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# E-Learning Strategy

For the Further Education Sector

A Learning Revolution

A Pre-strategy Consultation Document

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## Foreword

E-learning has the potential to revolutionise the way we teach and how we learn.

E-learning is about embedding and exploiting technologies in all aspects of teaching, and getting ICT embedded across the curriculum for all subjects and in the teaching practices of all tutors.

E-learning has the power to transform the way we learn, and to bring high quality, accessible learning to everyone – so that every learner can achieve his or her full potential. As well as Government, many others need to contribute to this learning revolution – education providers, employers and the e-learning industry. We must, also, share best practice across the education and workplace communities, so that learners can make a seamless transition as they progress.

E-learning is also about the skills we increasingly need for everyday life and work. In the changing world of the knowledge economy, ICT skills will help to boost productivity and competitiveness. Technologies can provide a more flexible, engaging and informative learning experience, meeting the expectations of today's learners.

Business and industry look to the Further Education sector as a key provider in terms of their personnel and company development. The demand for tailored and flexible provision outside of normal term-time and hours of business is only likely to increase. In responding to these different customer bases we should not be inventory-led – an approach where what is easy or convenient for us to provide is the limit of the range of choice given to the learner or business customer.

The purpose of this document is to set out the Department's proposals to further embed e-learning within the Further Education sector. Our proposals seek to identify a range of interventions and recommendations, which will provide assistance and guidance for the sector as we move forward with the e-learning agenda.

Our plans are to publish an E-Learning Strategy for the Further Education sector in the spring of 2006. This is a pre-strategy consultation document and I would welcome your views on the proposals as set out in this document. Your views will help inform the Department on the policies and strategies that will be needed to support the e-learning agenda for its Further Education sector over the next three years.

**Bernie O'Hare**  
**Director**  
**Further Education Division**

## 1 Why do we need a strategy?

- 1.1 The Skills Strategy for NI and the Further Education Strategy, FE Means Business, raise many challenges for the Department. They will also pose challenges for the Further Education (FE) sector, which will work with the Department to implement these strategies. It is vital that we collectively explore new and innovative ways of meeting the skills needs of both employers and learners, as outlined in the Skills and FE Strategies. This will be vital as we engage with organisations, particularly SMEs, in exploring ways in which we can assist them to upskill their workforces, without the constant demand to regularly release employees to attend education institutions. Increasingly organisations will demand alternative methods of delivery that are flexible and manageable and not constrained by traditional teaching methods and timetables. This will help ensure that the whole of the workforce, particularly those employed in small organisations, and those working variable shift patterns, can access education at a time and place that suits them.
- 1.2 A strategic approach to e-learning will also be necessary to support the implementation of a range of policy developments that are planned to happen across the United Kingdom. The programme of work associated with the UK-wide Reform of Vocational Qualifications has already seen much progress towards the introduction of e-assessment and e-portfolios. This, in turn, will impact on how qualifications are offered and delivered in Northern Ireland by a wide range of Awarding Bodies using e-learning and e-assessment. Ultimately, centre accreditation will increasingly require an e-learning and e-assessment capability in the delivery of qualifications.
- 1.3 The Department has already made substantial investment in ICT and e-learning across the FE sector. By 2006 we will have provided £25.6m of funding to the sector, in addition to the expenditure provided by the institutions themselves. This investment has resulted in significant progress in the development of the capacity within the FE sector to deliver e-learning.
- 1.4 Despite the progress made, to date, independent assessment of current provision has shown that e-learning is still not fully embedded in teaching and learning within the FE sector. This view is supported in the report by the Education and Training Inspectorate's Chief Inspectors 2002 – 2004 which stated *"There has been a significant increase in investment in ICT (within the FE Sector) but this has not yet been exploited significantly to benefit learners, and ICT continues to have a limited impact."*

Alongside the development of e-learning, QCA, the other UK regulatory authorities, and a number of Awarding Bodies, have all been developing the capacity and the systems to deliver e-assessment through both e-testing and the use of e-portfolios. A number of centres in Northern Ireland already successfully use technology to deliver tests and manage learners' portfolios of evidence, but QCA NI has found that the use of e-assessment is not widespread and its implementation is piecemeal.

