

RSC Remit 2007 - 2010

Introduction

The Regional Support Centres advise leaders and practitioners in learning providers nominated by their funding bodies, to help them to develop and implement effective e-learning strategies. The network of Regional Support Centres is a UK-wide service, responsive to local needs, under the guidance of regional / national stakeholders and centrally led. ¹

Regional Support Centres:-

1. provide advisory and support services to nominated learning providers and regional/ national organisations to help them develop e-learning capacity;
2. link nominated learning providers to JISC;
3. partner appropriate regional and national organisations to further the core remit;

within the defined financial and performance framework.

Spheres of activity include:-

- strategy development
- learning space design
- pedagogy
- e-learning tools
- network technical diagnostic support
- electronic resources
- e-progress review
- accessibility
- initial teacher training
- network management
- e-assessment
- learning technologies technical support

New spheres of activity will evolve continuously. In meeting national priorities and responding to local needs, the balance of activities will be influenced by the e-maturity of providers.

The processes for delivery are:-

- varied communication channels
- dissemination activities
- advice and guidance
- partnership with others
- forums
- gateways to services
- brokering

This core remit will be subject to review on an annual basis by the RSC Board with proposed changes subject to consultation. The RSC Board will consult with funding bodies and other RSC stakeholders if major changes are required to the core remit. RSCs may engage in activities beyond this core remit with the approval of the RSC Board who will assess impact of additional activity on delivery of the remit.

¹ In England, the RSCs are the regional delivery agent for the DIUS e-Learning Strategy. Their key role is to ensure signposting to all appropriate e-learning resources/services and encourage effective and appropriate use of LSC funded provision.

Mission

RSCs - stimulating and supporting innovation in learning

Strategic objectives

RSCs will:

1. contribute to the development of national and regional e-learning and associated strategies
2. assist with the development of organisational strategies
3. support the implementation of these strategies
4. facilitate the sharing of innovation and practice
5. facilitate regional collaboration
6. act as a gateway to expert advice, information and research outcomes
7. utilise innovative ways of delivering advice and support

RSC Services

Numbers in brackets map services to strategic objectives.

Spheres of activity

1. Strategy development and transformation

Discussions about strategy development and implementation form part of regular visits and other direct communications with all RSC customers. RSCs provide contextualising advice to leaders and senior managers on ICT and e-learning, to support their ambitions in transforming organisational cultures. RSCs provide or broker from appropriate consultants and other organisations, advisory services delivered at individual provider level for senior managers. This includes pointing to appropriate provision within the RSC service portfolio and other sources such as CEL, BECTa, QIA, SFEU, LSN etc. RSCs also provide specific advice on other issues such as helpdesk and learner support, change and risk management, legal and security compliance etc (2, 6)

1a. Strategic planning for project based, pedagogy-led introduction of new technologies for learning

RSCs advise on IT planning and review, and recommend technological and pedagogical resources, and further sources of advice to support innovative teaching and learning practice. RSCs take a proactive approach in enabling learning providers to assess the impact of incoming technologies and consequential methodologies in learning & teaching. (2, 4, 6)

1b. embedding e-learning

1c. cultural change

1d. quality

1e. staff development

1f. organisational structure

1g. curriculum delivery

2. e-progress review

e-Learning progress reviews are facilitated if requested, using appropriate tools as agreed with the provider. (2, 3, 4, 6, 7)

3. Learning Space Design

RSCs provide advice and communications on issues involved with new or refurbished learning spaces. RSC advice focuses on contextualising the e-learning opportunities of such 'new build', within the customer's overall learning strategy. RSCs help project design and development teams understand the special information, communications and learning technology needs of learning providers, such as infrastructural issues pertinent to e-learning, and provide exemplars of good practice. (2, 3, 6)

RSCs support accommodation / estates strategies

4. Accessibility

All UK RSCs provide advice and arrange training opportunities on accessibility and assistive technologies to all supported sectors. In England, RSCs support specialist colleges. (2, 3, 4, 6)

5. E-pedagogy

RSCs assist the process of embedding e-learning by advising on models and design of learning opportunities.

6. Support for Initial Teacher Training (ITT)

RSCs advise on appropriate resources and methodologies for the e-learning aspects of ITT programmes.

