
ONLINE TUTOR PACK

Introductory Guide for Tutor Candidates

Providing Online Support for Learners - An Introduction

Acknowledgements

Consortium Members

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David Brooks	Aberdeen College
Andrew Comrie	Perth College
Jim Everett	Lauder College
Marian Lever	James Watt College
Helen McNamara	Glasgow Telecolleges Network
Irene Watt Mitchell	New Horizons Training
Donald Steele	Edinburgh's Telford College

Authors

The following authors were responsible for writing the self-study leaning material on behalf of the consortium.

Andrew Comrie	Perth College
Jim Everett	Lauder College
Irene Watt Mitchell	New Horizons Training
Helen McNamara	Glasgow Telecolleges Network
Chris Whincop	Edinburgh's Telford College

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Editors

Marian Lever James Watt College

Morag Macmillan Aberdeen College

Project Manager

Heather Sanderson Kerson Associates

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Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)

Grateful thanks are expressed to SQA for allowing us to include the specification for HN Unit Provide Online Support for Learners – An Introduction in the Online Tutor Pack.

Web Addresses/URLs

The pack contains a number of web addresses/URLs - the listed sites in the study materials are not under SLN control. SLN cannot be held liable for any errors, omissions, inaccuracies in the information. The sites have been provided for reference/study material and were current when this pack was published.

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Introduction to the programme for tutor candidates

Who is the programme for?

This programme has been designed for education and training practitioners who are actively engaged in supporting learners. Whether you are a teacher, a tutor, a workplace trainer or a mentor, this programme aims to introduce you to the concept of providing support for learners through the effective use of information and communication technology (ICT). This is referred to as **online learner support**.

The programme is designed to support the SQA Higher National Unit - Providing Online Support for Learners - An Introduction.

What ICT skills do I need?

Before starting this programme, it is essential that you have basic information technology (ICT) skills in word processing, using email functions to individuals as well as setting up group emails and working with attachments, file management in a windows environment and web browsing and searching. **These skills will not be taught as part of the programme.** If you do not have these skills you should speak to your facilitator and/or training provider to address this issue.

Learners

You must have access to at least one learner during the programme as evidence must be generated of your ability to use online support techniques. The extent of online support for learners may range from providing support via email alongside face-to-face contact and traditional methods to the delivery of a learning programme solely online.

Terminology

Throughout the programme and the tutor pack the following terminology will be used:

- **learner** will be used to refer to students or trainees of the tutor candidate
- **candidate** will be used to refer to tutors undertaking the Unit – in some cases *tutor candidate* will be used
- **facilitator** will be used to refer to the tutor for the Unit – in some cases *tutor/facilitator* will be used
- **learning programme** will be used to refer to the course of study or qualification that you or a learner might undertake
- **training provider** will be used to refer to the organisation which is delivering the Unit or any other learning programme – this may include schools, FE colleges, universities, commercial training providers and in-house workplace training facilities
- **Unit** will be used to refer to the SQA Higher National Unit - Providing Online Support for Learners - An Introduction
- **online learner support** will be used to refer to the type of learning support covered by this programme.

Introduction to the online tutor pack

Pack contents

Your pack contains the following items:

Unit specification

- SQA Unit specification - Providing Online Support for Learners - An Introduction

Getting started

- getting connected guide (to be added by your training provider)
- training provider and facilitator details (to be added by yourself using the template on page 20).

Candidate learning materials

- Introductory Guide
- Study Section 1
- Study Section 2
- Assessment Pack

Before going any further with your programme, please check that your pack is complete. If at any time you experience problems with your learning pack, please contact either your facilitator or your training provider using the contact information details provided with the pack.

Content for Study Sections 1 and 2

The Unit has three outcomes:

Outcome 1: Evaluate the implications of providing online support for learners.

Outcome 2: Provide online support for learners.

Outcome 3: Use online tools and techniques to support learning.

The pack has 2 study sections. Study Section 1 is designed to support Outcome 1 of the Unit. Study Section 2 is designed to support Outcomes 2 and 3 of the Unit.

Study Section 1

- Provides an overview of online learning and online support and the major factors influencing growth in this method of programme delivery.
- Presents methods for assessing the potential uses and implications of online support tools and techniques.
- Explores the differences in approach and practice of online support to other methods of supporting learners.
- Evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of online learning.
- Identifies appropriate strategies for integrating online support techniques into a learning programme.
- Identifies appropriate strategies for evaluating the learner experience in an online environment.

Study Section 2

- Develops and implements an induction plan for learners who are to be supported online.
- Develops and implements a system for effectively organising and managing electronic communication with your learners.
- Develops and implements systems for correctly monitoring and recording learner performance.

- Develops a communication style between yourself and your learners which ensures learners are kept motivated, which contributes to learning and which is appropriate to individual learning styles.
- Develops and implements a system which ensures that all your learners participate online.
- Develops and implements systems for managing your learners as they progress through their learning programme.

