

# Part G Project findings and framework implementation: Discussion, synthesis and core principles for framework implementation

Professional development for e-learning: A framework for the New Zealand tertiary education sector

## Table of Contents

<b>1. SYNTHESIS .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2. OTAGO FINDINGS AND FRAMEWORK IMPLEMENTATION .....</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1    PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR E-LEARNING CONCEPTIONS: INDIVIDUALS' PERSPECTIVES .....	3
2.2    PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR E-LEARNING CONCEPTIONS: OTHERS' PERSPECTIVES .....	8
<b>3. MASSEY FINDINGS AND FRAMEWORK IMPLEMENTATION .....</b>	<b>14</b>
3.1    EMBEDDING AND IMPLEMENTING E-LEARNING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXTS.....	15
<b>3.2    BUILDING CAPABILITY THROUGH EVALUATION AND INTERPRETATION OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT INDIVIDUAL PREFERENCES AND PRACTICE .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>4. FRAMEWORK IMPLEMENTATION, KEY ISSUES AND CORE PRINCIPLES.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>25</b>

# 1. Synthesis

The main purpose of this part of the final report is to discuss how the framework for Professional Development described in Part F might be applied or used at the different levels identified namely;

- Institutions
- Departments
- Individuals.

It is clear from both the Otago and the Massey Research that there is a wide diversity of belief, opinion and practice amongst staff, and that these are informed and shaped with and through an equally diverse range of institutional contexts. In addition, e-learning and professional development are not static concepts but subject to continual forces of change and innovation. Consequently it is not possible to identify a particular policy or strategy, a mode of implementation, or prescriptive action which will be entirely appropriate for any given individual or institution. The intention of this synthesis chapter is to reflect on the implications of the findings of the two research projects and to establish some core principles. These core principles are intended to be flexible and open to interpretation by a range of individuals, institutions and sector agencies. They provide a way of using the framework both as a means of assessing current policy and practice and for forward planning purposes.

In setting out the e-learning framework in Part F we explained that the framework was the result of collaboration across two separately funded tertiary e-learning research projects. In preparing this final part of this joint report it is important to emphasise that we are drawing on all the earlier outputs and work conducted by both projects. This work includes:

- The two reviews (see part B and part C). Each review took a different approach and the results led to a far richer appreciation of practice and issues in this area.
- The two research projects (see part D and part E) took rather different research approaches yet substantially support the underlying thinking of the proposed framework.

The Otago research highlights a range of conceptions on what constitutes e-learning and e-learning professional development, including insights into what TEO staff would like to have and in what form. The Massey team's research emphasises the ways in which conceptions, experiences and practices are shaped in institutional settings, and the factors which both constrain and enable uptake, engagement and implementation of e-learning professional development. E-Learning professional development within institutions is influenced by conceptions of e-learning as highlighted by the Otago research. The way in which e-learning is used, experienced and shaped at the institutional level, and the broader macro level of the tertiary sector is highlighted in the Massey research. The sum result is a rich account of how e-learning and e-learning professional development is shaped by the experiences, beliefs and preferences of a wide range of teachers, managers and support staff in tertiary education organisations. Acknowledging and understanding the voices of tertiary education organisation staff and recognising these are influenced by diverse

institutional contexts is critical if the framework outlined in Part F of this research is to be usefully applied. Though informed by different philosophical perspectives and orientated towards different aspects of e-learning and professional development the Otago and Massey studies are complementary. Together they create a coherent foundation for e-learning and professional development practice in New Zealand's tertiary education organisations and for the implementation of the framework.

## 2. Otago findings and framework implementation

The Otago study began with a international environmental scan and continued with a new study which focussed upon the conceptions of e-learning and professional redevelopment for e-learning held by teachers and support staff within New Zealand tertiary institutions. The international environmental scan summarised some experiences and outcomes of e-learning professional development programmes from the UK and Australia (Part B) and led to the development of a framework for professional development which was presented in Part F. The new study was the phenomenographic research which served to bring to the project new data from the New Zealand context. The phenomenographic research outcomes were reported in Part E.

The current section will draw on the phenomenographic findings specifically and discuss in some detail possible implications for the implementation of the framework for professional development. The nature of the phenomenographic research of the kind undertaken within this project is such that it has resulted in a set of ideas that individuals, institutions and the sector can reflect upon and take into account when making plans for implementation of e-learning and professional development for e-learning. Thus, it must be noted that the phenomenographic study provides only background information for those interested in professional development for e-learning. In other words, the purpose of this section is to describe how the phenomenographic study outcomes might be used within future plans and actions related to e-learning and professional development for e-learning.

### *2.1 Professional development for e-learning conceptions: individuals' perspectives*

The phenomenographic research (see Part B) identified a variety of conceptions of e-learning and professional development for e-learning held by teachers, and by those who support teachers in New Zealand's tertiary education organisations. The value of the research lies primarily in how it serves to inform interpretations of the framework by those who plan for, design, implement and support academic staff development at a variety of levels, in tertiary education organisations.

The nature of phenomenographic research is such that the conceptions discovered describe the variety of ways a phenomenon is viewed. An individual is very unlikely to hold only one conception; rather views are multi-faceted. In addition, individuals can express those views differently depending upon the context they find themselves in and/or the purpose they have for making use of, or interacting with, the

phenomenon under question. Therefore, classification of individuals as holding a single conception, for example, is not an appropriate use of phenomenographic outcomes.

In an effort to make some explicit links between the conceptions discovered in the Otago study and the framework, vignettes of fictional individuals who represent combinations of the conceptions were developed. It then made it possible to consider how the professional development needs of these imaginary individuals may be addressed, in terms of the proposed professional development framework.

This is attempted below for imaginary teaching staff, Chris and Alex, and imaginary support staff, Sam and Les. An imaginary professional development team, Jade, Max, and Jo, is also presented, as one example of how, with insights gained from the phenomenographic study, the framework might be utilised in the design, development and implementation of professional development.

To show the links among the conceptions, the framework and the imaginary characters' experiences and actions, throughout the following descriptions, references to the categories of conceptions appear in *italics* and in parentheses, while references to the framework appear in **bold**.

Depicting imaginary characters is not a simple and straightforward process. People hold complex notions, have vast amounts of varying experiences and knowledge, live and work in complex environments and deal with many intricate and multi-faceted thinking and doing tasks within their teaching and support roles. Teachers hold their own conceptions of e-learning and professional development for e-learning and carry those into their teaching behaviours and practices and their responses to professional development. This is true of support staff as well, but further, they carry their conceptions into their professional development practices and behaviours as well.

