
Grounding staff development for networked learning environments.

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Paper presentation and poster session

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The paper describes some of the research and practice experience that underpinned the ScotCIT* ELICIT materials development, the rationale for its use in that development, and evaluation outcomes of expert practitioner trials of the materials for networked learning contexts .

The ELICIT project produced a set of tutorial modules for staff development in the use of on-line learning resources. The particular focus for the Networked Learning Conference presentation will be those specifically related to conferencing technologies (computer mediated conferencing and video-conferencing). All of the ELICIT modules will be available for demonstration and trial at the associated poster session.

These tutorial modules represent our solution to what we perceive as a gap in provision. There are several very good guides, tutorials and text-books on 'learning and teaching on-line' in the particular context of 'conferencing technologies' already available to the community and these are well based in practice experience and educational research. Many of us in the field can vouch for these, as learners and as teachers. Some of the best have been produced by delegates at this conference. Of these, the ScotCIT OTiS and VLS projects, sisters to our own, will be among those available for study and trial.

The ELICIT modules are intended to complement these, as an alternative or extension. Their main value, for us, lies in their flexibility, their extensibility and the principles that underpinned their development. They drew on output from research funded by the JISC under their 'networked learning' initiative, which itself was grounded by study of the research and practice literature, embracing a mixture of documented classroom interventions and empirical work, by field work involving study of learning environments resourced by conferencing technologies, interviews with students and with teaching staff across a range of UK higher education settings, and the collaboration of the research team each of whom are familiar with the use of such technologies for their own learning and teaching needs, in the analysis and interpretation of the project findings.

The incorporation of this work into on-line introductory modules, and frameworks for project-based modules for further development of skills in and understanding of networked learning was a natural next step. Members of the ELICIT course team worked closely on the design, development and implementation of the materials, which have now been tested in a variety of ways, depending upon educational context and learning group profiles.

The range of pedagogical strategies for use has included one-one and group project development via 'workplace learning'; on-line tasks and collaborative work with support via CMC itself; didactic and interactive seminar sessions; practice-and-play sessions involving relevant (learner-driven) use of educational technologies, group and individual tutorial support. All of our

learners sought to develop their scholarship as well as their practice in the field of education. An important part of provision, therefore, involves, relevant and appropriate research and practice literature to provide a range of theoretical 'readings' and case illustration for individual learners to access – independently or guided, according to motivation and need. The case illustration resources are themselves derived from the LNCS work, but also address the rich and varied experiential accounts drawn by the ScotCIT OTiS work on VLS, and the ASTER project, led by the University of York.

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