Title of Paper: Designing for Interaction?

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Proposal: The proposal is for an individual research paper. It could however be developed into a symposium of three separate papers, if the organising committee were interested - one on the pedagogic design of the programmes; one on the evaluation of the programmes; and one on the complementary quantitative and qualitative research into interaction on the programmes.

Abstract.

Designing for interaction?

This paper seeks to share the evaluation of a number of online programmes which have been run over the last two years at Edge Hill. These have ranged from a six-week staff development programme in online design and tutoring, to an eleven month postgraduate certificate in teaching and learning in clinical practice offered to health professionals. This evaluation is being complemented by research we are undertaking into the textual interactions which have taken place within the programmes.

The social constructivist model which informed the development of the programmes will be outlined. This model, influenced by the work of Wenger (1998) and others, emphasises the importance of designing opportunities for five different types of interaction within any programme - interaction with the technology; interaction with the content; interaction between tutors and participants; interaction between participants themselves; and interaction between all participants (tutors and learners) and their wider professional community.

The actual use of the interactive features of the programmes will be highlighted, including the temporal aspects of such interaction; and the differences between learners in their use of the interactive features will be hypothesised. The complementary research using the QSR NUD*IST software package will be presented to illustrate both the quantitative and qualitative nature of the interactions which occurred on the programme. This research will be compared to similar research undertaken in Australia and the USA (e.g. McKenzie 2000; Swan 2001). Evaluations of the programmes by all participants (students and staff), using a wide variety of evaluation techniques, will be discussed.

The research focuses on the question - what interaction **really** takes place within a supported online programme, delivered primarily through the medium of a virtual learning environment.

The results of the evaluation and the research lead back to the crucial question - how far can you design for interaction in a supported online programme?