



Best Practice Criteria for Sustainable E-Learning Open University, Milton Keynes, November 1st 2011

Financial challenges, market opportunities and technical innovation will drive greater use of e-learning. Some see cost-cutting as the primary driver, and fear that it will diminish the quality of the educational experience through reduced face-to-face contact. Others argue that e-learning creates new learning possibilities, and can strengthen educational quality, e.g. by enabling more rather than less learning contact with fellow students. The sustainability of e-learning is also contentious. Do virtual technologies have a lighter or heavier environmental footprint than traditional methods? And does e-learning create greater social inclusion, both globally and nationally, or will it lead to a 'second class' educational system with face-to-face methods reserved for an elite?

Given these controversies, how do both educators and learners decide which blend or variety of e-learning is most effective for them? Can we develop criteria for 'best practice' e-learning which recognise the validity of different approaches as opposed to current threshold standards? How can we best define the quality of 1:1 interaction with a tutor or equivalent; or the opportunity for high quality interaction with other learners; or the different technology infrastructures? These criteria could have many uses: directing attention to key issues during course design; helping providers (especially those new to the market) to reassure students that they can enjoy a quality educational experience; and helping learners to choose between providers. Of course, some of these goals would require either self- or external assessment against the criteria, but this could be 'light touch' if the criteria were focused on the distinctive features of e-learning rather than aiming at a comprehensive QAA-style assessment.

These questions will be addressed in this exploratory workshop, which blends face-to-face and virtual elements. The plenary sessions will be streamed on <http://stadium.open.ac.uk/webcast-ou/>, and the event will also be amplified through Twitter discussion (#bpel) and other means.



Best Practice Criteria for Sustainable E-Learning – Agenda - November 1st 2011

10.00 – 10.30	Registration
10.30 – 10.40	JISC and Best Practice E-Learning <i>Rob Bristow, Green IT Programme Manager, and Sarah Knight, E-Learning Programme Manager</i>
10.40 – 11.10	Economic Best Practice Criteria <i>Andrew Lane, Professor of Environmental Systems, Open University and Director, SusTeach</i>
11.10 – 11.40	Pedagogic Best Practice Criteria <i>Dr. Doug Clow, Lecturer in Interactive Media Development, Open University</i>
11.40 – 12.10	Environmental Best Practice Criteria <i>Peter James, Professor of Environmental Management, University of Bradford and Director, Virtually Sustainable</i>
12.10 – 13.00	Moderated small group discussions
13.00 – 13.45	Lunch
13.45 – 15.15	Small group and plenary discussion <i>Final small group discussion and feedback to plenary, voting on preferred criteria and reflection on outcomes</i>
15.15 – 15.30	Tea
15.30 – 16.30	Open University Showcase <i>E-learning initiatives and associated R&D projects such as OpenLearn, iTunesU, and YouTubeEDU</i>

There is no charge for the event. As places are very limited cancellations after October 24th, and no shows that are not due to illness, will be charged at £50. Please book by visiting www.goodcampus.org.

