

# RSC Newsletter

Issue 23 – November 2009

Stimulating and supporting innovation in learning

## Belfast Met work smarter with e-learning

Belfast Metropolitan College is leading the way in delivering the highest quality **learndirect** e-learning in Northern Ireland. Three staff members have recently completed advanced e-learning support qualifications that will ensure that college students and work based learners can benefit from **learndirect** skills and qualifications.

Being the first in Northern Ireland to complete this qualification, the staff have placed BMC to the fore in supporting blended learning through the use of quality procedures and standards.

Donna Hyland, Teresa Conlan and Oonagh Magee are members of the Work Smart mentoring team who are responsible for mentoring all levels of students within the college. Achieving the qualification fits into the ethos of the Work Smart Unit by offering students access to e-mentoring in a time and manner best suited to their preferred learning style.

While working on their qualifications, the team has rolled out a comprehensive product awareness session to all Programme Area Managers within the college and are looking forward to aiding curriculum staff to embed appropriate e-learning modules into their full and, part-time programmes, now they have qualified staff in place.

Maura Lavery, Deputy Director Curriculum Services, on congratulating the staff on their achievement stated, "In such challenging times opting to enhance skills through e-learning can support business of all sizes to maintain their investment in training whilst significantly minimising the working hours lost. Having achieved the mentoring qualification the staff are demonstrating an innovative approach to supporting all students within Belfast Metropolitan College."

To date, Belfast Metropolitan College have successfully delivered a blended learning ILM programme to large employers, reaching 50 work based learners. They have also successfully piloted the employability programme with Level 1 students and the ELLIS Programme with speakers of English as a second language.

This work based qualification has been developed for those who support learners within **learndirect** and relates quality procedures, documentation and standards. As such the qualification is unique.



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## Books for all – but no shelves necessary

"I'm very impressed – as are the staff and students with 'ebrary'".  
[a NI FE college librarian]

Ebrary? What do you mean – you haven't heard of ebrary?

In August of this year JISC Collections successfully completed the roll out (on time) of a collection of almost 3,000 book titles for use in FE colleges – and all for free. But you won't find them on the shelves.

For these are e-books – and you and your students can read them online via the ebrary catalogue. However, it doesn't stop there; users can also print relevant sections and teachers can make links to the books within the courses that they put up on the college's VLE. There are other user features such as the option to select unfamiliar words and seek a definition or explanation from other reference sources. Particularly useful is the ability to create your own 'bookshelves' of your finds so that you can retrieve them more quickly the next time.

The funding provided by JISC was £1.5M in total – to make available a collection free at the point of use until 2014 – and the successful bidder to provide the service was ebrary. Ebrary's role is as the negotiator of rights with the individual publishers and the provider of the online platform. The collection ranges across 31 subjects – from accountancy, art and design, childcare to travel and tourism. Not all subjects are equally represented – but there are plans to expand the collections once usage patterns have been analysed.

So – if you haven't seen them yet, go and see your librarian for advice on how to log on.

## JORUM – Come Drink Your Fill of Learning



The JISC funded JORUM service has recently opened up and simplified its access to a wide range of learning materials and objects. There are currently more than 3,300 resources available – from single files to multimedia learning objects – and all have been deposited by teaching staff in the UK's colleges and universities.

College staff can now access any of these objects for their own use in teaching and learning – as long as:

- The college has joined the UK Access Management Federation; and
- The college has signed the User and/or Contributor licences – which costs nothing.

As a temporary measure before the development of the full JorumOpen licences, the service is using the Open Educational Resources tool but when these are ready all current materials will automatically transfer.

So – what's in it for you and your students? The materials can be downloaded for direct use in the classroom and within virtual learning environments (VLEs) – or, if you want to make adjustments to the content, then that too is permitted. Contributors to the repository retain copyright over their own materials – under a Creative Commons licence.

Users will also have access to a Moodle based support community – the Community Bay – so help will always be at hand. For more information and instructions on joining – see [www.jorum.ac.uk](http://www.jorum.ac.uk).