Thus, we do not claim in the descriptions below to present the full gamut of possibilities within the characters we portray. However, the following vignettes have been assembled as a selection of imaginary characters to demonstrate one possible way into the use of the research outputs.

## 1 *Teacher - Chris*

### *E-Learning*

Chris thinks about how the learning of his students can be supported through the inclusion of a variety of teaching and learning activities in the courses he teaches. He makes use of e-learning technologies where he sees fit, drawing upon them because they are easily available, and assist him to manage his time and communication with students (*E-l Cat C*). The students appear to be comfortable with the inclusion of learning technologies, and the graphical and communication facilities of the technologies provide Chris with the capacity to give students good illustrations of key concepts (*E-l Cat A*). Chris does not highlight e-learning when he talks about his teaching, however. Rather, he describes his students' learning and their ability to come to grips with the content and process of his discipline as translated through the course he teaches (*E-l Cat C*).

### *Professional development for e-learning*

Chris conceptualises professional development for e-learning as collaboration (*PD Cat C*). He sees teaching as a shared activity, including necessary support staff to help provide and maintain the resources he uses and the services he draws upon to communicate with his students. Chris identifies his professional development **needs** in terms of what he can learn in order to improve student learning, and is only likely to participate in e-learning activities when current situations do not satisfy his aspirations for the good learning for his students. He is interested in new technologies that can serve to provide extensive possibilities for improving the illustrations of the concepts he teaches (*PD-L Cat B*), but no matter what professional development opportunities are available, Chris won't access them. At times when Chris does identify a need to learn more about e-learning, because of his views about the collaborative nature of teaching and support for teaching, he will benefit from **opportunities** to work with a wide range of support staff. He may not need extrinsic **incentives** to engage; he is driven to **engage** by his inherent need to see achievement in student learning. He is likely, however, to see the need for **evaluation** (of the effectiveness of his teaching, which includes e-learning) without being prompted. Whether he wishes to contribute to this personal learning to public scrutiny depends on other factors.

## 2 *Teacher - Alex*

### *E-learning*

Alex sees e-learning entirely as an instrument to achieve flexibility (*E-l Cat D; E-l Cat B*), to enhance communication with students and to provide a means through which to build relationships with her students, especially those who are not on-campus students. She is motivated by her student's success in their learning. E-learning enables her to make close connections with her students so that she can understand better their learning needs.

### *Professional development for e-learning*

For Alex, professional development is an instrument to train her to use e-learning (*PD Cat A*). Alex will clearly identify her **needs**, will respond positively to **opportunities** that illustrate the range of possibilities that technologies offer (*PD Cat B*) and train her to use them (*PD Cat A*). Where **incentives** for Alex to teach flexibly are in place, no further incentives are necessary for Alex to result in her **engagement**. Alex will **evaluate** her innovations if prompted to, but mostly is likely to see innovation as part of the job and as a matter of course as a way of achieving her goals of ensuring better communication with her students. She does not tend to see evaluation as integral to her teaching. Rather, Alex sees evaluation as a task that is additional to her teaching.

### 3 *Professional development support staff - Sam*

#### *E-learning*

Sam, a staff developer who works with teaching staff on teaching and learning topics and issues, sees e-learning as a means to facilitate learning (*E-l Cat C*), but is profoundly unimpressed with the amount of work and bother it seems to take to ensure smooth running and management of a course that includes e-learning. Sam struggles to use simple tools, such as email, and often talks about e-learning in terms of software and hardware (*E-l Cat A*). He notices that many of the teachers and students he comes into contact with also do not feel comfortable with e-learning and is suspicious about all the ‘hype’ that discussions about e-learning seem to generate. He genuinely feels that he has given e-learning ‘a go’, has discovered what it is good for, and decided to move forward in his own way, with minimal exploration of ‘the new’. He therefore believes that he has no **needs** in terms of professional development for e-learning, other than to be left alone to work as he sees fit.

#### *Professional development for e-learning*

Sam sees that any professional development should be relevant and purposeful (*PD Cat D*) for those who take it up, and its ultimate aim should be that of improving students’ learning. Although Sam’s role is to support teachers’ own professional development, Sam sees little place for ‘training’ in the use of technologies/software and hardware, the form he sees most professional development for e-learning taking (*PD Cat A*). In Sam’s opinion, this type of training should come from a training section of an institution, not from those who are professional developers, and it has minimal relevance to those who wish to teach effectively. While Sam does not discount the existence of e-learning and acknowledges its place in teaching and learning and the possibilities that e-learning can open up (*PD Cat B*), he believes over-emphasis on e-learning is not conducive to encouraging deep thinking about teaching and learning as a whole. He therefore believes professional development should include e-learning in an integrated way and not as a separate topic or set of issues.

As a result of his views about professional development, professional development for e-learning and e-learning, there are no **incentives** that will stimulate Sam to **engage** in any e-learning **opportunities** that are made available. He will **evaluate** teaching and learning innovations with little or no prompting, but not with a view to focussing upon e-learning.

### 4 *Professional development support staff - Les*

#### *E-learning*

Les’s vocation is to support teachers’ uses of e-learning. Les sees e-learning as a wide range of tools and strategies (*E-l Cat A*) that can support the interaction and communication between and amongst students and their teachers (*E-l Cat B*), and provide endless possibilities for exciting and worthwhile learning in all sorts of places, times and situations (*E-l Cat D*).

#### *Professional development for e-learning*

For Les, e-learning professional development can open up possibilities for teachers to use them (*PD Cat B*). Les is on a mission and can see the needs for professional

development for herself, as well as the **needs** of other teaching staff. Opportunities for professional development, including professional development for e-learning, should be taken up by staff, she believes. For example, she has trained as a teacher in tertiary education having taken her institution's Certificate in Tertiary Teaching. Les was disappointed that no teachers had been on the same certificate programme as she had (they were mostly librarians and other teacher support staff). She was also disappointed that so little e-learning was involved in the certificate, although it did make use of Blackboard. Furthermore, Les is disappointed that so few teachers came to the workshop she arranged on e-learning, as she believed it provided a good **opportunity** for teachers to **engage** in learning about some of the e-learning tools and teaching strategies that would set them on their way (*PD Cat A, E-l Cat A*). For Les, the excitement of using new technologies in a variety of ways to really help students to learn is a big **incentive** for learning more. She is passionate about passing on her enthusiasm to others through the professional development workshops she offers. Nevertheless, for as long as she has a job she will do her best to convince teachers and her institution that e-learning is the right way to go. Providing convincing evidence through formal **evaluation** may not be at the forefront of her mind, however, because, for Les, the most enjoyment (and therefore, the most convincing evidence for including e-learning) can be found in implementing ideas and seeing the learning happening.

