

Higher Education Training Needs Analysis

October 2004

Summary Analysis of Online Survey

Introduction

This chapter makes overall comparisons and provides summary interpretations of the analyses compiled for each of the five HETNA cohorts. Comparisons are only made where it is possible to do so, where similar issues were explored across more than one cohort. There may be important factors which HETNA online has identified with respect to some cohorts, but if these factors are unique, not applicable to the situation of the other professional cohorts, then this chapter may be silent on these significant issues. The chapters that precede this one give full independent analyses of each discrete cohort,

Basic facts about respondents. Overall, HETNA online respondents were almost equally split between the genders (47% males, 51% females, and 2% not specified). Within specific cohorts, however, the gender distribution was in some cases more marked. There were approximately twice as many females as males in the administrative and librarian-related groups, but the opposite situation in IT and networking. Academic staff were almost equally divided, with managers slightly more likely to be male (53%) than female (45%).

The following abbreviations are used within tables in this chapter

Acad	Academics (lecturers and researchers)
Lib	Librarians (and information and learning resources and ICT support staff)
Man	Managers
Admin	Administrative staff
Tech	IT and networking staff

The majority of all categories of staff were between 30 and 60, with the exception of IT and networking staff who were younger on average, and managers who were older on average. As may be expected, a sizable minority of the former category are in their 20s, and the latter in their 60s.

Access to equipment. As TALiSMAN did in 1998, and ETNA in 2003, HETNA attempted to gauge respondents' access to computers and the degrees of familiarity and confidence with which they used them. In 1998, 70% of staff questioned in Scottish HE had exclusive access to a networked computer. In 2004, this number across all categories averaged 92%, with a lowest figure of 81% for librarians and a highest figure of 99% for IT staff.

Confidence in using computers. Confidence is a subjective state of mind but, nevertheless, respondents were invited to consider what it meant for them and to indicate whether they felt generally confident about using computers in their work. The responses received were some of the most unanimous obtained anywhere in the overall survey, indicating how essential the computer has become as a tool in most people's working lives.

Feel confident using computers	Percentage
Academic	91
Library	90
Administrative	95
Managerial	95
Technical	98
Average	94

Table 1: Confidence in using computers

Back in 1998, TaLiSMAN discovered that 'only' 80% of respondents expressed such confidence.

The power of the computer. Staff in all categories were asked whether they thought their capabilities were limited by the power of their computers. The investment in infrastructure and hardware may clearly be seen in the low average affirmative response that was obtained. Although administrative staff registered most dissatisfaction with the power of their computers, four out of five of even this group felt their computers to be adequate. By way of comparison with respect to academics, in 2004 HETNA found 16% of them dissatisfied with the computing power available to them, whereas in 1998 TaLiSMAN found this figure to be 28%.

Limited by power of computer	Percentage
Acad	16
Lib	12
Admin	21
Man	15
Tech	18
Average	16

Table 2: Limited by power of computer

Using computers in the work context. All groups were asked how they used computers for work and overwhelmingly computers were used both to find information and resources and to communicate with colleagues. In 1998, TaLiSMAN found that these numbers were 82% and 91% respectively for the academic group only. In 2004, almost three quarters of academic and library-related staff use computers to communicate with students (up from only 55% in 1998).

In the work context computers are used....	Acad %	Lib %	Admin %	Man %
to find information or resources	99	97	97	98
to communicate with colleagues	99	99	99	-
to communicate with students	77	72	64	-
for the administration of your teaching	67	-	-	-
to support student learning	61	47	26	-
to assess student progress	32	8	-	-
to improve accessibility for people with special needs	32	24	21	-

Table 3: Computer use in the work context

ICT skills currently held. Unlike the previous question which enquired generally into levels of confidence held, and was possibly open to highly subjective interpretation, a series of questions was posed in HETNA which attempted to capture how people applied their skills. These questions were not asked by TaLiSMAN in 1998 so it is not possible to compare any progress in skills development. It is, however, possible to compare skills levels across groups.

