



JISC RSC Scotland South & West Case Study @ Royal Scottish Academy of Music & Drama (RSAMD)

Online Survey of Staff ICT Skills using the RSCs Training Needs Analysis (TNA) Tool

The background

RSAMD, also referred to as “The Academy”, is a world class specialist teaching institution and world renowned conservatoire. Recognition of the dedication and hard work of the staff to stay at the very top of their game is probably best reflected in the national and worldwide demand for student places at RSAMD.

As part of their aim for excellence, RSAMD started a Post graduate Certificate (Pg Cert) in Learning and Teaching in Higher Arts Education for staff in 2008. Accredited by the Higher Education Academy and awarded by RSAMD, the introduction of the Pg Cert had a really positive effect on the staff in general, not just for the dozen or so staff in the first cohort. There was a marked change in people’s perception of using technology as a result of the positive and enlightened conversations which arose directly as a result of staff working towards this certification. While there had been a general understanding of the use of technology in learning and teaching, studying for the Pg Cert was like switching on a light. It influenced a more pedagogical, transformational approach to teaching and the ways in which these technologies could move forward the teaching objectives in an enhanced way.

How could The Academy build on this momentum and what is the best method of identifying the training needs of a large number of staff? There is one dedicated IT trainer who works with every member of staff and every new student. Her remit includes IT induction, VLE assimilation and training in general software applications. This renewed interest in training for staff, matched with a marked increase in student expectation led to the realisation that The Academy needed to formalise its plans for e-learning and transformation of teaching through technology.

The challenge

In order to assess training requirements for staff, RSAMD needed to take a snapshot of the current position of staff ICT skills on the learning curve and to identify preferred methods of learning. This would give a starting position from which The Academy could then measure improvement as a result of staff development and training.

Identifying skills levels of staff and then implementing an appropriate and achievable training schedule can be a complicated and difficult process. RSAMD faced a particular challenge regarding staff numbers and their availability for training due to heavy teaching load. With very high staff/student contact time, RSAMD students receive more taught hours in any week than a primary school child. As well as 190 full time teaching staff in different roles and subject specialisms in the Academy, RSAMD

also employ in the region of 700-900 part-time, hourly paid staff composed of practicing artists in industry, visiting academics and professionals. These staff may only teach one specialist class a month or in the case of Master Classes, the professional artists are contracted for just one class a year. A major challenge in this exercise was going to be contacting and informing such a diverse and dispersed staff cohort of the need for their input to this study of in-house ICT skills.

The activity

Facilitated by the RSC Scotland South & West, RSAMD conducted an online survey of staff in February 2009 using the RSCs Training Needs Analysis (TNA) tool. To raise awareness of the importance of this survey it was first publicised through the Learning and Teaching Committee and then promoted throughout the Academy via email sent to directly to staff groups. Heads of Department in each area were asked to highlight its importance at weekly staff meetings and every level of management were involved in pushing the message through, including the Principal who spoke of the importance of the TNA and included it in his weekly email newsletter. The result of this top down and pervasive promotion was an excellent return rate of 119 responses. This number represented over half of the 190 full time staff responding to the survey. Only a small number of returns were from the part time and hourly paid staff.

Regional Support Centre Scotland South & West JISC
RSAMD - Lecturing & Tutoring Staff
 1. Lecturing & Tutoring Staff

