

AUSTRALIAN *FLEXIBLE LEARNING* FRAMEWORK

Managed by the Flexible Learning Advisory Group on behalf of all States and Territories in conjunction with ANTA

**2002 RTO Case Study Project
'Flexible learning in practice'**

**Bendigo Regional Institute of
TAFE**

BENDIGO PRISON CAMPUS

**Overcoming the challenges of
implementing flexible learning**

November 2002

RTO Case Study Foreword

The following case study is one of 18 case studies that document the use and application of Australian Flexible Learning (AFL) Framework products and services by Registered Training Organisations (RTOs). The case studies are an initiative of the AFL Framework for the National Vocational Education and Training System 2000 – 2004 as a means of offering 'real-life' examples of how RTOs are implementing elearning strategies with the assistance of AFL Framework products and services. Each participating RTO has documented their experiences over a six month period (June 2002 to November 2002) and have been selected from each State and Territory representing the TAFE, Private Provider, Enterprise and VET in Schools sectors.

Each case study will provide you with an insight into how RTOs are implementing flexible learning and is critical reading if:

- You are interested in finding out about the possibilities of flexible learning
- You are currently implementing flexible learning within your organisation
- You are looking to extend your flexible learning delivery capabilities

Each case study covers areas such as;

- How to implement AFL Framework products and services
- Change management practices
- Customisation of flexible learning products and services
- Professional development
- Access and equity considerations
- Flexible learning strategic planning
- Blended learning techniques
- Marketing and much more.

Each case study highlights the various ways in which AFL Framework products and services can be applied to the learning environment to enhance client delivery and service.

For further information pertaining to AFL Framework products and services or to access other case studies visit discover.flexiblelearning.net.au or phone 07 3234 1852.

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Executive Summary

Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE (BRIT) - Bendigo prison campus has recently implemented its first course incorporating flexible learning. In the near future, the BRIT team plans to include flexible learning in a number of existing and new courses.

This case study outlines the BRIT team's experiences in establishing their first course and developing others.

Challenges

A prison campus working within the Justice system, BRIT faces many challenges.

- Students can be released without notice and often do not complete their courses, particularly the longer courses. By introducing flexible learning, the team was able to offer a course to students who may be released before completing the course.
- Before introducing flexible learning, the BRIT team needed to research the possibilities and overcome their staff's concerns and lack of knowledge about flexible delivery.
- The BRIT team also needed to work within the Department of Justice security regulations (i.e. students cannot directly access the internet) as well as TAFE guidelines. These are not always complementary.

Australian Flexible Learning (AFL) Framework Products and Services

The BRIT team chose the following AFL Framework products and services to complement each other: the Legal and Regulatory Framework for Flexible Learning, the Flexible Learning Measurement Report, FlexWays and Toolboxes.

The team chose these products and services to support BRIT teachers and their methods in developing and delivering courses. FlexWays was the initial service which helped staff understand the benefits of flexible learning and even introduced some staff to working with the internet.

Strategy

The Certificate II in Asset Maintenance – Cleaning Operations was the first course BRIT chose to deliver flexibly. This was a simple course which required little development. This allowed the team to focus on developing knowledge of the flexible learning procedures and requirements.

The course has been quite successful with two classes conducted since early October. The second course included three students who were to be released before completing the course and were willing to use a mix of class time and flexible learning. This provided the team with an ideal situation to test the purpose of the case study.

Results

Following the success of the initial course and the increased interest in flexible delivery, BRIT will continue to develop courses with a flexible delivery component. However, to use flexible learning alone within a prison campus would be difficult, as students are unable to directly access the internet and may also not have the computer skills or the time to develop them.

The team has identified that courses with several delivery modes, (elearning, CD's, on-the-job, workbooks and classroom time) are most beneficial for students. These practical courses offer students incentives and skills which provide employment opportunities that were not previously available.

1.0 Introduction

Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE (BRIT) is a well-established TAFE institute operating from major campuses in the Bendigo CBD and nearby Charleston Road. BRIT also has campuses in the outlying towns of Echuca, Maryborough, Kyneton and Castlemaine as well as campuses inside four regional correctional facilities: HMP Prisons at Bendigo, Loddon, Tarrengower; and Malmsbury Juvenile Justice Centre. At these campuses, BRIT offers a wide range of study options to students.