I can.....	Acad %		Lib %		Admin %	
	DWC	KHT	DWC	KHT	DWC	KHT*
store files in folders & retrieve them from a computer	71	27	66	30	79	20
create documents using a word processing application	73	26	75	22	78	20
create tables in a word processor	64	32	54	32	67	25
insert images into word processing documents	55	35	47	33	53	34
insert hyperlinks in word processing documents	41	34	44	28	39	31
create spreadsheets	49	38	40	38	61	30
use functions in a spreadsheet	39	39	26	46	41	41
create databases	20	36	17	37	25	36
create presentations (PowerPoint)	54	35	32	36	33	40
use email	74	25	77	20	80	18
attach files to an email message	73	25	74	22	79	19
search the web for info	72	27	77	20	75	24
create my own web pages	21	30	20	27	14	25

Table 4: Practical skills

* DWC: do with confidence
KHT: know how to

Across all groups questioned there were high levels of confidence recorded in being able to store files in folders and to retrieve them, though admin staff indicated the greatest confidence in this activity. All groups were fairly equally confident in their abilities to use word processing applications, with admin staff leading slightly. As may be expected from their job role, and the likely requirement to handle figures and budgets, admin staff were also most skilled in creating spreadsheets. However, their skills levels compared to academics markedly dropped when it came to being able to use functions within spreadsheets: for this sub-question the two staff groups were almost identical. Unsurprisingly, academics claimed high proficiency in using presentation software (*Powerpoint*). All groups appeared equally skilled in being able to search the web for information. Academics were the highest scoring group in the ability to create web pages, though only a fifth felt confident in doing so.

With respect to identifying possible training need, as well as personal aspiration, it is interesting to note where respondents indicated that they wished to learn more.

I would like to learn how to....	Acad %	Lib %	Admin %
... store files in folders & retrieve them from a computer	1	1	1
... create documents using a word processing application	0	1	1
... create tables in a word processor	3	8	7
... insert images into word processing documents	8	14	10
... insert hyperlinks in word processing documents	20	21	24
... create spreadsheets	10	14	8
... use functions in a spreadsheet	18	20	14
... create databases	32	34	33
... create presentations (PowerPoint)	9	22	21
... use email	0	3	0
... attach files to an email message	1	1	1
... search the web for info	0	3	0
... create my own web pages	40	42	51

Table 5: Practical training needs

The high levels of ability recorded for storing files and creating folders indicate a negligible training need in these cases. Further down the list, universal interest across all cohorts may be observed for the activities of inserting hyperlinks into documents and, especially, creating databases and creating webpages. Only 25% of administrative staff noted in the previous table that they had any facility with web page creation, but the fact that they see the task as important to their role is evidenced by the fact that over half wished for training in this area.

Computers at home. HETNA did not seek to probe deeply into the question of the work-life balance, and a different research tool would be necessary if this were required. However, one question which was asked of almost all role groups was that connected with computers in the home.

Do you....	Acad		Lib		Admin		Man	
	Yes%	No%	Yes%	No%	Yes%	No%	Yes%	No%
use a computer at home?	91	7	83	15	84	16	92	5
use your home computer for work-related activity?	84	8	40	42	42	42	88	5
have internet access at home?	83	8	78	5	75	9	88	8

Table 6: Computers at home

The most evident conclusion to be drawn from this simple enquiry is that managers are the most likely to take their work home (88% do so), though academics are only slightly behind at 83%. Almost everyone has a computer at home and more than three quarters of these computers, in all groups, are connected to the internet.

Knowledge about the VLE. 'Virtual Learning Environment' may not have been a term that was familiar to all respondents, so the HETNA question designers also used brand names of common VLE products in case the words, for example, *BlackBoard* or *WebCT* were in more common usage. Despite this, the generally early stage of VLE deployment throughout universities was evident, as shown in the table below.

Does your institution or dept have a VLE?	Yes%	No%	D/K%	N/R%
Acad	50	10	40	0
Lib	58	8	31	3
Admin	34	10	56	1
Tech	72	11	13	4

Table 7: Institutional VLEs deployed

* N/R: no response
D/K: don't know

Admin staff were least aware of the development while technical staff (at 72%) had highest levels of awareness. This question probed respondents' awareness of local VLE deployment, rather than establishing factually whether it had occurred or not. Despite this, it may be supposed that the IT and networking cohort's responses would be most closely related to the reality as VLEs invariably require installation on institutional servers rather than on individual machines. It is clear that, though VLE deployments have actually occurred in most universities in Scotland in some form, as confirmed in sections of the HETNA report not connected with the online survey, knowledge about these deployments is patchy across most staff groups.

