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# SCROLLA - On-Line Learning and Assessment

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The Scottish Centre for Research into On-Line Learning and Assessment (SCROLLA) has been established under the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council's Research and Development Grant from 1 April 2001, with funding of £560,000 for an initial three year period. SCROLLA will undertake, inform and support inter-disciplinary research in the field of on-line learning and assessment across all Scottish educational sectors, underpinning the current 'e-revolution' with sound pedagogy. The Centre has formed a strong Advisory Board of prominent researchers, practitioners and policymakers from all levels of education in Scotland with several UK experts complementing the group. The administration for the Centre will be physically located in the Faculty of Education, University of Edinburgh but the Centre will also have a geographical presence at each of the three directing institutions: Glasgow University, Heriot-Watt University as well as Edinburgh University.

To date almost all educational investment in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has been in development, rather than research. Yet ICT is now 'mission critical' for educational provision in schools, universities, colleges, industry and corporate agencies, providing and resourcing learning across the community at large. The need for research to underpin educational development and the provision of a wider forum to inform and support good practice is clear. This young but expanding field is in urgent need of coordination, spanning all levels and sectors in a way that single research projects are unlikely to do.

## **What will SCROLLA do?**

SCROLLA will provide a focus for multidisciplinary research into the use of Information and Communication Technologies in education concentrating on on-line learning and assessment. It will draw upon educational, psychological, socio-cultural and computing science research traditions to establish a strong infrastructure to support development and practice across the Scottish educational community and beyond. This new Scottish Centre will:

- build on existing strategic alliances drawing together major research activity from different disciplines
- provide a focus for collaboration between staff in classroom settings, in policy agencies and in commercial organisations
- create a funding magnet to attract further research finance from outside the UK
- produce regular reports on current developments, futures analyses and research findings
- organise multidisciplinary seminars on current developments and research
- coordinate national activities acting as

counterweight to substantial foreign activity in this area

- provide a focus for a range of new and exciting learning and assessment software products and
- foster further links with software industry to market products worldwide.

## **Initial Research Themes**

On-line learning and assessment is a broad category. It includes pedagogy of use of ICT, computer-mediated communication (CMC), training, core ICT skills, ICT infrastructure, cost-effectiveness of new learning tools, computer-aided assessment, development and deployment of new tools, and the quality of networked learning support. In the first instance the Centre will focus on three major threads working in collaboration with interested colleagues, expanding as resources permit. These are:

- evaluation of the approaches used at policy and strategic levels for the implementation of ICT in education, to be directed from Edinburgh University
- basic research into technology-assisted assessment led from Heriot-Watt University and
- pedagogical implications of networked learning provision, coordinated from Glasgow University.

## **How can I get involved?**

Centre staff, when in place, will be working with discipline experts to find out what works, under what circumstances does it work and how can technology assist you in the delivery of courses. So, if you have ideas you want to try in these or related areas please contact me in the first instance and I will try to coordinate appropriately. If all you want at this stage is to keep in touch then again let me know and I will add your name to our information distribution list.