

Part F A framework for professional development for e-learning

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

Jointly prepared by:

University of Otago, Higher Education Development Centre
Dr Sarah Stein
Professor Kerry Shephard
Irene Harris

and

Massey University
Dr Juliana Mansvelt
Gordon Suddaby

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Background

The professional development of teaching staff in tertiary education organisations (TEOs) and of those who support them has been identified as an essential element of future progress towards implementing and building capability in e-learning in tertiary education. This framework addresses this perceived need, but also suggests that many of the features of the professional development of teachers can and should be replicated at other levels.

Departments and divisions within TEOs, the TEOs themselves, and the governmental organisations that support them, all need to undergo progressive development as learning organisations to properly understand and promote the development of teachers. Whether we regard this as the professional development of staff within these organisations, or as a development of the ethos of the organisations, development is needed.

Origins of this framework

This e-learning professional development framework was developed by teams of researchers led by the Universities of Massey and Otago in 2007. Their research was funded by the Ministry of Education. The research drew upon the experiences of a wide range of teachers, managers and support staff in many TEOs. The Ministry commissioned this research following recommendations from stakeholders over several years. This framework has been developed by drawing on the literature and research into current e-learning practice in New Zealand. It provides a platform for effective professional development. It is based on a series of research-informed conceptions for e-learning.

Purpose

This framework outlines levels of analysis and activities concerning the development of teachers engaged in e-learning and those who support them at all levels in the tertiary sector.

‘Levels’ refers to the individual, the department/institution, and the agencies that make up the tertiary sector. The purpose of the framework is to provide a set of principles/guidelines for TEOs and their staff and all other groups in the sector to consider when developing and implementing strategies for professional development for e-learning with the aim of continual improvement in professional capability. It is intended to complement the wide range of tools already available to the sector that promote e-learning by focussing on professional development for e-learning and by posing specific questions about the context within which professional development occurs.

Using information and communications technologies (ICTs) in tertiary education to enhance learning and teaching depends on an institutional approach to planning, monitoring and evaluation. It also involves seeking effective use of ICTs to support learning and teaching and the development and enhancement of capabilities across all levels of a TEO.

Audience

The intended audiences for this framework are Government, TEOs, tertiary teachers and their academic units, professional development groups, and other relevant stakeholders.

Underlying Principles:

This professional development framework reflects the five principles underlying the interim Tertiary E-learning Framework (Ministry of Education, 2004, pp 9-11).

- It is *learner-centred* in that it acknowledges that decisions about professional development at each level within a particular context are best made by those directly involved at the appropriate level.
- It is informed by, and seeks *good practice*, by being based on research carried out internationally as well as within New Zealand into professional development for e-learning.
- It promotes *collaboration* because it acknowledges and recognises the interconnections between and amongst the different levels and participants of the tertiary sector.
- It is *innovative* because it supports the generation of a breadth of possibilities and new ideas for professional development for e-learning reflecting the emerging and immature nature of this area. It is not a ‘one size fits all’ model, but enables the different levels to design, develop, implement and evaluate professional development activities that are best suited to meet their own needs.
- It is *affordable and sustainable* because it promotes systemic and systematic professional development through an ongoing and iterative process of engagement and evaluation.

Applications and Implications of the Framework

Our research has identified a range of conceptions, assumptions and experiences of e-learning and of professional development for e-learning. It is likely that these differences will influence how individuals and institutions will work with the framework. Some will approach the framework seeking specific skills and requiring specific incentives, others will approach the framework with research goals in mind and will expect no incentives other than opportunities for research. Some institutions will anticipate that all teachers will develop information technology skills, while other institutions will focus on the development of teams to support the learning of their students.

The framework is sufficiently flexible to allow all of these possibilities. It takes account of the various starting points and pathways that individuals, institutions and the sector agencies may follow.

These various starting points and pathways are illustrated in more detail in our final report.

Description of the framework

This approach variously combines practitioner participation, leading the way, and provision of incentives (via reward and recognition) which can progressively yield a development spiral. Working at all levels our framework suggests an iterative sequence of analysis and activity. This always starts with an analysis of development needs, of incentives for development and of opportunities for development. This is continued through active

engagement in learning or research and followed by an evaluative exploration of progress. There are five repeated stages as shown in Figure 1. This sequence of analysis and activity applies at all levels.

For example individual teachers can ask themselves what they need, what their incentives are, what support is available for their professional development, how they will engage with e-learning activities and what impact this has on their ability to support student learning. The same sequence applies to departments, to institutions and to other parts of the tertiary education sector.

