits they believed users gained or would be able to articulate about the centre's activities

What kinds of skills and expertise do the e-learning centre staff have?

We were interested to find out, among a centre's staff, whether there was a clear delineation of skills and areas of expertise (eg in learning or in technology) or whether staff had more integrated areas of expertise eg in learning technology. We were interested to investigate whether the kinds of skills and interests of centre staff was linked to the tendency of the centre to concentrate on pedagogical and/or technological activities.

What is the role of research in the centre's work?

The implementation of an e-learning centre within an institution of higher education is still regarded as a relatively innovative step and suggestive of an interest within the institution to support teaching and learning in new and contemporary ways. In this regard, we were interested to know where research into e-learning would figure in the aims and actions of the centre.

How is the work of the centre evaluated?

In this theme we were keen to understand how the work of the centre was evaluated and by whom this might be undertaken, eg whether it was primarily an internal assessment by centre staff or whether external mechanisms might be used.

What kinds of funding models are operated for the centre?

As part of wishing to understand the kinds of organisational issues facing an e-learning centre, we were keen to know how it was resourced and funded in this theme

What organisational structures are in place?

In this theme we were looking not only at the internal organisation of the centre, such as its management and administration, but we were also looking at the institutional structures such as reporting mechanisms and line management, and quality assurance procedures. We were also keen to hear about how the centre and its functions were aligned to, or interfaced with, other institutional support or service functions.

What challenges or issues does the e-learning centre face?

Under this theme, we wanted to hear from centre staff about the issues and problems they were facing and how they thought these might be overcome. We were interested to know how common these issues might be across different centres, or whether they were unique to a specific e-learning centre.

What future developments are planned or likely to occur?

Finally, we were keen to understand more about the visions of centre staff: the kinds of things they wanted to develop and their aspirations for the centre. We were also interested to hear about any planned changes or developments for the e-learning centre.

In the following sections we outline the findings for each of these four kinds of e-learning centre around these organising questions or themes. We also present a typical scenario or case study of an e-learning centre for each of the four kinds. Some examples of success stories are also presented.

### 3.3 The four kinds of e-learning centre

In the following sections we present our analysis of the survey data, organised around the four kinds of e-learning centre. We begin our presentation on each of the kinds by first presenting an outline description of the kind, focusing on the purpose(s) identified for that kind of centre. This is followed by a presentation of data around the questioning themes outlined above. We also present brief details of any success stories told to us by our interviewees. Finally a scenario for that kind of e-learning centre is described.

#### 3.3.1 Type A: A support or service role kind of e-learning centre

##### Outline description

This kind of e-learning centre is one in which an emphasis is put on the e-learning centre having a 'support or service' role within an institution. This can be further elaborated to highlight that this kind of e-learning centre has the enhancement of the instructional process as central to its goals. This includes that the staff of this kind of e-learning centre will normally work with subject specialists to design and set in place the e-learning infrastructure for a course. This infrastructure includes eg learning materials, study guides, specifications for individual and group learning tasks and the various ICT tools needed by the learners and their teachers. It is important to note that while this kind of e-learning centre may have research as part of its activities, the research orientation is not in the foreground of its mission.

##### What are the purposes and activities of the centre, and how are they organised?

The purposes of an e-learning centre offering a support or service role can be described by using the following verbs: support, provide, advise, assist, promote, filter, and train:

- *Support* is used to describe support of the instructional process or to enhance the teaching and learning provision, as well as to talk of support of the institutionally chosen virtual learning environment (VLE)
- *Provision* is used to describe the provision of tools, resources and information relating to e-learning
- *Advise* is used to describe the advice given to academic staff on a one-to-one and on a departmental basis eg in departmental development events
- *Assist* is used to describe the assistance given in course development in which e-learning is a part
- *Promote* is used to describe how the centre promotes good practice by reporting on successes, promoting the use of learning technology, some use of flyers
- *Filter* is used to describe the centre's role in acting as a filter for research and dissemination of research eg in taking innovative examples of e-learning to others across the institution
- *Train* is used to describe the training provided by the centre eg in use of an institutional VLE, but also the training provided as part of an institutional programme on teaching and learning designed for new academic staff

This kind of e-learning centre is primarily working with academics to establish an e-learning infrastructure eg in materials, study guides, specifications for tasks, use of ICT tools. Much of the centre's staff time is likely to be spent on one-to-one consultancy with some bespoke development work eg developing applications and learning resources through collaborative projects with academics. Also, much of the centre's work was found to be initiated by academic staff so we can suggest that their activities are often determined by users or they are 'bottom-up' driven. Other academic-related activities include staff development including running e-learning workshops and away days on the use of learning technology and some evaluation work eg of existing applications either available or in use.

In most centres of this kind we found their work was primarily organised around projects. However, in one case we found that projects were developed through a 'competitive proposal process'. The process begins with an academic who works on an outline idea and this is formalised through submission to the competitive proposal process. Successful outlines are then further developed with centre staff. The process was found to be useful for the centre for prioritising actions and helps to change the perception of the centre from a service role as available for all to use to one involved in selective development activity, but with guaranteed support to the department involved.

The process was seen to also act as an incentive for departments, using the funding to buy out time from regular teaching to spend on teaching development work. It was also suggested this process helped ensure projects were realistically funded and scoped. It also ensured that after the initial phase effort is put, time is not wasted on developments that do not get funded. The second stage of the project includes a firm commitment from the academic staff to work on the development and this was seen as a means by which to ensure projects are developed, and completed. Endorsement by the head of the school or faculty was also required in this process.

This support kind of e-learning centre may work in close association with other units or centres within the institution, and this was found to influence the orientation of the centre whether more towards a pedagogical focus or more towards a technical focus. Skills and knowledge were seen as complementary rather than duplicated between the e-learning centre and other units. In consequence, where an e-learning centre was located with an educational development unit, it was generally found that the e-learning centre was recognised foremost for its technological expertise and focus. Where an e-learning centre was located within the university's central computing services, centre staff were conscious of the need to promote their pedagogical expertise since they felt they may well be perceived as offering primarily technically-based support and services. Many e-learning centres of this kind have close associations with the institution's IT support services in order to draw upon their technical expertise. Other links were found between the e-learning centre and centralised services such as the library, audio-visual services and staff development units.

Work with students in this kind of centre was indirect or much less than with academic staff, though clearly there are indirect links to students through all of the centre's services and activities. In some cases the e-learning centre staff would have direct contact with students eg to provide student technical training especially at the start of courses with the technological tools eg with the institutional virtual learning environment (VLE).

Two centres interviewed identified some recent devolvement of the centre's work out to departments or faculties, due to increased workloads on centre staff. In one centre there are e-learning coordinators in faculties:

*We have one in CBS, one in the Health faculty, or Health School, School of Nursing and ... they co-ordinate all the activities within that school and try and promote it [e-learning], they organise staff development in the school.*

*(e-learning centre team leader)*

### **Where does the centre operate?**

We found this kind of centre functions mostly on campus but there was some variation in how the centre is set up and how staff are located. In one example the centre had a central space of office facilities with a learning technology room for development work and training sessions co-located. This centre was also placed within an institutional centre for teaching and learning providing close links to colleagues involved in all forms of teaching and learning. But the e-learning centre had its own, specific learning technology space.

In another centre we found staff were reasonably co-located in shared rooms along an office corridor, and in this case close to IT support colleagues.

Two of the centres interviewed have a learning technology lab space as well as office space, with facilities for video editing, multimedia work and videoconferencing available to academic staff and

researchers within the university. These two centres also have a multimedia specialist who needed a separate space because of the amount of equipment and the nature of the work, eg in audio/visual recording and editing.

One centre had more dispersed staff, rather than them being co-located. In this case it was suggested that the members of the centre were currently scattered because the centre was relatively new, still in an evolving stage of development and was developing through amalgamation of dispersed staff previously located in other units or departments. This head of this centre was currently operating in temporary accommodation, close to the main university buildings.

