

JISC

Effective Practice with e-Learning

An abstract, artistic composition featuring a stack of playing cards, including the Ace of Hearts and Ace of Clubs, set against a background of soft, glowing light rays and geometric shapes in shades of blue, purple, and orange. The overall aesthetic is modern and digital.

# Case Studies

Explore new concepts

Fermanagh College

## e-Learning in practice case studies

### Explore new concepts

#### What is the intended outcome?

Learners acquire knowledge and can articulate concepts and principles.

#### What is established practice?

- Expert practitioners present and explain essential course content
- Content is provided in different formats to support a range of learning styles
- Learners can test out their own conceptions in face-to-face sessions with practitioner and peers
- Pace and structure of learning is set by the practitioner to meet institutional requirements

#### What advantages can e-learning bring?

- Learners can access essential content at a time and place to suit their needs
- Content can be revisited for reinforcement
- Multimedia presentations can enliven factual information and support different learning styles
- Enhanced online presentations allow learners to reflect on concepts at their own pace
- Transmission of information online enables practitioners and learners to use their scheduled contact time more creatively

## Any time, any place learning

Fermanagh College

### Background

Fermanagh College of Further and Higher Education provides education and training to approximately 12,000 full- and part-time learners from County Fermanagh in Northern Ireland. Based in Enniskillen, it delivers over 750 vocational and non-vocational programmes.

### The challenge

Tutors at Fermanagh College published PowerPoint® presentations online through the college's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), but learners continued to ask for clarification of concepts. This had an impact on both tutor workload and the learning experience. The view was that online presentations, if composed of a list of bullet points, were of limited pedagogical value. One student, when asked what was wrong, summed it up by saying "What's missing here is the teacher." This was the catalyst for change at Fermanagh.

### The e-learning advantage

Computing lecturer at Fermanagh College, Hector McLennan, began to investigate how to make better use of presentations for learners who could not attend taught sessions by using Microsoft Producer®. Designed for use with Microsoft PowerPoint®, this software enables users to create, edit, synchronise and publish rich-media presentations to give the look and feel of a live event. The software is used to capture sessions on video with supporting audio files and can be synchronised with PowerPoint® slides to produce dynamic online presentations which can engage learners more effectively.

Taking this approach has allowed learners to bring higher order questioning to the learning process.

This technique has brought with it some distinct advantages. Class lectures and practical sessions are transformed into in-house learning objects. Developing e-learning content directly from classroom practice ensures its relevance to courses. Furthermore, learners can re-visit the content time and again. They can view practical demonstrations with accompanying commentaries and listen to lectures at any time – crucial for those who cannot get to sessions in person, but also valuable reinforcement for all. Enhanced online presentations also allow learners to reflect on concepts and develop learning skills, firstly, by identifying what they are unsure of, they can explore further at their own pace; secondly, by having more thoroughly understood the basic concepts using the online materials, they can then participate more actively in classroom activities.

### Key points for effective practice

- This method produces online resources that are directly relevant to the content of each course.
- Whole course sessions can be compiled and produced on CD-ROMs for learners without Internet access.
- Digital equipment is becoming less expensive and easier to use, but care should be taken to achieve the quality learners will expect, by including simple techniques such as the use of backdrops and acoustics.

### Final word

**Learning to use new software can be time consuming. However, this should be viewed as a learning experience itself, rather than an insurmountable barrier to success. The team ethos at Fermanagh has provided a supporting infrastructure for those involved and has enabled effective progress towards meeting learners' needs.**