## Celtic Camel in Northern Ireland



This new e-learning initiative was launched by the Regional Support Centre of Northern Ireland (RSCni) on the 21st October at the first of a series of RSCni regional briefings for Further Education (FE) Senior Managers.

This initiative will explore the effective use of e-learning by FE colleges, and how they might be able to learn from each other, based upon study visits to other FE Colleges throughout the Celtic nations.

### Celtic Camel Aims

The Celtic Camel programme will facilitate the sharing of experience, best practice, and information related to the management and use of e-learning to enhance teaching and learning. In particular, it aims to:

- exploit existing relationships between RSCs in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland so that the needs of FE colleges can be better met
- develop channels of communication between Managers, Lecturers, and Support Personnel of FE colleges from the Celtic nations around topics of mutual interest
- fund e-learning visits to FE colleges across the Celtic nations up to the value of £1,000 per visit
- improve understanding of the benefits of technology enhanced learning at an organisational level

For further details please go to RSCNI website: [www.rsc-ni.ac.uk](http://www.rsc-ni.ac.uk)

## RSCni Table of Events 2009 – 2010

| Date               | Event  | Venue                                 |
|--------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| 21st October 2009  | Senior Managers Briefing                               | Jury's Inn, Fisherwick Place, Belfast |
| 20th November 2009 | Learning Resources (LR) Forum                          | SWC, Dungannon Campus                 |
| 25th November 2009 | Open Source Software Regional Event                    | To be arranged                        |
| 27th November 2009 | ALT/JISC RSCni Funding Workshop                        | Stranmillis University College        |
| 3rd December 2009  | Accessibility Regional Event                           | Northern Regional College             |
| 17th December 2009 | Mobile Technology Regional Event                       | To be arranged                        |
| 29th January 2010  | e-Learning Forum – Digital Resources for Your Teaching | To be arranged                        |
| 17th February 2010 | LR Forum   | To be arranged                        |
| 24th February 2010 | ILT Staff Development Forum                            | To be arranged                        |
| 25th March 2010    | RSCni Annual Conference                                | To be arranged                        |

RSCni reserve the right to change this programme

## Bid and Win!

Many colleges in Northern Ireland have in the past or are currently interested in bidding for JISC project money. As anyone who has undertaken the task knows, project bids are time-consuming and should not be undertaken lightly.

RSCni have managed to secure the expertise of 3 experienced learning technology project managers for a one day workshop. The three experts have run projects with funds from the JISC and other sources, and have judged bids written by others. They will share their perspectives on writing convincing bids for funds. The workshop will give you tips on how to avoid wasted effort and dashed hopes.

This joint ALT/JISC RSCni Event Bidding and Winning Workshop will take place on Friday, 27 November 2009 at Stranmillis University College, Belfast

Topics to be covered include:

- When to bid and when not;
- Timescales;
- Getting your team together;
- Partnerships;



- Presenting your bid;
- Learning from failure

### Who should attend?

Anyone who plans to bid for funds from national or international sources for learning technology projects, including project managers, learning technologists, teachers, lecturers and senior managers.

More details on the workshop are available on the ALT web site at [http://www.alt.ac.uk/workshop\\_detail.php?e=329](http://www.alt.ac.uk/workshop_detail.php?e=329) or from Catherine Gormley at [c.gormley@rsc-ni.ac.uk](mailto:c.gormley@rsc-ni.ac.uk)

More details on JISC funding opportunities are available at <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/fundingopportunities.aspx>

Information on JISC-funded projects can be found at <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/projects.aspx>.

JISC

## Help! I am teaching ICT Essential Skills Level 1 and 2

Since August 2009, ICT Essential Skills Level 1 and 2 replaces Key Skills ICT Level 1 and 2 in FE Colleges and Training Organisations.

For the past few years, RSCni has been providing guidance to the sector through its Moodle site and e-learning technology workshops. The aim of the Moodle ICT Essential Skills website (hosted by RSCni) is to provide a vehicle for tutors to receive support from all the relevant partners DEL, ETI, CCEA RA, LSDA NI, CCEA Awarding Body and City & Guilds Awarding Body and RSCni.