#### **For whom does the centre operate?**

This type of centre has academic staff as its priority and its main users. This type of centre also often has connections to a specific class of academic staff, namely new lecturers and teaching assistants though the centre's work on the institutional programmes in teaching and learning (or academic practice) offered to new academic (teaching) staff.

However, this type of centre also has links to students, both indirectly eg in preparation of learning resources and support documentation but also directly eg in direct training and remedial advice on using a VLE. Student links are especially strong at the start of term when learners are first using learning technologies. Students on campus are the main (indirect) users and many may be supported on an ad hoc basis.

#### **What underlying pedagogical principles inform the centre's work?**

An emphasis was placed on the centre's use of pedagogical principles to inform its work in three of the centres interviewed. In particular, one centre identified a focus on collaborative working or learning and that experiential learning was a key part of its underlying pedagogy. Learning-driven technology solutions ie the appropriate use of technology to meet learning needs was emphasised in all cases: involving the sharing of best practice and ways to avoid pitfalls eg in not allowing the technology *per se* to determine the kinds of learning activity supported

Centre staff also suggested they saw their role to include helping academic staff to be explicit about their pedagogical principles and to explain these to their students.

#### **What are the educational benefits of the centre's work?**

The educational benefits were discussed in terms of pedagogical and technological benefits. They were also discussed in terms of benefits to staff and benefits to students (both directly and indirectly).

In terms of benefits to staff, it was suggested that the centre's work was valued for encouraging academic staff to be more creative in their teaching and find ways to inspire learners and improve the quality of the teaching and learning. It was suggested that the centre's work helped academic staff to rethink and reflect upon their teaching and support of learning as well as about how to use technology for teaching. One interviewee commented: *'it encourages users to re-evaluate what they think and do, encourages a planning ahead of teaching and learning, not just last minute lecturing'*

In terms of technological benefit, it was suggested that the centre's work was valued for helping staff in using ICT tools. Staff development in ICT, including reflection on developments undertaken, was stated as a benefit associated with the centre's work.

For students it was believed that the centre's activities helped support flexible patterns of learning eg increasing support to part-time learners; encouraging learners to work more independently and to be more creative; and for widening learners' access to resources.

#### **What kinds of skills and expertise do the centre staff have?**

In this kind of centre we found that typically between 4 and 10 staff were employed. It was claimed the number of staff was linked to size of the institution, the number of students and the number of



departments, schools or faculty and their academic staffing levels. All centres of this kind had a centre leader.

In terms of skills and areas of expertise among centre staff, we found for this kind of centre that they had skills in teaching and learning as well as in technologies but these skills tended to be individual areas of expertise that were generally either more technology-focused or more learning-focused. Two centre identified that staff had a background in teaching or had undertaken professional development courses linked to teaching and learning.

It was quite typical that some staff in this kind of centre should have a largely technical role as the central part of their duties eg in supporting a VLE. These staff were found to have extensive technical experience with a specific system or tool and have been involved in significant specialist training relating to the system/tool.

In larger units there may be a manager as leader, requiring managerial skills, but all centres identified the importance of good administrative and management skills for all centre staff, especially in project management. Some skill shortages were identified eg the need for better skills in project management were expressed by one centre.

In one of the larger centres of this kind it was found they also had a member of staff responsible for accessibility issues as well as having one person with a staff development function.

It was also found that some centres operate a mentoring scheme for their staff and this was used to not only support new, less experienced members but also to help pull the skills across a centre together – enabling better cover of duties between staff.

### **What is the role of research in the centre's work?**

In centres offering a support role we found research to be generally a weak element. *'If it fits and there's space and time'* was an immediate reaction from one centre leader when asked about research. Any involvement in research tended to be in short-term learning technology projects.

However, research was regarded as important and one participant commented that it should *'inform our practice but time constraints limit this'*. Interviewees commented that attending conferences, including for networking and current awareness of what others are doing, was valuable. External projects were found to help find time for research, because they allowed some buying out of time from routine tasks, allowing the centre to employ others to handle those tasks. It was stated that association with others, in external research, gave opportunities for fresh insights into practices. So involvement in research is definitely seen as advantageous, but tended to be limited by demands for immediate work.

One centre interviewed had 'the investigation of appropriate use of learning technology' stated at the outset of its web site as being part of its mission which is suggestive of an evaluative or even research remit though the interview data attests to the limits of this centre's involvement in actual evaluative or research activity.

### **How is the work of the centre evaluated?**

In discussing how the work of the centre was evaluated interviewees commented upon how complex it was to evaluate their successes especially because of the reliance and integration of their work with other services eg IT support. An example of central network failure impacting upon how students and tutors were able to use the VLE was given to illustrate the inter-relationships between systems and functions.

Evaluation was found to be conducted primarily through gathering immediate feedback on usability, and in response to institutional reporting mechanisms eg using internal centre staff review meetings, with the e-learning steering group, and through reporting to institutional level teaching and learning committees.

There was some sense from the staff interviewed of the need for more systematic evaluation of the centre's products and the need to more formally integrate evaluation into the e-learning development life-

cycle. One centre mentioned the use of end of course 'happy sheets' to gain feedback from the students as being tokenistic.

### **What kinds of funding models are operated for the centre?**

It was found that this kind of e-learning centre is generally funded by top slicing funds at the institutional level. These funds were used for staffing, resources and equipment needs. One centre allocated a part of its budget to be spent on costs associated with e-learning projects, developed through competitive proposal process but this was unusual in those interviewed.

It was also identified that many staff in this kind of e-learning centre are employed on fixed term contracts, typically of around three years duration. In these cases the centre tended to be relatively recently established and still evolving. There was some indication of the likelihood of staff moving to permanent status following the initial development period.

Most centres operate a rolling replacement programme for their learning technology related equipment

### **What organisational structures are in place?**

The organisational structures of a support role kind of e-learning centre were explored with centre staff. We found that the centre had a central role within the institution, in three cases being part of a central support unit for teaching and learning. We found this kind of centre would have links to related support and service functions eg to central IT support services, staff development units, and media services.

In cases where there is an institutional VLE being used for e-learning the centre is also likely to have links to administrative functions centrally such as student registration and administration systems.

Internally, within the centre we found it was normal for one person to oversee the centre's work and have overall responsibility for managing the centre. In terms of reporting it was common for there to be regular meetings of the centre head with his/her line manager, typically the head of the teaching and learning services. Many centres were found to have (or have had at the outset) a learning technology steering group with representation from all academic faculties.

Externally this kind of centre is known to have national links through professional associations eg with national learning technology-related bodies such as ALT, UCISA, JISC in the UK and internationally eg ASCILITE. It was also stated that this kind of centre is likely to have some links to more generic educational groups or services eg in UK with the LTSN generic centre, the ILTHE and BAOL as well as to some subject-specific associations.

Figure 1 below is a diagrammatic representation of the kind of structure within which this support kind of e-learning centre operates. It identifies influences upon the centre's work as well as the kinds of users and agencies associated to the centre. It shows the linked providers of other institutional services.