### Chris, Alex, Sam and Les: their perspectives and the framework

The following table provides a possible way to apply the framework to Chris, Alex, Sam and Les from a professional development planning perspective. Within each cell, appear a few words to indicate how an institution, a department or an individual might respond in order that professional development plans are matched with the imaginary characters' perspectives of e-learning and professional development for e-learning. The few notes against the elements of the framework for each imaginary character make reference to their expressed working experiences and beliefs, in the light of the conceptions discovered in the phenomenographic study.

Elements of the Framework	Chris	Alex	Sam	Les
<i>Needs</i>	Research opportunities	Training and a job	To be left alone to work as he wants to	Teaching opportunities
<i>Incentives</i>	Institution values innovation	Required to use e-learning	No reasonable incentives will work	None necessary
<i>Opportunities</i>	Collaboration and support	Workshops, one-to-one, IT helpdesk	None necessary	Workshops, one-to-one, IT helpdesk
<i>Engagement</i>	Institution values research into teaching	As a matter of course	No chance	As a matter of course
<i>Evaluation</i>	Institution values evaluation into teaching	Required to evaluate	Why bother?	Required to evaluate

## *2.2 Professional development for e-learning conceptions: others' perspectives*

When matched against the perspectives, viewpoints and conceptions held by a party other than the imaginary individuals, how the framework 'plays out' for each of the imaginary characters may very well be different. For example, an individual's self reported preference or **need** for one type of professional development over another may stem from a limited knowledge of the variety of professional development approaches available or simply reflect experiences from the past. What is viewed as **opportunities** for professional development approaches and types to meet the variety of needs can vary according to knowledge that individuals have of what is available or possible, resources, and the nature of the context. Similarly, **incentives** vary as do ways in which individuals **engage**, often being a factor related strongly to the availability of resources, including time. Views about the place and worth of **evaluation**, how it can demonstrate good teaching and contribute to the development of oneself as a teacher, is understood in different ways by different individuals/departments/institutions.

The imaginary teaching and support staff presented in the vignettes above do provide examples of one set of perspectives derived essentially from the application of the e-learning professional development framework at the level of individuals. The table above focusses, for example, on needs identified by individuals. Another set of perspectives that are just as legitimate as these individuals' perspectives will come from those with the responsibility of enhancing teaching and learning, specifically e-learning, at an institutional or policy level through large scale, longer term projects in order to achieve broad goals.

To illustrate how the outputs from the phenomenographic research may help to inform the decisions about professional development from the perspective of a professional development team engaged in planning and implementing a strategic plan for professional development for e-learning, another imaginary set of characters is presented. This time a small team is described.

### **Vignette of a team of professional developers**

Jade, Max and Jo form the core professional development group charged with establishing a professional development programme for e-learning for their institution.

They all have lots of experience as teachers and as teachers who have incorporated e-learning into their courses. Each has some professional development experience. Their current roles include the design, development and implementation of professional development programmes for all teaching staff at their institution. They have been included at the institutional level, because of their expertise and ability to provide advice about how to articulate the institution's goals for e-learning and providing advice about staff change and development. They are therefore committed to helping the institution achieve its goals for e-learning.

They are also very committed to the staff, and because they are experienced professional developers they are aware of the variety of staff and their likes, needs wants and dislikes. They run a variety of professional development programmes/**opportunities** for staff at their institution that attend to individual **needs** (e.g., one-to-one consultancies) and group **needs** (e.g., formal centralised workshops, departmental workshops designed around departmental needs, facilitation of working groups on curriculum design development and evaluation). They also design and develop teaching and learning professional development resources for staff, both online and paper based. As learning and teaching specialists, they are convinced that learning happens when learners are engaged and take an active role in their learning. In this regard they do not see staff as any different from students. From this team's perspective, professional development experiences need to **engage** staff. They are interested in providing well-founded evidence of the effectiveness or otherwise of e-learning innovations and therefore naturally encourage **evaluation**, reflection and reporting on developments at a number of levels. They encourage teachers to do the same. Simultaneously, the team is aware that there is a variety of motivations to engage in e-learning and professional development for e-learning. For some staff the **incentives** are personal and related very closely to their students. For others, it is research or opportunities to make contact with the broader community of teaching and learning that is the incentive. For still others, it is the reward gained through demonstration of high quality teaching, and hence the possibility of promotion and recognition of good practice that is the incentive. Finally, the team also accepts that there are staff who are simply not interested in teaching development, or more specifically, not interested in e-learning development.

While as individuals within the team, each may hold conceptions of e-learning and professional development for e-learning that are unique to him or herself, in general they are in agreement about the place and worth of e-learning: that it can enhance learning and teaching; and that it can aid communication and connection among students and teachers. They are very aware of the amount of work that e-learning generates for teachers, especially when teachers are in the beginning throes of coming to grips with hardware and software and new ways of thinking about teaching. They can be sceptical of the support that the institution provides for its staff, but mostly attempt to work within the limitations of provision and bureaucracy, because if they did not, very little would be achieved.

For this team, the phenomenographic research provides insights into the variety of conceptions held by staff. The research does no more than to provide the variety of those conceptions, but it thus provides some confirmation for the team of how staff could be viewing e-learning and e-learning professional development.

While the role of the academic staff developer/professional developer may be contentious (e.g., Manathunga, 2007; Webb, 1996) and not necessarily the same across institutions (and not in existence in many!), working from an assumption that staff/professional development is a form of teaching and learning, it can be suggested that there is a legitimate place for some kind of "diagnosis" of learning needs to occur in any development interaction. By "diagnosis" we mean that the staff developer, through processes of review and consultation, is often in a position to be able to recommend a variety of learning paths that individuals and groups may not be able to

recognise immediately. (The way a staff developer goes about making such recommendations, in recognition of appropriate teaching and learning/staff development principles, would not be to impose activities that should be undertaken, but to bring individuals and groups to a point of being able to recognise new learning paths for themselves.) This notion of diagnosis can be seen to be embedded in many of the orientations to the staff development role as described by Land (2001). It is not about telling people what they should do, or taking steps to remediate. It is about opening up opportunities for staff to explore new and possible ways of viewing and understanding e-learning and teaching.

