

# ON TRACK AND ON LINE: WHY SOME LEARNERS DO NOT SUCCEED ON ON-LINE COURSES

## Why are we investigating this research question?

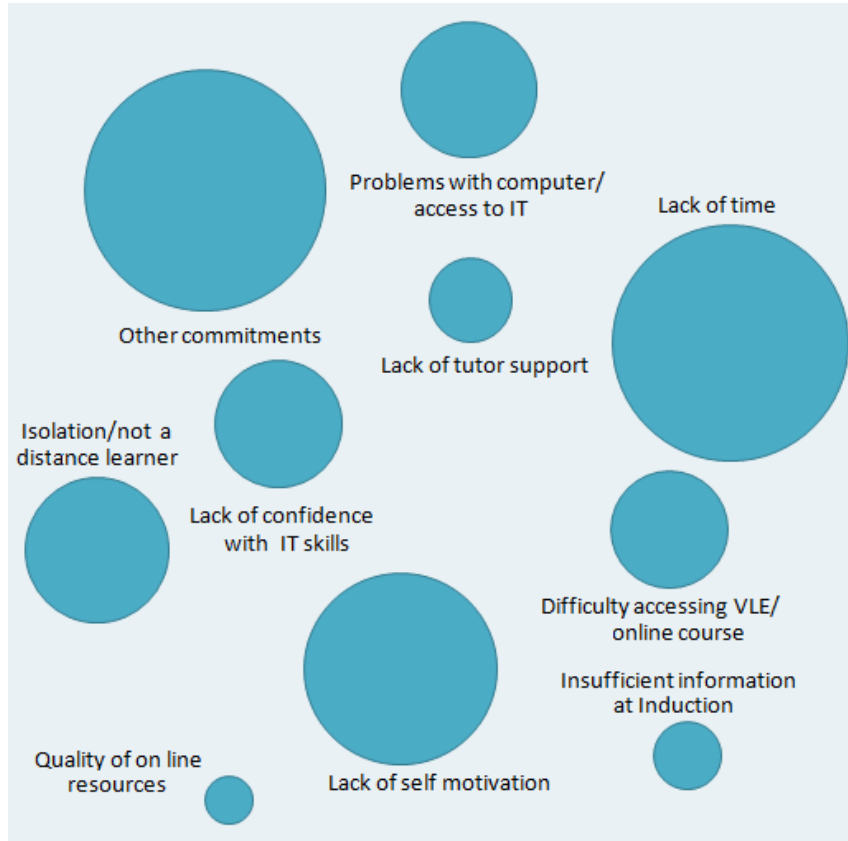
Over the last 3 years we have developed and trialled on line courses at Entry Level 3 to Level 2 in Numeracy and Levels 1 & 2 in Literacy.

We need to continue to improve the quality of the courses we offer to meet the needs of the service and improve the retention and success of our learners.

To develop a quality product to meet enquiries about online courses from external sources.

How to develop existing units in the move to functional skills.

## What issues caused you to not complete the course?



## Findings

- It was noted that the two main reasons for not completing the course were “Lack of time”, and “Other commitments” . This was interesting because it matched responses from students who failed to complete in-class courses, and was not expected.
- The third main reason for not completing the course was “lack of self motivation”. This can be understood as students working on a distance course to need to be self motivated, and miss the motivation and peer encouragement that is found in class based courses.
- It was encouraging to see that the course quality and tutor support had low values for not completing the course.
- There were some issues around accessing the course on the VLE together with confidence in using IT and IT problems in general.

## Recommendations

- 1)Change to the induction process to include a unit on “About Me” to establish learners’ ability to use the online course and upload work.
- 2)Change the way tutors are notified of new learners and that contact is established within one week.
- 3)Investigate how to address the issue of motivation for a distance learner.

## Data collection and analysis

Data was collected by contacting all learners from 2010/11 academic year who had not completed their course.

A phone interview was conducted with the learner using a standard set of questions to ensure consistency but also to allow for any extra information to be recorded.

## Student Demographic

Of the respondents :

- 1) 2/3 were female and 1/3 male
- 2) The age ranges where:
  - 18-29: 34%
  - 30-49: 43%
  - over 50: 23%.

## Strengths of the project:

The use of the telephone questionnaire highlighted areas that worked well as well as those that did not and was an opportunity for the learner to talk to someone and express their opinions.

It gave a clear indication of learners’ needs.. This has given good starting point for developing some blended learning materials/modules?

## Limitations of the project:

The number of responses to messages left to return calls; the overall response was 67%.

The question “Why did you join an on line course” was not sufficiently explicit.

Lack of access to comparative data for discrete courses.