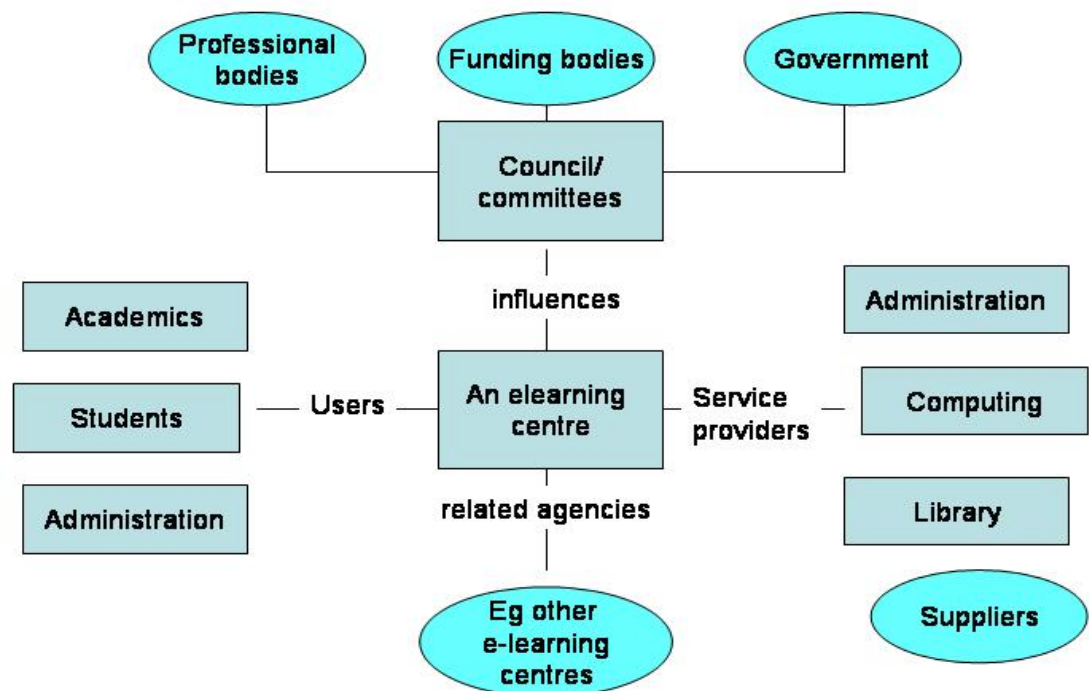


Figure 1: a diagrammatic representation of an e-learning infrastructure

In terms of structuring and organising the centre's workload this was found to be quite variable. One centre used financed projects as the basis of its workload. Another suggested the need to establish internal service level definitions for their work with academic departments, because of the continual increase in workload. The two newer centres interviewed were still operating mostly on a responsive or reactive basis to demands and requests from staff and departments.

#### **What challenges or issues does the centre face?**

The staff interviewed were able to identify a range of issues and challenges facing them in their e-learning roles.

It was found that centre staff felt a strong need for clear lines of reporting and the need to have a clear place in the institutional structure. Staff expressed a strong need for there to be a 'sense of fit with the institution and its institutional strategy'.

One of the most common issues raised was to do with time and demand for their support services. All centres felt under pressure to meet the aims and objectives of the centre especially to meet the demands from academic staff to develop e-learning materials and events and support them in running e-learning courses. Centre staff also identified the danger of mismatches in, or unrealistic expectations of, increasingly more academics, wanting to make use of e-learning. Consistency in quality of support across all users and more systematic handling of queries and maintaining contacts were mentioned as current and ongoing challenges. Tighter control over what the centre staff were doing and being more choosy about projects was also stated as needed. Two interviewees mentioned the need for systematisation of work processes, allowing tracking of progress and tracking of resources. The outcome of this sense of an ever increasing workload was the need to formalise the ways used to stay in touch with users to ensure coherence as the impact of e-learning grows. Staff also commented upon the need to keep staff with scarce skills in place, suggesting the need to pull skills together so that centre staff can cover for each other.

Maintaining or improving the quality of service while under increasing pressure especially to respond to immediate academic needs was commonly stated as an issue for this kind of e-learning centre. The growth and increase in activities had also led to an increase in immediate primarily technical kind of problems, often requiring immediate responses. Centre staff commented upon the very real danger of them becoming a help desk service.

Some centre staff identified the need to overcome user perceptions that the e-learning centre had a technological focus rather than a pedagogical one as a current challenge. One interviewee commented that the location of the centre and the line management and structure had influenced this perception. In this case the centre was physically located close to the IT support services and the centred head reported to the director of IT services. In another centre there existed also a linked educational development centre (with a clear remit regarding pedagogical matters) leading to an inference that the e-learning centre would have more of a technology focus than a pedagogical one.

In institutions with a central VLE, we found there was some pressure put on centre staff to meet targets in take-up in use of the VLE.

Other issues included the need to encourage a sense of ownership for and commitment to e-learning developments at departmental level, keeping up with technological developments and how to respond and allocate time equitably when there were strong variations in demand from the different faculties or subject areas – in particular one interviewee commented that development work for the sciences tended to be more complex, and more time-consuming and technically demanding.

### **What future developments are planned or likely to occur?**

We asked centre staff to comment upon planned forthcoming developments as well as to tell us about things they felt needed to be addressed. There was a strong belief in the need for an institutional strategy for learning and teaching if there was not one already in place and that such a strategy must take account of the place of ICTs.

Staff also expressed the need for staff development in use of e-learning to be tailored more to faculty needs and to be less generic. As this kind of centre becomes established within an institution there is likely to be more moves towards faculty teams, being made up of a learning technology specialist, a learning and teaching specialist and a student support specialist. We found this had happened already at two of the institutions surveyed and was a planned development for another centre. Underlying this development was the belief that if learning technology penetration is to be firmly embedded, there is a need for more learning technology professionals to be located across the university, and enabling them to specialise in e-learning support more tailored to different discipline needs. However the central role of this kind of centre was still regarded as important and a means to provide integration and dissemination of good practice across the organisation.

Some streamlining and systematisation of work practices is needed to cope with the increasing workloads facing support type e-learning centres. Workflow automation eg automated query and response for supporting future queries from users and work progress tracking was suggested as a forthcoming development area by one centre.

Technically one member of staff indicated the need for them to be involved in more experimentation with other advanced technologies for learning such as mobile devices and PDAs, suggestive of a desire to see the centre having not only a support role but also a role in teaching and learning innovation.

### **Success stories**

Below we outline three examples of real success stories for the support role kind of e-learning centre.

#### *a) Embedding a virtual learning environment (VLE) into a law course*

The aim of this project was to identify models for pedagogically effective use of VLEs for wider application within the context of legal education in order to support independent, collaborative, student-centred learning, and to achieve best practice within the wider legal academic community. The use of the VLE

began in an optional module in the law degree and now is a core module undertaken by all first year law students.

*b) The wide use of noticeboards and discussion spaces*

Noticeboards and discussion spaces are widely used by undergraduate and postgraduate students of various disciplines ranging from management, accounting and finance to social sciences and educational research in one university. The Domino system (Lotus Notes) is used as a platform because it is easy to install and personalise. In the case of accounting and finance, the tutor posts learning materials such as notes and .pdf versions of Power Point slides on the Noticeboard before the lecture. After the lecture he provides the lecture notes in formats which students can easily download. The Discussion Space is seen as a useful area for academic discussion related to the course. The Noticeboard is used for sharing course documents eg teaching materials, handouts etc

*c) The Development of Showcase: a way of presenting case studies*

Showcase is an application that displays decision tree-based case studies in one university. New case studies were found easy to edit and develop as formatting and content are separated out in the process. Showcase has been developed in collaboration with lecturers from Accounting and Finance Division for use with their students. However, Showcase has the potential to be used by many other disciplines. The particular case study they have developed for accounting and business students involves the auditing of a company where the student has to interview three directors and selects the appropriate questions from a list. This procedure determines how much information they can elicit from the directors. Each question is tagged with a style (closed, open, aggressive etc) and at the end of the interview the students are presented with an analysis of their interviewing style. This would then be followed up by a class discussion.

**Scenario For Type A**

The centre is a unit of four staff with skills designed to interface between learning and technology – ie 2 with expertise in pedagogical possibilities of e-learning, 1 with strong technical skills and know how, 1 with multimedia expertise. The unit is serving all faculties, supporting academic staff in course development where e-learning is featured.

The underlying pedagogical model is support of collaborative learning. Therefore, much of the centre's work is setting up discussion spaces in the institutional virtual learning environment to support collaboration among learners. The VLE is also used as an electronic noticeboard for posting teaching materials, course information, library resources eg reading lists. The centre has also made extensive use of templates for course design, to enable rapid design and reusability across subject areas. The other activities of the centre include production of paper based resources eg guides and worksheets.

