



E-learning Content Development

Topic Priorities

Summary Report

Undertaken on behalf of the Social Care Institute for Excellence

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Introduction

A consultation project was undertaken by The Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Social Policy and Social Work (SWAP) on behalf of the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) during the period October-December 2004. The project was commissioned by SCIE as part of its e-learning work theme, supported by a £2 million grant from the Department of Health *to assist the social care community in making the best use of information and communications technologies in teaching and learning, to deliver an improved service to users and carers in England.* The aims of the consultation were:

- To identify existing learning object and e-learning materials at degree level that may be able to be shared or repurposed for online access produced since 2003
- To identify topic priorities related to social work degree curriculum for e-content development, including for learning objects

Consultation strategy and response rates

The project involved an initial web-based search activity to identify any learning objects for use in social work qualifying programmes. The main consultation phase was designed to encourage participation in the consultation by a wide and diverse cross-section of social work education stakeholders. Contributions were received in the main via an online form and a consultation event with academics involved in e-learning and social work education.

88 responses were received via:

- Online submissions of the web-form (57), which include processed responses from phone (4) or face to face (6) interviews
- Workshop participation (18)
- Email – either with forms submitted as attachments or general comments within the main message (13)

Key findings

Availability on of learning objects and materials

Overall the picture of availability of online materials is a complex one. The searches elicited new learning objects in development by Stòr Cùram and the Universities Collaboration in E-learning

(UCEL), which are available only to subscriber organisations, although UCEL is creating more open-access objects. Searches for other materials that may be repurposed revealed that there is a potential wealth of content but locating, accessing and making any sort of judgement about level, currency, quality and authority is highly problematic. Websites hold text based information, some with interactive questions or activities. Many archives are storing video and audio resources. It is not possible to assert that for any areas of the curriculum there is a range of appropriate online material that can or could be used for teaching and learning purposes. At present support for Information Literacy and Research skills as identified in 2003 still remains the only area for which e-content is readily available. No other area of the curriculum is adequately supported by open-access learning resources. The results suggest that there needs to be more focus on using existing gateway and database sites to enable educators to locate resources that are focused on learning and teaching, rather than just research. The Electronic Library for Social Care (eLSC) and the Social Science Information Gateway (SOSIG) could be used to support this work. In addition more time and resource would need to be made available to go deeper into the site listings that are available in order to locate materials that are not categorised as for social work, but which may be relevant.

The results from the consultation with educators support the findings from the web searches that there are very limited open-access learning objects available to support educators delivering the new degree but that there is a wealth of information available on the web upon which educators can draw. The results also indicate that developments by SCIE need to be tailored to educators' use of e-learning, mostly commonly via Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) used by academics as these are where e-learning is focused for most respondents. The different resources identified suggest that more opportunities for educators to share information on resources that individuals have located for specific subject areas would be welcomed. Again it is difficult to conclude that any curriculum areas are well-covered by online resources, supporting the findings from the previous section.

Views of topic priorities and associated e-learning approaches

The information gathered for prioritisation of topic priorities is broad yet also sufficiently detailed to enable a set of recommendations to be produced for SCIE to take forward in its work plan. Not all the areas or topics lend themselves to learning object development however many may relate to the development of a broader range of content development focused on other learning activities and resources.

Respondents suggested a range of resources that they felt would support learning and teaching activities. Case study material, interactive activities and video streaming appeared to be the most popular and these preferences should inform the learning activity, material or object that SCIE

develops. Some of the suggestions offer the possibility of creating sets of materials with less financial and time resource required than for multi-media learning objects.

An important indirect benefit of the consultation activities is that it has brought together again a community of interest that contains a range of people who are interested and enthusiastic about e-learning and social work education and who wish to be more involved in e-learning developments. This group's enthusiasm and ideas offer a way of building an inclusive and shared approach to further e-learning developments for social work education in England and other countries in the UK.

Recommendations

Eighteen priority topics for e-content development are recommended, within four curriculum areas as detailed next.

Law

- Introduction to the Law – what is Law, how it is made, different aspects and stages of process, case law
- Child Care Law
- Court skills/craft

Communication and Practice skills

- Introduction to skills for social work
- Active Listening in face-to-face contexts – illustrating skills at Levels 1 -3
- Being a reflective practitioner
- Face-to-Face interviewing skills
- Assessment and recording
- Groupwork skills (1 large or series or 4-5 objects)
- Values and Fitness to practise – self-assessment

Theories and Methods

- Introduction to social work methods – Level 1
- Practice Models – Level 2
- Ecological Theory
- Managing risk
- Relationships with service users

Inter-professional working

- Professional roles and responsibilities
- Inter-professional working in contemporary social work – policy context

- Partnership working

In addition several general recommendations are made:

- Begin developments in e-content from educators' starting points, in particular their familiarity with VLEs by providing exemplars and practical guidance on integrating media, learning activities and other materials into VLE resources and PowerPoint presentations
- In addition to developing new content, also focus on developing systematic routes to and access points for existing content. Associated with this is the need to develop light touch quality assurance processes and a system for managing Copyright and Intellectual Property Rights issues.

Harness the enthusiasm and experience of those who expressed an interest in further involvement in e-learning developments by considering their potential participation in an advisory group to support SCIE's development work.

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