Planning your learning

Your learning plan

It will help you and your facilitator if you draw up a learning plan at the start of your programme and submit this by email to your facilitator. This plan can include any training needs you have in the use of online tools and techniques to be completed before starting the programme. It should also list the time you hope to spend on activities and assignments, and how you will plan these to fit into the work you do with your own learners. By sharing the plan as it develops (don't wait until it is complete before emailing sections to your facilitator), you will allow the facilitator to co-ordinate a general learning plan for everyone and draw up timetables. This will become a two-way process. If you also share your plan with the other candidates, you will all start to contribute to the overall planning of the online group activity.

To plan your learning you should read through and follow the guidance in Study Sections 1 and 2. These include advice about the number of hours you are likely to spend on each outcome, but this will of course vary between individuals.

Coming to terms with the materials

Everybody has their own learning style, and their own particular needs and interests. It is up to you to decide how you use the learning materials that support the course, though you should discuss your learning plan with your facilitator. The plan you come up with will depend on many factors. These include your personal style and interests, the amount of time you can realistically devote to learning, your level of motivation, and your prior knowledge of the subjects being covered.

Generally, it's a good idea to start by quickly getting an overview of the whole course by looking through the paper-based and online materials. This will help you to know what is where, so that you can find particular things more easily when you need to find them. It will also give you an idea of what you might particularly need to concentrate on and should help highlight likely areas of difficulty - something you should talk to your facilitator about. You can then start working through the pack sequentially, while dipping into areas which are of particular interest to you, and further exploring external resources, from time to time.

Although individuality in applying learning styles and creating learning plans is encouraged, it should be noted that online learning and discussion impose certain restrictions. Facilitators will co-ordinate the learning plans that you submit and agree a timetable for activities that involve online discussions, and will set deadlines for posting assignments. Although they will try to be as flexible as possible, it is clear that it would be inefficient for different members of the group to work on activities in a radically different order. Whenever online discussions are involved, it is advisable to agree a set period of time (say a few days, or a particular week) when the whole group focuses on a particular activity, or set of related activities.

Whatever your learning style, we recommend you complete the Pre-start Checklist on page 10. This should follow your induction with your training provider. If this highlights areas with which you are unfamiliar you should speak to your facilitator and/or training provider to ascertain whether this needs to be addressed before starting your programme.

General advice

As you work through this Introductory Guide, we recommend that you use this time to familiarise yourself with the materials. Where you identify gaps in your understanding or knowledge eg technical or practical matters, contact your facilitator, who may provide you with the answers or direct you to technical support. We then recommend that you approach your learning programme as follows:

Your learning plan

- Get an overview of the programme.
- Evaluate your own strengths and weaknesses in terms of what you know and what you know you can already do well.
- Formulate a learning plan (be realistic about the time available for offline study and preparation and online participation).
- Set yourself deadlines, and try to stick to them.
- Revise your plan, if necessary, as you progress with the programme.
- Identify needs or interests not (yet) covered by the programme and look for online resources that meet your needs.

- Try to read all materials with a discerning eye – do not believe everything you read.
- Try to find materials that are: interesting, relevant and understandable.
- Feel free to use the ideas of others in your assessments, but do not plagiarise (ie do not copy verbatim without using quotes and citing sources).
- Try to respond promptly to email messages and conference posts, but be realistic about the abilities of others to do so.
- Remember that this programme is not just what is presented to you, it is about what you *do*.
- Have fun, whenever possible, and try to remain positive when difficulties are encountered.

You and your facilitator

- Do not expect your facilitator to have all the answers (or to offer them even if he/she does have them).
- Share what you find with your facilitator.
- Seek help and advice from your facilitator.
- Monitor your own progress and let your facilitator know immediately if difficulties arise.
- Let your facilitator and or training provider know of any potential difficulties you identify.
- Start working on activities early, do not wait for the facilitator to tell you to start or wait until you or other candidates have finished earlier tasks – working on tasks in parallel is often a necessity as an online learner.

You and the other candidates

- Take part in any real-time (synchronous) sessions that are arranged – if you cannot, let others know by email as soon as you can (and send apologies if the session is already over by then).
- Try to help other participants and to be a willing, friendly, considerate and co-operative learner.
- Take responsibility for your own learning, but at the same time try not to work on your own – collaborate with others and establish a learner support network .
- Share what you find with other candidates.
- Seek help and advice from other participants.

Getting started

Important online information

As this programme is about online learning and online learner support, much of your learning will be experiential. From the outset, you will be required to use a variety of online tools to both communicate with your facilitator or with others on the programme and access support materials and other resources.

The programme assumes that you know how to use some basic online tools. These skills will not be taught.