On a day to day basis staff are involved in one-to-one contact for consultancy, running student technical training at the outset of a course and occasional staff development events for departments. In addition staff undertake some administrative and QA commitments eg reporting on their work on a regular basis to line management.

This centre works in close liaison with other support and service teams eg media unit, library, IT support, and student management systems. It is physically located within a centre for teaching and learning so there is a physical as well as a conceptual close-coupling of the centre's work to a learning or pedagogical focus. Staff work in an open office but have also use of learning technology lab space for development work and this includes a resources room. Facilities include learning technology resources eg video editing suite, videoconferencing facilities

Staff undertake some promotional activity for the centre's work, eg through electronic dissemination internally of course development achievements.

This centre has been designed to align with the institutional strategy for teaching, learning and assessment and this includes a commitment to the use of ICTs to support small group collaborative

learning. The centre and the learning technology strategy have grown from enthusiasm of key individuals and departments who have acted as flagships for e-learning development. As such this is very much an evolved model of e-learning centre development.

### 3.3.2 Type B: A support of innovation type of e-learning centre

#### **Outline description**

This definition puts an emphasis on the e-learning centre having an innovation in e-learning role within an institution. This definition can be further elaborated to highlight that this kind of e-learning centre has innovation in the instructional process as central to its goals. This includes that the staff of this kind of e-learning centre will normally work with faculty co-ordinators to develop existing online course management systems to efficient virtual learning environments and integrate them into teaching and learning. As part of that, the centre staff are likely to organise direct training of faculty members in using learning technologies. It is important to note that this kind of e-learning centre is highly likely to have research as a key and even integrated part of its activities. As part of its role in encouraging innovative use of technology in a variety of university settings, this kind of e-learning centre provides pedagogic and technical solutions and helps build next generation learning tools and services for its core residential and extended education environment.

In our survey of established e-learning centres we were only able to find one example of this kind of centre, so our reporting is necessarily concentrated around findings that may be particular to this specific centre, although where possible, we have attempted to generalise out our findings to what might be typical for any (or many) centres of this kind.

#### **What are the purposes and activities of the centre, and how are they organised?**

The purposes of these kinds of centre are to support innovation of curricula in all faculties with the integration of technologies into learning, through research, development and evaluation, and through meeting learning needs of staff in creating e-learning environments. These aims are met in part through the following kinds of activities:

- a) supporting problem-based learning and collaborative learning through the use of technology,
- b) supporting teaching staff in the implementation of its VLE (such as WebCT or Blackboard) and in their use of a collaborative learning tool in the centre interviewed (a tool known as Polaris and developed by the e-learning centre staff)
- c) conducting research and development through participating in project work eg with international partners
- d) monitoring the steps faculties take in using technology through evaluation

These activities are organised around creating and maintaining websites, developing manuals, arranging meetings between committees, setting up training and induction programmes, demonstration courses and by having regular strategic discussions with library. These discussions and the committee meetings aim to explore effective uses of technology within the institution. The website is enriched with powerpoint presentations and includes research articles and reports which can be downloaded by users. The demonstration courses i.e. show how to use Blackboard in problem based-learning, how to use other multimedia examples integrated in Blackboard. Finally, a major development within the centre studied has been the deployment of the Polaris tool: a building block fully integrated into the Blackboard environment.

This type of e-learning centre supports curricula and teaching staff across all university faculties, although there might be a variation in the way different faculties progressed in terms of integrating technology into the curriculum. Towards this goal, this type of e-learning centre has different functions moving from a research centre towards becoming an expertise centre.

### **Where does the centre operate?**

This type of centre operates mostly on campus having regular hours from 9 until 5 but its electronic resources are typically accessible on a 24 hour basis. Having its own building for the learning lab at the centre of the campus, this type of e-learning centre is located close to most of the faculties and is easy to find. The learning lab consists of an open space office and a demo room equipped with a smart board and able to give demonstrations of all kinds of applications.

### **For whom does the centre operate?**

It operates only for academic staff, with no direct contact with students who are nevertheless using the tools developed by the centre. The centre has close links with other institutions and learning organizations especially in relation to Polaris being used in Blackboard systems and other learning environments.

### **What underlying pedagogical principles inform the centre's work?**

In the centre interviewed, the centre's work was solely based on problem-based learning (PBL) in a collaborative context with the use of communication technologies. As part of PBL students meet in small groups in the presence of a tutor on a regular basis e.g. twice a week and analyse a problem using brainstorming in order to agree on what knowledge they need to find in order to solve the problem. It is essential in PBL to preserve complexity in ill-structured problems and to discover multiple solutions to the same problem.

### **What are the educational benefits of the centre's work?**

The educational benefits of the centre's work are better access to information and empowerment of communication in PBL. These qualities are enabled through the deployment of certain tools used to manipulate information and help sharing the results of these manipulations. The development of a collaborative learning tool was found to promote interactions in learning communities and to enhance development of knowledge through active and self-directed learning.

### **Which are the kinds of skills needed?**

Staff working in this type of centre each have a range of skills including pedagogy, cognitive psychology, educational psychology and technical skills i.e. programming and JAVA developing. It was mentioned that all kinds of activities were shared among all members and this indicates that there is team work as staff collaborate and bring their various skills together towards the development of learning technology tools and materials. The Director of the centre leads project work and meets twice a month with the team to discuss progress made within projects and related activities. Administrative work is conducted in collaboration with the office manager. The number of staff working in the centre studied was 9.

It was also mentioned that the centre has mechanisms for appraising staff through annual meetings in which they discuss their position in the projects and they exchange interpretations about work in an open manner. The centre is also working towards the development of a CPD (continuous professional development) programme to engage staff in related activities.

### **What is the role of research in the centre's work?**

Research has a central role in the centre's work being related to the curricula of the different faculties and guiding best practice. In that sense, research work is oriented towards bridging the gap between theory and practice in the area of e-learning focusing in collaborative learning in the context of problem based learning through uses of technology. The research and evaluation is organised around participation in long-term international projects (eg in the ELEN project in the case of the centre interviewed).

Other involvement in research includes smaller learning technology projects initiated by units in the faculties acting as partners i.e. they were invited to support the instructional technology part of anatomy in education module within the medical school.

### **How is the work of the centre evaluated?**

Evaluation activities include monitoring the steps faculties take in the process of starting with the implementation until full integration of technology in their teaching learning process. At the end of each academic year the centre produces an evaluation report which includes project reports detailing research outcomes and the financial situation of the centre. The evaluation outcomes are also discussed during co-ordinator meetings in each faculty. Evaluation processes are considered important for the centre in conducting needs analysis for parts of the centre's work, that is in supporting staff across faculties through the development of the website and the organisation of the demonstrations.

### **What kinds of funding models are operated for the centre?**

In the case of the centre interviewed, the university funds the centre with a regular budget of 500.000 euros per year with additional money for external activities. In addition, the centre finances further developments through re-investing in their own products. Staff are employed through projects on fixed-term contracts.

### **What organisational structures are in place?**

This type of e-learning centre has a central role within the institution in terms of leading discussions between faculties in the area of e-learning. Each month it brings together all co-ordinators from each faculty to discuss together e-learning developments and related experiences within faculties. In addition to that there is a Steering Group which functions as an educational platform bringing together all Directors of curriculum within different faculties at a higher level.

Internally within the centre the Director of the centre leads project work, works closely with the office manager and holds regular meetings with the team to discuss progress made within projects and related activities and finally reports to the university Vice Chancellor. The centre has close links to other support agencies across the university such as the bigger organisation for educational development of research and the ICT service/ Academic computing centre.

Externally, this type of centre has links with other universities and learning institutions, with national professional organisations and also links to more generic educational groups and services. In addition, there is collaboration with other partners, i.e. they are developing collaborative projects with local hospitals in trying to integrate e-learning in their practice.