Bendigo prison is one of the older prisons in Victoria. It is a medium security prison which caters for drug and alcohol rehabilitation.

The Bendigo prison campus of BRIT provides both Vocational Education and Training (VET) and literacy courses for about 85 students. Most students are at the prison for six to eight months (the length of their therapy). However, some students are reclassified at short notice and moved to another prison facility. Therefore, some students are unable to complete longer courses. Being a correctional facility, Bendigo prison students are not allowed internet access. This restriction has previously kept the campus's use of flexible learning to a minimum.

Prior to BRIT's involvement in this case study, flexible learning was only used in the Certificate III in Small Business Management. The course was co-ordinated by BRIT's Open Learning Centre and delivered using paper-based distance education learning resources. Unfortunately, this course was not attractive to students.

The team's case study objectives were the following:

- to offer students flexible learning using interactive CD-Roms and websites without them being able to directly access outside connections in the classroom.
- to develop a course that was interesting to students.
- to transfer the flexible learning skills and knowledge acquired by staff to other areas of study.

2.0 Getting started - Selecting the right AFL Framework products and services

BRIT's main challenge was to incorporate flexible delivery into an environment which had little knowledge of online delivery of training. Before the students could begin, the team needed to educate BRIT teaching staff about the flexible learning opportunities, as well as the corrections staff about security concerns.

To address these concerns, the BRIT team chose the following AFL Framework products and services.

The **Legal and Regulatory Framework for Flexible Learning** was used to increase the Manager's and staff's knowledge on legal and regulatory issues that impacted on activities and delivery techniques. It has improved staff's knowledge in areas such as copyright, privacy, e-commerce and telecommunications. This will be used as an on-going tool to provide staff with a legal and regulatory base when developing or implementing their courses.

Note: The 'Legal and Regulatory Framework for Flexible Learning' product has been superseded by 'Legal Issues in Flexible Learning' and can be accessed at flexiblelearning.net.au/legal.

The **Flexible Learning Measurement Report** was a valuable guide for staff. It provides a benchmarking tool which enables staff to accurately gauge the effectiveness of flexible learning activities and progress. It assisted BRIT to identify course standards and development progress which saved staff time. Consequently, staff have seen flexible learning as a positive, best practice approach to flexible delivery.

FlexWays provided BRIT with templates for developing course materials. This will continue to ensure that the BRIT team develops courses in similar formats.

Using **Toolboxes**, BRIT has been able to give teachers a starting point when developing their flexible learning components for use in 2003.

This case study process has provided many learning opportunities for students and staff. The BRIT team is now investigating using flexible learning not only in current subjects, but also for new subjects which offer career pathways for the students upon release.

The combination of flexible learning, using the AFL Framework products and services, and classroom time means that BRIT can better cater to the range of student requirements.

3.0 Putting flexible learning into practice with AFL Framework products and services

By choosing AFL Framework products and services, BRIT has been able to implement flexible learning in an orderly and deliberate way.

Although some staff had reservations about using flexible delivery, they were given confidence in the process through the **Legal and Regulatory Framework for Flexible Learning**. The team's **Flexible Learning Leader** also played a key role in implementing flexible delivery, giving the team confidence.

The team used the **Flexible Learning Measurement Report** as a benchmarking tool which allowed the team to apply flexible learning models to their situation. Initially, the team used it to source relevant information, particularly the '**Prototype Benchmarks for an Effective Flexible Learning System**'. They then distributed the benchmarks to all staff to obtain feedback. With this feedback, the team chose particular benchmarks and modified others to suit their circumstances. The customised benchmarking prototype was then distributed to staff to assist them when implementing flexible learning. These can be located in Appendix A.

The team will continue to use these benchmarks to promote best practice throughout the campus and will investigate other benchmarks relevant to new courses which may be offered in the future.