Use made of the VLE. The HETNA online survey enquired deeper into the VLE issue, beyond testing individual awareness. An important part of the survey was to probe the extent to which VLEs are being used for teaching and learning. In this respect, the key staff categories to be surveyed were academic and library related. These cohorts were asked how they used their VLE if they had one. A comparison of their answers is contained in the table below.

If you use a VLE, do you use it to...	Lib				Acad			
	Yes %	No %	N/R %	N/A %	Yes %	No %	N/R %	N/A*
deliver learning resources?	12	4	36	48	29	6	43	23
conduct assessments?	3	7	37	53	9	21	46	24
track the progress of learners?	3	6	38	53	13	18	45	24
communicate with learners?	7	7	37	49	25	8	44	25

Table 8: Uses made of the VLE

- * N/R: no response
N/A: not applicable

The high levels of 'no responses' and 'not applicables' indicate a lack of general engagement with VLEs at present. Clearly, VLEs are not yet an indispensable tool for the support of teaching and learning: the figures show that awareness of VLEs is low and usage of VLEs, even lower. Recalling earlier questions which showed that all academics (99%) used computers to find information or resources and to communicate with colleagues, it is interesting to speculate how the percentage obtained would have been different if the question had been asked before the Internet, and especially the Web, became commonly available in the early to mid 90s. In this context, low current awareness or usage does not necessarily mean that a technology will not in the future become part of everyday life. However, the answers to these questions indicate how much awareness there is still to raise among staff involved in learning and teaching, and how much staff development is surely required if strategists intend that ubiquitous VLE usage will be achieved in Scottish universities.

Although not directly involved with teaching and learning, admin staff are certainly indirectly involved. As already established, this group was the least aware of VLE developments so it is not surprising that only 6% of admin respondents could supply a description of what they were using their local VLE for – primarily for providing course information. This functional link between admin staff and VLEs may be anticipated to grow as VLE usage becomes more pervasive and a need for more and more accurate information through the VLE is understood. Clearly, staff development opportunities will need to be scheduled for staff both directly and indirectly connected with teaching and learning if local VLE deployments are to be successful.

Training in VLE usage. The extent of the need for staff development is clearly demonstrated by the figures shown in the following table. On average, only 12% of respondents indicated that they had received any training, with an overwhelming 88% saying they had not or giving no response to the question. IT and networking staff are a special staff group with respect to the VLE. In some circumstances they may even be the people that the other groups come to when they need support and training in VLE usage. However, the involvement of this group with the VLE is mainly at the server side and, as with admin staff, their understanding of its actual application in the core business of learning and teaching, is similarly essential for successful institution-wide deployment.

Have you been trained to use the VLE?	Yes %	No%	N/R%
Acad	21	50	29
Lib	13	64	23
Admin	7	61	32
Tech	6	74	20
Average	12	62	26

Table 9: VLE training received

Access to video conferencing facilities. By contrast, HETNA logged much higher awareness of institutional video conferencing facilities.

Do you have access to a video conferencing suite?	Yes %	No %	D/K %	N/R %
Acad	54	14	30	2
Lib	39	24	34	3
Admin	44	26	29	1
Tech	80	7	10	3
Man	81	10	7	2
Average	60	16	22	2

Table 10: Access to video conferencing facilities

The 'don't know' and 'no response' categories were similarly much lower than for questions connected with VLE awareness. As would be expected, awareness was particularly high among technical staff (who support it) and managers (who have specialised professional reasons for using it).

Usage of institutional video conferencing facilities is as shown in the grey column in Table 11. The two staff groups which make most use of this technology are firstly managers, and secondly technical staff. It is clear that the more than half of managers who use VC have several bespoke reasons for doing so. Of these, the most popular reason given was to reduce travel to other venues (see a previous chapter which interprets the online data received from senior managers for more information). As busy people with particularly hectic diaries, VC technology is valuable in this regard. Looking to the future and anticipated rising traffic congestion levels, the likelihood of road tolls and the sheer inability to find a parking space in urban centres, it is possible that VC in some form will become even more attractive to managers (and others) as a substitute for face-to-face.