### **What challenges or issues does the centre face?**

The centre faces a continual challenge in explaining the pedagogical benefit in using technology across faculties. Another issue is dealing with variation in demand within faculties for the centre's support and services. Technical problems in upgrading the VLE (ie Blackboard) was also an issue identified by the type B centre interviewed.

### **What future developments are planned or likely to occur?**

The centre plans to re-build curricula to further integrate e-learning into the university's mainstream educational support. It also plans to start cross-disciplinary 'communities of practice' within the institution.

### **Type B Success Story**

#### *Development of Polaris; a tool for the support of interactions in collaborative learning*

Polaris is a prototype tool, fully integrated in the university's widely used course management system. It enhances collaboration in a problem based learning context supporting the processes of knowledge development and knowledge management as users can collaboratively restructure the content of the



knowledge base according to their insights. These processes are encouraged in a setting for asynchronous constructive interaction in which learning mechanisms occur. Polaris includes navigation and orientation facilities supported by free text search facilities. The active work in collaborative knowledge development is supported through the use of these tools to collect quotes and full documents and link documents that are part of different threads. In this way, Polaris enhances reuse of knowledge within a learning community.

### **Scenario for Type B**

The centre is a unit of nine staff with skills designed to interface between research, pedagogy and technology. The unit is serving all faculties, supporting innovation within the instructional process of the university.

The underlying pedagogical model is about collaborative learning in a problem based curricula context. The centre's work is to set up discussion spaces to enable building of knowledge through encouraging comparisons of students' work, searching for information and sharing of experiences within the institutional virtual learning environment (VLE). Mutual discussion and negotiation of tasks is meant to generate new knowledge.

The other activities of the centre include support of staff in the implementation of the VLE and evaluation of the process of the implementation of learning technology within faculties from initial steps to full integration in their teaching and learning process.

On a day-to-day basis staff are involved in discussions with committees on the uses of technology, writing and maintaining of websites integrated with examples of multimedia use, running induction programmes and technical training sessions for academic staff. In addition staff undertake some QA commitments e.g. reporting on work on regular basis to line management.

This centre works in close liaison with other support and service teams e.g. library, ICT service centre, educational development and research group. It is physically located within the centre of the city having its own building and within a short distance from the faculties. Staff work in offices but have also use of a demonstration room equipped with a smart board for presenting all kinds of applications, which is open for visitors. Staff undertake some promotional activity for the centre's work, e.g. disseminate results within and outside the university through reports.

This centre has been designed to align with the institutional strategy for educational renewal and innovation through implementation of learning technology in teaching and learning across faculties. The centre has grown from initiatives to redesign and improve the educational process in the context of problem-based learning and it contributes in maintaining the institution at a prominent position in educational innovation through developing new knowledge and refining requirements for best practice in the field of learning technology. As such this is very much a strategically planned model of e-learning centre development.

#### 3.3.3 Type C: An e-learning course development type of e-learning centre

##### **Outline description**

This definition puts an emphasis on the e-learning centre having a course development role within and possibly outwith the institution. This definition can be further elaborated to highlight that this kind of e-learning centre has the development and delivery of courses online as central to its goals. This includes that the staff of this kind of e-learning centre will normally work collaboratively to prepare content and produce teaching materials for a course as part of developing learning events for geographically dispersed students. It is important to note that while this kind of e-learning centre may have research as part of its activities, the research orientation is not in the foreground of its mission.

In our survey of established e-learning centres we were only able to find one example of this kind of centre, so our reporting is necessarily concentrated around findings that may be particular to this specific centre, although where possible, we have attempted to generalise out our findings to what might be typical for any (or many) centres of this kind.

### **What are the purposes and activities of the centre, and how are they organised?**

The purposes and activities of this type of e-learning centre is to develop and deliver courses over the internet on a national basis. These activities are organised in the following ways:

- a) development of online web-based system for registration and support for learners and tutors, which includes: catalogue services, student registration, administration of student progress, and administration of exams.
- b) supply of tutors with a complete set of templates for delivering courses over the Internet, which are used to organize the presentation of each course in a similar way.
- c) participation in learning-projects and assistance with e-learning expertise.
- d) support of web sites for schools and government organizations who do not have sufficient knowledge in running network solutions on the Internet.

This kind of e-learning centre works closely with related faculties that may offer advanced technical support to develop courses, certificates and other programmes in the field of computer science. Much of the centre's staff time is likely to be spend on course development ie designing lessons, modules and related materials for self-study structured after normal progression related to subject domain. A set of exercises is developed for each module that includes tasks closely connected to the text and other questions having an open character and can be targeted towards individual students or student groups. The courses are updated each semester to capture the latest technology and to reflect the change in student needs. On a day-to-day basis staff run the portal where courses are available and support the students mainly through providing feedback on their work. As part of their work staff have published a number of textbooks. Staff are also likely to develop advanced technologies like streaming video for illustration and story telling through involvement in research projects.

### **Where does the centre operate?**

This type of e-learning centre's work is mostly linked to off-campus students who are geographically dispersed but may visit the centre for certain course requirements such as laboratory exercises. The centre also functions on-campus as a research and development centre.

The centre studied is located within the department of informatics and it has a range of physical resources i.e. 2 offices, rooms for meetings and laboratories including computers and other multimedia equipment.

### **For whom does the centre operate?**

This centre operates for adult students and academic staff including researchers. It is a large centre and it has attracted thousands of online students nationwide since it was established, having links with other universities and adult learning centres. Some of the resources produced by the centre are made available for students on campus as extra resources.

### **What underlying pedagogical principles inform the centre's work?**

The centre's work is informed by the qualities of open and distance education: these being flexibility, autonomy and self-directed learning. Learners may proceed on their own pace taking responsibility for their own progress and often studying part-time due to professional commitments.

### **What are the educational benefits of the centre's work?**

The educational benefits of the centre's work were identified as experiential learning and support of collaborative learning through the use of advanced technology. The centre suggested value in its work in supporting life-long learning and offering flexibility in meeting student needs.

### **What skills and expertise are needed for staff employed in the centre?**

A range of skills is needed for staff working in this type of e-learning centre, eg: a) management and administrative skills; b) pedagogical skills for staff working on content development and research; and c) technical skills for LAN management, Internet publishing, programming in Java, XML, graphic design and

web design, etc. In the centre studied, three members of staff were working full-time on administration, network management, profiling, marketing and student support. Around 30 staff worked part-time on course development and text book authoring. A small number of those would be directly involved in research projects.

#### **What is the role of research in the centre's work?**

There is a strong research element in the centre's work as it participates in many national and international projects in the field of e-learning, especially in terms of developing new learning methods and materials while keeping up with technological developments.

#### **How is the work of the centre evaluated?**

The content of the courses and the way they are run are evaluated against a set of recommendations given in newly established government quality reform policy. Other forms of evaluation take place at monthly board meetings together with the director and the research director. These are informed by students and project partners' views which are collected by using questionnaires. Feedback on the quality of the course content materials given by the students is discussed among staff before each semester update.

#### **What kinds of funding models are operated for the centre?**

The usual application for project funding procedure from different public and government sources is followed. The centre has dialogues with companies who have interest in their expertise or vice versa. The cost for course developing, running and marketing is covered by student fees. When it comes to developing new courses, the centre often receives signals from the computer industry or demand from potential user groups. This type of centre also looks for trends in the market and among the current users and students, to predict and prepare for future work.

#### **What organisational structures are in place?**

Work in this type of centre is led by a board, director and research director, practicing an open or one-level hierarchy model, in which everybody can influence with their opinion. Activities led by the centre studied are closely linked to a university, in particular to the Department of Informatics which provides technical support. Externally, the centre is a partner in national and international research networks on e-learning and it is also a member of national research and development groups.

#### **What challenges or issues does the centre face?**

The centre interviewed suggested increasing competition in the area of open and distance education was the main challenge faced by this kind of centre. In order to promote their work the centre has a marketing strategy group which is trying to find ways to spread knowledge about what they can offer and focuses on advertising in news-magazines and education and computer exhibitions.