The team chose to implement flexible learning into their Certificate II in Asset Maintenance – Cleaning Operations, which consisted of three CD-Roms. This course was a simple and relevant course which they could easily monitor to gauge how receptive students would be to flexible delivery. The resource also introduced staff to flexible learning and the benefits of combining both face-to-face and online methods of delivery into a blended learning environment.

Early challenges included students' poor computer skills, technical problems in the computer lab, minor disruptions to BRIT teaching staff, and staff's lack of knowledge. This reduced the success of the first class. Student feedback from this class reflected

these problems. However, some students indicated that they could see an advantage in using a flexible learning approach to learning if the problems were rectified.

Subsequent classes produced more favourable feedback from students. Four students from the first class returned and said that they felt flexible learning offered them more chances to complete the courses and offered subjects which may enhance their chances of employment upon release.

In the first class, nine students received Certificates (100% success rate). This group used the flexible learning component as revision and extra study only. In the second class, three students will be released before finishing the course and they have used both the flexible learning and classroom time to progress through the course early. After a practical assessment, they have all passed the competency and have been awarded a Certificate.

By continuing to use the benchmarking and the **Toolboxes**, BRIT will be able to develop their own course materials in 2003. As many courses are currently converting to training packages, the team is already looking to vary their approaches to delivery. This provides the perfect opportunity to continue what we have started and to positively develop to the benefit of both staff and students.

4.0 How to get the most out of AFL Framework products and services

The BRIT team used a variety of AFL Framework products and services. Despite the volume of information on the internet, BRIT used the RTO Discover:e website (discover.flexiblelearning.net.au) to successfully navigate their way through this information. The site provided them with a comprehensive guide to the AFL Framework products and services and case study project.

Although a long document, the **Legal and Regulatory Framework for Flexible Learning** provided BRIT with detailed information for staff and linked them to the new processes of flexible learning. This kept the BRIT team up-to-date with current legal requirements and provided links between policy, regulation and practices. The team focused on the areas of copyright, privacy, e-commerce and telecommunications.

During the case study period, this product became the **Legal Issues and Flexible Learning** section of the RTO Discover:e website. In addition to the information provided in the original product, this new product contained enhancements such as a question and answer section where solicitors will reply by email to specific legal questions.

Finding course content was also easy through the **Toolboxes** section of the website. By choosing a training package, BRIT was able to obtain an overview of the content, sample pages and where to purchase the toolboxes.

FlexWays was also very useful for staff. It is clear and straightforward, and gave staff the choice to create a professional development plan with specific goals. Staff having difficulty defining a goal also found the scenario builder useful.

To establish effective benchmarks, BRIT used the **Flexible Learning Measurement Report**. In addition to the benchmarks, this provided useful background information which clarified some areas of staff concern. After sourcing the benchmarks, the BRIT team presented staff with a prototype which highlighted their particular course areas (see Appendix A).

5.0 Conclusion

Prior to BRIT's involvement in this case study, the team had little knowledge about introducing more relevant courses to students and no clear pathway to implement them. The AFL Framework products and services provided this pathway.

Once the team overcame their unique challenges, the team tested their new flexible delivery methods. Unsure how the students would react to this type of delivery, the team was encouraged and supported by the AFL Framework products and services.

Minor disruptions to BRIT staffing meant that development was slow. While this was frustrating at times, it allowed the team to research and reflect on different aspects of the project before they implemented it.

To choose the right flexible learning implementation tools among a myriad of products and services (most of which are free), the team was clearly guided by the AFL Framework products and services guide and people who have worked in these areas for some time. This together with the RTO Discover:e website helped the team choose the right AFL Framework products and services, they also helped them navigate through the extensive information available on the internet.

By using the AFL Framework products and services, BRIT became more aware of the legal requirements placed on staff and students and the impact it has on course development and delivery. The team are now more confident in using flexible learning approaches.

BRIT's Bendigo prison campus now offers students a variety of relevant and interesting courses. By using the mix of class time and flexible learning, the team hopes to continue to use flexible delivery in a number of courses. Students have completed the Certificate II in Asset Maintenance – Cleaning Operations course in shortened timeframes using this method of delivery.

In the future, BRIT plans to develop an interactive CD-Rom which will be used as part of their staff induction program to introduce the ideas and practices developed during this case study.