In the light of this assumption about the diagnostic element that can be an inherent part of any staff/professional development process or interaction, the following provides an example of how, in working with the four imaginary characters described earlier, the imaginary professional development team could respond. For each of the imaginary characters, possible opportunities for learning are suggested in the dot points that follow.

Note that we have not included any description of *how* the perspectives of the professional development team might be shared with the imaginary staff members. This overview is simply to highlight some reflections, and implications for the use of the phenomenographic outcomes in the light of the framework from the perspectives of professional development.

### *Sam*

Sam claims that he has no professional development needs. However, it could be argued that, in his support role, he has not taken into account the variations in the way others view e-learning and professional development for e-learning and his one approach to focussing only on learning and not providing support on a more specific level in terms of the technical and pedagogical aspects of the use and integration of e-learning, may result in teachers who work with him failing to see the relevance, purpose, worth and potential of any aspects of e-learning. Sam's professional development needs, as assessed by a party other than himself may include, therefore, his engagement with the learning needs of teachers who are involved in developing their teaching, with specific reference to e-learning, how teacher professional development and learning occurs and what sorts of professional development for e-learning teachers do need in order that they are able to develop. Incentives that may be required for Sam to engage with e-learning in a different way than he has in the past, may include active involvement in planning for professional development and other kinds of support for teaching staff, alongside colleagues who hold conceptions of e-learning that are more aligned with the institution's goals; or the inclusion of specific targets set for Sam's development within his annual review and goal setting plans.

Summary of professional development opportunities for Sam, which he may not have identified for himself, may include:

- A course on teacher professional development, teacher learning and 'diagnosis' of teacher e-learning needs;
- Opportunities for reflection on how e-learning changes the teaching/learning situation and the whole learning environment;

- Collaborating with other support staff on professional development support for teaching staff as a way of learning from others how they view e-learning and e-learning professional development;
- Targets for Sam's own professional development in e-learning that are built into his annual review and goal session plans.

### *Chris*

Consultation with Chris may elicit that he is not using some of the software he has incorporated into this teaching in the most advantageous way; that his current practices are actually increasing his workload and that he could be operating in a much more efficient manner. He may also have no knowledge of a new product supporting e-learning, just on the market, that may help him to achieve a graphical quality to the illustrations he uses that far outshines the quality of his current illustrations. For Chris, one professional development need therefore that he had not identified for himself may be the need to learn more about the software and hardware that is available. The professional development process for undertaking the necessary learning may involve a variety of approaches. However, for Chris, knowing that he is more likely to think about the learning of his students and the opportunities his teaching may present for research and investigation, a brief workshop or opportunity to work one-to-one with a member of support staff may be all the 'training' he needs to get him up to speed with the technology. He will then benefit from having time and space to experiment with its use and plan an investigation that will provide a well founded evaluation of the worth of the new product in terms of student learning. As he is planning for his teaching and experimenting with ideas, because Chris sees teaching as a collaborative exercise, he tends to chat with colleagues about how they may be using the technology, or, as questions arise, he often calls on help desk answers to technical questions and instructional designer expertise to help him think through the pedagogical use of the technology.

Summary of professional development opportunities for Chris, which he may not have identified for himself, may include:

- consultation with a professional developer;
- a workshop on the technical aspects of the new software;
- time to plan implement and evaluate a small research project;
- access to learning technology specialists - help desk and instructional designer to provide 'just in time' answers to queries;
- access to colleagues who have used or are in the process of planning for the use of the new technology.

### *Les*

For Les, who is so enthusiastic about e-learning and about sharing her knowledge with other teachers through formal courses and workshops, it may be appropriate for her to be made aware of the variety of activities other than workshops that are also professional development activities. Though Les has completed her Certificate in Tertiary Teaching and is well versed in reflective practice, she may be encouraged to begin to view the teachers she works with as learners as well and she should be introduced to the notion about reflecting upon her own actions as professional developer and the influence her actions can have on staff development and learning. Included in that exploration, the place and value of evaluation could be highlighted

and she could be assisted to embed evaluation strategies within her professional development work as a matter of course.

Summary of professional development opportunities for Les, which she may not have identified for herself, may include:

- working in collaboration with other more experienced professional developers to plan programmes that are broader than just workshops;
- engagement in discussion with colleagues on topics such as reflection and evaluation;
- opportunities to work in departments with teachers as they design, develop and evaluate their teaching;
- processes and routines within Les's department that include evaluation and reflection as a matter of course.

### *Alex*

Alex is generally content with the situation in which she works, and is happy to follow the direction set by her institution. For her, evaluation has not been seen as something of importance and learning about how to go about evaluation of e-learning may be a way for her to reflect more deeply about her teaching, her students' learning and why making connection with students' understandings is such an important thing for teachers to be able to do. Through reflection and evaluation may come deeper insights into how and why she is doing what she is doing and enable her to contribute better, not only to her own students' learning, but to her colleagues' understandings as well, through sharing her learning with them.

Summary of professional development opportunities for Alex, which she may not have identified for herself, may include:

- consultation with a professional developer;
- a course on teaching, learning, assessment and evaluation and the place of e-learning within teaching and learning in tertiary settings;
- processes and routines within Alex's department that include evaluation and reflection as a matter of course.

This team-based vignette naturally emphasises the needs of the institution over the needs of the individuals, as identified by the individuals themselves. This imaginary institution has clear goals that anticipate that all of its teachers will embrace e-learning and its e-learning professional development team has been dispatched to identify opportunities for its staff. This team has been instructed, probably as a last resort, to suggest that targets be built for some staff in their annual review and goal session plans. There is clearly no room for diversity or dissent amongst these teachers or within this team of professional developers on this matter. Sam, as a professional developer himself, is particularly vulnerable in this respect; note how possible targets for Sam's own professional development have been recorded here as opportunities, not as obligations, but their obligatory nature will no doubt be revealed if he fails to meet his allotted targets. Of course, in this imaginary institution academic colleagues in other departments may also be waiting for the e-learning professional development team to arrive, but may not be looking forward to it.