- 1.5 Whilst e-assessment could be used to accredit a qualification, irrespective of the mode of teaching and learning, the full benefits of e-learning to the learner, centres and employers can only be realised if it is coupled with the widespread introduction of e-assessment. This joint approach is essential if learners and employers are to achieve the flexibility they need to get full value from the introduction of e-learning.
- 1.6 As outlined above, the FE sector is at various levels of maturity in its e-learning provision. The Department's E-Learning Strategy will aim to develop a baseline for e-learning provision across the FE sector, which will capitalise on investment to date, rationalise current provision and develop proposals to enable it to increase its e-learning capacity.
- 1.7 The Department recognises the benefits that technology can bring to teaching and learning. It accepts that it is not enough to have pockets of best practice and will aim, therefore, to have an E-Learning Strategy that impacts on all its learners, within the FE sector.
- 1.8 The benefits of the investment to date can already be seen in colleges. Collectively, we have developed a strong foundation on which we can build a strategy for future development.
- 1.9 We need to evaluate where we are now and determine what interventions are required to fully embed e-learning in Further Education in the future.

## 2. What is E-Learning?

- 2.1 To move forward with e-learning we need to share a common understanding of what is meant by e-learning and its benefits. A number of acronyms are used widely in connection with e-learning, most notably IT, ICT and ILT. Lifelong Learning UK has adopted the following definitions:
  - IT** Information Technology - the computer infrastructure, hardware and software used to process data and deliver information
  - ICT** Information and Communication Technologies - the combination of computing and communication technologies (including computer networks and telephone systems)
  - ILT** Information and Learning Technologies - this is used to refer to the use of information and communication technologies to support the core activities of educational organisations
- 2.2 Essentially, e-learning is 'technology-enhanced learning' (the definition often used by the European Commission) to emphasise that Information and Communication Technology is adding to, and enhancing, existing good practice and contributing to 'blended learning'.

- 2.3 E-learning exploits interactive technologies and communication systems to improve the learning experience. It has the potential to transform the way we teach and learn across the board. It can raise standards, and widen participation in lifelong learning. It cannot replace lecturers or tutors, but alongside traditional teaching methods, it can enhance the quality and reach of their teaching. It can enable every learner to achieve his or her potential and help to build an educational workforce empowered to change. It makes possible a truly ambitious education and training system for a future learning society.
- 2.4 When used appropriately, e-learning has the potential to improve the quality of learning through using interactive computers, online communications, and information systems in ways that other teaching methods cannot match. It is relevant to all subjects and to learners at every stage of learning through its adaptability and its interactivity. E-learning can even reach out and re-engage people who are currently not involved in education because it is interactive and can adapt to their needs.
- 2.5 When we see how on-line services are increasingly becoming an essential part of everyday life, it makes sense for education and training to mirror these changes and to build the skills needed for employability, as well as quality of life and citizenship.

### **3. Why is it important?**

- 3.1 The Department's Skills Strategy for NI outlines the actions required to address the skills needs for individuals and for employers and employees. FE Means Business reinforces these actions by outlining the FE sector's role in supporting the needs of both the economy and of learners. Both documents also identify the increasing role that the community/voluntary sector can play in widening access for learners. The common objectives are raising quality and standards, meeting diverse needs, widening participation and building the skills for employability and for business success.
- 3.2 E-learning will contribute to meeting a range of the objectives contained in both strategies, such as achieving higher levels of skills for the labour market, targeting relevant learning for lower skilled adults, improving integration of existing forms of outreach and motivating adults to develop new skills.
- 3.3 E-learning is particularly important because people are finding that it can make a significant difference in so many areas, e.g. to how quickly they master a skill; how easy it is to study; and, of course, how much they enjoy learning. It has the capacity to contribute to all the Department's objectives for learning: to raising standards; improving quality; removing barriers to learning and participation in learning; preparing for employment; upskilling in the workplace; and ultimately, ensuring that every learner achieves their full potential.