It is essential, therefore, that before progressing with the programme, you have access to and know how to use:

- a computer with Internet access and a web browser, eg MS Internet Explorer or Netscape
- electronic mail

Some of the websites you will be required to access will be password controlled. Your training provider or facilitator will provide you with these details.

Pre-start checklist

This checklist should be completed after you have followed the Getting Connected Guide provided by your training provider. When you are connected, and have been given the technical and practical help to undertake the programme, you should be able to answer Yes to all these questions.

Do you know:	Yes	No
· which tools you will be using during this programme?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
· what tools will be available in online programme that you plan to lead yourself?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
· how to read, reply to, forward and compose email messages?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
· how to send files as email attachments?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
· how to open email attachments sent by others?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
· how to create a distribution list in the email program you'll be using during the programme?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
· the email addresses of the facilitator(s) and other candidates?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
· how to follow email conventions so as not to confuse or offend others?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
· how to use a browser to view, print and bookmark pages and download files?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
· how to open pages and files that are saved locally?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
· how to copy the URL of a web page from the location box of the browser and paste it into an email message?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
· how to select and copy text from a web page and paste it into an email message or conference post?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- how to use search engines to find websites or newsgroup postings that have information on topics you are interested in?
- how to post to a conference/online forum/message board (if available)?
- how to use videoconferencing (if available)?

If you cannot answer *yes* to any of these questions you should contact your facilitator or your training provider.

Introductory tasks

Your first tasks are designed to ensure that you can use all the online tools that you have at your disposal for the programme.

All the information you require is provided in your Getting Connected Guide.

As you start to work through this Guide, if for any reason you experience problems accessing the facilities you need, contact your training provider immediately.

The sequence of the tasks are as follows:

- finish reading this Introductory Guide
- work through the Getting Connected Guide
- complete training provider and facilitator details (see page 20)
- complete the Pre-start Checklist
- report any problems to your training provider
- start working through Study Section 1.

Assessment information

You are encouraged to engage in all of the study section activities as these will provide the foundation for your assessments. Some activities are directly linked to the assessments and contribute to your evidence of competence.

Study Section 1 provides learning materials and underpinning knowledge for an overview of the Unit and also contains activities to support the assessment exercise for Outcome 1.

The assessment exercise for Outcome 1 is in your Assessment Pack. You should arrange with your facilitator when you feel you are ready to complete this assessment exercise. You should email your completed assessment to your facilitator.

Study Section 2 contains activities to support Outcome 2 and 3 of the Unit. The activities will provide you with practical examples of good practice which you can then use with your learners. These activities will help you to compile a portfolio of evidence and supporting commentary on how your evidence meets the Unit requirements. These will be formally assessed for Outcomes 2 and 3.

As you will be completing these assessments at a distance from your training provider it is essential that your work is authenticated. You will need to nominate someone such as your workplace supervisor, training officer or staff development officer to undertake this role. Your nominee must be agreed by and acceptable to your training provider. The training provider will be able to advise you about who will be suitable.

Your facilitator and training provider will provide you with any further assessment arrangements pertaining to their organisation. This should be in your Assessment Pack.

Resources

There are a variety of tools and resources available to you to assist you with your learning. The tools you need will vary, depending on your own situation. It may well be that you are unfamiliar with some of them. If so, you might like to take a look at some of the websites listed below:

Internet

<http://www.learnthenet.com/>

<http://www.rgu.ac.uk/schools/sim/research/netlearn/teaching.htm>

Email

<http://www.webfoot.com/advice/email.top.html>

(See <http://www.learnthenet.com/>, too.)

Conferences

Conferences, like email programs, come in many flavours. They are also known as *forums* or *message /bulletin boards* (if you disagree, that's ok – you can discuss it on a programme conference). They should enable *threaded* discussions (some don't). Usenet newsgroups follow the same format, and for many people the terms *conference*, *forum*, and *newsgroup* are just about synonymous. To take a look at newsgroups, use *deja.com* (<http://www.deja.com/>).

To see how a forum works, you could look at any of the forums (they call them message boards) on the popular Motley Fool site (<http://boards.fool.com/> - there's even a board for teachers in the folder 'Fools of a Feather'), or carry out a search for a forum on your own subject area(s) using AskJeeves (<http://www.aj.com>) or a search engine of your choice.

Browsers

<http://www.learnthenet.com/english/html/12browser.htm>

Search Engines

<http://www.learnthenet.com/english/html/78tutorial.htm>

Chat Facilities

<http://www.newbie-u.com/irc/>

Videoconferencing (VC)

<http://www.learnthenet.com/english/section/conference.html>

Other guides and tutorials

There are many guides and tutorials available on the Web. Try using AskJeeves (<http://www.aj.com/>) if you would like to find more.