Alternatives to this institutional-wide application of unitary policy do exist. An institution that cherishes diversity of teaching approach has no need for such tactics. Institutions can develop learning and teaching strategies that seek to constantly research the possibilities offered by new technologies and to progressively adopt those that its teachers learn to respect. Such a strategy could itself respect variation in the needs of its teachers, as identified by them, and provide appropriately varied opportunities and incentives to encourage them to engage with e-learning. Notions of team-teaching do not require all teachers to acquire the same skills, but enable different teachers to contribute in different ways. If our imaginary institution addresses its own aspirations for e-learning in this way, and chooses to focus on some balance between its needs and those expressed by its most valuable resource, its staff, a different future exists. Chris and Alex work together, with a wide range of other teachers, to run innovative and varied learning opportunities for the Institution's students. Sam is invited to work with Jade, Max and Jo to develop varied and innovative programmes of professional development for e-learning that succeed in attracting academic colleagues voluntarily, without resorting to the 'opportunities' of targets in their annual appraisals. (Many thought that if Sam was involved in running them, they must be OK and would not force them into using teaching approaches that they were uncomfortable with). This alternative institutional approach almost certainly involves the development of a learning and teaching strategy that is integrated with an academic promotion policy so that the institution can demonstrate that it values, and rewards innovation, evaluation and research into teaching. And it is almost certainly also integrated with an institutional human resources policy that ensures sufficient support is provided to teachers. Most of all this institution has an E-learning Strategy fully integrated with its Learning and Teaching Strategy so that developments in e-learning are never isolated from an ongoing exploration of how to improve student learning.

And what of Les? The institution's learning and teaching strategy rejects all notions of innovation and development without evaluation. As new technologies emerge and are incorporated into teaching programmes, their fitness for purpose is constantly questioned and tested and compared with the more traditional approaches with which they coexist. As they are adapted and re-tested the professional skills of the institution's teachers are constantly challenged. Les has found a new role in ensuring that the skills-base of teaching teams is sufficiently broad to cope with the diversity of teaching provided, and in helping these teams to research their teaching practice.

And what of the students in this imaginary institution? They have come to cherish the diversity of teaching approach and the impact that this has on the knowledge, skills, and values that they develop whilst in tertiary education. They certainly learn IT skills in some classes. Some assignments require them to work collaboratively online. They become confident self-directed learners as their information literacy skills develop. But they also learn how to listen and take notes in lectures. They learn the skills of debate and discussion in tutorials. They learn research approaches in enquiry-based learning classes. They learn professional and practical skills in the workplace. They interact with teachers, tutors and postgraduate students, co-workers and trainers to develop robust notions of role models. Should tertiary education be other than this?

### 3. Massey findings and framework implementation

While the Otago findings and vignettes have focussed on individual conceptions, the Massey Study has looked specifically to understand how conceptions might be shaped and explained in institutional settings. The Ministry of Education contracted the Massey University team to explore a range of factors related to professional development and e-learning in tertiary education organisations. This discussion provides a synopsis of the key findings of the research listed in Part E of this report (and highlighted in this section in *italics*) and considers how these might be used to inform e-learning professional development policy and practice. These findings, in combination with the Otago research form the basis of the core principles in Part F as a means of assisting institutions in implementing and interpreting the jointly developed Framework.

The Massey Literature Review (Part C), like the International Environmental Scan (Part B) outlined an array of studies which identify tools and materials that can be used by New Zealand tertiary education organisations to support their teaching staff to inform current e-learning professional development practices. The Massey review outlined the wider context of change in the New Zealand tertiary sector in relation to e-learning, and noted the usefulness of Marshall's e-learning maturity model (Marshall, 2005) and the ACODE (2006) Benchmarks for assessing current capability. Though outlining a number of specific initiatives the Massey literature review sought to examine the range of factors which constrain, enable and promote sectoral, institutional and individual improvements in e-learning capability through engagement in e-learning professional development. The literature suggested that vision for e-learning and planned intentionality was important with regard to e-learning professional development and that a comprehensive institutional approach is required for both policy development and implementation. The review also suggested practical ways in which engagement might be encouraged by institutions and outlined the factors believed to affect uptake and involvement of staff in e-learning professional development. It also reviewed the literature on best practice in e-learning professional development and the characteristics of effective professional development.

An online survey and semi-structured interviews were undertaken to explore beliefs, preferences, experiences and practices of staff in relation to e-learning and professional development. The key findings which emerged from participants' responses and narratives are listed in the discussion which follows. These findings are directly related to framework categories (e.g. about need, opportunity, or incentive etc) although they are not exclusive to individual categories. For example how best to address issues of high workloads and time which limit engagement in e-learning can be a matter of identifying **need** (deciding to make e-learning and e-learning professional development a central workplace activity); providing **incentives** (work time release, e-learning professional development as part of promotion and appraisal structures); creating **opportunities** (by setting aside institutional time for workshops or on-line networking); promoting **engagement** (through changing teaching/research workload balance, altering work cultures) and **evaluation** (through monitoring staff workloads, and assessing investment of time in professional development). These linkages are made more explicitly in section 4 below where core principles derived

from the findings are linked to framework stages. The more holistic view implied by the findings and framework is also likely to lead to professional development which is less focussed on individual skills which differ significantly, and more orientated toward improving capability whatever the 'level' or extent of engagement in e-learning. When attention is focussed on addressing all the differing stages of the framework (identifying the need for professional development, finding incentives, achieving engagement and evaluating success) then the accompanying professional development will both be a reflection of and responsive to the needs of the institution in which it is based.

### *3.1 Embedding and implementing e-learning professional development in institutional contexts*

The Massey research has indicated that it is essential to embed e-learning and its associated professional development within the structure and culture of institutions. Alignment of policy and practice, co-ordination of staff and structures supporting and implementing e-learning professional development, transparency and communication of policy and practices and a vision for e-learning are all essential for effective implementation and uptake of e-learning professional development. Embedding and implementing professional development must include consideration of all framework levels, which include identification of needs, finding appropriate incentives, providing appropriate opportunities, achieving engagement and evaluating the success of professional development for e-learning. In the discussion which follows the central findings of the Massey research are presented in italics:

*The distinctive characteristics of institutions and the contexts in which they are located are critical to the development and implementation of policies and practices for e-learning and professional development.*

The key finding of the Massey research is the diversity of contextualised experience and institutional context, and hence the need for institutions themselves to determine, and make clear their objectives and actions for engagement in both e-learning and professional development. Given the different definitions of e-learning coupled with the various staff perceptions of it, variance in individual needs and skill levels, rapid technological change, and the variety of e-learning tools and activities which might be most suitable for particular teaching contexts it is impossible to specify the particular package of skills staff need in order to adopt e-learning. As capabilities are likely to be substantially altered as both technology and e-learning pedagogy and practice evolves it would be misleading and inappropriate to recommend a core skill set. There cannot be a 'one size fits all approach' to baseline capabilities as staff and institutions are not homogenous groups.

