

# COL's Policy on eLearning

This policy document specifies guidelines and broad policies to promote and inform the development of and use of eLearning in COL. It provides a basis for standardised and structured approach to the use of this medium.

## COL 's interest in eLearning

1. COL is a leader in policy and practice in open learning and distance education (ODL). In addition to enhancing ODL provision across the Commonwealth it develops new ideas and concepts as well as contributing to experiments and innovations and to their dissemination. As a result of COL's work, governments have an increasing appreciation of the potential of ODL.
2. COL 's core task is to expand access to quality education through its programmes in Commonwealth countries. The range of possible technologies to achieve this includes all aspects of eLearning. Due to the rapid technological changes, COL must constantly seek new technological methods and approaches that will assist in finding the correct balance in reaching more potential learners.
3. The objectives of COL's eLearning policy are to:
  - o expand effective learning opportunities through its programmes, using the most appropriate technologies and approaches to fit the learners' circumstances,
  - o monitor latest developments in eLearning to help promote what could be useful in reaching additional learners and improving the teaching-learning processes,
  - o support and perform limited pilot programmes to test the use of technologies and approaches in reaching COL's objectives, and
  - o provide a technological infrastructure that may be used to support education programmes that COL has a need to run.
4. Wherever feasible, the most cost-effective software infrastructure should be implemented so that this may be used as an example of what can be implemented in developing countries.

## Important areas of eLearning

COL will focus its eLearning efforts in the following areas:

1. The evaluation of learning management systems (LMSs), learning content management systems (LCMSs) and learning object repositories (LORs) where these are applicable and appropriate to COL's mandate, with special attention to open source software.
2. Developing and providing the training necessary for Commonwealth countries to gain the skills to develop learning materials in formats appropriate for storage in repositories and reuse in learning management systems.

3. Provide a basic infrastructure that may be used for online programmes and communities of practice supported by COL to address both development and delivery of effective eLearning practices.
4. Through COL's work in policy, systems, applications and knowledge management, learning content that is customisable, reusable and available to member countries should be stored using appropriate technologies and made easy to access and use.

## **Support for eLearning**

To adequately provide for the integration of eLearning techniques into COL's work, the following will be implemented and maintained:

1. Monitor the available learning management systems and learning object repositories.
2. Implement and maintain an infrastructure including LMS and LOR to support the development (including "conversion") of learning objects and provision of online learning environments.
3. Online and face-to-face programmes to enhance the skills of ODL practitioners in Commonwealth countries to implement similar systems.
4. The Knowledge Management (KM) team at COL will take responsibility for the evaluation of systems, skills enhancing programmes in eLearning and the implementation of infrastructure to support those programmes offered by COL.
5. Where COL staff members deem a programme is suitable for offering in an online environment, the choices of technology mix, instructional design and learning facilitation will rest with the person responsible for the activity, while support and advice and infrastructure will be provided by the KM team in support of this policy.

## **Disseminating the findings**

eLearning programmes should be monitored from the point of view of creating good practice case studies and examples that can be shown to Commonwealth countries.

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