VC is showing itself to be a tool that is not used indiscriminately, but selectively when there is a need for it. Where that need exists, the technology is an extremely powerful one. Academics use the technology much less frequently than managers at roughly a fifth of respondents. The TaLiSMAN survey in 1998 addressed VC usage and acknowledged the low take-up among academics with the following:

“Access to and use of video conferencing, at the time of the survey, was extremely low. This situation will change with the launch of the MAN video conferencing service.....Access to video conferencing will become almost uniform.”

In 1998 the percentage of academics who reported ever having used VC was only 7.2%. Video conferencing has not become a universal, indispensable tool for all users. However, in 2004 it is being used by a significant minority where there is a specific need, not just because it's there. Despite the current relatively low figure of 23% for academics, it is worth noting that this is more than three times the level of six years ago.

How often do you use the video conferencing suite?	Never %	Sometimes %	Frequently %	Total: sometimes AND frequently	N/R %
Acad	40	21	2	23	37
Lib	35	10	2	12	54
Admin	38	11	2	13	49
Tech	51	23	8	31	18
Man	35	33	19	52	13

Table 11: Use of the VC facilities

Usage (frequency) of desktop video conferencing. Again, managers and technical staff were most likely to use desktop VC, though the top-most and second-most frequent positions were reversed. For academics, desktop VC usage at 6% was very small – although still three times more than that reported by TaLiSMAN in 1998 (2%). In 1998 most desktop VC experiences were very disappointing; users were often treated to video or audio but rarely both through a tiny blurry window on the computer screen. Incompatibility and bandwidth restrictions generally made using desktop VC in education a frustrating experience.

Institutional VC facilities, on the other hand, have usually been superb in quality and accurately synchronised in sound and vision – especially in Scotland. If ever staff in the past have been cautious about using institutional VC facilities because of a lack of confidence in or understanding of the various components of the VC studio, including how to manage camera angles and input and output feeds, how to instruct touch screen control panels and so on, many of these concerns on an individual level are becoming resolved through manufacturers

now bundling VC components on the desktop within other more familiar software applications. If this trend continues and consolidates, perhaps a survey in a further 6 years time may reveal a very different picture for VC at the desktop – or possibly at that time for VC through the mobile device.

Do you have access to desktop video conferencing?	Yes	No	D/K	N/R
	%	%	%	%
Acad	6	53	35	6
Lib	3	56	36	5
Admin	6	57	33	4
Tech	26	60	6	8
Man	19	75	4	2

Table 12: Access to desktop video conferencing

Usage (function) of video conferencing in general. Where it is used, the HETNA survey indicated that academics, librarians, administrators and technicians predominantly use the technology for communicating with colleagues

Using VC to communicate with colleagues	% of all respondents
Acad	16
Lib	9
Admin	10
Tech	30

Table 13: Using video conferencing to communicate with colleagues

The relatively small figure for academics in Table 13 shows a threefold increase over TaLiSMAN in 1998.

The specialised use for VC that was expressed by managers, as mentioned previously, is provided in the table below:

Do you use video conferencing to...	Yes%	No%
...communicate with staff in another part of your own Institution?	32	42
...communicate with local external contacts/bodies	23	48
...communicate with national external contacts/bodies	30	43
...communicate with international external contacts/bodies	25	48
...reduce travel to other venues	37	36

Table 14: Managers' use of video conferencing

Special needs. The following table allows a comparison between academic, library and admin staff on the issue of being aware of the implications of the Special Needs and Disability Act, 2001.

Awareness of the SENDA legislation			
	Acad %	Lib %	Admin %
No response	33	41	62
Never heard of it	8	4	9
Partly aware	20	17	10
Reasonably aware	25	24	10
Highly aware	14	14	9

Table 15: Awareness of the SENDA legislation

High percentages of respondents across all categories did not respond at all to this question. This is especially true of admin staff who may have thought the question was not relevant to them. The number of persons who were either highly aware or reasonably aware among academics and librarians was almost identical – just over a third of total respondents from these groups. Adding in their ‘partly aware’ colleagues brings the figure to approaching 60% among academics. As compliance with the regulation is now a legal requirement, the figures shown above indicate that some headway has been achieved in informing staff of their SENDA-related obligations, though there would clearly appear to be a need for further training.