It is, however, possible to emphasise the kinds of strategies and measures that might support improvements in capabilities. These strategies attend to the other aims of the research. These are directed toward reflecting on the implementation requirements needed for adoption of e-learning professional development and to consider the sorts of embedding process which will support teaching staff and contribute to continued

improvement in e-learning professional development capability in New Zealand tertiary education organisations:

*Effective e-learning professional development involves addressing institutional and staff attitudes and beliefs as well as addressing the existence of structures and mechanisms.*

Institutional commitment to effective professional development in e-learning involves attention to attitudes and beliefs as well as structures and mechanisms. The research revealed that the provision of opportunities for professional development, support structures, and awareness by staff of these opportunities was not in-itself sufficient for achieving engagement. A commitment to effective e-learning professional development involves addressing differing attitudes and beliefs and institutional cultures surrounding research, learning and teaching as well as attention to policy, infrastructure and processes.

*Clarity around institutional expectations for and about e-learning and its role in teaching and learning assists staff in making informed decisions about engagement in professional development.*

Interview participants were often unsure about institutional policy with regard to e-learning and e-learning professional development along with the kinds of resourcing and support available to engage in it. Confusion over what e-learning was, expectations for involvement and where to get assistance were also sources of frustration for some staff. In addition, staff beliefs about the role and purpose of e-learning, its merits and what professional development could offer them impacted on their decisions to engage. Clearly communicated expectations for and about e-learning and professional development and its role in teaching and learning and institutional structures appears to assist with individuals' identification of a need for e-learning professional development and to encourage their engagement in it.

*Alignment, co-ordination and transparency of pedagogical and technological support and of institutional structures is important for developing capability in e-learning*

The research suggests that attention to the integration of pedagogy and technology in e-learning professional development is a key to improving capability. Capability that is orientated around an individual's agency in e-learning can be amplified and motivated through professional development which is integrated, aligned, supported and resourced institutionally. The alignment, co-ordination and transparency of pedagogical and technological support and of institutional structures provides clarity for staff and promotes staff awareness of appropriate opportunities and assistance. It also has potential for increasing engagement through linking teaching practice to e-technologies and through demonstrating the value and application of e-learning and associated professional development.

*Financial and technological resourcing and support is necessary to promote good management, leadership and staff engagement*

Staff suggested financial provision for e-learning professional development, including time-release; course and conference attendance and funding for technology and Professional development for e-learning: A framework for the New Zealand tertiary education sector

support would facilitate engagement in e-learning professional development. It would also go a long way to creating a culture which supports the development of new e-learning opportunities, forms of professional development and the development of e-learning leaders. A lack of financial support for teaching release, conferences etc frustrated some managers who wanted their staff to actively engage in e-learning but recognised they were unable to provide incentives. Instead the managers relied on intrinsic motivators and rewards and the consequent involvement of those staff who were personally motivated to engage in e-learning professional development.

*Institutional engagement requires involvement from relevant stakeholders – provision and awareness of opportunities may not be sufficient*

Focussing on the institutional context in which staff engaged in e-learning professional development, enabled the Massey team to reflect on different institutional actors whose beliefs and practices need to be incorporated in order to provide incentives and opportunities for engagement by teaching staff. Involvement and commitment of support staff, professional developers, ICT experts, and managers at a variety of institutional levels was seen as important for supporting and encouraging continued staff involvement particularly as involvement in e-learning requires staff to prioritise time. As mentioned earlier attitudinal commitments and support may be as important as infrastructural and organisation measures to support e-learning and e-learning professional development, suggesting that institutions should have a demonstrated commitment to involving all stakeholders in the development of a culture which values e-learning and related professional development.

*High workload and time constraints limit engagement in e-learning and professional development*

Both the online survey and the semi-structured interviews highlighted time as a major constraint on involvement in e-learning and e-learning professional development. Often it was associated more with issues of prioritisation than available time. E-learning professional development tended to be low on the list of priorities if this was not the staff's area of academic engagement. The pressure to obtain research outputs, cope with existing teaching loads and undertake required administration often meant e-learning professional development was afforded a lower priority. A number of staff felt that the research expectations placed upon them by their institution and direct-line managers as a consequence of the PBRF meant that their research rather than their teaching involvement was what the institution valued and recognised. Staff cited evidence of this in relation to current appraisal and promotion structures which they believed favoured research. In addition, as stated previously, e-learning was seen by some as an addition or alternative to face to face or distance learning, rather than as an integral part of teaching and learning. Addressing these wider contextual factors may encourage staff to take up opportunities for e-learning, promoting engagement in e-learning professional development and improving baseline capabilities.

### 3.2 Building capability through evaluation and interpretation of professional development individual preferences and practice

The exploration of professional development experiences, practices, beliefs has helped to identify the needs and priorities for e-learning professional development to support their teaching staff. The previous section has highlighted the importance of commitment to, and clarity and co-ordination of policy and strategy, staff and infrastructure, resources and support, implementation. However engagement and evaluation of e-learning professional development opportunities should also include assessments of staff capabilities, experiences, views and priorities. This ‘top down’, ‘bottom-up’ integration should mean strategies and priorities are more responsive and perhaps ultimately more proactive as staff initiatives and innovations are recognised and their ideas and feedback begin to inform future e-learning directions. Embedding e-learning therefore is not simply a matter of getting the structures, or institutional rhetoric right, it is about engagement with key stakeholders (including students whose views are not represented here) and addressing commonalities of interests and competing claims and attitudes.

*There are multiple and diverse journeys of e-learning. Assessing the professional development needs, capabilities, and desires of staff and recognising that these will change over time is consequently important.*

The survey and interview analysis demonstrates staff have a wide range of e-learning experiences and preferences and e-learning trajectories. Nevertheless it was possible to identify some commonalities of e-learning journeys. Staff that had recently been involved in e-learning attending professional development courses dealing with basic e-learning competencies utilised more informal and self-directed forms of professional development as self-efficacy increased. The diversity of experiences and forms of engagement, the varied preferences for forms of professional development are likely reflect the different beliefs, learning orientations, disciplinary bases and past learning of staff. As needs change over time, evaluations of staffs’ professional development needs and preferences on an ongoing basis is necessary to inform the continual development of institutional policy and practice, and to ensure staff involvement and engagement in e-learning professional development strategy and the opportunities which are derived from it.

