What is e-learning?

A short guide to e-learning by Virtual College

A simple definition

"E-learning is the use of technology to enable people to learn anytime and anywhere."

So what is it?

Typically e-learning is used to describe online modules which learners work through at a time, pace and place that is convenient to them. The modules are usually interactive and often assessed.
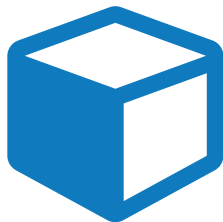
Interactive + **Assessed**

E-learning courses

For e-learning courses, you have two main choices:

Generic e-learning

often refers to titles such as 'Health & Safety at Work'. Multiple organisations use exactly the same course without modifying the content.

Bespoke e-learning

is developed specifically for a company using their content and branding.

Is it just online learning?

Well at its simplest form yes, but the information can be cascaded in lots of different ways. Remember the definition '... the use of technology...' there is no limit on what technology you choose to use.

Your e-learning could involve:

Virtual classrooms

Web conferencing

**Chat rooms**

Podcasts

Video

Online games

Blended learning

Putting together multiple forms of learning is called blended learning. Your blend could include both online and offline delivery including coaching etc. You should choose the blend that best supports the delivery of the content without overwhelming the learner.

An LMS is an online system which gives learners access to your e-learning courses. Often LMS's can be used to manage the full range of training delivery offered by an organisation. The Virtual College LMS is a proprietary system (as opposed to open source) which can manage online and offline delivery, training requests, appraisals, e-portfolios and more.

So what are the benefits of e-learning?
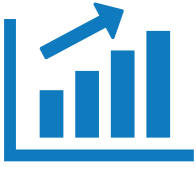
Increase staff productivity

Typically a one day face to face training course can be delivered via e-learning in a third of the time, with no travel time required – as a result staff have more time to spend on core work tasks.

Reduced training costs

On-line learning does not require face to face training time, venue costs, travel costs, overnight accommodation and subsistence costs. Typically an on-line course can be more than 60% cheaper than more traditional classroom training.

Reduction in carbon footprint

No travel to and from venues required and no printing of training materials.

Flexible and rapid deployment

Courses can be completed during scheduled downtimes at a pace, place convenient to the learner. Organisations can roll out new messages and information very quickly to core groups of learners.

Scalable

It can be as easy and quick to train 10 people or 10,000 people – it requires no / very little administration to plan and roll the training out.

Increased comprehension rates

Studies suggest that comprehension levels and retention rates derived from e-learning may be up to 250% better than traditional methods. The main reasons for this are that learners
• have to participate and interact with the learning
• can conduct the training in short bite-size pieces and go back to parts of the learning to refresh their understanding
• can undertake the learning at a time and place to suit them and their mood
• generally have to complete a knowledge comprehension test or quiz at the end of the learning

Consistency

Messages and the learning experience is consistent from one learner to another – the core content and delivery mechanism is always the same.

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