#### **What future developments are planned or likely to occur?**

The centre plans to develop more courses online using advanced technology and to collaborate with institutions or key players abroad in order to provide courses. In relation to the above goals, efforts on research with a focus on learning technologies will be increased.

#### **Scenario for Type C**

The centre is a large unit of over thirty staff working part-time and only three staff employed full-time with skills designed to interface between pedagogical, technical, i.e. web design, programming, research and administration. The unit is serving learner needs on a national basis through developing courses, certificates and programmes mostly in the field of computer science.

The underlying pedagogical model is about flexible, self-directed study and experiential learning through structured modules to enable learner autonomy. The centre is developing a certain approach to the development of internet-based courses, though modules that include a set of exercises linked to text or

having an open character to be solved by students working remotely individually or in collaboration. The templates used are enriched with advanced technologies such as streaming video. These materials are also provided to campus students as additional resources.

The other activities of the centre include management of an online web based system for registration and administrative support for learners and tutors. In addition the centre participates in learning technology projects and it supports schools and government organisation in running network solutions.

On a day-to-day basis staff are involved in developing learning materials, writing text books, running the portal and supporting students. Staff undertake some QA commitments and evaluate their work against a set of recommendations using student questionnaires and staff focus group discussions.

This centre works in close liaison with the Faculty of Informatics and e-learning and it collaborates with other universities. It is physically located within the Department of Informatics and e-learning having offices with computers and multimedia equipment and meeting rooms. As the centre follows an open and distance mode of learning work with students is conducted online. However, some laboratory exercises are organised on a face-to-face basis, at certain locations across the county.

A marketing strategy group within the centre undertake promotional activity through submitting information about courses offered at educational exhibitions and published materials.

This centre has been designed to align with the institutional strategy for open and flexible learning through the use of networked technology targeted at geographically dispersed students. The centre has grown from governmental initiatives developed to meet learner needs focusing in the area of computer science. As such this is very much a strategically planned model of e-learning centre development.

#### 3.3.4 Type D: A research role e-learning centre

##### **Outline description**

This definition puts an emphasis on the e-learning centre having a research role within an institution, so the research orientation is in the foreground of the centre's mission. This definition can be further elaborated to highlight that this kind of e-learning centre has research into the instructional process as central to its goals. This includes that the staff of this kind of e-learning centre will normally work on a number of research projects exploring the relationship between new technologies and development of new attitudes and investigating the conditions for effective management of e-learning activities. It is important to note that in this kind of e-learning centre aims to produce new knowledge and define requirements for best learning practices and individualized learning approaches to help universities maintain leadership positions.

In our survey of established e-learning centres we were only able to find one example of this kind of centre, so our reporting is necessarily concentrated around findings that may be particular to this specific centre, although where possible, we have attempted to generalise out our findings to what might be typical for any (or many) centres of this kind.

##### **What are the purposes and activities of the centre, and how are they organised?**

This centre works in partnership with private companies and public institutions to implement and evaluate experiences in e-learning and assess the impact of new media in education. It examines and tests new tools and supports integration of e-learning processes into the curricula. The centre's activities can be described as follows:

- a) integration of audio/video sources in e-learning activities. In the centre interviewed we found one project about developing and testing an online repository of documents enriched with texts and audio/video to assist teaching.
- b) research and evaluation of impact of new media on education and integration of e-learning in curricula,
- c) consultation services and support for implementation and assessment of e-learning processes in higher education institutions and in corporate and professional environments and

d) set up of a virtual meeting place to share experiences for researchers and experts on a weekly basis.

On a day-to-day basis the centre staff undertake research project activities, give lectures and write research papers.

#### **Where does the centre operate?**

This centre operates mostly on campus and it is located within the university. Most of the research and evaluation activities are conducted within the physical space of the centre and the students are located on campus.

#### **For whom does the centre operate?**

It operates mostly for researchers in the area of e-learning but centre staff do have links with students. The doctoral school students enrolled in this centre study new media in education from different points of view: pedagogy, economy, literature, informatics, psychology and knowledge management.

#### **What underlying pedagogical principles inform the centre's work?**

The respondent stated that 'the centre's work is informed by autonomy in an e-learner centred framework'.

#### **What are the educational benefits of the centre's work?**

The educational benefit of the centre's work is the improvement of the quality of educational activities through understanding the conditions to develop and manage effective learning experiences to assist educational practice.

#### **What skills are needed for staff employed in the centre?**

Research, pedagogical and technical skills are needed for the centres' work. Background experience of research staff includes education, engineering, communication sciences and economics. In the particular centre studied, administrative tasks are shared among students. Being a relatively small centre, it employs 5 staff who share research project roles and technical responsibilities.

#### **What is the role of research in the centre's work?**

Research has a central role with five large projects with national partners in progress, investigating the relationship between new technology and the development of new attitudes, approaches, theories and practices in learning. One of the projects (mentioned by staff in the centre studied) investigates how e-learning activities are managed and organised within universities: aiming at understanding success conditions and sustainability problems.

#### **How is the work of the centre evaluated?**

Evaluation in this type of centre is conducted in response to reporting mechanisms, i.e. through internal centre staff meetings.

#### **What kinds of funding models are operated for the centre?**

The centre's director initiates funding procedures.

#### **What organisational structures are in place?**

The centre director has overall responsibility for managing the centre and the on-going projects. The centre works independently from other services and administrative sections of the institution and it collaborates with other departments and offers its services as appropriate. Externally, the centre has links to national associations for e-learning and private companies.

### **Scenario for type D**

The centre is a unit of five staff with skills ranging from research to technical. The unit is involved in five learning and teaching programmes and has links with all faculties in terms of implementing and evaluating experiences in e-learning.

The underlying pedagogical model is about self-responsibility in an e-learner centred framework. These ideas inform a number of projects in progress, which are investigating success conditions and sustainability problems for managing e-learning activities and exploring ways of building up communities of practice.

In relation to the above, the centre is engaged in testing of educational software, tools and resources, integration of audio-visual material and evaluation about the impact of new technology in education. Other activities include consulting services, support for implementation and assessment and assistance with integration of e-learning processes into curricula.

This centre works in partnership with private companies and public institutions. It is physically located within the university. Staff work in an open plan office with computers and multimedia equipment.

Staff undertake some promotional activity for the centre's work, e.g. through electronic dissemination via mailing list.

This centre has been designed to align with the institutional strategy to enhance uses of new media and support of ICT in education and this includes a commitment to improve quality of educational activities and effective learning experiences to assist good practice. The centre seems to have grown from enthusiasm of key individuals and appears to be an evolved model of e-learning centre development having, however, now developed a strategic planning element for future evolution of the centre.

We decided to undertake a broader form of the survey with a larger public group as a complementary activity to the qualitative study conducted through the in-depth interviews. A more limited online version of the questionnaire has therefore been created using SNAP software. The web-based survey uses Likert scale responses and this will be made publicly accessible via the E-LEN website and an email message to online discussion lists will advertise the online survey.

We will conduct a statistical analysis to provide us with quantitative data, to augment the qualitative analysis. The data from this questionnaire will therefore be analysed using SPSS quantitative data software.

A draft version of the web-based survey questions can be seen in Appendix 2.

## Rationale for a guidelines document on implementing an e-learning centre

We believe the guidelines are important to help develop and implement e-learning centres in a systematic and coherent manner. The guidelines document will offer a set of organisational and pedagogical guidelines to all interested parties on forming their own learning centre in a systematic way.

There are several emerging needs to justify the project's production of a set of guidelines on best practice in the implementation of an e-learning centre. The first to mention is the need to learn about the know-how, best practices, rules of thumb of implementing e-learning when new organizations, enter the e-learning field. Despite the progress that has been made in the last five years in the use of information and communication technologies in education, many institutes/organisations that think of taking the step to implement electronic learning environments, face the problem of not knowing where to start from and what to do. Instead of re-inventing the wheel they could take advantage of the expertise and know-how of existing e-learning centres that has been gathered in the survey and used in the guidelines document.

