

e-Learning quality guidelines

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e-Learning quality guidelines have been developed for the New Zealand tertiary sector. The guidelines enable a community of practitioners to share good practice and will be of value in staff development and planning within an organisation. The guidelines are in a wiki that allows open access for editing and adding to the resource. The wiki provides a way for the guidelines to continue to develop and be relevant.

The literature provided direction on the key characteristics of the e-learning guidelines.

- i. The guidelines should be developed in consultation with stakeholders and be acceptable to them (Inglis, 2005). The New Zealand guidelines were developed with input from the sector, but more importantly the project provides a mechanism for the tertiary community to discuss, update and share good e-learning practice. This was done by hosting the guidelines in a wiki that allows open access to edit and add to the guidelines.
- ii. Guidelines should be presented as suggestions for good practice, rather than as a document demanding compliance (Meyer, 2003; Marshall, 2004). The New Zealand guidelines are presented as questions that allow for reflection on current practice. This is intended to encourage thought — a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ response will not generally answer the question sufficiently. Each guideline has suggested answers that include information on effective practice from current literature and New Zealand practice. This is not a definitive answer but an overview of current thinking on the question.
- iii. Guidelines should be enabling rather than restricting (Meyer, 2003; Inglis, 2005). The New Zealand guidelines enable by being easily understood, with a minimum of complexity and jargon. Ambiguity in interpretation can be discussed on the wiki and further clarification obtained from the sector.
- iv. Guidelines need to be localised (Inglis, 2005). The New Zealand guidelines allow organisations to select guidelines that are a priority and relevant to their own needs, and use them as a basis for change. There is a scenario facility that allows organisations to outline their situation and then select the guidelines relevant to them so they can work on implementing them.

The guidelines are organised into three dimensions: audience, teaching activity and Ministry of Education e-learning principles. Each dimension has subcategories as follows: audience (teaching staff, managers, students), teaching activity (learning design, teaching relationships, other support), and principles (learner-centred, best practice, collaboration, innovation, sustainability).

The guidelines inform staff of good practice, help in the design of learning, and offer a practical entry to discussing quality in teaching through e-learning. The e-learning quality guidelines are available at <http://elg.massey.ac.nz>.

References

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