



Planning and Implementing e-Learning in your School

HANDBOOK FOR PRINCIPALS &
ICT CO-ORDINATING TEACHERS



National Centre for Technology in Education
Ionad Náisiúnta don Teicneolaíocht san Oideachas

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Introduction

Introduction

The Department of Education and Science (DES) has adopted a detailed information and communications technology (ICT) strategy for 2008 – 2013 which prioritises a number of key areas for investment which will, over future years, further the integration of ICT in learning and teaching. Each school will be required to prepare and implement an e-learning plan as part of its Whole School Plan. It is in this context that the e-Learning Handbook has been produced - to assist schools to develop concrete action plans and strategies to integrate ICT into learning and teaching across the curriculum.



The Whole School Plan

Every school is required to have a Whole School Plan as set out by the Education Act, 1998. The Whole School Plan is a statement of the educational philosophy of the school, the overall aims of the school and how it proposes to achieve them. It deals with effective implementation of the school curriculum and the organisation of the school's resources in pursuit of this objective.

The e-Learning Plan is developed in the context of the Whole School Plan, taking into account the level of ICT resources available to the school and the confidence and readiness of staff to integrate ICT into their practice. Similar to the Whole School Planning process, developing the e-Learning Plan involves the key stakeholders, including the board of management, teaching staff, support staff, parents, students and the local community.

“Bolstered by ICT, the art of teaching can more easily facilitate personalised learning experiences which develop independence, self-direction and lifelong learning skills.”

Investing Effectively in Information and Communications Technology in Schools, 2008-2013
– The Report of the Minister's Strategy Group

What is e-Learning?

e-Learning is simply learning which takes place with the assistance of digital technology. The use of computers and other digital devices together with online learning tools and materials are the prerequisites for e-Learning to take place. When digital technologies are successfully integrated with the appropriate pedagogies to meet the objectives of the curriculum it can be said that a form of e-Learning takes place. Due to advances in technology and the increasing availability of good quality online resources – many interactive – the definition of e-Learning also incorporates “anytime, anywhere” learning and the opportunities for self-directed and more personalised learning.

For example, e-Learning may involve using digital video technologies and editing software to make a local history documentary, conducting research on the history of the school and the local area, communicating with a historian online to gather more information or publishing the project on the school website.

ICT (Information + Communications Technologies) is the term used to describe all digital technologies used in education; it ranges from computers and software to digital cameras and printers and includes digital content resources. The definition is inclusive of all new and emerging technologies.

The characteristics of a positive and active e-Learning culture in a school incorporate the following:

- students’ learning needs remain central to all e-Learning developments
- technology is confidently used by all staff members
- a range of ICT devices are available for use throughout the school
- there is ease of access to networked ICT facilities for staff and students
- there is distributed access to broadband internet
- collaborative learning is promoted
- there is provision of learning spaces for ICT-enabled learning
- a pathway for professional development of teachers in the integration of ICT is planned and promoted
- there is wide-ranging use of ICT across all areas of learning and teaching
- where possible, self-directed and personalised learning is facilitated and supported
- there is a willingness to use new digital tools and resources for learning and teaching activities
- students have the opportunity to acquire digital literacy skills and to adapt safe and ethical use of digital technologies in their daily lives



What is an e-Learning Plan?

An **e-Learning Plan** describes a series of actions that a school will take to integrate ICT into its learning and teaching activities over a specific timeframe. The e-Learning Plan outlines how a school will improve and develop the level of integration of ICT under five headings:

- Leadership and planning
- ICT in the curriculum
- Professional development
- e-Learning culture
- ICT infrastructure

When developing the e-Learning Plan, the school identifies a series of targets and tasks under each of the above headings to progress the integration of ICT within the school.

