

TELRI

Methodology for cost-benefit analysis (cost-effectiveness)

The project will make it a priority to include a qualitative cost-benefit analysis in a number of the interventions. An approach is indicated below.

Educational effectiveness must first be measured, comparing the effectiveness of the new teaching and learning strategies with the previous approaches, including the role played by the technological intervention. Immediate and long-term benefits may occur in:

- explicit in curricula about learning outcomes & assessment criteria;
- enhanced student achievement in the skills that contribute to research capability;
- improved access to learning opportunities;
- cohesion of teaching and learning processes into a coherent strategy;
- increased ratio of motivators to barriers (leading to increased uptake and success);
- maintenance of quality in courses involving larger numbers of students;
- reducing teaching staff work loads in preparation, delivery, support and marking;
- increasing the quality time that staff can spend with students;
- reducing the overall cost of methods and materials in the long term;
- more effective use of IT infrastructure;
- potential for distance learning development.

In terms of the benefits in improving student motivation and learning, one would ideally measure learning outcomes of groups making use of IT against those who do not. This might be achieved by evaluating outcomes with the previous years' equivalent groups. It is unlikely, given the relatively small scale of the project, that one would be able to identify major learning shifts. However, it should be possible for each intervention to derive qualitative data on changes in student capability, and this will be obtained through interviews with staff and students.

The cost of each intervention might also be measured, in terms of: improved or increased use of existing equipment; provision of new equipment; staff training and learning time; and production of new tools and materials. The intervention cost must be compared with the cost of current or where possible alternative methods. Cost in pilot courses will be projected to longer-term benefits of the intervention in terms of maintaining quality and values, staff development, student motivation and achievement, and other factors affecting sustainability (validity and viability).

Collaboration with the experts in the area of cost-effectiveness will inform our approaches and assist with the practical methodology, based on their experience at institutional levels. Gordon Doughty at University of Glasgow (previously TLTSN Centre) has already been approached for external consultancy.

Statements about cost-effectiveness may be derived by considering the overall benefits against the net cost of implementation. This can be guided by change management considerations that relate the likelihood of sustainable change in terms of the balance between desirability of change, net costs and extent of disruption required.