

Use and Integration of Media in Open and Distance Learning

1. Background

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) are pleased to provide this toolkit for your use and we sincerely hope that it will be a valuable resource for anyone planning and conducting training in the practice of open and distance learning.

The development of this toolkit and others, in various topics related to open and distance learning, has involved the time and dedication of a number of organisations and individuals. The impetus and financial support which enable COL to embark on this undertaking came from the Asian Development Bank. Under the terms and conditions of the ADB Regional Technical Assistance Project for Capacity Building in Distance Education for Primary Teacher Training, COL was commissioned to prepare training materials for use in three training workshops in the Asian region. In addition, COL decided to concurrently develop an additional three toolkits. Therefore, toolkits will be available in the following topic areas:

- overview of open and distance learning
- designing open and distance learning materials
- planning and management of open and distance learning
- use and integration of media in open and distance learning
- quality assurance in open and distance learning
- learner support in open and distance learning

Each of the training toolkits will incorporate several elements including:

1. detailed trainer's guide including training strategies, exercises and activities
2. master overhead transparencies
3. recommended reading list
4. case studies of best practices

The toolkits are designed to stand alone although it is envisaged that trainers may choose to use complementary segments from other kits in order to customise training workshops for particular audiences. It is assumed that the ultimate user of the toolkit, the trainers, will have extensive experience and knowledge of the subject area and will augment and embellish as required.

Professional staff at COL were responsible for developing the preliminary blueprint for each of the six topic areas. The International Extension College, Cambridge, UK, was then commissioned to prepare the toolkits. IEC staff, COL staff and trainers, who were responsible for the first pilot test of the materials, consulted regularly throughout the development process.

A special thank you is extended to Dr. Charles Currin, Senior Education Specialist, Asian Development Bank, who has provided encourage and support throughout the RETA project. Sincere appreciation also goes to Dr. Barbara Spronk, Executive Director, IEC and her staff, for their dedication, commitment and hard work in developing and producing the toolkits.

Finally, a special note regarding the case studies section of the toolkit and the gracious co-operation of the many colleagues from around the world who so readily agreed to share their experiences and prepared a case study for inclusion in the toolkits.

The training of people in the practice of distance education continues to be a priority for The Commonwealth of Learning and we are hopeful that this series of toolkits will be a valuable resource for the distance education community. We of course would welcome your comments and feedback so that we can continue to improve and enhance the toolkits.

2. Introduction to the Kit

In the pages that follow, you will find a variety of resources intended to assist you in preparing and offering a workshop on using and integrating media in open and distance learning.

The materials are arranged by topic, eight in total, followed by a bibliography of suggested readings, glossary of terms used in open and distance learning, and a set of case studies. Within each 'topic' section, you will find

- a complete table of contents;
- an overview of the section and the sources from which materials were drawn;
- a variety of material, including definitions, descriptions, diagrams, and checklists;
- a set of practice exercises; and
- a set of masters from which to make overhead transparencies.

Interspersed throughout the materials are examples of the issue or practice that is being outlined. These examples have been set out in indented sections like the following:

Examples: Some institutions are intent on integrating media into their programming as completely as possible; see the case studies for Deakin University, Murdoch University, and the Open Access College.

Suggestions for involving your workshop participants in the generation of additional examples that are drawn from their own experience are set out in screened boxes like the following:

Discussion: Ask participants to spend 15 minutes with a partner discussing their institutions' experiences with introducing a new technology. Ask each pair to produce one lesson they learned from that experience, to share with the group.

The case studies are provided as yet another source of illustrative examples of actual practice.

These materials are not intended as a course in integrating media into open and distance learning. There are no 'objectives', no prescriptions, and no statements of what you should be able to do as a result of having worked through the kit. Neither are the materials intended as an outline of an actual workshop, for you are faced with new audiences, new contexts, and new challenges each time you set out to conduct a workshop. You may adapt these materials to any situation, as in these examples:

- you may be asked to provide a ten-day workshop to a group of academics, who represent a number of universities in a given country, to orient them to the significant features of open and distance learning for their context. Two of these days are to be devoted to integrating media; or
- you might have two weeks to spend with an audience that consists of employees of a foundation that provides funding for educational television, coaching them in the principles of materials design and media integration for distance learners; or
- you may be asked to do a workshop on integrating electronic media for people who are primarily managers rather than designers or authors, but who need a clearer understanding of what is involved in media integration in order to more effectively fulfil their jobs as managers of an open and distance learning programme.

As an experienced trainer you know that designing an effective workshop is the same as designing an effective course: the participants' needs and contexts come first, and your decisions about what you will present and how you will present it will follow from what you are able to find out about your audience. Of course your workshop design will also be influenced by your own experience, expertise, and point of view because you bring a wealth of knowledge, skills, and understanding to your task. Consequently, a 'trainers' kit' can aim only to supplement your own resources and to offer some ideas and materials to use or not use as you choose, based on your tasks and needs.

We hope you will find these materials useful. They are based on the real-life training experiences of a range of distance educators, some of whom prepared the outline for the kit, some of whom prepared the topic-by-topic materials, some of whom provided the case studies, and yet others who reviewed and piloted the first version and offered valuable advice and suggestions as a result. We look to you for continuing advice and suggestions, especially in the form of training materials that you have found useful and would be willing to share with others via the agency of the Commonwealth of Learning. Please contact the COL Project Manager, Patricia McWilliams, at the address provided in this kit, with your comments.