Assistive technologies. This section looked further than general awareness of SENDA into awareness of specific forms of assistive technology. Where academics and librarians were broadly similar in the previous table, librarians now clearly demonstrate more specialised knowledge. Admin staff appear now to have more experience of such technologies than academics.

Index	I already know about....	Acad %	Lib %	Admin %
1	making online learning resources more accessible?	21	36	19
2	the ‘accessibility options’ built into the Microsoft Windows environment?	18	27	19
3	adapted keyboards and alternatives to the standard mouse?	21	45	27
4	alternative input methods (eg voice recognition, switches, infrared tools)	22	31	25
5	alternative output methods (eg tactile diagrams, text-to-speech, Braille transcription)	13	28	14
6	screen magnification & screen reading software (eg Zoomtext, Jaws, Supernova)	17	36	18
7	specialist software to support learning (eg Texthelp, Mind Manager, Inspiration)	9	24	10

Table 16: Practical knowledge of assistive technologies

This relationship between staff cohorts is shown in the following line diagram, where library-related staff are represented by the thick upper line. As well as demonstrating more specific awareness, librarians were also *less* likely to offer no response to this part of the survey. On average, 34% of academics did not respond, and 25% of admin staff. Only 8% of librarians ignored this question, suggesting perhaps that this group appreciates that knowing about accessibility issues is part of their job.

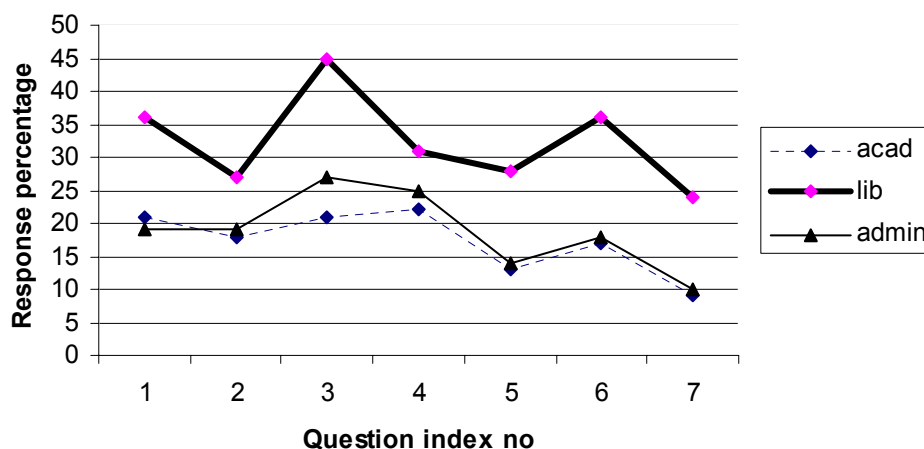


Fig 1: Practical knowledge of assistive technologies (by cohort)

Training needs connected with accessibility. Finally in connection with accessibility, the staff cohorts were asked to identify areas where they would like to know more. The results are as shown in the table below.

I would like to learn about....	Acad %	Lib %	Admin %
making online learning resources more accessible?	26	33	23
the 'accessibility options' built into the Microsoft Windows environment?	23	32	24
adapted keyboards and alternatives to the standard mouse?	19	21	20
alternative input methods (eg voice recognition, switches, infrared tools)	22	26	21
alternative output methods (eg tactile diagrams, text-to-speech, Braille transcription)	22	27	21
screen magnification & screen reading software (eg Zoomtext, Jaws, Supernova)	21	23	20
specialist software to support learning (eg Texthelp, Mind Manager, Inspiration)	25	24	22

Table 18: Training needs for assistive technologies

As before, this information is presented in a line chart (Table 19) so that the relative positions of each cohort may be seen. Although, as shown previously, librarians were already leading in knowing most about specific assistive technologies, they also here exhibit the strongest wish to know more. It is likely that staff development plans within universities in the area of assistive technologies would benefit both from providing further training to this group and by involving them in the training of their colleagues in other professional areas.

One of the issues which emerge from this area, just as it did with the ETNA survey of FE college staff in 2003, is the disparity between *awareness* and having the practical/technical skills to achieve *application* of that awareness. The following brief comment was typical of many received:

I know about all of these but have little practical experience.