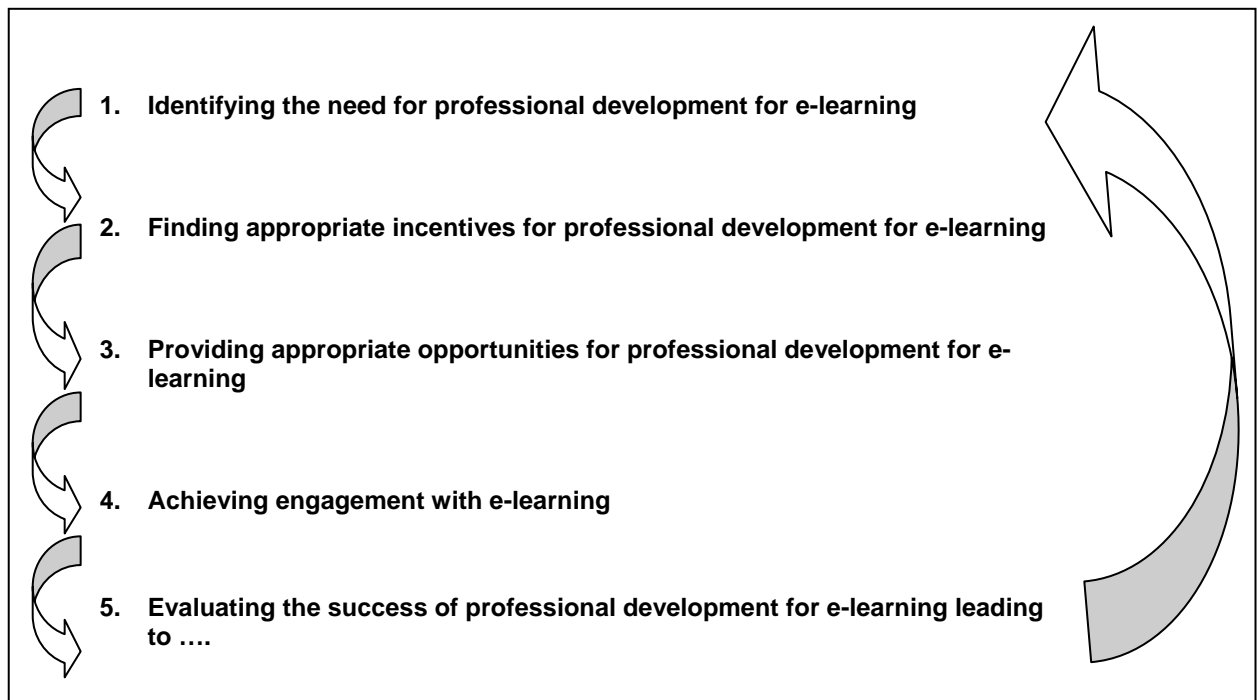


Figure 1: A Framework for Professional Development for E-learning

Application of the Framework

The following table provides guidance as to how the different stages of the framework can be applied at each level. It poses key questions which may be asked and addressed at any point in the continuing cycle/spiral of professional development for e-learning. The last column includes educational institutions along with a range of other bodies with interests and influence in the sector in the broader category of Tertiary Sector Organisations. The Ministry of Education, TEC and Ako Aotearoa would be in this category.

Stage of the Framework	Individuals	Institutions/Departments	Tertiary Sector Organisations
<p><i>Identifying the need for PD for e-learning</i></p>	<p>What does e-learning mean in my teaching context?</p> <p>Is there potential/value in e-learning for my teaching and for my students?</p> <p>Is e-learning relevant for my teaching?</p> <p>How might it have application in terms of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) improving teaching and learning outcomes? b) the teaching/ research nexus c) personal professional development and capability <p>What would I like to be able to do in</p>	<p>What do we know about the potential and value of e-learning for meeting institutional teaching and learning priorities?</p> <p>Is there a need for goals and planning objectives concerning e-learning?</p> <p>What form might these take?</p> <p>How might these strategies be aligned and connected through the policy, structures and practices in the institution?</p> <p>How can we provide leadership and direction for managerial, support and teaching staff (e.g. exemplars, learning from colleagues' experience, facilitating communities of interest, and internal interactions)?</p> <p>What skills and knowledge are needed by</p>	<p>What kinds of teaching and learning should be made available in NZ?</p> <p>How is research and scholarship around the value of e-learning promulgated and shared amongst TEOs?</p> <p>What research and development initiatives can be employed in order to help TEOs with their strategic planning?</p> <p>What parts of the wider Tertiary community can provide leadership in this area?</p> <p>How might the sector value and recognise innovative teaching?</p>

Stage of the Framework	Individuals	Institutions/Departments	Tertiary Sector Organisations
	<p>relation to e-learning?</p> <p>Who are my students, what do they want/desire in terms of e-learning</p> <p>What ICT skills and access do they have?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do student capabilities and preferences mesh with my teaching and learning objectives? <p>Prioritisation of Professional Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What sort of professional development activities do I need to engage in? • What sort of skills and knowledge might I need to develop in order to use e-learning effectively? (teaching, pedagogy, subject matter, technical capability) • How might I prioritise PD for e-learning within my 	<p>staff at all levels of the organisation?</p> <p>What value is placed on innovative teaching?</p> <p>Are institutional expectations made clear at all organisational levels?</p> <p>Is there transparency and equity in access to resources for PD and e-learning (personal, funding, ICT capability)?</p> <p>What services does the institution need to provide to its students?</p>	

