

## OTARA: An e-learning design framework

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Many academics approach the process of Learning Design like construction workers. They take the curriculum document, or Unit Standard, as the plan upon which the delivery is constructed. OTARA is used as a DESIGN tool. It focuses on the DESIGN of the learning process and supports a social constructivist approach that incorporates physical resources and ACTIVITIES.

### Core assumptions

- Vocational Education and Training is more about raising awareness and skill than teaching facts.
- Educational Technology enables a broad level of access to information. This shift of power encourages tertiary providers to focus on facilitating and accrediting learning.
- E-learning lends itself to a social constructivist approach.

### Opportunities Galore

Whilst subject matter knowledge is important, a wider accessibility to education through the internet means that it should no longer be the primary focus of a tutor, lecturer or teacher. Good teachers never did act that way, of course... but they could have done.

Just as we are no longer bound by the classroom, our approaches to facilitating and assessing learning are no longer constrained by the walls of our institutions.

This shift in constraints provides us with many new opportunities to meet the needs of our students and the community.

Adopting flexible delivery becomes a trade-off between the adaptability of the classroom and the flexibility of time and space offered by e-learning. One way of balancing the changes in constraints is by using structure.

Consider the following

Benefits		Constraints
Adaptability <sup>1</sup> Inclusive environment	Classroom Delivery	Same time Same Place
Any Time Any Place	E-learning/Flexible	Exclusive Environment Requires Structure

## Design Process

### Content vs Process

Content is not the most important factor. This has always been the case. (Evidence: two lecturers teaching the same syllabus but using different approaches and resources).

At this stage of our e-learning journey, most of us are working in the zone of conscious incompetence. We know there are things we don't know and that we need to know. Frameworks help us become competent.

If we use a similar classification to contrast this state with our work in a classroom, we could say that many tutors are unconsciously competent: a state where they prepare and deliver without the need for expressed frameworks because they are familiar with the options and how they can make them work.

Achieving the end goal is the important thing—enabling students to gain knowledge of how to use information to achieve their desired outcomes.

Our institutions' quality assurance policies and procedures require us to have formal documentation that builds the context for any programme or paper. These include the underlying philosophy for the offering, delivery methods, hours, objectives, graduate profile and possibly the assessment standards.

In our e-learning environment we need to have an explicit idea of how we will assess the performance of our learners to determine whether they have reached the standards described in the documentation.

The first two formal pieces of information we have will be the Objectives and the evidence we will use to meet our Assessment needs.

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<sup>1</sup> Adaptability is shown by the teacher's ability to adapt to continually changing classroom dynamics and to grasp the learning opportunities that present themselves.

## OTARA

OTARA is a simple construct that allows us to focus on achieving our desired outcomes through the selection of the available tools, techniques and resources.

Refer to the printout showing the OTARA framework...

<b>O</b>	are the <b>objectives</b> or learning <b>outcomes</b>
<b>T</b>	are the <b>themes</b> that represent the way we decide to chunk related objectives to achieve our goal.
<b>A</b>	are the <b>activities</b> students need to undertake to achieve their goals
<b>R</b>	represents the <b>resources</b> we will use to support the learning activities
<b>A</b>	are the <b>assessments</b> we will use to gather evidence of a students learning

For example: This workshop was designed using the attached OTARA template...

### Explanation

You can see that evidence of achieving the objectives is subjective. We need to feel that you have engaged in the OTARA design process by working to complete an example. The activity requires collaborative group work. The resources are provided, and we will complete the process by focusing on each theme. As with most design processes, we expect OTARA to be used in an iterative manner.

Before we undertake the group work, let's take a look at some typical options available to us for each heading area. A template entitled TYPICAL OPTIONS is provided for reference.

## Group Exercise

**Course Name:** Feline Aquatic Management

**Objective:** Student will be able to demonstrate an ability to bath a cat.

**Delivery Method:** Online Blended Delivery

**Evidence:**

- Feline need for bathing is clearly shown, and benefits explained
- Preparations comprehensively mitigate risks to washer, cat, and environment.
- Cat, washer, and environment sustain minimal physical and psychological damage.