There are a number of key characteristics of the e-Learning Plan. It:

- is integrated in the Whole School Planning document
- involves the leadership and direction of the principal and of the ICT co-ordinating teacher
- involves consultation with all school staff
- focuses on how ICT is integrated into the delivery of the curriculum
- identifies the resources and skills that are required to enable ICT integration to occur
- identifies a budget
- outlines an evaluation mechanism to ensure that it is reviewed on a regular basis

The e-Learning Plan contains three main sections: the Introduction, the Plan itself, and the Conclusion.

Introduction

- The school's e-Learning vision
- Overview of existing school resources
 - ICT infrastructure & resources
 - Teacher ICT skills and competencies
- Overview of the development of the e-Learning Plan
 - The development team
 - Timeframe within which the e-Learning Plan was developed

Overview and Action Plans

This section is the key element of the document. It consists of:

- e-Learning Plan overview
 - Summary of priorities, targets and tasks
- Action plans
 - Detailed description of each task
 - Monitoring and evaluation procedures

Conclusion

This section of the plan contains:

- The schools' ICT budget
- A checklist of the school's policies which relate to ICT
- Evaluation timeframe
- Signature of the principal and of the chairperson of the Board of Management: date adopted and review date

Why develop an e-Learning Plan?

Developing an e-Learning Plan provides many benefits in working towards integrating ICT into learning and teaching. Specifically, developing an e-Learning Plan will:

- provide an opportunity for the school community to develop an agreed vision for e-Learning within the school
- add a significant dimension to the Whole School Plan
- document how ICT will support teaching, learning and assessment strategies in the school
- provide a focused ICT implementation strategy for the school to help it realise the school's vision for learning in the 21st century
- assist the school in applying for funding when available
- assist the school in strategically allocating any funding received.

Leadership in the context of e-Learning planning

School leadership is required in order to integrate ICT into the culture of a school. Successful integration is more likely to occur in a supportive school environment where the principal plays a key role in facilitating the planning process. The principal does not have to be an expert in ICT use or in e-Learning.

Integrating ICT into learning and teaching requires schools to have a clear whole school focus on learning, teaching and on organisational improvement. This involves leadership. The whole school approach requires that the following aspects are taken into account:

- philosophical (educational philosophy of the school in relation to ICT)
- pedagogical (learning and teaching)
- physical (staff, facilities and equipment)
- practical considerations (funding and time available)

“Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality.”

Warren G. Bennis, Founding Chairman of the Leadership Institute at the University Of Southern California

“Strong leadership and vision are pivotal to embedding ICT in schools. Every school, under the leadership of the principal and supported by the ICT co-ordinating teacher, must strive towards effective whole school ICT co-ordination and this should filter down into concrete learning experiences for the students.”

Investing Effectively in Information and Communications Technology in Schools, 2008-2013
- The Report of the Minister's Strategy Group



Using the e-Learning handbook

This handbook is designed to provide school leaders, primarily the principal and the ICT co-ordinating teacher, with the rationale and tools to assist them in the development of an e-Learning Plan as an integral part of the Whole School Planning process.

The handbook deals with the planning process in a systematic fashion. There are four steps in this process:

1. Review and prioritise
2. Develop the e-Learning Plan
3. Implement and monitor the e-Learning Plan
4. Evaluate the e-Learning Plan

The handbook provides relevant tools and resources, including:

- e-Learning audit templates
- e-Learning Roadmap
- e-Learning Plan template
- e-Learning case studies
- NCTE advice and support information

In addition, there are a range of other supports that will assist schools in creating and implementing their e-Learning Plan:

- **NCTE website** www.ncte.ie/elearningplan
- **NCCA ICT Framework** www.action.ncca.ie
- **NCTE professional development courses** www.ncte.ie/ICTTraining/Courses
- **Scoilnet website** www.scoilnet.ie

The school planning support services provide support and advice on whole school development planning, an area in which the e-Learning Plan will play a significant part:

- **primary support** www.pfds.ie
- **post-primary support** www.sdpi.ie and www.slss.ie

Summary

- e-Learning planning is part of the Whole School Planning process.
- The principal leads the e-Learning planning process.
- The e-Learning handbook provides advice on the process of the development of the e-Learning Plan.