Now that you have finished reading this Introductory Guide and completed the introductory tasks you should feel more confident with the technology and understand what the programme involves. If you are unsure about anything then contact your facilitator and ask. And remember, the resources listed above will be there to help you at any time during the programme so you do not have to explore each one thoroughly now! It is time to get started so start working on Study Section 1.

Good luck with your studies.

Glossary

Announcement board

A space, usually accessible via the WWW, that displays messages and announcements that are updated over time. As with traditional announcements the messages all come from an official source such as the course tutor. (see also *Bulletin board*)

APL

Accreditation of prior learning

Asynchronous (communication)

Unlike face-to-face or telephone communication (that is "synchronous" communication), the participants in asynchronous communication do not need to engage at the same time. Instead, contributions are stored electronically so that participants can access others' contributions and respond to them at times that are convenient to them.

Traditional letters and telegrams are forms of asynchronous communication, however the time lag in these methods makes it difficult to sustain a dialogue. Computer mediated forms of asynchronous communication, such as email and online conferencing, permit more rapid delivery and response allowing dialogues to develop. (see also *Online conference*)

Bulletin board

A space, usually accessible via the WWW, that displays messages and announcements that are updated over time. Unlike an Announcement Board, messages are accepted from a wider range of contributors, usually all the members of the group.

Also known as a Message board. (see also *Announcement board*)

CAL

Computer-assisted learning; augmenting the learning experience with methods and activities that make use of ICT. (see also *CBL*)

CBL

Computer-based learning; a learning experience that is wholly delivered via a computer. Typically

CBL does not include any tutor input and relies completely on the software to manage the learner's experience. (see also *CAL*)

Client (software)

The software that resides on the user's computer that accesses the services on a online server. An internet browser is a client in that it permits the user to access the WWW but does not itself generate any WWW content.

CMC

Computer-mediated communication; a generic term for the use of computer networks to allow communication between people.

Conference posting

A contribution to an online conference or forum. (see *Online conference*)

Didactic

Instruction presented from an authority.

FAQ

Frequently asked question; an archive of questions and responses usually presented a listing. Users with queries can use this archive as a quick way to find answers.

FEDA

Further Education Development Agency (serves England and Wales)

Hypertext

The linking of texts (and multimedia objects) through references that direct the user to relevant resources beyond the text they are currently using. The links found on WWW pages are hypertext links.

ICT

Information and communications technology; a generic term that encompasses all forms of computers and computer networks and the technologies that make them work.

Intranet

A self-contained network, or network of networks. Usually one that is specific to an organisation or department. An intranet typically offers many of the same services as the Internet, such as email and web pages, but restricts access to the WWW. (see also *LAN*)

ISP

Internet service provider

LAN

Local area network; a network of computers that is physically located in a specific area such as a building or site. The term usually refers to the technical infrastructure of the network rather than the services the network offers to users.

Message board

(see *Bulletin board*)

Moderator (online conferencing)

The individual who manages an online conference. Duties of a moderator may include screening postings for inappropriate content and encouraging participation in the discussion. (see *Online conference*)

Netiquette

The code of conduct and conventions of communication used in online communication. Netiquette includes such areas as appropriate use of language, conventions for indicating emotional tone of the communication, etc.

Newsgroup

Also known as Discussion list. A group engaged in online communication around a particular shared theme or interest. Typically carried on through email this form of online communication is one of the oldest forms of CMC. Although they are increasingly being replaced by WWW-based online conferences, newsgroups remain popular. An extensive listing of newsgroups and discussion lists from around the world can be found at <http://tile.net>

Online chat

Synchronous communication via the Internet. Typically, online chat allows a group of users to see the participants contribution as it is typed allowing for dialogue that approximates a face-to-face conversation. Increasingly online chat is being replaced by technologies that allow telephone-like voice conferencing over a network or Internet.

Online conference

An online conference will provide a structured space for asynchronous communication through the WWW for users addressing a particular topic or subject of interest. Typically, the conference will include threading so that related conference postings are grouped in chronological order. Users make their contributions to the online conference through postings that are in response to previous postings or begin a new thread (topic for discussion).

Participation in online conferences are usually restricted to registered members although it is often possible for non-members to view the discussion as guests.

Online forum

Another term for Online conference. More often used when the membership of the discussion is left open.

Pedagogy/pedagogical

Relating to teaching. Usually used to refer to teaching style or teaching philosophy.

Search engine

A site on the WWW that allows users to search for information on the WWW. Typically a user enters keywords and the search engine returns links to pages accessible on the WWW that include those keywords.

Training provider and facilitator details

The training provider responsible for delivering this programme will provide you with details of your facilitator. This information will accompany your pack. If for any reason you do not get this information, please contact your training provider.

Training provider	
Address	
Telephone	
Fax	
Email	
Facilitator name	
Email	
Telephone	

Remember you should insert this in your Getting Started section of your Online Tutor Pack.