

Standing Conference of National and University Libraries
Higher Education Colleges Learning Resources Group
Universities and Colleges Information Systems Association

Learning Resources for Teacher Education:

A Guide to Good Practice



2000

Purpose and Publication

The purpose of this publication is to set out key criteria of good quality learning resource provision in support of teacher education courses in UK higher education, and to give examples of the different ways in which these criteria can be met. The publication is intended for providers and managers of learning resources, academic staff responsible for teacher education courses, institutional managers, and even perhaps, as a source book of comparisons, for Her Majesty's Inspectors as they go about their work of assessing the quality of teacher education courses.

The recommendations are based on wide experience of learning resource provision in other subject areas, on a study of various OFSTED and DfEE publications, and in particular on a twelve-month study project carried out in 1998-99 by a joint working group of representatives of the Standing Conference of National and University Libraries (SCONUL), Higher Education Colleges Learning Resources Group (HCLRG), Universities and Colleges Information Systems Association (UCISA) and Her Majesty's Inspectors. Members of the group visited 8 volunteer institutions to look at suggested good practice. The recommendations carry the approval of SCONUL, HCLRG and UCISA. It should, however, be made clear that the guidance offered is published independently of OFSTED and DfEE, whose publications are always based on their formal inspection methodologies.

The publication takes the form of a discussion of examples of good practice drawn from the 8-institution study and from other good sources which have been drawn to the attention of the authors. A succinct aide-memoire of key questions for teacher education providers to ask themselves and for HMI to use as a guide in the course of inspections is appended as Appendix 1.

This document is available on the UCISA website (<http://www.ucisa.ac.uk/rc/library/reports.htm>) and the SCONUL website (<http://sconul.ac.uk/>).

The document may be quoted from and replicated in whole or part without charge provided that the source and copyright are acknowledged. The term 'learning resource centre' is used to encompass 'library', 'information services centre', 'IT open access centre', and 'learning resource centre'.

The OFSTED background

OFSTED and learning resources professional associations began discussions about the place of learning resources in initial teacher training (ITT) in 1998. They soon agreed that there was a need for a report to draw attention to the common features of 'best practice'. Such a report would not only highlight good practice in institutions, but would steer others who were looking to improve their learning resource facilities, and help providers prepare for inspection.

A small-scale survey was, therefore, undertaken to:

- identify and publicise what makes for 'best practice' in provision and management of learning resources;
- demonstrate the developments achieved in meeting the needs of the National Curriculum in ITT on the use of Information and Communications Technology in subject teaching; and
- give guidance with the inspection of the T1 Cell of the Framework for the Assessment of Quality and Standards in Initial Teacher Training.

The Framework states in Cell T1 (**‘the quality of training’**) “...evaluation will address the extent to which:

a) trainees’ subject knowledge is audited at the outset of training, assessed and monitored and, if necessary, brought up to the required level.”

and

“e) trainees have access to resources and use resources well in their teaching, private study and directed time, and are taught how to appraise critically these and other materials in common use in schools”.

Under Cell M (**‘the effectiveness of the management and quality assurance of the training’**), evaluation will need to address how well:

“a) staff involved in training have up-to-date professional and subject knowledge and teaching expertise”.

The quality assurance requirements in Annex I of ‘Requirements for Courses of Initial Teacher Training (Circular 04/98)’ also concern learning resources aspects of Cell M, in particular that:

“the division and deployment of available resources has been agreed in a way which reflects the training responsibilities agreed by each partner.” (Annex I, C. 3.1.2)

The examples in this report are from visits made in autumn 1998 and spring 1999. On the basis of what was known about learning resources provision, a number of providers were invited to be involved. The examples are not unique or perfect, just instances of how providers approached meeting the demands of Circular 4/98 and supporting the general resource demands of initial teacher training.

Although it was a small-scale survey which concentrated on good practice and did not involve grades, it became obvious that the time and input required from providers for preparation for the actual visit was considerable. The project group, therefore, pay tribute to the participating institutions for their thorough preparation and excellent hosting of the visits. These were well-managed and involved a significant commitment from staff at all levels and trainees at the various providers, the learning resource centres and in visits to schools.