*Conceptions about e-learning and professional appear to be important in influencing both initial and continued involvement in professional development*

The Otago research explored staff conceptions and the significance of these in depth. Interviews with staff as part of the Massey research confirmed that conceptions of e-learning and of e-learning professional development were important in influencing uptake and continued involvement in e-learning professional development opportunities, especially when it comes to staff being involved in e-learning professional development. Beliefs about what e-learning was, how it sat in relation to other teaching modes, its merits and pitfalls, and of the value and usefulness of e-learning professional development (particularly formal opportunities) did appear to play a significant role in uptake and engagement in e-learning and e-learning

professional development. Though the accuracy of some of the assumptions about e-learning and professional development might be questioned, conceptions, beliefs and attitudes were powerful motivators or inhibitors of engagement. Institutional recognition of these conceptions, beliefs and assumptions and debate around these is likely to promote more informed decisions around engagement and need.

*The characteristics of effective professional development as identified by staff:*

- *individualised*
- *relevant*
- *situated*
- *involves learning with/or from others*
- *flexible*
- *readily available pedagogical and technical support for learning*
- *exposure to ideas and examples of good practice*
- *interaction in small groups or learning communities*

The interview findings confirmed those aspects of effective professional development identified in the Massey literature. These characteristics provide a basis for the implementation of formal e-learning opportunities, but also appeared to be characteristic of the informal and spontaneous activities which constitute the majority of e-learning professional development for staff. Professional development which possesses these characteristics tended to be viewed as more effective (even if staff could not say why) and also appeared to promote ongoing engagement in e-learning professional development.

*While it is possible to list the characteristics of activities staff believe are effective, evaluating how and why this is so, and what outcomes are likely to result is in need of further research.*

While interview staff could comment at length on what worked well with regard to professional development they were less able to articulate why this was so, and to what effect. If institutions are to encourage informal forms of professional development and to evaluate the success of professional development for e-learning as part of implementing the framework outlined in Part F of this report, then knowing how and why engagement in different forms of professional development are effective would be of value. Consequently the development of a mechanism to assess effectiveness which is based around more than self-reported outcomes is in need of further research.

*A commonly stated reason for why professional development worked well was the establishment and maintenance of social (interpersonal) relationships with others.*

Participants stressed it was the relational aspect of both formal and informal e-learning professional development that was helpful for their learning. Establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships in and across institutions whereby staff can share experiences, learn from others and ask questions in a supportive context appears to be important. Even in formal courses, continued professional development was often based around relationships established with trainers and facilitators,

suggesting that approachability and enthusiasm of professional developers and e-learning facilitators may be as important as instructional and technological expertise.

*Informal forms of professional development are both popular and seen as effective. It is important to understand why, and to consider how institutions might facilitate and encourage this activity. Nevertheless formal professional development is still warranted.*

That informal professional development constituted such a significant part of both survey and interview participants' professional development indicates further research is necessary in order to establish why and how this is seen as effective. It also suggests that institutions may benefit from exploring how staff development policies, structures and training might support and enhance informal and largely spontaneous activity. However interviews and expressed preferences of staff in the survey suggest there is still a necessary role for formal professional development opportunities which should incorporate the characteristics of effective professional development listed previously.

*For most, e-learning is about good teaching and learning practices, and the application of e-technology in disciplinary contexts. Staff desire professional development which combines these attributes.*

The majority of interview participants stressed a view of e-learning, and of e-learning professional development which involved the integration of pedagogy and technology. Staff wanted professional development which involved the interrelationship between pedagogy and technology, focussing on how this could be applied in real teaching contexts and which linked to and/or was situated within the discipline in which they were based. Professional development which integrates the two, whether in formal or informal activities was viewed as productive and helpful - a means of facilitating staff development and capability and producing better outcomes for students.

*Achieving engagement: Professional development has a positive role in overcoming anxieties and scepticism and in motivating individuals*

For many staff new to e-learning or reluctantly involved in e-learning, professional development had a role in overcoming fears around coping with technology, anxieties about time involved and scepticism about the value and role of e-learning. An improvement in self-efficacy was expressed by staff after involvement in formal professional development activity but was especially evident with descriptions of the benefit of informal forms of professional development activity, suggesting initial engagement in and experiences of e-learning professional development may impact on continuing professional development and e-learning involvement.

*The conceptualisation and institutionalisation of e-learning as a non-core or additional work activity can lead to a lack of prioritisation and engagement by staff.*

During interviews staff often referred to the way in which costs and benefits of engaging in e-learning and e-learning professional development were weighed in relation to other work-place priorities. Many staff across all institutions (but

particularly evident in the two universities) expressed the current tertiary environment valued, rewarded and prioritised research over teaching. Consequently e-learning professional development was not accorded a high priority in relation to work-time tasks. This was further complicated in that some staff viewed e-learning as an alternative rather than integral part of learning and teaching, and consequently as a less significant activity. If institutions identify a need for engagement with e-learning as part of their key activities, then a demonstrated commitment to embedding and promoting e-learning as an integral part of teaching and learning, and as a worthwhile and important work-time activity (underpinned by support structures and appropriate resourcing and incentives) could result in greater identification of the need for, prioritisations of, and engagement in e-learning by teachers.

## 4. Framework implementation, key issues and core principles

The phenomenological perspective taken by the Otago team has produced important insights into the how e-learning and professional development is conceptualised by individuals and what this might mean for institutions when reflecting on the extent, direction and form of professional development. The Massey research informed by post-structural political economy approaches has extended these reflections noting how conceptions, experiences and practices are produced in social and structural contexts. In combination these studies have produced the framework outlined in Part F of this report, a framework which focuses on individual, institution or sector level and which is directed at each of levels towards identification of needs, incentives, opportunities, engagement and evaluation. The framework provides a basis for evaluating current practice and for building sectoral, institutional and individual capability. It also provides a foundation for organisations to better integrate e-learning and associated professional development structurally and culturally.

