Unified Funding System

Workshop 1

Understanding models of online / technology-enabled learning: current and future state

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Workshop aim

The primary purpose of this workshop was to gain insights into:

- The underlying characteristics of different delivery models for online learning

- How current models of online education delivery may need to change to support the outcomes the Government is seeking from RoVE outcomes

Workshop insights will inform further work with sector experts to identify and assess options for a new funding category system which includes fields of study and new mode-based funding categories.

Upcoming work will focus on:

- How to define and classify education delivery and support for work-based learning into potential new mode-based funding categories.

- Developing an approach to 'bottom up' cost modelling and testing assumptions about the underlying cost structures and cost components of potential new mode-based funding categories.

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▶▶ Introduction

Vic Johns provided an overview of the rationale for RoVE and the outcomes Government is seeking. This reinforced the need for the funding system to enable and support **the** growth of *work-integrated delivery* which enables:

- Improved learning and pastoral care support, especially for work-based learners

- More exposure to the workplace and smoother transitions into employment for provider-based learners

- Flexibility for learners to move across the system in line with changing circumstances

Challenges and opportunities

Participants identified the following **challenges and opportunities** to achieve the desired RoVE outcomes:

- Learner needs should be at the heart of the new system. Learners should be able to select the delivery mode which is suitable for them, and to change modes and their circumstances or needs change.

- The future funding system should enable and support all TEOs to fulfil their functions regardless of specific delivery model.
    - This includes support for learner 'onboarding' e.g. guidance, financial assistance, access to pastoral care and mental health support etc.

- The flexibility of online/technology-enabled learning, and the ability to offer courses outside traditional semesters works well for learners and employers - but is not always well supported by reporting and monitoring requirements.

- There's potential for greater use of online assessment to support recognition of prior learning.

- Investment in upskilling staff to support online/technology-enabled learning is required.

Reform of Vocational Education (RoVE)

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Key themes - definitions

- Participants preferred the term 'technology-enabled' to 'online'. This language recognises that all models of education delivery and support are increasingly 'technology-enabled'.

- There is also growing use of technology-enabled business insight tools by TEOs to help monitor and analyse student engagement and achievement, drive system improvements, and help identify and intervene to support at-risk learners.

- Programmes which involve teaching and learning at a education delivery site and/or in the workplace, can also be enhanced and complemented by the provision of online learning materials, learning and pastoral support, and/or assessment.

Participants also recognised that there are **wholly online / technology-enabled** forms of education delivery and support

For example:

- **The technology-enabled education delivery models operated by the Open Polytechnic, TANZ and SIT2Learn are all designed to provide flexible, online, distance learning and pastoral support to learners, regardless of the learner's physical location.**

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Key themes - access

Workshop participants highlighted that learners choose online/technology-enabled learning for a range of different reasons, and to meet different needs.

For example, online/technology-enabled learning:

- Can be highly flexible, enabling learners to fit study in around work and caring responsibilities. Learning can be offered outside a traditional semester timetable. TEOs described offering courses with multiple cohorts over the year, and exploring 'jump on, jump off' delivery models

- Can provide learners with access to programmes, subjects and courses which may not be available at a nearby institution or local education delivery site

- Can act as a gateway for those learners who do not feel comfortable on campus, and provide a low key way for learners to access education and training without others knowing

- Works well for some learners with a disability or a learning need that is better managed and supported through learning in a home environment

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Key themes - learner support

Participants identified some specific pastoral care and **learner support issues and challenges** associated with online/technology-enabled delivery:

- Learners require different types of support, and their needs are prone to change. Online systems need to be designed to support this (often through the use of facilitation teams).

- A necessary focus when providing pastoral care for online learners is creating connections, through phone calls, email and texts. There must be opportunities for the students to ask questions about the content of the course, as well as about personal issues.

- Establishing and maintaining strong personal connections between facilitators and learners is considered especially critical for many Māori and Pacific learners.

- One participant noted that online distance delivery has higher drop out rates than campus-based delivery (at their provider).

For example:
***Te Wānanga o Aotearoa* offers 'study at home' courses, supported by face-to-face learning and pastoral support.**

These courses involve written and/or online learning materials.

Learners also have access a kaitiaki support person, who can make in-home visits.

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Brief overview of models

There were broad similarities across the different delivery and support models outlined by workshop participants.

The remaining slides summarise some of the key similarities and differences across:

- Programme design

- Facilitation of learning and pastoral support

- Assessment

Note that in some, but not all, of the current models operated by providers, online/technology enabled learners also have access to wider institutional supports and services (e.g. SIT2Learn students can access online nurse, counselling, library services).

Programme design

Online/technology-enabled learning involves upfront costs, in the form of investment in IT platforms, programme design, learning and assessment materials.

Programme design is led by subject matter and industry experts, and is often contracted out separately from direct facilitation of learning and support to learners.

Participants indicated that wholly **online/technology-enabled learning is more suitable for some subject areas** or programmes than others. However, technology can supplement 'hands on' learning and help to address safety issues, in advance of, or alongside, practical experience in the workplace.

For example:

- **SIT's tractor simulator programme helps to ensure learners are safe well-prepared *prior* to attempting to drive a tractor**

- **MITO supports 'on- job' training for trainees and apprentices through online and physical learning resources and assessment materials**

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▶▶ Facilitation of learning

Facilitation of **learning and pastoral support** may be supported by a team in a provider-context, or by a training advisor, and potentially an industry mentor, working with an employer, in an ITO-context. There is also growing use of online peer learning networks.

The specific composition of a facilitation team and the role of individual members varies across the delivery models operated by different TEOs. Common features in a provider-context include online/technology enabled learners being assigned:

- An adjunct teaching and support staff member such as a course facilitator who may or may not be a subject matter expert, to facilitate learning, answer questions, moderate online forums and discussion groups, remind learners of upcoming course assessments etc.

- A student liaison / advisor, to maintain a relationship with the learner throughout their journey, support engagement and provide pastoral support (regardless of course).

Ongoing operational costs are influenced by learner need and the amount and type of facilitation support given by the provider, or arranged by the ITO, online, by phone, or in-person.

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Assessment

- Technology can help reduce administrative costs associated with compliance requirements, monitoring student engagement and achievement, and assessment.

- In a provider-context, marking may be undertaken by a facilitator, or by separate markers/assessors, who may also provide formative feedback to learners.

- In a work-based learning context, assessment may be undertaken by an employer, work-based assessor, contract assessor, or training advisor.

- Delivery models operated by both providers and ITOs may include auto-marking for some assessments.

Next steps

Workshop participants are asked to review these slides and send any further comments, queries and information to the UFS project team using the subject line UFS and the email address: rove@tec.govt.nz.

The insights from this workshop (and subsequent feedback) will inform further work with sector experts to:

- Consider the potential definition and classification of new funding categories which take into account both field of study and delivery mode

- Test assumptions about the underlying cost structures and cost drivers for different delivery modes

This engagement will inform future advice to the Minister of Education.