Before the visits, providers sent a brief statement outlining their policy for provision and management of learning resources. Other information included results of user surveys, management data and other evidence of evaluation and audit. The visits themselves involved:

- discussing learning resources provision with heads of service, subject librarians, representatives of the teaching programme and trainees;
- observing trainees’ use of resources and services, including those for producing teaching materials; and
- discussing the quality of services and the support of learning and of school experience with trainees.

The visiting groups noted the varying stages of development in each of the providers, which reflected significant progress in ITT provision brought about by DfEE Circulars 10/97 and 4/98. They have moved rapidly to meet the learning and teaching needs of ITT trainees. This momentum continues. The commitment of staff is firm, policies are reviewed, the views of staff and trainees are considered and the provision is well-managed.

Policy and Planning

CELL M - The effectiveness of the management.....and"the division and deployment of available resources"

All participating providers have a clear policy on learning resource support for all students. Roehampton Institute's policy, for example, includes phrases relating to:

- academic excellence;
- encouragement of critical study;
- learner-centred environment;
- being flexibly responsive; and
- learning experience of the highest quality.

It also includes strategies for giving particular support to initial teacher training covering:

- the assessment of good practice with reference to information;
- staff and trainees in relation to information and technology;
- management of information assets;
- information quality, and
- the proper use of information

The University of Northumbria Information Strategy of 1997 sets out some broad goals to be achieved by 2001. The initial priorities were met within the target time of July 1998. New targets have been set and the priorities have been regrouped. Quality assurance mechanisms are in place and the arrangements are already meeting the needs of trainees. The speed and quality of response at Northumbria is indicative of the importance placed on support for all students by the providers surveyed.

This support is exemplified by the effective involvement of senior management at all levels and there is a general momentum towards delivering a commitment to implementing 'Excellence in Information Technology' for all.

Cell T1 (e)' trainees have access to resources and use resources well in their teaching, private study and directed time, and are taught how to critically appraise these and other materials in common use in schools'

Well-developed planning mechanisms for policy and practice are a successful way of responding to needs and creating an understanding between learning resources staff and their education colleagues. At the College of St. Mark and St. John (Marjons), the head of the Learning Resources Centre (LRC) sits on a 'Product Development Group'. This Group considers the additional equipment and facilities necessary for all new course proposals before their validation. At Chichester Institute the validation committee also requires that the Head of Learning Resources vets the resource implications of new courses. Learning Resources representatives are, in fact, on all course committees and the Head attends most academic sub-committees. It is standard practice at Chichester that all validated course module reading lists are passed to the Subject Librarians so that materials can be ordered in good time.

At Oxford University, a study by the librarian into what and how a cohort of secondary phase trainee teachers learned about the use of resources in teaching, helped to develop a better practical understanding of the work of the Department and to ensure that appropriate support was provided to trainees.

All providers surveyed have designated individuals or teams, who are responsible for learning resources to meet the needs of ITT. In addition to routine learning resource work, these individuals manage the main loan materials for school experience, and have developed a good understanding of the multiplicity of trainees' needs. Most individuals reported very good liaison between learning resource staff and ITT tutors and most attend course committee meetings.

Strong planning links between the learning resource and academic staff ensure that the provision of subject specific stock is responsive to the course requirements.

Regular meetings of working parties, for instance Marjons' Information Strategy Groups and Information Strategy Technical Groups, are a mechanism for considering issues about ICT systems development, including software needs and training for all staff. The day to day involvement of LRC staff has significant benefits. As might be expected, good links between subject departments and the LRC ensures effective and timely planning of resource provision.