Otago's research has shown by use of vignettes the sorts of factors which might be considered in relation to provision of e-learning professional development for individuals in relation to the framework dimensions. The Massey findings point to the significant impact of an institution's culture, and of macro-environmental influences such as government policy and funding arrangements. These have profound effects on the way in which an institution views a particular phenomenon or shapes its core business. At a more micro-level the strategies that an institution employs, which are shaped in relation to the macro influences, has an impact on the conceptions that people hold about e-learning and professional development. The Massey research highlights the complex environment in which conceptions of e-learning and professional development exist and how a range of cultural and structural factors are likely to affect peoples' conceptions of the concept. For example, a person who believes that the institution undervalues teaching and learning (of which e-learning is a part of) is likely to have a rather negative conception of e-learning as an institutionally supported concept. Another individual may believe that e-learning has the potential to be extremely effective in breaking down distance between staff and students, yet their conception of e-learning may not be supported by the institution.

Simply, a person's conceptions and actions are informed by and productive of the context in which they are situated. As contexts, the various organisational levels identified in the framework influence each other. For example, the instigation of e-learning in New Zealand tertiary education organisations in the 1990s was not required or directed by national political-economic policy at the time, yet in the early 2000s that government policy makers began to intervene and promote e-learning at least in part, as a result of the movements in the institutional context. The formation of the Tertiary E-learning Reference Group (TELRG), and various funding and research opportunities in turn became a source of information, involvement and influence for tertiary education organisations.

The evolution of e-learning within tertiary institutions has had a variety of drivers. The increasing availability of hardware and useful software, the expectations of the

students, the high level of interest and enthusiasm of the earlier adopters within the academic community, the perceptions of institutional managers that e-learning was ‘the next big thing’, and the undoubted successes of many initiatives have all contributed to the growth of e-learning within tertiary education organisations.

Against this background and underpinned by the conceptions of staff, institutions have had to engage with e-learning and to endeavour to meet the challenges of a dynamic and fluid situation. Professional development has been one of the key levers in this environment. However, many institutions have found that providing appropriate professional development has been a challenging business. This research sheds light on why this is so. The research has, unsurprisingly, reinforced what the wider professional development literature tells us about professional development – that the most effective professional development initiatives are context-specific and embedded within an institution’s policies, practices, and culture (Butterfield, Prebble, *et al.*, 2002). More significantly, the findings strongly suggest that there is not a ‘one size fits all’ model for professional development in e-learning, and that flexibility and institutional autonomy is important. It is suggested here that on the evidence of this investigation, staff engagement in professional development for e-learning is not yet matching the aspirations of staff, institutions and stakeholders in the wider tertiary sector with respect to delivering a key goal of the Interim Tertiary Strategy where it states :

*e-Learning has a vital role to play in strengthening New Zealand’s tertiary education system and helping it to better meet the needs of learners. (Ministry of Education 2004, p4)*

The key findings of the Massey research (noted in sections 3.1 and 3.2 in italics) can be stated as a series of key principles which underpin and highlight factors contributing to effective professional development in e-learning within an institutional context. While these principles do not comprise a formal framework, acknowledgement and attention to them in the development of an institution’s e-learning professional development policies, practices, and structures will contribute significantly to the interpretation of the professional development framework outlined in Part F of this report. In this process it is important to realise that as well as the key principles, there are a significant number of tools available that will assist and enable the development of an appropriate contextualised institutional framework. These tools include the ACODE Benchmarks (2006), the eMaturity Model (Marshall, 2005), the Effective Practice Exemplars (Ministry of Education website), the e-learning Guidelines (Milne and Dimmock, 2005), the (soon to be completed) eResources Project (Prebble, Higgins and Suddaby), and the ACODE e-learning Benchmarking process.

The research has clearly demonstrated that staff conceptions of e-learning and their level of engagement and expertise as e-teachers is not generated in a vacuum and that context is a critical factor in guiding and shaping the development of staff capability and their attitudes towards e-learning. The findings of this research add to the tools available to institutions through the principles which institutions might employ to raise the standards of e-teaching and e-learning through an effective and relevant professional development strategy and programme for e-learning – one which involves engaging with the conceptions, preferences and practices of staff. While

these principles are aimed primarily at facilitating change at the institutional level of the Framework, they may be relevant for the wider sector level decisions too. In addition, if an institution decides to apply these principles they should contribute to an environment which involves staff and is encouraging and/or facilitative of their engagement. The table below presents those principles. The shaded cells show where they integrate with the elements of the framework.

Key Principles	Needs	Incentives	Opportunities	Engagement	Evaluation
Institutions should to recognise the distinctiveness of their own contexts when developing and implementing policies and practices for professional development in e-learning					
Commitment to effective professional development in e-learning involves attention to attitudes and beliefs as well as structures and mechanisms					
Institutions should clearly communicate their expectations for and about e-learning and its place in teaching and learning to enable staff to make informed decisions about their engagement					
Alignment, co-ordination and transparency of pedagogical and technological support through institutional structures is vital for developing capability in e-learning					
Institutions should promote and support effective leadership and management in e-learning through the provision of financial and technological resourcing					
Continuous development of institutional e-learning policy and practice needs to be informed by the ongoing evaluation of staffs' professional development needs and preferences					
Formal institutionally-based professional development is important and needs to recognise that effective professional development should be; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individualised</li> <li>• Relevant</li> <li>• Situated</li> <li>• Involve learning with/or from others</li> <li>• Flexible</li> <li>• Supported appropriately</li> <li>• Exposed to ideas and examples of good practice</li> <li>• Interactive through small groups and/or learning communities</li> </ul>					
Institutions should recognise the importance and effectiveness of informal professional development in e-learning and address ways in which staff development policies, structures and personnel support and enhance this					
Effective professional development in e-learning involves the interrelationship between pedagogy, technology, and the discipline					
Commitment to involving all stakeholders in the development of a culture which values e-learning and related professional development must be demonstrated					
Institutions should identify, promote, and demonstrate commitment to e-learning as a key activity if they want to ensure that it is prioritised by staff					
The workload and time implications for staff of engagement in e-learning and e-learning professional development must be recognised					

Key Principles	Needs	Incentives	Opportunities	Engagement	Evaluation
Staff have a variety of conceptions of e-learning opportunities for dialogue and debate about these need to be provided					
Institutions developing leadership and staff engagement with e-learning professional development should recognise and value e-learning as an integral part of good teaching practice					
Institutions should recognise the positive role that e-learning professional development plays in overcoming staff anxiety and scepticism about e-learning					
Institutions should recognise the importance of inter-personal relationships in design and delivery of e-learning professional development					
Institutions should actively engage in researching and evaluating their e-learning professional development practice					

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