

DRIVER CPC - PERIODIC TRAINING

Using Technology to enhance Learning and Access to Learning in the Periodic Training Context: Issues and Options

Introduction

A number of centres and operators have asked about the opportunities for using ICT and e-learning within Periodic Training and/or as a tool to enhance access.

The Joint Approvals Unit for Periodic Training (JAUPT) is currently exploring the ways in which a blended learning approach (which draws upon electronic and trainer input) could add value to some training courses. This paper identifies the issues that need to be taken into consideration when using electronic options.

We would welcome views from users and deliverers of Periodic Training on the issues set out in this paper and also on the issues raised by the use of IT.

Centres should note that there is no requirement for approved centres to use electronic options. Clearly, electronic options are not appropriate for all learners and circumstances. JAUPT anticipates that only a minority of centres would choose to use a blended learning option and/or to use IT as a option for enhancing access.

Requirements for Periodic Training that affect the use of Technology

The following issues need to be taken into consideration when identifying how technology could be used to support Periodic Training.

- The Directive is clear that e-learning alone is not an appropriate mechanism for the delivery of Periodic Training for Driver CPC. Training should be an interactive process.
- A trainer should be available to learners for the whole of the training period. This means that learners should have access to a trainer and should be able to discuss any aspect of the training at any time.
- Requirements in relation to security checks and the recording of information mean that a centre representative must be available to manage the administrative arrangements.

Blended Learning

Technology is continuing to evolve and increasingly training centres (both within and outside of Periodic Training) are using “Blended Learning” models. Blended learning, at its simplest, is a mixture of technology and direct trainer input that enables learners to

benefit from both technology and a human interaction. Different programmes have different levels of technology.

It is widely recognised that e-learning packages can benefit learners but that many learners need to have the support of a trainer on hand to support them in engaging with learning and remaining motivated.

Technology Options to enhance Learning

How could the technology enhance learning?

A number of the courses that have been submitted to, and approved by, JAUPT include some learning via technology. For example, some courses use technology to support drivers carrying out refresher learning around the theory and hazard perception tests; others use technology to support training around the use of digital tachographs. These technological aids are part of a broader course. All learning of this type is fully supported by a tutor.

This model is totally within the requirements of the Directive as the technology is used as a learning aid. Subjects are introduced by a tutor and there is discussion around the subject during and after the use of the IT.

An increasing range of software is becoming available. As well as covering content, the software can provide interactive exercises. Evidence suggests that the use of interactive software can be motivating for learners – it can also engage individuals directly (as they are engaged in activities on a one-to-one basis) rather than as part of a group.

What are the issues for trainers and learners?

The following issues need to be considered by centres seeking to use technology within their training sessions:

Availability of equipment and of staff with technical expertise: The use of software and IT-based exercises requires centres and trainers to have access to appropriate equipment and also to trainers/technicians who can ensure that equipment works smoothly. This requires initial investment by training centres.

Restriction on learner numbers: The amount of equipment available will create restrictions on the number of learners who can undertake the training at the same time. The number of learners will also be an issue for trainers who will need to be able to provide specific one-to-one support as needed eg if individual drivers have specific questions in relation to the exercise or the use of the software. This is not an option for a large group of learners. JAUPT will need to consider whether there should be a limit on the number of learners for such courses.

IT skills of Learners: There are also challenges in ensuring that all drivers can use the equipment. Trainers need to ensure that drivers have the appropriate skills **before** the training commences. The training to use the equipment is not part of the Periodic Training. Trainers need to ensure that drivers are not disadvantaged due to their (or other drivers') lack of IT skills.

Course structure: Trainers will need to plan and structure courses in a way that mixes IT and group interaction to ensure that learners remain motivated, engaged and able to benefit from the access to other drivers and their experiences.

Health and Safety: Trainers will need to be aware of and comply with health and safety regulations in relation to the use of IT eg ensuring that learners have appropriate physical conditions and take breaks.

Learner Needs: Trainers will need to ensure that no learner is disadvantaged by the use of IT eg where learners have a disability and the use of IT creates a barrier to learning.

Technology Options to enhance access to Periodic Training

How could the technology enhance access to Periodic Training?

In addition to using technology to provide learning aids, technology could also be used to help learners access training. Drivers in rural locations may have limited access to training centres; alternative options provided by IT to reduce the costs of travel and to maximise the training courses available need to be considered.

The Directive specifically requires that learners should have access to a trainer for the duration of the training. However, JAUPT believes that it would be possible to establish this access with the aid of video-conferencing. This would enable drivers to have access to a tutor for the whole of the training session.

What are the issues for trainers and learners?

The use of video-conferencing for training is becoming increasingly common, particularly in remote areas. However, this is not an easy option, nor indeed a cheap option. The following issues need to be considered.

Availability of equipment and of staff with technical expertise at each location: The trainer is not available in the same location as the learners. This means that both the learning location and the location where the trainer is based will need to have appropriate equipment. There will also need to be access to technical expertise in both locations to ensure that the equipment works for the duration of the training. This requires investment in equipment for all locations as well as investment in training for technical support.

Video conferencing solutions will need to be of a sufficient standard to enable meaningful communication between the learner and the trainer for the duration of the training ie this means maintaining enough of the broadband/cable capacity to keep a high enough quality, real-time connection.

Location restrictions: The availability of equipment and technical support staff will create restrictions on the locations and also the number of learners who can undertake the training at the same time. Although the trainer may be located in a different venue, the training centre will still need to provide administrative and technical back-up for the

duration of the course. The centre remains responsible for meeting the location requirements as set out in the course approval requirements.

Restriction on learner numbers: The number of learning locations will be an issue for the trainers who will need to be able to provide specific one-to-one support as needed for all learners on the course for the duration of the course. This is not an option for multiple location training at the same time. JAUPT would need to set limits on the maximum number of locations and also the maximum number of learners that the trainer could support at the same time.

Course structure: Trainers will need to plan and structure courses in a way that ensures that learners remain motivated, engaged and able to benefit from the access to other drivers and their experiences.

Overcoming learner resistance to technology: Some drivers will be uncomfortable with video-conferencing/web-cam approaches and trainers will need to take this into consideration and ensure that these drivers are supported and engaged.

Health and Safety: Trainers will need to be aware of and comply with health and safety regulations in relation to the use of IT eg ensuring that learners have appropriate physical conditions.

Learner Needs: Trainers will need to ensure that no learner is disadvantaged by the use of IT eg where learners have a disability and the use of IT creates a barrier to learning.

Availability of administrative support at all locations: All courses require administrative support for security checks and recording purposes. All locations will need to be able to provide this support.

NOTE: If delivery via video-conferencing also draws on IT-based learning packages, all of the issues identified in the section on the use of technology above will also need to be considered.

Feedback from Approved Centres and users of Periodic Training

The Joint Approvals Unit for Periodic Training invites feedback and views from approved centres and users of Periodic Training on (1) the use of technology within Periodic Training and (2) as a mechanism to aid access.

We are keen to receive views on the options and issues raised in this paper. We would also welcome feedback on additional ways of using technology within Periodic Training.

Feedback should be submitted to: Vicki Ball (Vicki.ball@goskills.org) by 31 May 2009.

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