6.0 Glossary of Terms

BRIT = Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE

HMP = Her Majesty's Prison (Bendigo, Loddon, Tarrengower)

AFL Framework = Australian Flexible Learning Framework

VET = Vocational Education and Training

7.0 Acknowledgements

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Appendix

PROTOTYPE BENCHMARKS FOR AN EFFECTIVE FLEXIBLE LEARNING SYSTEM

STUDENTS

Flexible Learning Component	Benchmarks
Access to VET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Emphasis on openness and equity in access to study ▪ Access, bridging, literacy and other programs are provided to improve opportunities to enter VET and Achieve qualifications
Information Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students are provided with up to date information about courses including admission requirements, fees, course objectives and competencies, articulation pathways, and modes of delivery
Access to online technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students have access to technical assistance throughout their study – on campus or remotely
Learner Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students are provided with hands-on training in using ICTs for study purposes and developing their technical literacy skills ▪ Students are provided with hands-on training and information to aid them in searching and using online and hard copy information resources, and developing their information literacy skills ▪ Questions directed to students services staff are answered quickly and accurately, with a structured system in place to address student complaints

CURRICULUM

Flexible Learning Component	Benchmarks
Structures and outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Award structures and module sequences encourage flexibility to meet client needs ▪ Content and learning processes are clearly linked to learning outcomes and competencies ▪ Learning outcomes and competencies are defined in terms of content-related knowledge and skills and lifelong learning skills
Curriculum development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teachers have access to specialist advice and assistance in instructional design and production of multi-media learning resources ▪ Instructional materials are reviewed periodically to ensure they meet quality standards
Learning Resources – Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learning resources are readable (at appropriate language and literature levels) and printable, stimulating and interactive ▪ Learning resources are technically correct (functional, tested, quality controlled), navigable, structured and flexible ▪ Processes are in place for updating and renewing of learning resources
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learning outcomes and student needs, not the availability of existing technology, determine the technologies used in course delivery ▪ Teachers are responsive to student queries, proactive in student monitoring and provision of feedback
Assessment – assignments, examinations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teachers and students agree on expectations regarding times for student assignment completion and teacher response ▪ Students have access to computer managed assessment programs on campus and remotely ▪ Online and other technologies are used to provide feedback to students in a constructive and timely manner
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The module/program’s educational effectiveness and delivery processes are regularly assessed against specific standards ▪ Intended learning outcomes are reviewed regularly to ensure clarity, utility and appropriateness

PROVIDERS: TEACHERS AND MANAGERS

Flexible Learning Component	Benchmarks
Professional development – teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Time release and other strategies are in place to assist teachers to develop new skills and competence in flexible learning
Professional development – Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ VET managers at all levels have access to online and other PD programs to develop: ▪ Hands-on understanding of flexible learning and online delivery ▪ Education management skills for flexible learning environments
Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ IT support and help desk is provided for the maximum time possible, especially on call during class sessions
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teachers are encouraged to develop communities of interest with other VET teachers, industry workers and others to assist flexible delivery
Incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teachers are encouraged to develop interests and skills in flexible learning and online delivery

PROVIDERS: ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

Flexible Learning Component	Benchmarks
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Senior managers understand and are committed to goals of flexible learning and online delivery and change processes required ▪ Senior managers provide visible, tangible leadership in defining and implementing flexible learning appropriate to the institution and its clients
Organisational planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The online technology plan is fully integrated with all aspects of the institution's strategic plan and culture
Technological infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regular hardware and software upgrades and installation are implemented ▪ Appropriate security and authentication systems are in place for all users ▪ For classroom-based learning, dedicated workspace is provided which isolates students from external interference and prevents students from interrupting other classes
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Internal operating procedures and schedules to accommodate flexible patterns and timetables for delivery ▪ Quality assurance frameworks are in place
Financial management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Resource allocation processes recognise the need for upfront investment in course development and PD

VET SYSTEMS

Flexible Learning Component	Benchmarks
Policy and leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Senior managers understand and are committed to goals of flexible learning and online delivery and systemic change processes required.