7. Network Management

RSCs advise on how to configure, operate and administer network technology effectively. They provide support and broker training workshops for institutions wishing to adopt good practices in network management, using appropriate tools such as BECTA FITS and ITIL. (3, 4, 6)

8. Network technical diagnostic support

RSCs enable training to undertake wired network diagnostics and network mapping, and wireless diagnostics and surveying, using appropriate tools; they provide implementation support and security advice, using appropriate tools; and they advise on network monitoring and bandwidth utilisation. (3, 6)

8a. Information security

RSCs advise providers on information security policy and practice. (2, 6)

9. e-assessment

9a. e-Portfolios

RSCs offer advice on use of e-Portfolios and electronic individual learning plans. They assist in the integration of e-Portfolios into learning providers' strategic planning. (3, 4, 6)

10. Electronic resources

RSCs support appropriate sector consultations by producers and publishers and advise on the use of publicly funded and subsidised e-learning materials. They advise on how to integrate them with a range of library and e-learning systems and tools for more seamless use. RSCs facilitate, promote and support learning resources staff forums such as library management systems user groups, providing general guidance & networking opportunities. RSCs advise on authentication with ATHENS and the migration from ATHENS to Shibboleth. RSCs advise on the development and embedding of relevant portals such as Learning & Skills web and Intute. (3, 4, 5, 6)

10a. Repositories

RSCs offer advice on institutional, regional and national e-learning digital repositories. They advise learning providers in the deployment and associated issues surrounding the use of digital repositories within the organisation. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)

10b. Information Skills

RSCs promote the importance of information skills and encourage collaboration in the design and implementation of information skills programmes. RSCs promote online services in this area. (3, 4, 6)

11. Learning technologies technical support

RSCs enable staff to investigate new and emerging e-learning technologies; to access training in the use of e-learning applications; to investigate and share knowledge of content delivery systems, such as VLEs, MLEs, file-stores, and repositories; and to promote systems integration of all learner services e.g. via single sign-on. (3, 4, 6)

12. e-Learning tools

RSCs provide advice on selecting and implementing a range of e-learning tools, including content development tools, assessment tools, repurposing tools and communication tools. (3, 4, 6)

12a. Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs)

RSCs advise on the use and implementation of VLEs. VLE user groups are facilitated and specific training brokered where appropriate. (2, 3, 4, 5, 6)

Processes for delivery

1. Communications

RSCs promote communications on behalf of appropriate publicly funded services, initiatives and learning providers via a range of channels, including e-mail, mailing lists, newsletters and web technologies. (3, 4, 5, 6)

2. Forums

RSCs facilitate or support forums that bring together those with common interests from a region or sub-region. Forums may be linked across regional and sectoral boundaries. Examples of supported forums are technical, curriculum, learning resources, staff development. Other examples include user groups for particular systems. RSCs use communication tools to extend the work of such forums. Practitioner community liaison is backed up with site visits to key practitioner contacts. (3, 4, 5, 6)

3. Dissemination

RSCs liaise between learning providers and JISC services and support JISC and other programmes, disseminating project outcomes. For smaller HEIs, they help broker relationships (nationally) between specialist HEIs (e.g. land based, performing arts, and education). (3, 4, 6)

4. Gateway

RSC operate as the regional point of contact for appropriate JISC activities, supporting JISC policy, strategy and initiatives, promoting relevant JISC services and resources, and providing feedback to JISC on provider needs, regarding the suitability of existing provision and the need for additional services and resources.

RSCs will act in line with relevant national strategies and initiatives, establishing and sustaining effective communication channels.

5. Advice and guidance

RSCs take enquiries from key contacts in their identified learning providers through various means, including a helpdesk. Enquirers will be referred to appropriate sources of expertise or responded to directly. Advice and guidance will be delivered both on site and remotely. (2, 3, 4, 5, 6)

6. Brokering (e.g. partnerships, training)

6a Staff Development

RSCs advise learning providers on potential sources and resources for staff development, working within frameworks such as the LSN e-Learning Professional Development framework. They also arrange relevant regional courses and workshops by training providers. They advise on staff development strategy, and work in partnership with

other organisations to create staff development opportunities such as 'Learning Journey'-type events. RSCs promote subject based practitioner networks and virtual practitioner networks, where appropriate. (2, 3, 4, 6)

6b Online Staff Development

RSCs promote the use of online staff development courses, modules and learning objects that teach staff how to deliver e-learning and organisational transformation, including subject-specific online courses, in support of subject learning networks etc. National publicly funded services that produce online learning products may consult RSCs to find out the needs of RSC customers; RSCs then advise customers on how to embed such training in their staff development programmes. RSCs advise national online training initiatives on appropriate technologies and pedagogy to match programmes to customer need. (2, 3, 4, 6, 7)

7. Partnership

RSCs enable providers to exploit opportunities available through regional and national initiatives.