## 4. Benefits

- 4.1 The role of e-learning in education will grow substantially in the next decade. The drivers are partly economic, but growth is also driven by the rising demand from learners, who increasingly use technology in everyday life and who want more flexible forms of study and learning programmes better tailored to their needs. The benefits of e-learning are well documented and accepted, not only within the UK but world-wide. These benefits are not only for the FE sector, but also for the learner and the employer.

### For the Further Education Sector

- 4.2 E-learning is important for education because it can improve the quality of the learning experience, and extend the reach of every lecturer and tutor.
- 4.3 E-learning can help remove barriers to achievement, by providing new and creative ways of motivating and engaging pupils and learners of all abilities, enabling and inspiring every one to attain their educational potential.
- 4.4 E-learning can support learning by offering differentiated learning, particularly for those who need support in literacy, numeracy and ICT.
- 4.5 E-learning offers a wide range of tools to enable teachers and learners to be innovative, creative and resourceful in all learning activities. Teachers and learners can easily customise digital learning resources to suit pace and level, appropriate to any learning style and ability.
- 4.6 E-learning creates on-line communities of practice. The Internet can bring learners, teachers, specialist communities, experts, practitioners and interest groups together to share ideas and good practice.

### For Learners

- 4.7 E-learning can provide an individualised learning experience for all learners, including those who are disadvantaged, disabled, exceptionally gifted, have special curriculum or learning needs or who are remote or away from their usual place of learning.
- 4.8 E-learning can facilitate wider participation and fairer access to further and higher education by creating the opportunity to start learning and to choose courses and support according to the learners' needs.

- 4.9 E-learning provides personalised learning support through information, advice, and guidance services. It can help learners find the course they need, with a seamless transition to the next stage of their learning, including online application or enrolment and an electronic portfolio of their learning to take with them.
- 4.10 E-learning provides virtual learning worlds where learners can take part in active and creative learning with others through simulations, role-play, remote control of real-world tools and devices, online master classes, or collaboration with other education providers.

## **5. Principles of the Strategy**

- 5.1 The Department's E-Learning Strategy will help to shape a vision of future e-learning within the FE sector. At the heart of the strategy will be the aim to realise the full potential of digital technology, through its effective use, and embed it in learning and teaching.

### **It will be based on four principles:**

- to take a co-ordinated approach to share good practice across the FE sector; the strategy will work towards reducing variation and enable the sector to embed e-learning in its provision;
- to establish standards of the kind that will introduce a common approach to e-learning, in order to continue to improve the quality of e-learning, whilst providing the flexibility necessary to allow the sector to meet the individual needs of its learners;
- to make sure that a blended approach to learning is adopted that will balance e-learning with traditional methods, recognising their value; using e-learning only where appropriate to suit individual learning and teaching styles;
- to ensure the necessary infrastructure and support services are in place to support the use of e-learning within the FE sector.

## 6. What is proposed?

6.1 To ensure that the Principles of the strategy are realised, four areas for “action” have been identified:

- Strategic Leadership & Management
- Quality Standards
- Learner support and widening participation
- Infrastructure/Support Services

### Strategic Leadership

6.2 Over the next five years the Department will take forward the implementation of the Skills Strategy for NI and FE Means Business. These strategic changes will place demands on budgets and infrastructure. The Department recognises the importance of its role in providing strategic leadership for its FE sector, to ensure the successful implementation of its policies and strategies. It also recognises its pivotal role in supporting, developing and leading a vision for e-learning, in conjunction with the sector.

6.3 Implementing e-learning will undoubtedly bring about change for the FE sector. It is likely to involve the use of tools and/or systems that may be new to staff and learners and, unless the sector is properly prepared for the change, the e-learning tools themselves will be seen as the cause of change and may be resented and resisted.

