

Higher Education Training Needs Analysis

October 2004

ETNA – HETNA: Comparisons with Further Education

Introduction

The Scottish JISC Regional Support Centres conducted a survey of all further education colleges in Scotland in the summer of 2003. This work, which was made available throughout Scotland and elsewhere in the UK, became known as the ETNA Report¹.

The HETNA survey which targeted universities, and which has supplied the basis for this report, was built on the ETNA framework but was also adapted in several significant respects in order to attune accurately to the different HE environment.

Despite the clear differences between the further and higher education sectors, there are some useful parallels between the two bodies of research. This chapter attempts to draw out these parallels.

Academic

- Provision of technology was found to be adequate in both sectors though more had exclusive access to computers in HE
- FE is very teaching-focussed and vast majority of staff have a teaching qualification. A split focus was observed in HE where a minority have teaching qualification. In both sectors only a very small number have any kind of formal qualification in online learning. A need arises from both sectors for a benchmark qualification in this area.
- There is a degree of ignorance of the existence and use of VLEs in both FE and HE. In HE the market appears to be simultaneously dominated by the big two VLE vendors (*BlackBoard* and *WebCT*) and yet there are cases of support for a multiplicity of platforms within the same institution. Within FE there is the model of an 'institutional' VLE. Within HE the VLE is often 'departmental'.
- The sectors share a demand for training in e-pedagogy, online authoring and use of the VLE. However, in HE there is also a demand for webpage creation and databases which differs from FE, possibly because of the research focus.
- Few have the experience of taking part in an online course in either sector.
- Awareness of SENDA legislation and its implications is growing but there is a real need in both sectors for practical training in how to use technologies that enhance accessibility.
- Lack of time is the greatest barrier to staff development in both sectors though there is a growing acceptance of blended delivery as a suitable method of training.
- There is indication in HE of a strong undercurrent of scepticism regarding online delivery which may impede further development unless evidence is provided which can make clear its value.

¹ The ETNA Report is available through the website of the RSC Scotland North & East at www.rsc-ne-scotland.ac.uk

Library & Resources

- In both sectors computer technology is now the primary tool of information management and communication. Using technology to communicate with students would appear more common in HE than in FE.
- Once again there is a lack of awareness of VLEs and only a small number have received any formal training. This is common to both sectors.
- The greater use of online journals within HE emphasises the importance of research in this sector.
- As with academics, training is required in assistive technologies.
- There is a need in both sectors for a greater quality control of online materials once they have been produced.
- Most are happy to accept some element of online training as part of the mix though training delivered wholly online is rejected as a model.

Senior Managers

- This area sees the closest match between the two sectors.
- Managers in both sectors felt that the technology they had access to was fit-for-purpose. They were confident of their ability to use it to find, create and disseminate information.
- Many of the training needs highlighted here are common to both sectors such as managing cultural change and legal issues as well as the potential uses and implications of emerging technologies.
- The highest use of video conferencing is found among this group of HE staff - greatly more so than among their counterparts in FE.
- There is widespread acceptance of a blended form of training delivery for this cohort.

Admin Staff

- Exclusive use of a computer is common to both sectors and generally the technology base is seen as appropriate to the demands made on it.
- VLEs so far play little part in the work activities of this cohort in both sectors, a fact reflected in the very low numbers who have received any training in this area so far. However, the perception of the potential importance of VLEs is higher in FE than in HE, perhaps again reflecting the centrality of the 'institutional' model of deployment in FE.
- The software applications training programme, ECDL, seems to be more accepted as a standard in FE than in HE. In the latter there is a multiplicity of qualifications cited by admin staff, suggesting a possible need to develop a standard. Despite this multiplicity, ECDL was identified as a major training need by many respondents from HE.
- The desire for training in web page design also echoes the demands of this cohort in the ETNA survey of FE colleges.

Networking & Technical Staff

- In HE, this cohort had a markedly younger age distribution than other HE cohorts.
- In both surveys this cohort has the highest awareness – perhaps not surprisingly - of technologies like the VLE and video conferencing, though very small percentages have received any formal training.
- The greatest demand among technicians in both sectors was for training in network security and in the deployment of wireless networks.
- In both sectors there was a greater willingness to consider self study and training online than is evident in other cohorts.