The issue identified here, therefore, is not only a need for general awareness-raising, but also for practical training in how to apply the things learned.

Finally, on the subject of accessibility, is the issue of determining *how much* knowledge and skill the individual staff member is expected to have, both from the perspective of their institution and with regard to the Law. This is perhaps best decided at the strategic level within universities. Comments received in HETNA about accessibility make it clear that many members of staff do not feel it their job to know more than where to go if they need help. The following comments were typical:

I know where to go within the university to learn about these.

I know about making resources accessible to the extent of knowing that my institution has the means to do so.

My university would help me if I had a particular need to use one of these.

My comment on this is that it should probably not be a lecturer's job to know all the ins and outs of the above but that a lecturer should be supported by specialist technical staff to assist accessibility.

This is not relevant because we have a department who just deals with it: we just ring them for advice.

Unlikely to need any as we teach Dental students

Vaguely aware of most of them but not very interested.

University management teams are well placed to influence where the local emphasis lies between awareness-raising and practical application so that SENDA compliance is achieved and so that no one is excluded from receiving a high quality learning experience due to disability.

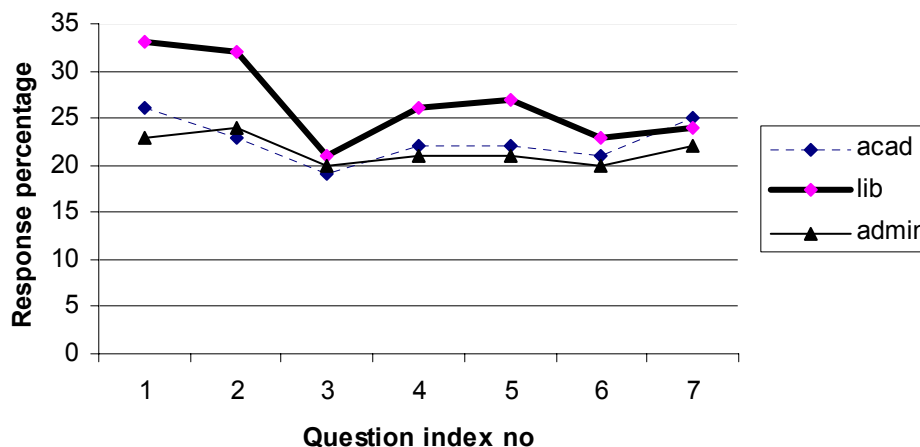


Fig 2: Training needs for assistive technologies (by cohort)

The kind of training felt to benefit respondents' work the most. This area is one in which specialised job areas make cross-cohort comparisons difficult in some cases. Managers and IT & networking staff in particular have specific training needs which are mostly not shared by other cohorts. Detailed comments on the training needs of these groups are included in previous chapters concentrating on their role categories. The following table shows a comparison of demand for a range of potential training opportunities offered to academic, library and admin staff.

Training in which of the following would most benefit your work?	Acad %	Lib %	Admin %
Video conferencing	19	6	14
Facilitating electronic discussions	28	13	-
Effective searching on the web	26	20	22
Using a VLE	34	23	-
Authoring online learning materials	40	19	38*
Understanding the theory, practice and pedagogy of online learning	39	23	-
ECDL	-	-	36

Table 20: Training of benefit to the work situation

(* this item was described as 'creating webpages' in this instance)

When asked to prioritise the sort of training that was most important to them, joint top for admin staff were creating webpages and the software applications training programme, ECDL (European Computer Driving Licence). For academic staff, the top three were online learning pedagogy, authoring online materials and VLE use. For librarians, the three most popular requests were for effective use of the library management system, authoring online materials and metadata tagging. Linking all three cohorts is a wish to be able to make materials available online.