6.4 The FE sector at all levels is looking for ways to make e-learning affordable and sustainable and in managing sustainable resource planning for e-learning. For the benefits of e-learning to be fully realised, the sector must improve resource planning, procurement and collaboration, to reduce the costs of e-learning. Providers must also consider how e-learning will improve quality, achieve economies of scale and increase value for money. An understanding of the costs of sustainability, including maintenance, technical support, upgrading and replacement, is essential.

6.5 By setting out their strategic intent, senior management within the sector can give the basis for defining the scope for e-learning implementation. However, this will also identify associated costs and risks. Risk Management is featuring more prominently on the agendas of senior managers in all aspects of their activities. Its relevance is particularly clear in relation to projects, particularly projects with an IT or systems component, such as implementing e-learning tools.

6.6 A clear strategic vision for e-learning will also identify the teaching issues that will need to be addressed if the vision is to be realised. It is clearly documented that the demand from practitioners for effective guidance on good teaching practice, particularly in designing activities for virtual learning environments, needs to be an integral part of all learning organisations' e-learning strategies. Good practice in e-learning places more emphasis on the individualisation of learning with learners making their own learning pathways, at a speed that is appropriate to them. Whether used in purely distance learning, or a blended mode, the pedagogy of e-learning needs to be taken into account in the planning process, prior to, and throughout the implementation of the e-learning strategy.

**Within this context, the Department will:**

- work with the FE sector to explore the long-term affordability of e-learning, as the current arrangement of short-term top-slicing and central capital funding may not be sustainable in the longer term;
- work with the FE sector to explore how the responsibility for e-learning planning and provision can be integrated within institutions' overall budgets;
- review its current Information and Learning Technology policy and associated funding within the FE sector, to inform the development of a new policy to support the embedding of e-learning and e-assessment within teaching and learning;
- encourage and support a collaborative approach amongst FE institutions, to share good practice in both the application and infrastructure resulting from the significant investment provided by the Department;
- encourage co-ordinated strategic management approaches to the development of e-learning, through joining up learning and teaching, human resources, IT, and estates strategies, to maximise the benefits of technology across the sector;
- provide development programmes for the leaders and managers of its FE sector, in order to enhance the understanding and skills of leaders in the use and application of e-learning.

6.7 The Department recognises that it has a key role in ensuring that the investment in e-learning to date is maximised, and that the benefits of e-learning are evident throughout the FE sector. It also recognises that it has a role in facilitating the process of change, and is committed to working with partners, to build a co-ordinated system-wide approach to exploiting the potential that e-learning offers.

## Quality Standards

- 6.8 The quality of provision within all aspects of further education has, and will continue to be a high priority for the Department. Currently the Department is reviewing quality assurance and performance measures in the context of the Skills and FE Strategies. The recommendations from this review will impact on the way in which the Department measures the quality, performance and impact of e-learning.
- 6.9 It is crucial that both the Department and the FE sector, seek to assure the quality of provision of e-learning, taking account of the quality of both the teaching and learning process and business processes that can be enhanced with technology.
- 6.10 Possibly even more important is the Department's requirement to help individual institutions understand their own positions on e-learning, to set their aspirations and goals for embedding e-learning, and then to benchmark themselves and their progress against institutions with similar goals, and across the sector.

In order to assure quality of teaching, supporting learning and leadership, the Department will:

- adopt the Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) standards for ILT, to inform both staff and management development;
  - encourage the FE sector to use the LLUK standards to develop workforce development plans, in order to improve the skills and knowledge of their staff in the use of e-learning;
  - develop appropriate benchmarks of performance in the use of e-learning and e-business for the FE sector; and
  - work with the Sector Skills Councils to ensure that all Sector Qualifications Strategies promote the use of e-learning.
- 6.11 Transforming teaching and learning through the application of technology requires a change in culture. The Department is committed to working with the regulatory authorities, Awarding Bodies, and others, to ensure that the delivery and assessment of qualifications is equally flexible and meets the needs of learners. This means an increasing use of e-assessment such as on screen testing and the use of e-portfolios, although it is recognised that, in future, the use of other systems, such as those provided by mobile technologies, may become widespread.