1. First Name 2. Last Name 3. Curriculum Area(s)

4. Please indicate which one of the following categories applies to you.

Full-time
 Part-time
 Part-time hourly paid

5. I am a member of the following School:

Music
 Drama

6. The majority of my teaching is delivered:

One to One
 Group

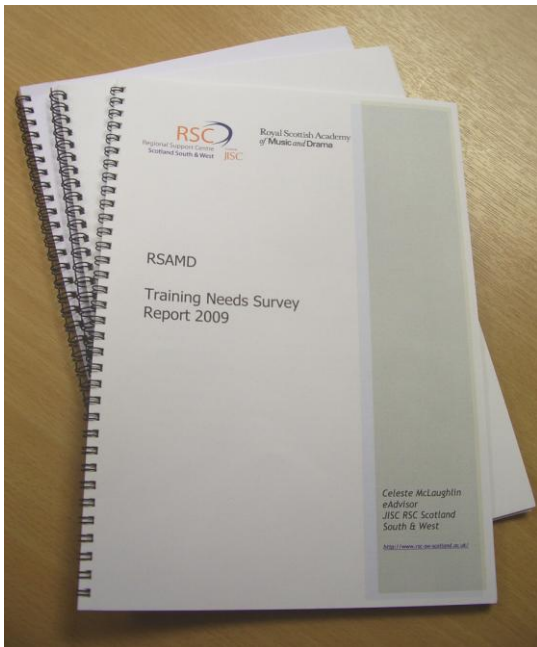
7. Hardware - I can operate the following:

	little/no	some	good	advanced
Personal Computer/Laptop	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Printer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scanner	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Data Projector	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Digital Camera	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Network and Portable Storage	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. Software - I can:

Timing of the survey launch was an essential consideration, prior to roll out. The TNA took place during the second term in February 2009. While this is an extremely busy term at the Academy, it was considered the optimum time for launching the survey as staff were settled into the academic session and the courses were bedded down and moving forward. Whilst being one of the busiest performing arts venues in Scotland, February was a relative period of calm in the performance schedules at The Academy and a higher response rate from staff was more likely then, than during peak performance periods such as during pantomime and opera season.

The impact



The TNA report provided a timely snapshot of staff ICT skills and provided clear evidence of the need for staff development and the need for a formal e-learning strategy, along with policies for enhancing teaching through the use of technology. These findings were reported to the Learning & Teaching Committee and recommendations were made to the Academic Board. Within a few months of the publication of the TNA report, the Academic Board of RSAMD had approved the appointment of a full time Learning Technologist on a permanent contract.

The TNA results were passed to Heads of Department, who disseminated the results to staff via team meetings. The results have also been used during the Career Review Process and managers have found them to be a useful overview of staff training needs while the IT Trainer at

RSAMD has used the findings to implement targeted training to appropriate staff groups. The appointment of a Learning Technologist had an immediate positive impact on the use of e-learning within the Academy. The Learning Technologist is helping to create an e-Learning Strategy in conjunction with a technology enhanced learning policy. It is mission critical that this new strategy fits into the Academy's wider objectives and strategic aims.

Lessons Learned

An institution-wide exercise of this magnitude required dedicated and informed staff to execute it, along with strong support from senior management. Caroline Cochrane, Head of Information Services at RSAMD, played a pivotal role in setting up and promoting the TNA and was asked to comment on lessons learned from this fact finding experience. Caroline listed several key factors that impacted on the success their TNA results:

- There needs to be clear objectives when undertaking any exercise like this. In order to effect change you need a structured approach and have an objective in mind that fits with the overall objectives of the institution.
- Timing of the project is essential to its success and must be planned. Good timing of the rollout for the survey at RSAMD had a massive impact on the successful response rate.
- Set the scene. The groundwork for the TNA had already been put in place via the implementation of a Pg Cert in the previous year. Staff had become engaged with ICT prior to the TNA and subsequently the data gathered from the TNA was more useful than it might have been otherwise.

- The TNA was a success built on the awareness raising and its publicity throughout The Academy and particularly benefited from promotion by senior management and the Principal. More engagement by staff in the TNA equated to more relevant and useful data.

Prior to the TNA, The Academy had started working on a Curriculum Reform Project, aimed at creating an excellent learning experience for students. Caroline felt that the TNA was “exceptionally useful” as it gave them a clear benchmark of where the staff were at in terms of using technology in their communication and teaching. The main theme emerging from the TNA findings was the gap between the theoretical understanding of technology in learning and teaching and the practical application of that technology. The TNA has been useful in identifying staff training needs that will in turn impact on the Curriculum Reform project, which makes its first recommendations to the Academic Board in June of this year. The timely appointment of a Learning Technologist as a result of the TNA will undoubtedly ease the implementation process of any curriculum recommendations made by the Academic Board.

The TNA provides a snapshot of staff ICT skills and RSAMD hope it will be an iterative process, likely to be repeated every 2-3 years as part of their drive for lifelong learning and excellence in learning and teaching at The Academy.

Useful links

A sample TNA is available from the RSC website –

<http://tiny.cc/FuLQQ>