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## Abstract

### **Beyond Institutional Boundaries: reusable learning objects for multi-professional education**

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#### **Abstract:**

In early 2002 a number of UK FE and HE institutions founded a collaborative project to produce a bank of high quality e-learning resources or 'reusable learning objects' (RLOs) to support and enhance teaching in the traditionally difficult areas of statistics, epidemiology and research skills. Creation of these resources is very costly; typically amounting to more than one institution can afford to fund. Yet many of these resources are generic and can be used, re-used and shared between institutions. So the Universities' Collaboration in Elearning' (UCEL) was founded to create, develop and share these resources.

Historically, the early uses of computer-aided learning were to develop entire courses (either on the web or CD-ROM). This led to a monolithic approach with large, unwieldy and rigidly fixed slabs of learning making it very difficult for anyone else to incorporate the materials into their teaching; effectively, either the whole course had to be used, or none of it. This resistance typifies what came to be known as the 'not-invented here syndrome'.

Current e-learning practice is moving away from courses and more towards the resources that actually form the components of those courses. RLOs present a number of educational advantages compared with more traditional course-based approaches. Because they are stand-alone resources that encompass a single "chunk" of learning, they can be used in many different ways and across disciplines. This makes them extremely flexible and cost-effective. Students and teachers alike have access to these resources at any time or place through a standard web-browser. Teachers can combine various RLOs to form the basis for their own custom-made courses or they can direct students to individual RLOs to support or explain a particular concept or process. Material can be kept up to date more readily: it's much easier to update a single resource than an entire course.

Collaborators come to the project from a wide variety of nursing, health professional and medical education backgrounds. One of the project's aims is to discover how pedagogically valuable the RLOs are when used in learning and teaching across different subjects and curricula.

This paper introduces the project, examines the commonalities between different disciplines, and then outlines the strategies for evaluating a RLO's 'usefulness' for multi-professional education.

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