Secondly, there is a need to identify, share and disseminate the know-how, best practices, rules of thumb of e-learning between various organizations, already involved in e-learning. E-learning is currently a growing market and a field of rapid continuous development throughout the world. It is expected that the labour market requirements of the new knowledge economy will force higher educational organisations to extend the skills of students in respect to knowledge work, "information handling" and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. To make effective use of e-learning methods, and to meet these changing educational needs, groups of universities and other educational and training organisations will have to find ways of identifying and sharing best practices, collaborating in the exchange of competence, experiences, 'lessons learned', tools and materials, etc.

The third need is to establish more e-learning centres and enhance the existing ones. Higher educational institutes and training centres have started to establish e-learning centres to serve the learning needs of students, to aid faculty and staff in the deployment of innovative curriculum pedagogy and state-of-the-art learning technology in real courses, and to develop new learning technologies guided by theory and validated by observation of practice. This is happening in each of the member states, and in all of the countries of Europe, though at very different rates of progress. There is an explicit need to create more of these e-learning centres in each educational institution, corporate company or other organization in order to serve the ever-increasing demands of the new economy. Furthermore existing e-learning centres need to be changed for the better by adopting best practices from their peers, in order to enhance and adapt to the changing e-learning demands.

## Potential beneficiaries

The potential beneficiaries and clients of the guidelines on setting up e-learning centres will be educational institutions wishing to set up an e-learning centre within their own institution. This will include:

- (a) the higher education sector (because new learning centres will be established with the aid of the existing ones and faculty members will be informed about R&D trends, best practice etc in the e-learning field); and
- (b) large companies and public sector organisations which are setting up their own e-learning centres, in order to support greater and better use of e-learning for internal training and performance improvement purposes.

## Survey advice on what's needed

Some of the key issues that the guidelines will address have been identified by subjects in the survey. For example, they have suggested that the document should emphasise the importance for the institution to have a strategy of how an institution wants to develop to full integration of e-learning and that an e-learning centre needs to have direct links to institutional senior management. The respondents also



suggested the guidelines should suggest how a centre might be structured and where a centre is physically based must be considered.

## **Structure of the guidelines document**

The Guidelines document will firstly set out its overall purpose: to assist people in setting up an e-learning centre. It will also outline models of how e-learning centres have been set up, using the scenarios of types of e-learning centre activities. It will identify different kinds of centre activity and ways of organising those activities. It will identify the kinds of issues faced and the pitfalls to avoid. It will also try and point to future developments and directions for e-learning centres. It will suggest useful pedagogical approaches and also what pedagogical approaches are best avoided with e-learning. It will point to future developments eg new technological developments and new technology standards. It will also attempt to advise the institution at policy and planning level as well as offering practical advice to practitioners.

The structure for the guidelines document is likely to be as follows:

### **Executive summary**

#### **Part 1: Introduction:**

- i. Who is this document for?
- ii. How should this document be used?
- iii. Terminology
- iv. Origins – the E-LEN survey
- v. Acknowledgements
- vi. The nature of the problem
  - a. setting up an e-learning centre
  - b. issues and challenges e-learning centres are facing
  - c. pitfalls to avoid
- vii. What is an e-learning centre? Our definition

#### **Part 2: Implementing an e-learning centre: notes and guidelines**

1. Rationale for an e-learning centre
2. Scenarios and kinds of e-learning centre
3. Leadership for development of an e-learning centre
4. Strategy and policy development for e-learning
5. Skills, competencies, roles for e-learning centre staff
6. Pedagogy for e-learning (drawing particularly on JISC NlinHE Guidelines)
7. Organisational issues for an e-learning centre
  - a. infrastructure for an e-learning centre

- b. location
  - c. links and agency
  - d. e-learning development
  - e. barriers and pitfalls
8. The need for establishing an e-learning community
- a. Internally
  - b. External links to cognate groups and professional associations and organisations

**Part 3: Resources for e-learning**

- 1 Web sites
- 2 References

## e-learning Centre Survey

*E-Learning is the systematic use of networked multimedia computer technologies to empower learners, improve learning, connect learners to people and resources supportive of their needs, and to integrate learning with performance and individual with organisational goals*

### Introduction

An e-learning centre is a physical centre that supports e-learning and teaching within an organization. An e-learning centre is established for serving the learning needs of students, faculty and staff of an educational/training organisation, An e-learning centre has the enhancement of the instructional process as part of its goals. It is not a centre which foregrounds its research orientation, though it may conduct research as part of its activities.

We intend to create a practical guide for the implementation of e-learning centres, as physical entities. The e-learning survey is the first activity under WP1 of E-LEN and is designed to gather information on e-learning centres that already exist. We anticipate from this data that we can identify a set of types of e-learning centre (based on kinds of activity and contextual factors) and for each type know a little more about the way that they have been set up and the kinds of services and activities they undertake. The analysis and identification of types of centre will feed into the workpackage's main deliverable, namely a set of guidelines on the implementation of e-learning centres.

The e-learning centre survey will initially be undertaken within the partner members of E-LEN. It is anticipated that partners will conduct the survey within their own institution by face-to-face interview with the centre's head and/or staff. Data gathered will be first collated and analysed by the Lancaster team.

It is planned that the survey will look at the following seven aspects concerning the implementation of an e-learning centre:

- 1 Services and activities
- 2 Resources, including staff
- 3 Administration, management and financial
- 4 Quality assurance
- 5 Success stories
- 6 Areas for concern
- 7 Growth and future plans

**N.B. The survey will need to begin by gathering base information about each institution in which an e-learning centre is situated. This will include information on number of staff and students, on the institutional goals/mission and purpose. It will also gather information on when the centre was set up, how it has developed and how it fits within the institutional structure.**

In the next sections we outline the kinds of questions to ask in respect of the seven aspects identified.

## Services and activities

- 1 What are the overall purposes of the e-learning centre?
- 2 How many teaching and learning courses/programmes is the centre involved in?
- 3 How many academic departments/schools/faculties have links with the centre?
- 4 How does the centre determine the kinds of activities it undertakes/supports? Eg are there certain agreed pedagogical principles that guide the use made of technology?
- 5 What services are offered by the e-learning centre?  
*If necessary prompt to consider services in terms of pedagogical, technical, promotional/dissemination, other eg administrative services.*
- 6 Who are the main users of the centre's services? Eg staff or students or both?
- 7 What kinds of educational benefits for staff and/or students are associated with the centre's services?
- 8 How do such benefits fit with the ongoing activities of the centre?
- 9 What kinds of day-to-day activities are performed by the centre?  
*If necessary prompt to consider activities in terms of pedagogical, technical, promotional/dissemination, other eg administrative activities*
- 10 How are the learning needs of staff and students met by the centre?
- 11 Are the centre's services primarily geared to on-campus or off-campus learners or a mixture of both?
- 12 What kinds of working relationships does the centre have with:
  - Institutional units such as Departments or Schools or Faculties?
  - Members of the academic staff?
  - Students?
  - Service and administrative sections of the institution
  - Are there any other groups the centre works with?
- 13 What kinds of working arrangements does the centre have with its main users?  
*If necessary prompt to consider whether work is primarily organized on a project basis or perhaps built on ongoing associations*
- 14 What links are there between the centre and national/international initiatives/associations for e-learning  
*If necessary prompt to consider associations like UK's Association for Learning Technology*
- 15 Do you have any particular success stories in terms of services offered and the activities of the e-learning centre?
- 16 Are there any particular problems the centre has faced (or now faces) in terms of services or activities?
- 17 Where and how does research fit into the centre's work?
- 18 Does the centre offer induction programmes for users eg for new academic staff?