Stage of the Framework	Individuals	Institutions/Departments	Tertiary Sector Organisations
<p><i>Finding appropriate incentives for PD for e-learning</i></p>	<p>work schedule?</p> <p>Why should I learn new skills?</p> <p>What are the benefits to be gained from using e-learning for myself and my students?</p> <p>How will my efforts be recognised?</p>	<p>What sort of incentives might encourage staff to engage with e-learning, and to be involved in PD for e-learning?</p> <p>What encouragement and recognition is available for those who provide informal support for teachers engaged in e-learning?</p>	<p>What strategies and processes need to be in place to ensure the desired learning and teaching services are available?</p> <p>How does the sector recognise and value PD for e-learning?</p> <p>What networks of collaboration and information can be built to facilitate the development of ideas and exemplars and lead to engagement in e-learning?</p>
<p><i>Providing appropriate opportunities for PD for e-learning</i></p>	<p>What opportunities exist to develop new skills and knowledge?</p> <p>What forms of professional development can I access/engage in?</p> <p>What are my professional development preferences?</p> <p>Are current forms of PD meeting my needs (technical, social and pedagogical)?</p> <p>Do personal workload models and</p>	<p>What kinds of PD do staff prefer?</p> <p>How can a range of PD development activities and opportunities to meet the needs of a diverse range staff (both full and part time), at different stages in their e-learning journeys be provided?</p> <p>How are staff made aware of PD opportunities, both inside and outside institutions?</p> <p>How can informal professional development be facilitated and built upon?</p>	<p>What processes, policies, resources, and strategies will need to be in place to support the sector in offering these opportunities for staff?</p>

Stage of the Framework	Individuals	Institutions/Departments	Tertiary Sector Organisations
	<p>personal professional development goals reflect the time involved in e-learning and PD for e-learning?</p>	<p>Can PD opportunities and assistance be provided on a 'just-in-time' basis?</p> <p>What resources – physical, financial, personnel and technical need to be provided?</p> <p>What training and career structures are available for those who support the development of teachers?</p> <p>Do workload models and appraisal processes reflect the time involved in e-learning and PD for e-learning?</p> <p>How might teaching and technology be linked within the structure and operation of the institution with regard to the practice of teaching?</p>	
<i>Achieving engagement with e-learning</i>	<p>What will I do?</p>	<p>How is staff engagement monitored and their development recognised?</p>	<p>How is institutional engagement and development monitored and recognised?</p>
<i>Evaluating the success of PD for e-learning</i>	<p>Was it worth the effort for me and my students?</p> <p>How do I know?</p>	<p>Was it evaluated and what are the outcomes of the evaluation?</p> <p>How was the uptake and effectiveness of e-learning and PD for e-learning assessed?</p>	<p>What are the lessons learned?</p> <p>What improvements may be made for the future?</p>

Stage of the Framework	Individuals	Institutions/Departments	Tertiary Sector Organisations
	<p>What have I achieved? Where do I go next?</p>	<p>Was reflective practice on the part of staff encouraged? Was a sustainable culture of continual innovation and development built? How are the experiences of e-learning as an on-going stimulus to change shared and promoted? How are e-learning leaders/innovators recognised and valued? Where to next?</p>	<p>How are the experiences of e-learning as an on-going stimulus to change shared and promoted? How are e-learning leaders/innovators recognised and valued? Where to next?</p>

Evaluating the impact of this framework

Audits of e-learning development in tertiary education often emphasise barriers to uptake of e-learning tools and resources and tend to describe slow rates of change across the sector as a whole. Meanwhile, the use of email to support communication in and between our TEOs has become almost ubiquitous, students and teachers use word processors and spreadsheets as a matter of choice, use of online learning management systems is spreading rapidly and a wide range of multimedia is used routinely to support teaching, and learning. The e-learning professional development framework described in this document accepts that each part of the tertiary education sector is making progress in adopting, implementing and evaluating e-learning as part of a broad and ongoing exploration of education. However, the processes involved cannot be successful if only applied to the development of teachers and to the work of academic staff developers. Institutions and the sector as a whole must identify needs, incentives and opportunities for professional development. Each part of the whole must engage in e-learning development and in evaluation of what is working and what is not.

The e-learning professional development framework itself does seek change and its impact also needs to be evaluated. As each element of the sector adopts the framework and progressively moves forward from its own particular baseline and evaluates its progress, the sector as a whole will change. An analysis based on targets and performance indicators may not be the best way to monitor this change, which may be slow and variable and will always be difficult to separate from more general developments in education. Oversight from an organisation which is both part of and distinct from the sector is likely to be valuable in assessing the development of the sector and of the e-learning framework. Several possibilities exist but Ako Aotearoa, as a new entity within the tertiary education sector with a developing range of interests and activities, potentially has a unique opportunity to be involved in this evaluative role.

References

Ministry of Education. (2004). *Interim E-Learning Framework*
<http://cms.steo.govt.nz/NR/rdonlyres/17D7A181-CD49-4D18-B84E-EE0D57149BC5/0/InterimTertiaryLearningFrameworkweb.pdf>