Back in 1998, at the time of the TaLiSMAN survey, materials could only be put online by persons who had a reasonable knowledge of HTML and, ideally, some more advanced multimedia or programming skills as well. The TaLiSMAN team itself, based at Heriot-Watt University, used to offer web training courses where the main tool for web authoring was only

'Notepad', the basic text editor built into Microsoft Windows. Every item of HTML code was written out manually in a time-consuming and error-prone manner. In 2004, applications have advanced so far in terms of usability that the 'pain' of having to learn HTML is much reduced, if not almost eradicated. Arguably, through WYSIWYG¹ applications such as *Dreamweaver* and *FrontPage*, and especially through the tools available within the average VLE, it is now possible for lecturers and support staff to prepare materials for online delivery without knowing a single item of HTML syntax.

Specialist skills. As shown in Table 21, publishing online was the most sought after training (web development), desired by all three categories. A significant second most popular category was project management, shared by just over a third of all academics and administrative staff.

Would training in any of the following specialist skills be of benefit to you?	Acad %	Lib %	Admin %
Image Editing	27	11	21
Video Creation/Editing	22	7	14
Web Development	45	31	40
Project Management	35	25	36
Data Analysis	33	-	-

Table 21: Training needs: specialist skills

Preferred methods of training and support. All job categories indicated that lack of time was a significant barrier to receiving further training so all cohorts were asked about the types of training scenarios that they would find acceptable. The results of this were somewhat similar to those obtained in 1998 by the TaLiSMAN survey, with the exception of 'advice by phone, electronic mail or through electronic discussion lists'. In 1998, this method was acceptable to approximately twice the number of academics as in 2004, identifying perhaps the information overload phenomenon that many people feel has occurred in their mailboxes in the interim.

Which methods of training and support would you find suitable?	Acad %	Lib %	Admin %	Man %	Tech %
Traditional face-to-face workshops/courses	73	80	77	65	78
Advice by phone, electronic mail or through electronic discussion lists	35	42	36	46	46
Blended a 'blended' model of face-to-face workshops and open or flexible learning supported online	71	72	75	75	85
Open and flexible learning delivered and supported wholly online	44	48	47	50	49

Table 22: Methods of training found suitable

¹ WYSIWYG: 'what you see is what you get'.

Issues from this chapter, converting to recommendations:

- Universities should communicate information about their ICT strategies to all staff, making clear the status, role and planned purpose for the VLE.
- University management should clarify for staff what the institution expects of them with respect to the VLE.
- Appropriate staff development should back up the institution's definition of staff roles with respect to e-learning.
- The successful realisation of the institution's e-learning strategy involves the participation of other key staff categories as well as academics.
 - Admin staff are an important category of staff with respect to the provision of e-learning within institutions. This is likely to increase as the need builds for providing more course and other information online. This link should be recognised and admin staff given time and able to access all appropriate VLE-related staff development opportunities to help realise the institutional plan.
 - Technical staff need special training to understand not just how VLEs work at the server side, but how the institution regards the VLE as an essential tool to assist teaching and learning.
- Video conferencing in VC suites is used where there is a specific need, not 'just because it's there'. Due to the greater possibilities becoming available for mobile devices and through new possibilities for audio and video over IP, investment should be made in researching how these opportunities may impact upon student learning in innovative ways.
- Some awareness of SENDA is evident: 60% of academics claimed some knowledge, 55% of librarians, but only 29% of admin staff. There is still need for awareness raising in this area.
- Librarians are already the most highly aware cohort on accessibility issues, and are the most keen to find out more.
- Many staff do not feel that accessibility issues concern them at more than a superficial level, or in some cases at all if they feel it is properly the remit of someone else within their institution. As with VLEs, university management teams should confirm their expectations to all staff on this issue. Universities need to comply with SENDA legislation AND clarify to staff what is their individual role in ensuring that no learner is excluded from receiving a quality learning experience on the grounds of disability.
- Regional Support Centres already work closely with the JISC Service, TechDis, on providing assistance with accessibility issues to FE Colleges and to some universities. A suitable approach in some cases has been to enable staff to achieve a level of accessibility in their ordinary work practices through implementing various simple, low cost, low effort strategies which can be applied to everything that they do.
- There is a great demand to know how to publish materials online, through the VLE or through ordinary webpages. Such a goal is not as difficult to achieve now as it was in the late 90s before the introduction of powerful WYSIWYG applications or VLE tools which have eliminated much of the need for specialist multimedia design knowledge. Staff development opportunities should be provided which enable staff to realise this goal by using wherever possible: the knowledge they mostly already have and applications they are already familiar with.