19 Is there an induction programme for staff who work in the centre?

### **Resources including staff**

- 1 How many staff work in the centre?
- 2 What roles and responsibilities do centre staff have?
- 3 What kinds of working arrangements exist among centre staff?
- 4 Who leads work in the centre?
- 5 What is the centre's physical location?
- 6 Do users attend the centre or visit or do centre staff visit users?
- 7 What physical resources does the centre have for:
  - The centre staff?
  - Users?
  - Students?
  - Visitors?
- 8 What kinds of resources does the centre produce?
- 9 How are resources acquired?
- 10 How are resources maintained?
- 11 What kinds of learning technologies are deployed in the activities/services of the centre?
- 12 What kind of accessibility to centre resources is offered to users?
- 13 Does the centre have fixed opening times?
- 14 Does the centre buy in any resources?
- 15 Are there any particular success stories in terms of resources?
- 16 Have there been any problems in terms of resources?

### **Administration, management and financial**

- 1 How does the centre function on a day-to-day basis?
- 2 What management structures are in place in the centre?
- 3 Who does the head of the centre report to?
- 4 Are any groups/departments/units linked to the centre?
- 5 How are the centre's activities assessed and evaluated? How? And how often?
- 6 How are the centre's staff appraised/assessed and evaluated?

- 7 How are the centre's resources assessed and evaluated?
- 8 Are any promotional activities undertaken for the centre?
- 9 Are any dissemination activities undertaken about centre's work?
- 10 How are new 'projects' initiated?
- 11 What are the management/ administrative skills of staff in centre?
- 12 What are the pedagogical skills of staff in centre?
- 13 What are the technical skills of staff in centre?
- 14 Are there any particular success stories in terms of administration and management of the centre?
- 15 Have there been any particular difficulties in terms of administration and management of the centre?
- 16 How is the centre funded?
- 17 How much did it cost to set up the centre?
- 18 What aspects make up the centre's running costs?

### **Quality Assurance mechanisms**

- 1 What reporting mechanisms are used by the centre?
- 2 How does the centre evaluate its work?
- 3 What provisions are there for users to influence the centre's work?
- 4 How are staff engaged in CPD?

### **Success stories**

- 1 Does the centre have any specific success stories eg of projects undertaken that could be outlined?
- 2 How has the centre used the success(es)?

### **Problems/concerns**

- 1 Has the centre had any specific problems/concerns that could be outlined? And how have these been overcome?
- 2 Are there any issues of difficulty currently or any likely to emerge in next year or so for the centre?

### **Growth and future of the centre**


- 1 How do you picture the centre's future?  
*Prompt to consider whether future is likely to mean more of the same kind of work; new work; growth of centre; change of focus of activity; or other*
- 2 What changes are needed to the centre?
- 3 Are there any challenges facing the centre?

4 What kinds of guidelines would you find useful if you were:

(a) setting up a centre like this one; and

(b) running a centre like this one (considering under themes of pedagogical, technical, organizational)

With thanks for participating



1. What size is the institution?
  - Staff
  - Students
2. How many departments, schools, faculties are there?
3. What are the purposes of the centre? (please tick all that apply)
  - Advice & support to academic staff/students
  - Staff development, eg in use of learning technology or a VLE
  - Supporting innovation in e-learning
  - Course development
  - Evaluation
  - Research in e-learning
4. How are the centre's activities determined?
  - To meet certain pedagogical principles
  - ??
5. What services does the centre offer?
  - Support of e-learning courses & development
  - Support & training in use of learning technology tools, eg VLE
  - Materials development
  - Promotion of e-learning
  - Evaluation of e-learning
  - Other, please state
6. What are the benefits of having an e-learning centre?
  - Encouraging staff to evaluate their teaching and support of learning
  - Improving learning
  - Help staff use e-learning
  - Supporting more flexible patterns of learning
  - Widening access to resources
  - Other

Which is the main benefit?
7. Does the centre have links with the following groups within the University?
  - Academic staff
  - IT support staff
  - Students
  - Administrative staff
  - Media
  - Library staff
  - Any other(s) please specify
8. Does the centre have links to external groups?

Yes	No	If so which?
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9. Where does research into e-learning fit into the centre's work?
  - Central
  - A regular activity
  - An occasional activity
  - No research undertaken



10. Does the centre offer training or induction to e-learning to new users?

Yes                      No

11. Does the centre offer staff development events for academic staff?

Yes                      No

12. Does the centre offer staff development to it's own staff?

Yes                                      No

If yes, what is offered?

## Resources

1. How many staff work in the centre?

- 1 – 4
- 4 – 8
- 8 – 12
- More than 12

2. What roles do the e-learning centre staff have?

- Learning support
- Technical support
- Both
- Management
- Administration
- Web development
- Evaluation

3. Does the centre have a leader?

Yes                      No

4. What is the centre's physical location?

- A dedicated building or collection of rooms
- A set of closely linked rooms
- offices spread more widely
- just one room

5. Does the centre have facilities for users?

Yes                      No

If yes are these for:

- Demonstration
- Training
- Development work
- Videoconferencing
- Other, please specify

6. Which of the following does the centre have?

- Multimedia playback equipment
- Video editing/production
- Audio editing/production
- Videoconferencing facilities

- Other, please specify

7. Does the centre support a VLE?

Yes                      No

If yes, how many courses/programmes use the VLE?

8. Does the centre produce?

- Electronic learning resources
- Study guides
- Computer Assisted Assessment materials
- Simulations
- Performance support tools
- Other, please specify

### **Administration, management, financial**

1. Does the centre have a leader?

Yes                      No

2. Does the centre have a steering group?

Yes                      No

3. Is the centre part of:

- An educational development/teaching & learning centre
- IT support services
- A research group
- Independent
- Library services
- A-V group
- Other please specify

4. Who does the Head of the Centre report to?

- Central senior management of the institution
- A Head for Teaching & Learning
- A Head for Information Technology
- Other, please specify

5. How are the centre's activities evaluated?

- by it's users
- by centre staff
- by institutional senior management
- by a steering group/committee
- Other, please state

6. Are the centre staff evaluated, or assessed or appraised?

Yes                      No

7. Does the centre engage in dissemination of it's work?

Yes                      No

If Yes, how?

8. Does the centre engage in promotion of it's work?

Yes No

If Yes, how?

9. How are projects/developments in e-learning initiated?

- From academic staff
- By centre staff
- Through competitive bidding internally
- Through external funding
- Other, please specify

10. What skills/experience do centre staff have?

- Pedagogy/teaching & learning expertise
- Cognitive psychology
- Educational Technology, eg in multimedia
- Programme management skills
- Administrative skills
- Teaching skills

For each member of staff, tick all that apply

11. How is the centre funded?

- Top sliced funding
- Self funding/projects
- Sponsorship
- Other, please specify

12. Do staff engage in CPD?

Yes No

13. Do users xxx centre's work?

Yes No

How?

14. Does the centre face any problems? - (tick all that apply)

- Too few staff
- Too much work
- Too many technical queries
- Lack of time/development work
- Lack of time/research
- Lack of sufficient funding
- Too strong a technical focus
- Lack of pedagogical focus
- Lack of institutional commitment
- Lack of institutional strategy/e-learning
- Lack of academic commitment
- Poor reporting mechanism
- Lack of time for SD of centre staff

Any other comments

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## About E-LEN

E-LEN is a European network of institutions with e-learning expertise. The network was established to share and develop information and design patterns regarding e-learning. An important activity of the network is the dissemination of design patterns to interested parties.

The E-LEN project is part-funded by the European Union through the Minerva programme. The E-LEN partners are:

- University of Cyprus (co-ordinator)
- The Learning Lab, University of Maastricht (NL)
- CSALT, University of Lancaster (UK)
- A Priori Ltd (UK)
- Ilmenau Technical University (DE)s
- Hypermedia Open Center – Politecnico di Milano (IT)
- InterMedia, University of Bergen (NO)
- NITOL (NO)
- National Technical University of Athens (GR)
- Open University of the Netherlands (NL).

