

Australian *Flexible Learning* Framework

Supporting Flexible Learning Opportunities

Flexible Learning Leaders 2003 Progress Report

**Margot McNeill
Senior Project Officer
OTEN, NSW**

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Flexible
Learning
Leaders 

flexiblelearning.net.au



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PROGRESS REPORT

1. Learning

My project involves investigating how assessment technologies might be combined to produce an integrated model for sustainable use in a distance education context. So far, much of my time has been spent conducting an review of what other institutes and practitioners are doing, and analysing the current literature.

On reflection, as I began my research, I suspected there were many ideas about what online assessment meant, and many different approaches to its implementation. This has been confirmed by my findings so far. Many institutions are trialing different solutions, and useful tools have been developed. One example is Westone's Assessment Generator, which provides a template for constructing assessment tools linked to elements and performance criteria from current Training Packages. Nola Campbell at Waikato University and Jan Herrington of Edith Cowan have each developed comprehensive teaching and learning programs, where authentic assessment is ongoing throughout the online learning environment.

Now my next step is to analyse these findings and to develop some recommendations for OTEN, in our specific DE context.

2. Update

1. Literature review – I have completed the initial readings I set on starting the project. However, the list keeps growing as I discover interesting writings as I go along. I hope to have this stage completed by late September.
2. **Site visits.** Completed so far:
 - CIT – Janice Anderson – leading practitioner in online assessment,
 - Centrelink – networked online training in a corporate environment,
 - Westone – Assessment Generator project team and past FLL, Melissa Sorenson
 - Army – Offensive Action simulation and design issues around the development, use and maintenance of assessment simulations,
 - Edith Cowan – Jan Herrington, leading practitioner in online assessment design,
 - Auckland University – OASIS automated assessment system and CECIL learner management platform,
 - Waikato University, Innovations Centre for Class Forum platform and staff development program, and Nola Campbell, leading practitioner in online teaching and assessment
 - Auckland College of Education – online assessment as part of teacher education, scalability issues with WebCT,
 - Macquarie University – practitioners from the Flexible learning Centre.

Still to be conducted:

- Hunter Institute – Donna Hemsley, Question mark automated assessment software.
 - Institute of Chartered Accountants, Australia (ICAA) – practitioners working with “Mind Trail” online marking software
 - Department of Defence (Sydney) for storage of assessment and automated marking
3. Registered for conferences
- ODLAA, (presenting)
 - Networking 2003, (presenting)
 - FLL Sharing Workshop
 - Ascilite 2003.
4. Registered for courses
- AGSM ‘The Corporate Communicator’ program, Sept 03
 - USQ Supervised Project FET8661, July – November 03

3. Feedback

So far my project has been going very well. I have met many practitioners in Australia and New Zealand, and seen some great innovations. These experiences have been shaping my final report and the model I hope to produce for OTEN. Hearing them discuss the issues they have explored and resolved has been invaluable in my learning journey.

Assessment is a high priority for OTEN, and much of the success of my project so far has been due to the support of OTEN management and staff. This has enabled me the time to research and reflection and the resources to ask others for assistance. The work I am doing is already having an impact at OTEN, in that my contribution to the Assessment Steering Committee and other forums is more informed. I am also planning to establish an Assessor Network for OTEN staff and some external practitioners, to provide another avenue for sharing learning around such an important issue.

4. Attachments

Attachment 1 - Postcard from Margot McNeill to FLL forum (July)

Hi from a weary traveller, just back from a hectic couple of days in Perth.

Thanks to the generous hospitality of the Western Australians, I had a great chance to spend some time investigating the work some of the innovators are doing in online assessment.

I spent time with:

- Westone (what legends! The Assessment Generator will be a great tool for us at OTEN. It enables the construction of valid assessment tools through close links with training packages, down to element and even performance criteria level)
- the Army (their simulations are like something out of Shrek, and they've developed comprehensive specs for developers!)
- Jan Herrington, whom after many years as a shining light at Edith Cowan is soon to take up a position as Associate Professor at Wollongong Uni (what ideas on constructivism! An environment where assessment is king must be good!); and
- a private RTO, Gold Security, exploring online learning in Cert 4 (a staunchly pragmatic approach - so sensible!)

So far, my FLL experience has been fantastic. The photo is of "Bus Buddy" Maggie and myself, taken when she visited OTEN to check out our systems for incorporating student feedback. Next stop is NZ; I'm off to see Nola and our colleagues from across the ditch.

Attachment 2 – FLL forum update – posted 21st August, 2003

I'm at home today having my weekly FLL day, so it's a good time to post up a quick update. Life has been quite hectic lately; I've had papers accepted at

ODLAA and Networking 2003, which has taken quite a lot of work. It's good to know they've been accepted, but I just have to finish the presentation component next.

I've finished most of my FLL site visits, so I feel like I'm off to a good start. I've been writing them up as I go along, but there still seems to be lots of structuring of my comments required before I'm happy. I've also almost finished my literature review. As I go, I keep adding more to the list of things to be read, so I guess it will end one day!

I have been reflecting on the impression that my work as FLL is starting to have an influence at OTEN already, although my project still has quite a long way to

run. I've been invited to a couple of additional meetings to inform other projects which involve some aspect of assessment, and there is a merry band developing who are keen to hear of my travels and findings, and have begun experimenting already! We've started working on a prototype of an online marking template, which is very exciting.

Two exciting things coming up:

1. Next Monday I'm off to an Assessors' Network workshop. This will be a great bonus to my project, because I'll meet other "kindred spirits" and

will have the know-how to set up an OTEN network with some external practitioners.

2. In early September, I'm off to a 3 day residential course at AGSM; The Corporate Communicator. It sounds great, so I'll keep you posted!
Margot

5. **Summary**

My project involves investigating how assessment technologies might be combined to produce an integrated model for sustainable use in a distance education context. So far, I have spent most of my time conducting an extensive review of what other institutes and practitioners are doing, and analysing the current literature.

On reflection, as I began my research, I suspected there were many ideas about what online assessment meant, and many different approaches to its implementation. This has been confirmed by my findings so far. Many institutions are trialing different solutions, and useful tools have been developed. One example is Westone's Assessment Generator, which provides a template for constructing assessment tools linked to elements and performance criteria from current Training Packages. Nola Campbell at Waikato University and Jan Herrington of Edith Cowan have each developed comprehensive teaching and learning programs, where authentic assessment is ongoing throughout the online learning environment.

The Flexible Learning leader program has been a great opportunity to investigate these innovations, and to establish an invaluable network. My next step is to analyse these findings to come up with some recommendations for OTEN, in our specific DE context.