Elsewhere, learning resources teams are developing detailed and realistic service level standards. Meetings are generally very open and creative with contributions being made by staff at all levels. Many providers have gone through, or are going through, a restructuring process. It is anticipated that this will lead to improved planning between the learning resources teams and the faculties/departments.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) - meeting the requirements of Circular 4/98 Annex B

Increasingly providers are making a particular commitment to developing a co-ordinated approach to purchasing computer hardware. In one case, strenuous efforts make sure that only hardware which could interface with existing facilities was purchased. An Information Strategy Group checks out proposed purchases, to ensure compatibility with the network. Furthermore, most providers have types of stand-alone computers which are commonly in schools, so trainees have an opportunity to become familiar with machines they will encounter on their school based experience.

One useful feature seen at Roehampton was centrally funded support for the development of trainees' knowledge and skills in ICT. A thorough audit of trainees' ICT competence enables them to formulate their own action plans. When the audit highlighted shortcomings, trainees can undertake special courses provided either within the faculty or by Information Services.

At Marjons a clear definition of responsibilities for learning resources has helped to establish an effective organisational structure. Booklets have been produced for trainees and staff outlining the respective staff roles and the range of resources provided by the Centre for Information Technology in Education (CITE) and Learning Resource Centre. The library uses the Intranet to give staff regular updates about the services on offer, in a 'current awareness bulletin'. This covers all aspects of LRC services, with a particular focus on ITT.

At Hull University the Merlin Development Unit has developed an innovative web-based on-line learning environment 'ICT for History' to provide support for the development of PGCE trainees' ICT skills. This system is capable of supporting a wide range of disciplines and educational initiatives based on the important principle of developing a sense of community and peer support. This approach centres on communication and its elements include: a software framework with templates for creating applications; access to help from the development officer; and a technical administrator to run the system.

All courses now have a focus on ICT. The survey visit to Reading University looked at the undergraduate teacher training course for the primary age range in design technology. Trainees were observed working on developing their ICT skills through the design and development of personal web-sites which are posted on the University Intranet. This learning is well supported by technicians in the IT centre and by staff in the library. The trainees' progress is monitored on-line by tutors and useful feedback given via e-mail. At Chichester also, Primary PGCE students were observed using the ICT Education Centre facilities to create a variety of classroom materials.

Liaison is also important between those involved in learning resources provision. An effectively managed central strategy for organisation of resources *enables* library and IT staff to work side

by side in providing 'common services' and to develop an information strategy and an IT Strategy, e.g. Roehampton, Northumbria. Communication and understanding between departments, LRC, and institution-wide ICT resources benefits trainees. Where two or more campuses or sites are involved, it is usual to find that Learning Resources Units are on all sites, providing consistent and complementary services.

Providers recognise the importance of keeping these issues under review. Most providers ensure this by monitoring the quality of learning resources provision as part of the routine internal quality enhancement process. Learning resources are also inspected as part of the QAA inspections - the outcomes are prime indicators of the quality of the provision.

Responsiveness to Staff and Trainee Needs

Quality assurance mechanisms ensure that trainees' voices are heard. The learning resource centres are no exception. Feedback from trainees has led to a number of initiatives which include the appointment of additional professional librarians, opening of training centres, improvements in the provision of staffing, increased spending on learning resources and changes to library loans policy.

Trainees' feedback makes a significant contribution to learning resources policy and practice in all case. For example, Oxford University Department of Educational Studies organises a library tour, by curriculum grouping, at the start of each course. Additionally, at the end of the first term a literature research session is provided for trainees which focuses on preparing them for writing their dissertations. In common with most providers, services are backed up by clear documentation, giving full details of available assistance and resources. These initiatives have been developed as a result of trainee feedback.

At Marjons, the Art, Design and Technology (ADT) department operate a similar range of feedback systems. Additionally, the department uses capability audits for trainees on entry to courses which enables tutors to evaluate trainees' needs and to use the relevant available options and individual learning packages to meet them. There is a *developing* system of communication between staff and trainees by e-mail. Research by trainees using the Internet is becoming standard practice.

