

# E-Learning in professional contexts

**Aileen McGuigan**



The ePIC Research and Scholarship Group is now in its second year of existence. It is one of a number of such groups in the University of Dundee's School of Education, Social Work and Community Education. ePIC is comprised of some 20 members of the School's teaching staff, from different disciplines, with varying experience of research and scholarship. Some of our members are 'emergent' researchers, keen to get involved in scholarly activity, others have already established themselves with a range of projects and publications.

With ESCalate's funding, we were able to host at the University of Dundee a well-attended and useful 'Sharing Ideas' symposium on 14th May 2010, the theme was e-learning in professional contexts. Some 30 attendees included ePIC members, representatives from the University's School of Medicine and from the college sector.

Julie Hughes of University of Wolverhampton was invited to speak on her interest in blogs to support learning. Her presentation, 'Building blogging learning communities: what can we learn?' was well-received and generated a lot of discussion. It was particularly useful for attendees to see and hear about Julie's experiences of blogging and e-portfolios in Pebblepad: our VLE platform at University of Dundee is Blackboard, which is very different.

Several ePIC group members gave short presentations on their 'work in progress': in 'Just two clicks' Lucy Golden presented on the importance of interaction design in online learning materials; Lynn Boyle's 'Blogging for success' was all about the potential isolation of the online distance learner and how this problem can be alleviated through group blog activity; Lynn Kelly and Sharon Jackson shared their experiences of online learning

with social work students in 'An evaluation of the student experience of engaging in collaborative inquiry through the virtual learning environment'. Lastly, Natalie Lafferty's presentation 'Beyond the garden wall: exploring the use of Wordpress to support teaching and learning' was all about the educational use of blogs in the context of University of Dundee's School of Medicine.

The symposium gave attendees a welcome opportunity to learn about each other's specific interests in the field of e-learning and to 'cross-fertilise' through some lively discussion which is still continuing, long after the event, with various attendees now 'paired up' and working together on a variety of projects.



**Aileen McGuigan**  
University of Dundee

Aileen McGuigan is ePIC (e-learning and professionalism in context) Research and Scholarship Group Convenor at the University of Dundee. Since 2006 she has been teaching on the TQ (FE) (Teaching Qualification (Further Education) programme – an online professional development programme for lecturers. Her research interest is in educational applications of Web 2.0 technology, particularly the effective use of blogs to support professional learning.

Aileen McGuigan: University of Dundee

**Project page: *Sharing Ideas: ePIC and web 2.0 tools:***  
**<http://escalate.ac.uk/6931>**