### Groupwork Exercise Process

1. Form groups of 3-4.
2. Using the template provided, consider the objective(s), and identify how you will assess the students.
3. Discuss and note the activity options you have for achieving the objectives given the constraints (i.e. online!)
4. Discuss the way the proposed activities could be chunked into a theme.
5. Choose the activities for your offering ...
6. Identify the resources that will be needed to undertake the activity and identify what needs to be done to create them.

On conclusion (if we have time) run through the key points using Q&A.

**Online Programme Planning document**  
**20/09/2005**

Objectives/PCs	Themes	Activities	Resources	Assessment
<p>To understand the need for and method of use of the OTARA eLearning design template.</p>	<p>Why we need a framework...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Initial thesis</li> <li>2. Change from content delivery to activity</li> <li>3. Lack of familiarity with options</li> <li>4. Comparison of f2f and online.</li> <li>5. Need for structure</li> </ol> <p>Introduction to OTARA</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Acronym meaning</li> <li>2. Focus on outcomes</li> </ol> <p>Working with OTARA</p>	<p>Presentation: approx 10-15 min to introduce OTARA and the reasons it is needed.</p> <p>Small-group exercise on a generic subject <i>e.g. bathing a cat...</i></p> <p>Brief discussion on eLearning Course design</p>	<p>Short presentation – PowerPoint.</p> <p>Completed OTARA template for this presentation.</p> <p>Examples of the likely contents of each OTARA column and how they relate.</p> <p>Partially completed problem for the group-work.</p> <p>Evaluation forms</p>	<p>Workshop participants will be seen to engage in the design process and <i>may</i> ask questions or challenge the presenters.</p> <p>Monitor workshop activity to assess engagement in design at some level.</p> <p>Evaluation forms will show attendees experimented with the OTARA framework. Feedback will be overwhelmingly positive</p>

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<b>Objectives/PCs</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
<p>The objective or learning goal may already be established in the course descriptor or be an element from a unit standard.</p>	<p>Scaffolding to provide clear expectations and instructions that will guide learners through the unit of work.</p> <p>Themes link and explain resources, and fill any gaps that may not be covered by resources available elsewhere.</p>	<p>What the learners need to DO to bridge the gap between objectives and assessment.</p> <p>May include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lecture</li> <li>• Discussion</li> <li>• Readings</li> <li>• Journaling</li> <li>• Quizzes</li> <li>• Experts</li> <li>• Projects</li> <li>• Web searches</li> <li>• Case studies</li> <li>• Scenarios</li> <li>• Role play</li> <li>• etc</li> </ul>	<p>What the learners <b>need</b> to build skills, knowledge and understanding to complete the activities and the assessment.</p> <p>Subject support may include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• library</li> <li>• Internet</li> <li>• workplace</li> <li>• Fellow students</li> <li>• Tutor or facilitator</li> <li>• subject specialists</li> </ul> <p>Other support may include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning skills</li> <li>• Pastoral care</li> </ul>	<p>Identify the evidence that is needed to show that students have achieved the specified outcomes.</p> <p>The assessment is derived from the objectives. May also be identified as the performance criteria of a unit standard.</p>

**Online Programme Planning document – eFest Group Exercise**

**20/09/2005**

**Course name:** Feline Aquatic Management

<b>Objectives/PCs</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
Illustrate understanding of cat's need for a bath		Compare washed and unwashed cats  Evaluate health and domestic risks of unwashed cats		Feline need for bathing is clearly shown, and benefits explained  <i>Assessment</i>

Objectives/PCs	Themes	Activities	Resources	Assessment
<p>Assess risks and prepare self, cat and surroundings</p>		<p>Prepare the workspace</p> <p>Prepare self</p> <p>Prepare cat</p> <p>Bathe cat</p>		<p>Preparations comprehensively mitigate risks to washer, cat, and environment.</p> <p><i>Assessment</i></p>

<b>Objectives/PCs</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
Demonstrate ability to restore order from chaos and apply first aid		Dry cat  Assess damage  Apply first aid  Tidy up		Cat, washer, and environment sustain minimal physical and psychological damage.  <i>Assessment:</i>