A number of institutions aim to support all categories of staff by providing an environment in which they can learn how to use the various software applications and teaching and learning packages. This often includes provision of in-house training. Some providers ensure that learning resource staff undertake a customer care course specifically tailored to their specialist area. Staff development provision is co-ordinated centrally and needs are identified from appraisal returns and also through staff-student liaison committees.

The librarians and technical support staff are often involved in the teaching process and where possible are offered induction and/or training for this role which equates with the training afforded to academic staff.

At Roehampton, an effective user education programme for teacher trainees had been developed by Information Services. This has been integrated into the student's modular programme, and includes induction sessions for all ITT trainees plus further inputs throughout the programmes and a session on running a school library for trainees on Year 4 of the BA(QTS) course. Such programmes are obviously beneficial when they are held in good, purpose designed training suites within the learning resource centres. Equally good arrangements exist at University of Northumbria at Newcastle (UNN), where technicians deliver training on presentation skills using AV and IT techniques.

The Lindisfarne School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) scheme has worked on the development of support materials for trainees' use. Among other items, this includes the

production of in-house CD-Roms of teaching resources with links to Internet web sites. These are provided to trainees at minimal cost to ensure that they have a readily available source of learning resources for specific subjects. Resources such as these are particularly valuable when the students are based at some distance from the central provision.

All providers surveyed are at pains to ensure that where ITT takes place on sites separate from the main campus, all trainees have equal access to learning resources. Additional arrangements include an inter-site book/materials delivery service which generally provides a very rapid turn-round.

Libraries keep extended opening hours, and increasingly IT centres are open for up to 24 hours. Many of these centres have full support during the working day and reduced staffing overnight. Hours are reduced during vacation periods.

There are good arrangements generally for loaning equipment and materials, for example video and digital cameras and big book versions of children's stories. These give good support to the trainees' work in schools. It is becoming possible for trainees to borrow personal computers or laptops for use whilst on school-based experience. Where this happens, trainees feel that this arrangement greatly enhances their ability to teach with and through ICT most effectively.

A current development, usually in conjunction with central computer/IT Services, is the introduction of self-paced learning facilities for IT users. Technical staff or multimedia managers are usually available to give support to this.

At Reading University, the Technical Support Unit (TSU) is based on the same campus as the Faculty of Education and provides trainees with a range of high quality learning resource production and presentation services for trainees and academic staff. This unit operates on a commercial basis and its services are available to schools, teachers and businesses.

At Roehampton, the outstanding quality of materials produced by final year undergraduate trainees for teaching mathematics to Key Stage 2 pupils, demonstrates the effective use of specialist packages, facilities and support provided by the Faculty ICT Centre and the Information Services Department. Similarly, as an outcome of Hull University's involvement with the Merlin project, a Key Stage 4 Science resource pack of exceptional quality had been produced by post-graduate trainee, whilst on school-based experience at the Malet Lambert School.

At Marjons, a considerable amount of current development with the use of the Internet and the Intranet on an individual basis within the ADT department has taken place. Staff now regularly use the technology to move information and images about the system. Trainees are contacted via e-mail and tutors are able to communicate equally effectively from home using their own computing facilities.

Generally, use of the National Grid for Learning's (NGfL) 'Virtual Teachers' Centre' is developing. It is becoming an accepted way for staff to keep abreast of information relating to teaching and learning in ITT. Evidence of use of all resources, and in particular ICT, by trainees in their own work and in teaching generally is leading to the development of independent, resourceful trainees who are well-placed to make use of these important skills in their teaching careers.

Organisation

The benefits of good co-operation and understanding between learning resources and education staff are cited above. The advantage of this was demonstrated in the providers' organisational structures which reflected and responded to the needs of their users. Generally, there is good co-operation between all staff at all levels and, in many instances, the relationships were exemplary. Similar good relationships, increasingly, are being developed with partnership schools and colleges.

Providers demonstrated a number of approaches to providing trainees with the facilities they need to develop their teaching skills. At Chichester a new purpose-designed and built Learning Resource Centre is located on the main site. This houses book and journal collections, audio-visual materials, electronic information, media equipment loans and open access IT centres. In addition, there is a small art gallery which is used to provide original stimulus material for students and to display students' own work. A variety of study areas is provided, including individual study rooms which students can reserve.

