

Briefing paper 7

Embedding Learning Technology Institutionally (ELTI): Using the ELTI Audit Tools

A national study was commissioned by the JISC¹ to provide an in-depth audit and review of staff roles and activities associated with the embedding, development and support of learning technology in higher education (HE). The study team also investigated patterns of staff recruitment and deployment across the audited institutions, relating these to critical institutional factors. Recommendations for further study and strategic focus by the JISC and guidelines for institutions on staff recruitment, deployment and development for effective support of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) for learning and teaching were also included. Whilst there are constant changes in emphasis within this fast-moving area and many institutions are now focusing on e-Learning or managed learning strategies, the findings and guidance resulting from this study are still very topical and will be relevant to all those who work with learning technology within HE.

This paper introduces the audit tools methodology used in the study which is now available for other institutions to use as a tool for understanding current and planned activities and structures. Undertaking an institutional audit will also be helpful in fostering collaboration and change.

This paper describes:

- Why you might want to do an institutional audit
- Background to the study
- The audit methodology
- An overview of the audit process and tools
- Carrying out an audit
- Further information and support

Why perform an audit?

Carrying out an institutional audit could bring some or all of the following benefits. It could:

- Help to build links among a wide cross-section of staff within your institution
- Provide a thorough overview of how learning technology is being embedded within your institution
- Help to develop a broader and deeper understanding of the ICT-related issues facing different stakeholder groups
- Provide baseline data on your institution which could be used for further comparative or longitudinal study
- Enable different stakeholders to examine the factors which help to impede or accelerate change
- Develop a consensus as to the key priorities and issues in learning technology planning
- Provide evidence to assist senior managers in decision-making

Background to the study

The methodology for this institutional audit was developed as part of a national study to investigate the staff behind the 'learning technologist' label and to identify common patterns of skills, distinct and emerging roles, and the practices, values and needs of this community. It also set out to identify institutional factors affecting the working context and professional issues relating to learning technology staff. The study was carried out largely by institutional auditors who were volunteers based at each of the institutions taking part in the study. These volunteers were mostly people with a role in fostering collaboration and change across their institution. The feedback from this group was extremely positive, showing that the audit process itself had been very beneficial in the institutions that had carried it out. Because of this, the JISC has now decided to make this methodology available to the whole HE community.

Institutional factors

¹ The Career Development of Learning Technology Staff Scoping Study was carried out between June 2000 and January 2001. It was led by Helen Beetham and a team from the Universities of Plymouth, Bristol and Glamorgan. Since then, follow-up work has been undertaken to make both the findings and methodology more widely available to the HE community.

From the study and models developed as part of the study, 12 key institutional factors were identified as follows (these were developed in close consultation with the original institutional auditors).

Culture:

1. Profile of Learning and Teaching
2. Profile of Learning Technology
3. Reward and recognition
4. Research and development

Infrastructure:

5. ICT infrastructure
6. Learning Technology support
7. Learning Technology funding
8. Administrative infrastructure

Knowledge:

9. Staff ICT/pedagogy skills
10. Student ICT/learning skills
11. Digital learning resources
12. Networks and collaborations

The audit process

A learning technology audit is designed to collect information that is useful to the institution about the 12 key factors in learning technology development. The process of auditing is at least as useful as the information collected. For the purposes of the current study, auditors brought together a group of stakeholders at each institution to discuss each of the 12 issues, assess their own institution on a number of key indicators, and reach a consensus about factors promoting and blocking effective change. The JISC is currently developing a pack, based on the study reported here, which will enable managers in HE to repeat this process for their own institutions.

The audit tools

These audit tools allow you to describe your institution, staff roles, skills and activities in a number of ways. There are four sections to the audit:

1. Institutional Factors
2. Roles
3. Skills
4. Policy and Planning

Institutional Factors Tool

The aim of this tool is to help you identify your institutional strengths and weaknesses in relation to the development, embedding, support and use of learning technology. The outcomes can be used to help formulate an action plan for balanced development. The factors audited are subdivided into three sections:

- Culture
- Infrastructure
- Expertise

Each factor is assessed via a number of key indicators in the form of positive statements (which may be seen as indications of 'institutional good practice').

Roles

This audit tool is designed to help you map and describe the people at your institution involved in the development, use and support of learning technology. It will also help you to identify key roles and activities which may be missing from your institutional profile.

Skills

This audit tool is designed to help you map the learning technology skills required by people in different roles. It can be used to develop job descriptions for new or existing posts, or as a training needs analysis for individuals and roles. It can also act as a general needs analysis for learning technology skills, either across a whole institution or in a smaller context, such as a department, faculty or project.

Policy and Planning

This audit tool is designed to help you map the planning and decision-making structures which impact on the use of learning technology at your institution. It can be used to identify gaps in the decision-making process, tackle bottlenecks and conflicts of interest, or (looking from the 'bottom up') to target key individuals and committees. Unlike other tools, this allows you to represent the 'top-down' view of learning technology as represented in your institution's management and committee structures and written policy statements.

Carrying out an audit

To carry out the audit you will need the ELTI workshop pack which contains the Audit Tools, the Audit Notes and the Facilitator's Guide. The pack provides a comprehensive set of supporting documentation. The notes will take you through each step of the audit and give examples of what you will need, how you might approach each section, how to score individual elements of the tools and how to analyse and interpret data. It is therefore essential that you read the notes thoroughly before embarking on a particular audit, and refer to them throughout the process.

Read on...

This briefing paper can only serve as an introduction to the audit tools. The workshop pack, including detailed guidance and a copy of all the tools, is available. In addition, more information on the original study is available as a series of briefing papers, prepared to present the most relevant findings to different audiences. It is recommended that you obtain all the briefing papers in order to obtain a comprehensive overview of the impact of the study and its findings.

Other briefing papers available

Briefing paper 1: Learning Technology: Key Implications for Educational Developers

Briefing paper 2: Learning Technology: Key Implications for Learning Technology Staff

Briefing paper 3: Learning Technology: Key Implications for Managers of Learning Technology Specialists and Heads of Personnel

Briefing paper 4: Learning Technology: Key Implications for IT Services Staff

Briefing paper 5: Learning Technology: Key Implications for Library Staff

Briefing paper 6: Learning Technology: Key Implications for Academic Staff

Senior Management Briefing Paper: Embedding Learning Technology Institutionally

Copies of the audit tools, full report and briefing papers are available from:

<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/careers>

Further information and support

For further information and details of institutional support for undertaking an audit, please contact Sue Timmis at the Institute for Learning and Research Technology, University of Bristol, at:

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