- 6.12 Learners also need an assessment system that captures their achievements, assesses the skills they are learning, and supports tutors and lecturers in using assessment to determine their learning needs. Assessment is one of the most powerful drivers of innovation and change in education, as it defines the goals for both learners and tutors. E-learning systems could greatly enhance the value of assessment through data analysis for the teacher, and interactive feedback for the learner.
- 6.13 E-learning will also provide the means to assess the new kinds of e-learning skills needed for life and work. In adult learning and workforce development, online assessment has the potential to widen participation by overcoming barriers such as time, location and cost through 'on demand' testing.
- 6.14 To inform this consultation document, the Department commissioned QCA NI to undertake research in Northern Ireland and develop a number of case studies which have suggested that further development and support is needed. A substantial review of Awarding Body perceptions and state of readiness to implement e-learning has also been undertaken by QCA. To address the analysis to date, the Department will work with QCA NI and CCEA to carry out the following initiatives and ensure that they are linked effectively to work on the regulation of e-assessment, being progressed by QCA, CCEA, and the regulatory authorities for Scotland and Wales.
- develop regulatory principles, to promote confidence in the use of e-assessment within vocational education.
  - develop protocols and guidance on the wider use of e-portfolios within vocational education.
- 6.15 Quality of provision is also dependant on the quality of delivery. The development of staff skills and changing attitudes are some of the most difficult areas in which to produce results. Practitioners need to understand technology so that they can use it creatively, innovatively, and with confidence to address day-to-day activities. E-learning should be embedded into staff training in a way that is consistent with the desire to embed e-learning into the curriculum.

The FE sector needs to recognise the importance of investing adequately, to incorporate e-learning in staff development and teacher training. In support of this goal the Department will:

- assess the extent to which the FE sector has integrated the use of e-learning and technology into staff development programmes;
- continue to work with the Higher Education providers to ensure that lecturer training addresses both the teaching and technical needs

required to allow future and current lecturers to deliver e-learning effectively.

### **Learner Support and Widening Participation**

- 6.16 The Department recognises that future FE provision will no longer be tied to a particular place or time, and learners will be able to complete their programme in a learning style suitable to their needs. The Department is committed to improving the support offered to individuals, by linking learning episodes and creating a complete record of every individual's learning engagement throughout their life.
- 6.17 This concept will also extend to learner support from the point at which they first engage with learning, in finding the course they need such as online advice, guidance and diagnostics. The development of high quality e-learning opportunities will lead to learners being able to take a more flexible approach to their learning.

The Department's ultimate goal for learner support is to:

- provide access to a curriculum that has been mapped to qualifications (or 'units of') that can be e-assessed and recorded;
  - track student activity and achievement against these elements, to allow tutors to set up a course with materials and activities to direct, guide and monitor learner progress;
  - support online learning, including access to learning resources, assessment and guidance;
- 6.18 The Department's aim will be to support learners better as they move up the education ladder and, hence, to assist in achieving its goal of reversing the trend of poorer levels of attainment in education as outlined in its Skills Strategy for NI. It will give priority to supporting proposals where learners will be better supported in meeting their personal goals through the provision of organisational IT systems that help learners make a smooth transition from school to college, work, university or training.

To support this approach, the Department will work towards introducing better support for learners by:

- carrying out a scoping exercise to assess the feasibility of developing and implementing a pilot of the Unique Learner Number service in Northern Ireland;

- working closely with DfES on developments relating to the introduction of ICT as the third essential skill;
- working closely with the Department of Education to develop an e-learning model to support collaboration between the school and FE sectors, as outlined in the Post Primary Review;
- working with the FE sector to introduce electronic enrolment/registration for all learners who avail of its services/provision.

## **Infrastructure/Support Services**

### **Infrastructure Services**

6.19 Over the past five years, the Department has made considerable investment in supporting e-learning, both directly to providers and through its funding for the Northern Ireland Regional Area Network (NIRAN), Northern Ireland College Information System (NICIS) and annual contributions to the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC).

