



Focus Groups



Significant investment has been made by institutions in recent years in technology for teaching and learning and many are keen to discover the 'distance travelled' in terms of technology use for delivery of the curriculum. The RSC can facilitate focus group sessions to assist institutions to establish staff and student perceptions & opinion about the use of technology on courses and the added value they feel has been provided. Focus groups

provide an opportunity to gain in-depth insights into particular issues and are a valuable means by which to collect detailed qualitative data.

The Objectives

The objectives of the focus group sessions are to gather information on some or all of the following topics but can be tailored to each organisation's specific needs:

- Access to technology
- Technologies used by lecturing staff
- Extent of the use of technology for teaching & learning
- Use of the learning platform and the tools within it
- Use of new technologies e.g. Web 2.0 / mobile technologies
- Institutional factors affecting the use of elearning
- External factors affecting the use of elearning

Preferences for future development

The Methodology

Round table sessions are held with a number of different stakeholder groups. Ideally these include sessions with groups of learners, curriculum Practitioners and operational managers / department heads. The specific number of sessions would be agreed at the outset of the initiative but would be arranged chronologically starting with the learners and finishing with the department heads. This is to allow the broad outcomes from each group to inform the discussions in subsequent groups. The length of each session is likely to increase from circa 45 minutes with learners to 2 hours with Department Heads which allows for feedback from previous focus groups and extended discussion if necessary.

All discussions are recorded on tape and after each session a summary report is written up. Summaries are made available to the participants via a blog, to provide them with an opportunity to comment or clarify any of the information gathered and a period of two weeks allowed for feedback before a final report is written up.

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Discussion topics

Learners

The purpose of these sessions is to establish student perceptions & opinion about the use of technology on their courses and the added value they feel has been provided. Topics may include:

- *Access to technology*
- *Technologies used by lecturing staff*
- *Extent of the use of technology for teaching & learning*
- *Use of the learning platform and the tools within it*
- *Use of new technologies e.g. Web 2.0 / mobile technologies*
- *Their preferences in terms of using technology for learning*

Curriculum Practitioners

The purpose of these sessions is to establish lecturers' perceptions & opinion about using technology to deliver elements of their courses and begin with a brief overview of the general findings from the learner focus groups. Topics may include:

- *Access to technology*
- *Technologies used by lecturing staff*
- *Extent of the use of technology for teaching & learning*
- *Use of the learning platform and the tools within it*
- *Use of new technologies e.g. Web 2.0 / mobile technologies*
- *Their preferences in terms of using technology for learning and teaching*
- *Institutional factors affecting the use of elearning*

Heads of Department

The purpose of this session is to establish the distance travelled, the impact of college investment in ICT and to explore some of the issues that surround the introduction of elearning for curriculum delivery. Topics may include:

- *Feedback of the general findings from previous focus groups leading to some general discussion on the overall awareness of the current state of play within departments.*
- *Implementation of the elearning strategy*
- *The benefits of implementing elearning in general educational terms and in institutional terms.*
- *The strategies that are employed to implement elearning. Internal and external influences on the implementation process.*

For more details call Fionnuala Carmichael or Joan Walker at the Regional Support Centre