RSCni e-learning support to participants encompasses:

- Moodle (Virtual Learning Environment) training
- support for the project through a discussion/news/announcements forum on Moodle
- assistance for participants in developing appropriate e-resources and technical skills as required for teaching and learning

Other resources from partners include advice on initial assessment, templates, Guidance from DEL, awarding bodies documentation and quality standards links.

Tutors too have contributed and supported each other through forums on topics such as initial assessment, free memory sticks, and interpreting the accessibility.

The ICT Essential Skills website has over 300 users in Northern Ireland. It can be accessed at <http://www.ictessentialskills.co.uk>.

For more information on accessing the website, contact [c.gormley@rsc-ni.ac.uk](mailto:c.gormley@rsc-ni.ac.uk).

## New online resources for learning, teaching and assessment

The Higher Education Academy and JISC have teamed up to produce a set of online guides and interactive tutorials, designed to help learning and teaching professionals make best use of digital technologies in their practice.

The rapid development of information technology has made available a plethora of new resources for education. These educational tools can significantly enhance learning and teaching but also create new challenges for staff.

These new online tutorials and guides give practical guidance on how to use digital technologies in areas such as assessment and work-related learning. They also show how technology can be used to help tackle issues such as inclusivity, copyright law and plagiarism.

Topics cover:

- Assessment
- Copyright, accessibility and the law
- Creating your own on-line learning materials
- Internet plagiarism
- On-line image searching
- Preparing learners for the workplace
- Supporting learning in the workplace
- Supporting inclusivity
- Technology-enhanced learning and teaching

For more information please go to <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/news/stories/2009/06/collaboration.aspx>

## Cloud computing useful?? I think so!



There is now a growing number of very useful and practical applications available from the cloud aside from the established Google docs, adobe etc...

### Photo Editor - Pixlr

Is a completely online and free photo/picture editor that seems based on the very popular and expensive Adobe Photoshop.

Have a look yourself:  
<http://pixlr.com/editor/>

### Virtual Desktop – G.ho.st

Ghost is a flash based virtual desktop that allows you to have access to your files and applications anywhere in the world, with 15 GB of personal storage.

With the virtual desktop, no payment or installation is required for updates or office type applications and, security is handled within the cloud.

Mobile Ghost – ghost "lite" version allows you access your desktop via your mobile phone!

Have a try on <http://g.ho.st>

## Xerte Learning Object Development Tool



The Xerte Online Toolkit is an Open Source content creation tool developed by the University of Nottingham. It allows ordinary teachers to create rich, interactive engaging resources with high levels of accessibility.

Xerte includes the following features:

- all content is keyboard accessible using the tab, space, arrow and enter keys
- the user can choose from a number of different colour schemes, text sizes and font types
- a range of media types, interactivities and self-assessments cater for different learning preferences
- text-to-speech has been implemented for all textual content in the learning object

Although designed primarily as a web based content creation tool, Xerte can also run on a memory stick and has been bundled with Moodle in MAXOS (Moodle and Xerte On a Stick.

### Who Can Benefit from Xerte?

#### Further and Higher Education

With large organisations needing to demonstrate compliance with the Disability Equality Duty, Xerte Online Toolkits are an excellent and cost effective way of combining inclusion needs with staff development in high quality content creation.

#### Work based learning / employer engagement

Xerte allows businesses to rapidly create high quality resources that meet the needs of a diverse workforce (some with accessibility requirements). Where work practices involve multiple sites with limited connectivity, MAXOS is an ideal way of carrying a course in a pocket.

#### 14-19 Diplomas

The rich learning resources that can be created in Xerte are ideal for 14-19 learners. Where teaching is split between schools and colleges, tutors can provide consistency of access to resources using MAXOS.

For more information on Xerte please contact Audrey Graham at [a.graham@rsc-ni.ac.uk](mailto:a.graham@rsc-ni.ac.uk)