6.20 In total, this support has provided technical and human infrastructure to enable use of technology to administer, manage and deliver learning in the FE sector. The successes from this support include:

- a well established technical infrastructure across the FE sector, providing high bandwidth access to e-learning tools and resources;
- a common Management Information System, NICIS, used by all FE institutions to aid administration and management of institutions;
- staff with some of the skills needed to use technology in support of learning;
- mature support services that have developed strong working relationships within the FE sector.

6.21 The Department will continue to support the technical infrastructure by:

- remaining an integral partner of the JISC, to ensure that the infrastructure and other e-learning needs of the FE sector in Northern Ireland are in line with the rest of the United Kingdom, including procuring SuperJANET 5 for the sector;
- continuing to support NIRAN, giving further consideration to the procurement of a 'Dual Entry Point' to ensure the long term resilience of the system;

- continuing to develop NICIS, to maximise its benefits and outputs and assess the most appropriate option for linking it with institutions' other ICT systems, such as their learning platform (VLE or other), to enable better delivery, administration and management of learning.

## **Support Services**

6.22 The Department's contributions to the JISC provide access to a wide range of e-learning services to the FE sector. These include Network, Expert, Content and Support Services. Such services, brought into focus and set in a regional context by the Regional Support Centre (RSCni), include:

- facilitating the sharing of local, national and international good practice;
- promoting and supporting the use of e-learning through staff development initiatives;
- supporting college planning and managing of e-learning;
- providing guidance on the use of technology in the classroom to enhance the learning experience;
- signposting appropriate resources to support e-learning;
- advising on appropriate college infrastructure to support e-learning; and
- providing assistance to college support staff in the use of technology with disabled learners and staff.
- The Department recognises a need to focus particular support in accelerating the pace of embedding e-learning into mainstream learning activities. This will allow increasing numbers of learners to enjoy the benefits of learning technologies.

6.23 To achieve this aim the Department will:

- maintain core funding available for the RSCni and investigate options for extending the role of the RSCni to offer additional, regional focused e-learning support for the FE sector;
- provide a forum for agencies such as the RSCni and others to work together in developing support for the integrating organisational ICT systems, to better manage learning.

6.24 E-learning is not effective in isolation. The FE sector will wish to create networked partnerships with other organisations, so that it becomes easier to share e-learning tools and resources, and to develop and adopt good practice. E-learning makes it easier to establish partnerships with local industry and SMEs. This would give learners online access to work-based learning materials, and employees' online access to educational opportunities.

## **7. Measuring the success**

7.1 There are many examples of e-learning successes in our colleges, but they are not universal. There remain a number of areas that both the Department and the FE sector will need to address, which will be critical if e-learning is to be fully embedded in teaching and learning. The critical success factors will be:

- senior management in the FE sector are fully engaged in exploiting e-learning and e-business in their organisations, by leading and managing the challenging change processes involved;
- e-learning technologies have been introduced as part of a strategy to apply technology in support of curriculum aims and objectives;
- lecturers, tutors and researchers are afforded the time and support to develop and update their teaching practice in line with the requirements of e-learning;
- FE institutions have clear policies and implementation strategies in place, outlining the training and resources and access to technology, for lecturers and tutors who wish to adopt or develop e-learning and e-assessment;
- unified support is available for learners, through significant cross-sector collaboration in supporting learners as they move through the education system;
- common technical and quality standards have been adopted, to ensure that e-learning is both shareable and affordable.

We intend to evaluate our strategy every three years. Our review will be informed by the research and evaluation and monitoring of progress against our implementation plan and by reviews of our investments in enhancement of the learning experience more generally. The implementation process will include continuous review and refinement.

