

**Practitioner Research and
Evaluation Skills Training (PREST)
in
Open and Distance Learning**

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**International Research Foundation
for Open Learning**

IRFOL is an independent research agency
working on open and distance learning.

IRFOL has four functions:

- to stimulate and carry out research for policy makers on open and distance learning
- to meet the research needs of practitioners in open and distance learning
- to offer support and training to researchers, especially in institutions with limited research capacity
- to publish the outcomes of research

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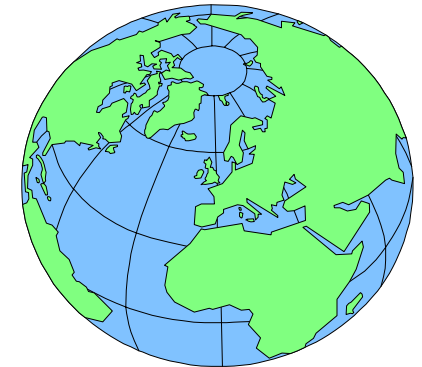
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THE COMMONWEALTH OF LEARNING

Practitioner Research and Evaluation Skills Training (PREST) in Open and Distance Learning

The International Research Foundation for Open Learning (IRFOL) has developed training materials on behalf of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) to help ODL practitioners build up basic research and evaluation skills.

The aims of the materials are:

1. To make practical research and evaluation skills training accessible to a wider group of ODL practitioners.
2. To improve the quality and extent of research and evaluation in the ODL field.
3. To increase the influence of research and evaluation on policy-making, management and practice.
4. To contribute to the development of a principled and systematic research capacity within ODL institutions.
5. To widen the research agenda in ODL.

There are two sets of materials:

Core modules

- A1: Doing educational research and evaluation in ODL
 - A2: Planning research and evaluation
 - A3: Getting and analysing quantitative data
 - A4: Getting and analysing qualitative data
 - A5: Mixed research methods
 - A6: Reporting research to support or influence change
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Handbooks

- B1: Using programme monitoring in research and evaluation
 - B2: Measuring outcomes
 - B3: Costs and economics of open and distance learning
 - B4: Programme evaluation and its role in quality assurance
 - B5: Researching marginalised and disadvantaged learners
 - B6: Researching tutoring and learner support
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The core materials (20-40 reading hours each + activities) provide a foundation in research and evaluation methods explored within ODL contexts for inexperienced researchers

The handbooks (20 reading hours each + activities) are guides to conducting research and evaluation in a particular field of ODL.

Written by experienced researchers and ODL practitioners, these instructionally-designed print materials are available on the COL website at:-

www.col.org/resources/startupguides/prest.htm

The flexible resources can be used in a variety of ODL contexts:

1. As self-study by individual or small groups of ODL work colleagues
2. As reference materials by individuals and research networks involved in planning or implementing research projects in ODL.
3. As support materials for training providers (in face-to-face workshops or as supplementary reference materials to courses).
4. Adoption or adaptation in accredited face-to-face or ODL courses, e.g. the handbooks could act as electives

www.col.org/irfol