Provision in all the institutions is made for off-air recording, playback, reproduction and copying audiotapes, recording facilities for lectures, seminars, observation and simulation sessions, film bookings and audio visual equipment loans. Clear guidance is also given to trainees on how to access learning resources from schools' library services in LEAs during school experience. At several institutions lists of web sites on all school subjects and phases are also provided in hard copy.

All providers have centres, either attached to the learning resource centres or in separate locations with a large number of personal computers (PCs), which provide access to the Internet.

Access to print and electronic material on education were successful features of well-integrated, up-to-date library services. They all offered inter-library loans services for library stock items trainees could not find. Long opening hours and good support structures were aspects of provision trainees particularly appreciated.

A common theme of the survey was the value of learning resource professionals in helping trainees develop confidence and understanding. Most centres provide support services and staff are available throughout the week. During term time, technicians also would be on duty all the time.

Oxford University's Department of Educational Studies library, although small, is a very active resource. Staffed by two full-time and three part-time librarians, who are supported by a resources co-ordinator and an IT technician, it houses a basic stock of books to support the subject specialisms of the ITT courses. Trainees can access books from any library in Oxford and beyond. To judge the effectiveness of this, the staff conducted a survey of trainees' use of the other libraries and used the results to liaise effectively with colleagues at those libraries. Other examples of providers where ITT is based away from the main site illustrated the usefulness of ensuring trainees have access to the providers' main resources.

One provider's ITT site learning resources staff includes a Multimedia Manager. Four other staff are dedicated to the School of Education Studies and Management which also has a separate IT centre with a member of support staff in attendance. Another provider has two linked computer networks which connected a cluster of computers around the campus. The networks give access to a wide range of software and other facilities (such as CD-ROM information sources, e-mail and the Internet) and provide the main ICT resource for most users. A larger provider's IT resources were arranged in nine clusters.

At all institutions in the study a range of CD-ROM and Internet based information services are available via the network, with E-mail facilities. Within the ADT department at Marjons, trainees

could make use of a loan facility for hardware including electronic resources (digital cameras, video cameras, specialist computer software, pixies and roamers). Text based resources produced by tutors to support specific courses and modules were also available for loan.

The provision and organisation of resources is changing rapidly to meet identified and emergent needs. Marjons is planning to install telephone and computer access to trainees' individual study areas, which could eventually involve direct links between tutors and trainees while working in their rooms. Tutors there reported that e-mail was increasingly becoming the way of transferring information, especially visual images and communication between individuals. The college was setting up off-site access to the LRC, e-mail and all other Intranet services. E-mail is rapidly taking over from notes and telephone calls. In one department, it was becoming the standard method of commenting on work in progress, returning marks and responses to draft documents. From the beginning of the 1999/2000 academic year, trainees will receive all tutor feedback and assessment marks only by E-mail.

Partnerships

There has been ambitious and innovative investment in and development in the area of provision of learning resources to support ITT and in particular to facilitate the management and quality of school partnership arrangements. The process of auditing the schools' ICT facilities to ensure minimum standards for all trainees is in the early stages of development. The University of Hull has been particularly successful in sharing the benefits of the Merlin research project with schools.

Information services staff have been clearly briefed about the pattern of school experience and the sort of specialist support required by trainees during that time. In the best instances, such staff have received well-targetted, useful training.

Learning resource centres routinely conduct surveys and studies of trainees' needs to ensure that trainees can maximise the use of resources in the classroom. A range of other curriculum resource materials and equipment to support the trainees' work on school placement including a good range of published teaching support materials, is available. Training in the use of resources is offered to all those who request it.

Separate courses in ICT are offered. Optional ICT workshops equip trainees with the development of personal IT skills. It is a requirement made by all providers in this survey, that all trainees' assignments are produced using a word processing package and other appropriate software.