## 8. Summary of recommendations

The Department will:

- 8.1 • explore the long-term affordability of e-learning as the current arrangement of short-term top-slicing and central capital funding may not be sustainable in the longer term;
- 8.2 • work with the FE sector to explore how the responsibility for e-learning planning and provision can be integrated within institutions' overall expenditure;
- 8.3 • review its current Information and Learning Technology policy and associated funding within the FE sector, to inform the development of a new policy to support the embedding of e-learning within teaching and learning;
- 8.4 • encourage and support a collaborative approach amongst FE institutions, to share good practice in both the application and infrastructure resulting from the significant investment provided by the Department;
- 8.5 • encourage co-ordinated strategic management approaches to the development of e-learning, through joining up learning and teaching, human resources, IT, and estates strategies, to maximise the benefits of technology across the sector;
- 8.6 • provide development programmes for the leaders and managers of the FE sector, in order to enhance the understanding and skills of leaders in the use and application of e-learning;
- 8.7 • adopt the Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) standards for ILT to inform both staff and management development;
- 8.8 • encourage the FE sector to use the LLUK standards to develop workforce development plans, in order to improve the skills and knowledge of their staff in the use of e-learning;
- 8.9 • develop appropriate benchmarks of performance in the use of e-learning and e-business for its learning providers;
- 8.10 • work with the Sector Skills Councils to ensure that all Sector Qualifications Strategies promote the use of e-learning;
- 8.11 • develop regulatory principles, to promote confidence in the use of e-assessment within vocational education;

- 8.12 • develop protocols and guidance on the use of e-portfolios within vocational education;
- 8.13 • assess the extent to which the FE sector has integrated the use of e-learning and technology into staff development programmes;
- 8.14 • continue to work with the Higher Education providers to ensure that lecturer training addresses both the learning practice and technical needs required to allow future and current lecturers to deliver e-learning effectively;
- 8.15 • provide access to a curriculum that has been mapped to qualifications (or 'units of') that can be separately assessed and recorded;
- 8.16 • track student activity and achievement against the above elements, to allow tutors to set up a course with materials and activities to direct, guide and monitor learner progress;
- 8.17 • support online learning, including access to learning resources, assessment and guidance;
- 8.18 • carrying out a scoping exercise to assess the feasibility of developing and implementing a pilot of the Unique Learner Number service in Northern Ireland;
- 8.19 • working closely with DfES on developments relating to the introduction of ICT as the third essential skill;
- 8.20 • work closely with the Department of Education to develop an e-learning model to support collaboration between the school and FE sectors as outlined in the Post Primary Review;
- 8.21 • work with FE sector to introduce electronic enrolment/registration for all learners who avail of their services/provision;
- 8.22 • remain an integral partner of the JISC, to ensure that the infrastructure and other e-learning needs of the FE sector in Northern Ireland are in line with the rest of the United Kingdom, including procuring Super JANET 5 for the sector;
- 8.23 • continue to support NIRAN and give further consideration to the procurement of a 'Dual Entry Point' to ensure the long term resilience of the system;

- 8.24 • continue to develop NICIS to maximise its benefits and outputs and assess the most appropriate option for linking it with institutions' other ICT systems, such as their learning platform (VLE or other), to enable better delivery, administration and management of learning;
- 8.25 • explore the feasibility of developing a common Virtual Learning Environment Platform for the FE sector;
- 8.26 • maintain core funding available for the RSCni and investigate options for extending the role of the RSCni to offer additional, regional focused e-learning support for the FE sector;
- 8.27 • provide a forum for agencies such as the RSCni and others to work together in developing support for the integrating organisational ICT systems, to better manage learning.

## **9. Equality Impact Assessment**

The Department is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and good community relations, protecting human rights and meeting objectives of the New Targeting Social Need Policy.

In developing policy for the Further Education sector, the Department will meet its obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and will also ensure that impact assessments are carried out in accordance with commitments given in the priorities and budget.

## **10. Your Views**

Your views on the E-Learning Proposals are welcomed.

You should write or e-mail

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This document is also available on the Department for Employment and Learning website [www.delni.gov.uk/elearningforfesector](http://www.delni.gov.uk/elearningforfesector)

## Glossary

ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
CCEA	Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
ILT	Information and Learning Technologies
JISC	Joint Information Systems Committee
LLUK	Lifelong Learning United Kingdom
NICIS	Northern Ireland College Information Systems
NIRAN	Northern Ireland Regional Area Network
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
RSC	Regional Support Centre
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment

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