

e-Learning: Use e-learning environments, platforms and online learning**4.1 Plan to use a learning platform****4.1.1 Understand commonly used terms such as: platforms, websites, intranets VLE/MLE, online learning and the feature of each****LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

After working through this information sheet you will have an understanding of the terms websites, online learning, VLE, MLE and intranets.

Definition of a web site

A Web site is a related collection of World Wide Web (WWW) files that includes a beginning file called a home page. An organisation or an individual will tell you how to get to their Web site by giving you the address of their home page. From the home page, you can get to all the other pages on their site.

Definition of online learning

Is the use of any communication network (usually the Internet, a VLE or other computer networks) to deliver learning experience.

Refer to Unit 1 for the definition of e-Learning.

Definition of a learning platform

'A 'learning platform' is a term covering a variety of different products, all of which support on-line elements of learning in some way'

There are **three** main types of tools that form a learning platform:

- **Content:** this includes tools that enable the delivery of electronic learning content, whether this content is written in house, or imported from other commercial packages;
- **Communications:** tools that support any type of communications and group work, for example, e-mail, discussion lists and bulletin boards;
- **Management:** this includes any tools or systems that support the management of the teaching and learning process such as formative or summative assessment or tracking of progress.

However, within education and training environments there are **three** commonly used terms to describe learning platforms:

- the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)
- the Managed Learning Environment (MLE) and
- an intranet or Portal.

Common terms used to describe a learning platform:

VLE	A Virtual Learning Environment	a combination of all three tools – content, communications and management. It supports a range of learning processes, from traditional classroom use to off-line, distance learning and online learning
MLE	A Managed Learning Environment	a system designed to assist teachers in the management of online courses. It usually includes access control, provision of e-learning content, communication tools, and administration of user workgroups. It incorporates a VLE and Management Information Systems
Intranet/Portal	An internal Web site	a site that is controlled and normally produced, by the organisation. Some organisations do not allow access to the Internet and download selective information for learners to their Intranet. One example would be an Intranet used in a prison to deliver flexible learning but restrict access to the Internet.

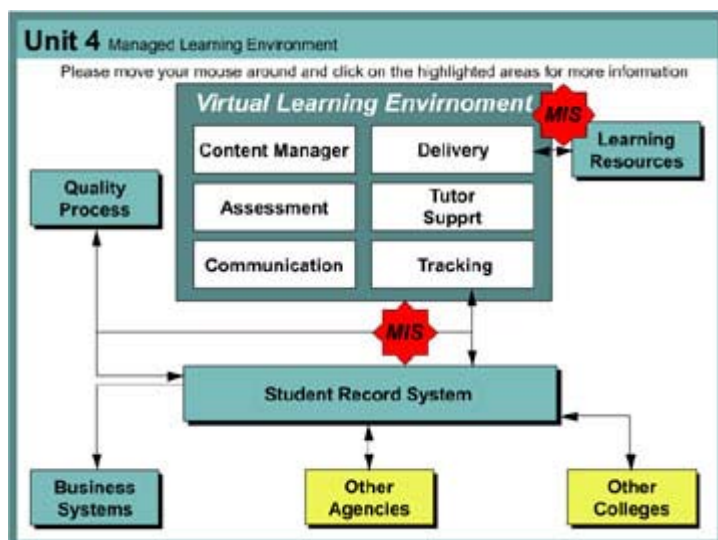
The VLE should:

- deliver learning content to a computer or mobile learning device
- include tools that enable content, either produced in-house or commercially produced, to be uploaded by admin or teaching staff;
- provide communication tools that support any type of communications and group work, for example, e-mail, discussion lists and bulletin boards;
- be accessible to learners within the educational environment and if possible from home or the work place.

The MLE would include: Click image for DLR for more information:

- tools or systems that support the management of the teaching and learning process;
- formative or summative assessment;
- allow the manipulation of data from various sources that enables senior managers to evaluate and improve the effectiveness and quality of provision
- tracking of learner progress.

The VLE acts as a 'portal' to online Curriculum Mapping, Assessment, Communication, Delivery, Tutor support and Tracking facilities sitting within the MLE.



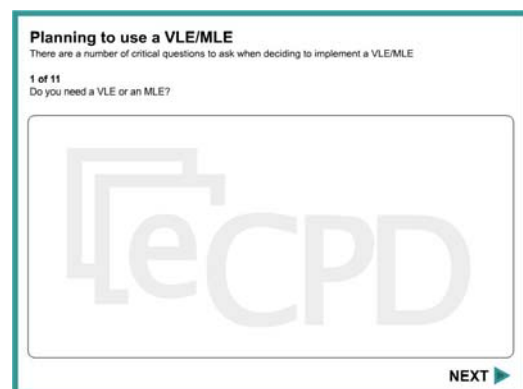
What does a VLE/MLE do?

The principle functions that the complete VLE/MLE needs to deliver are:

- Controlled access to curriculum that has been mapped to 'chunks' that can be separately assessed and recorded
- Tracking student activity and achievement allows tutors to define and set up a course with accompanying materials and activities to direct the learner and monitor their progress
- Support of on-line learning, including access to learning resources, assessment and guidance. The learning resources may be developed in-house, or purchased materials that can be imported and made available to learners
- Communication between the learner and the tutor and learner and other learners in the group. This allows a flow of feedback and support between all involved

TASKS

- 1 Please complete the task on implementing a VLE by clicking on the dynamic learning resource "planning to use a VLE" or by accessing the online digital version on the ePD web site.
- 2 Once you have identified VLEs that you want to investigate further, complete the comparison table which is available on the Ferl web site in order to decide which VLE is most appropriate for your organisation. Investigate commercially available VLEs and Open sources VLEs eg Moodle. Access the comparison table from here:
http://ferl.becta.org.uk/content_files/ferl/pages/focus_areas/vle1/purchasing/table_example.htm
- 3 What are the reason for using a VLE instead of using a shared drive or the intranet/portal? Using the Ferl web site find out the answer as well as listing all the component parts of a VLE?
- 4 There are a number of case studies on the Ferl site that describe how various colleges are using VLEs. Find a case study for the specific VLE that you are using or that you think is appropriate to your organisation following the completion of the above tasks. Summaries the advantages of this product and disseminate to your manager or colleagues.

**WEB LINKS**

- Access the Learning technologies section of the Ferl web site to find out more information about Learning Platforms in the VLE focus area. <http://ferl.becta.org.uk/display.cfm?page=461>
- Access the JISC web site to obtain further information about MLEs and VLEs http://www.jisc.ac.uk/index.cfm?name=mle_briefings_1
- Also on this site you will find a full overview of an MLE and interoperability issues http://www.jisc.ac.uk/index.cfm?name=mle_overview

CROSS REFERENCES TO OTHER INFORMATION SHEETS

Unit 4 - 4.1.4

Unit 9