

Choosing a VLE

Whilst keeping in mind that implementing a Learning Platform should be part of a self review/change management process rather than just buying a product, at some point it will become necessary to select the VLE component of your system.

General issues

Some typical questions you would need to ask a supplier are likely to include:

- Does the VLE system already contain content, or are materials available separately from the producer?
Is the system purely a shell in which you place your own content, sourced elsewhere?
- How easy is it to write and upload materials?
- Is uploading content to the VLE a simple drag and drop process, or more complicated?
- Is it easy to create online tests?
- How much HTML (Web authoring) knowledge is required - the less the better!
- How easy is to do administrative tasks, like enrol students into the VLE?
- How open is the system - does it allow you to share with other resources or systems you might have? Does it talk to your Management Information System for example? Is it compatible with other VLEs? Does it meet the emerging standards?
- Are the other functions, e.g. communications, student tracking, assessment, easy to use and well designed?
- What about installation, technical support, and training? What's included in the purchasing price and what isn't? Is training face-to-face, online, or both?
- Is there an email or Web-based user group you can join and monitor before purchase, and if so, what sorts of comments have existing users made?
- Can you get an evaluation version to install and test before buying?
- Is it configurable to the look and feel of your college?
- Does the supplier offer a hosting service, where the VLE is hosted on their own servers, rather than your college servers, so reducing your need for technical support to be provided internally?
- Which other colleges already use the VLE you are considering? Are there reference sites or demonstration courses?
- What are schools and Local Authorities in your area using or planning to use?

The [Edutools](#) community maintain an up to date list of VLE reviews and comparisons

Statement of Requirement

As part of the self review process you should create a Statement of Requirement (SoR) to work through with any potential suppliers. Becta will publish advice on this in April 2007.

You should make sure that end users, both lecturers and learners are included in creating this key document.