

Rapid e-learning Authoring

Rapid e-learning authoring is about minimising the effort needed to technically produce resources, so that more time can be spent focussing on the job in hand, i.e. developing effective learning experiences.

When creating e-learning materials it is easy to spend too much time on things that don't have much impact on learning. The following suggestions can help you make producing e-learning materials a more efficient, effective and enjoyable experience

Build a toolkit of software you know is reliable and you can use quickly and confidently

Pick your tools carefully. Look for software that:

- Is easy to learn and use, by both tutors and learners
- Produces outputs that are in a common format
- Enables you to produce "accessible" resources. The JISC TechDis service provides guidelines on how to do this http://www.techdis.ac.uk/index.php?p=9_7
- Is reliable. Well established products are more likely to be so than newer, untried ones
- Is durable. Will it still be there in 2 years time? This is particularly relevant to web-based tools and services

The most popular e-learning tools tend to be the ones people already use and can work with quickly (e.g. Word, PowerPoint). Are you making the most of the features these offer? Can you enhance what you produce with them using additional software tools?

Create templates to save time

- Choosing graphics, fonts, colour schemes, layouts and navigation can take more time than developing the actual learning content, so aim to do this only once for each type of resource by creating templates
- The most effective approach is for your organisation to develop a range of templates (presentations, word documents etc.) which include any logos, style guides and graphic design. These can then be stored centrally and used by staff when developing learning resources, to ensure consistent quality
- Where no organisational templates exist, create your own. This is normally done by creating your design then choosing "Save as template"

Organise your resources

- Doing a lot of “Googling” each time you create new materials can be time consuming and inefficient. Aim to use existing resources, where possible and develop a well organised resource bank you can build on.
- Create a structured set of bookmarks/favourites for links to external resource banks you use regularly
- Ideally, you should store your resources on a central platform (such as a shared drive or VLE), to enable sharing and re-use. This will also allow you to access them remotely, if you need to
- Check that third party resources have the relevant copyright permissions. Using the same sources regularly can reduce the time needed to do this

Plan before you begin

- Think about the costs and benefits before you begin. Spending an hour tweaking one or two images is probably not a good use of your time
- Plan before you start creating your resources. Use a check list (a lesson plan can do the job) to cover objectives/outcomes desired, learner characteristics, resource needs, technical issues

Some further checks

- Are your materials self-explanatory? Is it clear how you navigate through them?
- Have you made use of different types of resource (text, images, sound, video, links to web sites)? These can make a more engaging experience and enhance learning