Trainees report that they have good access to the learning resource centres and they claim that good use is made of them. Trainees speak highly of the quality of support given by all resource centre staff and confirm the value and importance of the training support received.

During school based experience, trainees cite the obvious problem of distance of the schools from the centres. Providers have devised a number of strategies to cope with this. There are very good systems, for example, for requisitioning books and other materials: special arrangements for ITT trainees are made during school experience – for instance, allowing them to increase the quantity of books that they can borrow at one time; extending the loan period; and longer opening hours for the IT centres. The problem for most trainees is that access to computer resources in schools has to be carefully negotiated. Trainees at the Malet Lambert School in association with Hull University have full use of the available resources in the school as part of their training entitlement. Increasingly trainees are seen as having ICT expertise which can be used in teaching from the first school-based experience and schools are working in conjunction with their partners to ensure good access for all trainees.

Appendix 1 – Aide-Memoire for the evaluation of learning resources support for Initial Teacher Training

1. The Access Trainees have to Learning Resources

1.1 How are decisions taken on the quantity and distribution of learning resources and how are the particular resourcing needs of ITT courses addressed?

1.2 Does your HEI offer its trainees sufficient

- Books and journals?
- School curriculum resources?
- Generic and educational software?
- Computers (at least some which should have internet access)?
- CD-ROM databases and online information sources?
- Other ICT, media, audio-visual and reprographic equipment, representative of the range found in schools?

1.3 For each of the resources listed above, are they relevant to the age ranges and subjects offered and do they enable trainees to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills to at least the standard required for the award of Qualified Teacher Status.?

1.4 Are the learning resources listed above accessible to trainees both whilst based at the HEI and also whilst at partnership schools? Specifically,

- Are the opening times of Libraries, ICT facilities, technical support units and book/stationery shops geared to trainees' needs?
- Are all trainees eligible to appropriate levels of access to learning resources (eg an e-mail account, access to the WWW, evening and weekend access to ICT facilities, Library material and technical equipment loans)?
- Are trainees eligible to use learning resources belonging to partnership institutions?
- What arrangements are made for trainees to access the HEI's learning resources whilst on school experience?

2. The Use Trainees Make of Learning Resources

2.1 How are trainees equipped:

- to exploit ICT and information resources effectively in their own studies?
- to develop ICT and information management skills in their teaching?
- to enable them to apply ICT and information management skills in their subject teaching?
- to appraise critically the learning resources available, print and electronic?

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Is there mutual understanding of resource needs? Specifically,

- Is there effective liaison between teaching staff and Library/ICT staff?
- Is there appropriate contact between trainees and Library/ICT staff?
- Do Library/ICT staff recognise and respond to school experience needs?
- Are there opportunities for Library/ICT staff to contribute to the training programme?
- Do trainees and trainers have access to appropriate support and help from Library/ICT staff?
- Do staff development arrangements for tutors and support staff facilitate mutual understanding?

3.2 Are quality issues in learning resource services investigated as part of course evaluations? If so, how are the outcomes used to establish and develop appropriate prioritisation within these services?

4. Context

The 1998 *Framework for the Assessment of Quality and Standards in Initial Teacher Training* states in Cell T1 (**'the quality of training'**) "*..in evaluating the quality of training, it will be necessary to ask how well the:*

(e) trainees have access to resources and use resources well in their teaching, private study and directed time, and are taught how to appraise critically these and other materials in common use in schools."

It is hoped that the preceding questions will form an appropriate checklist for considering the effectiveness of the institution's learning resources within the expectations of this cell in the 1998 Framework.

Appendix 2 - Providers involved in the survey

- CHICHESTER INSTITUTE OF HIGHER EDUCATION, now UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CHICHESTER
- COLLEGE OF ST MARK AND ST JOHN
- LINDISFARNE SCITT
- ROEHAMPTON INSTITUTE
- UNIVERSITY OF HULL
- UNIVERSITY OF NORTHUMBRIA AT NEWCASTLE
- UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
- UNIVERSITY OF READING