**Research Information and Digital Literacies Coalition – RIDLs**

**PROPOSED CRITERIA FOR DESCRIBING, REVIEWING AND ASSESSING PRACTICE IN INFORMATION LITERACY** **TRAINING**

The criteria suggested below are intended to describe and review practice in information literacy[[1]](#footnote-1) training for higher education researchers. They relate to all interventions aimed at developing researchers’ information-handling knowledge, skills and competencies, whether in the form of face-to-face sessions/courses or digital/online resources (thereafter referred to in this document as ‘courses or resources’). They serve two broad purposes:

1. Helping institutional staff who design and deliver courses and resources to describe and review them; the aim being to provide a structured and recognized way of presenting such interventions in online resources and demonstrating their value.
2. Providing a simple means of assessing courses and resources, for use within or outside the institutions in which the interventions have been compiled; the aim being to assess their suitability and usefulness as transferable resources.

The criteria are thus set out under two broad headings: describing and reviewing courses or resources; and evaluating courses and resources. These two parts are complementary, and in both cases, the criteria are articulated around a series of questions addressed directly at practitioners.

The criteria are informed by, and incorporate elements from teaching/learning resources criteria devised by other bodies (Vitae[[2]](#footnote-2), Jorum[[3]](#footnote-3), CILIP[[4]](#footnote-4), HEA[[5]](#footnote-5), DELILA[[6]](#footnote-6)).

1. **Criteria for describing and reviewing courses or resources**

This first set of criteria is destined chiefly for those who, within higher education institutions, are responsible for devising, running or managing courses, sessions and other digital/online resources aimed at developing researchers’ information-handling knowledge, skills and competencies. These are referred to below as information literacy courses and resources. The criteria take the form of a set of structured questions intended to help you describe such interventions for the benefit of learners, but also for your peers in your own or other institutions. You may find this useful for a number of reasons, including:

* a consistent approach to descriptions should make it easier for you to compare different courses or resources; this is for the benefit of learners, but also for colleagues in your own or institution who might be interested in drawing from what you have done;
* consistency is also useful when you set out your courses or resources in public or open environments such as those found in Jorum[[7]](#footnote-7) and the Vitae Database of Practice;
* a recognised way of describing courses or resources means that you would not have to reinvent ways of presenting the different ones that you may be involved in.

In addition, addressing the criteria could be useful in helping you to frame your courses or resources, to review them for your own purposes and conceivably to demonstrate their value.

**Structured questions to address the criteria**

* ***Who is the course or resource designed for, and why?*** In the first instance, you will want to set out who the course or resource is designed for. It is then important for you to describe needs; these relate both to what individual learners might require as part of their broader professional development, and also to the needs of relevant organisations, such as the HEIs where learners study or the funders that support them. Also, professional requirements might highlight the usefulness of the course or resource. So the extent to which need is assessed or analysed prior to the formulation a course or resource could be an indicator of its effectiveness, and provide an important basis for setting its objectives. Nevertheless, in addition to responding to need, it is also important to meet demand from individuals who wish to receive training in order to be able to perform effectively as researchers. The ‘market’ for training is therefore conditioned by a combination of anticipation of need, and responsiveness to demand.

*Individual learners*

* Who are the learners that the course or resource is designed for?
* By career stage (research students, research fellows, tenured researchers…)
* By discipline
* What steps have you taken to assess learners’ need for the course or resource?
* If such steps have not been taken, what is the reason for this?
* Given that the course or resource relates to information literacy, how does it fit the broader professional development needs of the learners?
* To what extent is the course or resource a response to demand from learners, and if so, how is have you identified this?
* Is participation by learners in previous similar training activities a factor in helping you to determine demand?
  + Is such participation in previous activities analysed, in terms of range of learners (for instance, by discipline or career stage)?
* How is the course or resource made appropriate to learners, for instance with regards to their current level of skill, years of experience, disciplinary areas?
* How accessible is the course or resource, particularly for learners with diverse needs?
* What do learners need to know already in order to benefit from the course or resource?
  + Have you set a baseline to reflect this?
* On the basis of the assessment of need and demand, what have you done to communicate clear learning objectives to those who attend the course or use the resource?

*The broader context*

* How does the course or resource fit with your institutional and/or departmental policy and practice on researcher development?
* Can the course or resource be transferred or adapted to suit needs or contexts other than the one for which it is designed?
* ***What knowledge, skills and competencies is the course or resource intended to provide?*** Information literacy covers a wide range of knowledge, skills and competencies, and it is important to describe to which of these the course or resource relates. Information literacy training also forms part of professional development more broadly. It is therefore inherently related to models or frameworks, such as the Researcher Development Framework (RDF)[[8]](#footnote-8) and the Seven Pillars of Information Literacy[[9]](#footnote-9), and to the range of initiatives within institutions aimed at developing researchers in a well-rounded way.
* What areas of information literacy does the course or resource cover?
* Information searching and discovery
* Assessment and analysis of information sources
* Citation and referencing
* Data management and curation
* Plagiarism, fraud, copyright and other relevant legal issues
* Data protection and/or freedom of information
* Publishing and dissemination of research results (including open access)
* Other
* Is the course or resource informed by models or frameworks such as the RDF and the Seven Pillars?
* If so, how?
* Have you sought to make use of the information lens[[10]](#footnote-10) of the RDF?
* ***How is the course or resource delivered?*** There are a number of practical questions that should be addressed when describing the mechanics of delivery, and also those responsible for the delivery.
  + What form does the course or resource take?
  + Classroom-based courses (lecture or workshop)
  + Individual tuition
  + Online courses
  + Training material (printed or digital)
  + Other
* What would you describe as the main features of the course or resource?
  + Mode of instruction
  + Length of course
  + Use of assignments
  + Assessed/non-assessed
  + Other
* Who designs and delivers the course or resource?
  + Library
  + Graduate school
  + IS department
  + Other
* What are the different roles and responsibilities of these various players with regards to the design and delivery of the course and resource?
* What skills and know-how are required by those devising, running or managing the courses and resources?
  + How do these skills and know-how relate to the different roles and responsibilities?
  + How were these skills and know-how acquired?
* What support is required to run the course or resource (personnel, facilities, financial)?
  + If the courses and resources take the form of digital/online resources, are they free for others to use or can they be readily purchased?

1. **Criteria for evaluating courses or resources**

This second set of criteria is for the benefit of training practitioners who are looking to identify and possibly make use of existing information literacy courses and resources devised by their peers in other departments or institutions. The emphasis here is on how finding out how success has been measured, how needs have been met, and what have been the outputs and outcomes of the courses or resources.

**Structured questions to address the criteria**

Ascertaining the influence, benefits and success of the course or resource, and relating them to baselines and objectives, is crucial. It is therefore important to set out a range of criteria to help training practitioners and their institutions gather evidence to describe the effectiveness of the course or resource. The Impact Framework developed by Vitae’s Impact and Evaluation Group (IEG – formerly the Rugby Team)[[11]](#footnote-11) is an evaluation model which may help in this task; the questions below are drawn partly from the Framework’s pathway of five impact levels. For reference, the relevant impact level is indicated in brackets after each question.

* + How many learners, by career stage and discipline have taken part in the course or used the resource? *[IEG impact level 0]*
  + If the course has been run previously, or if the resource has been previously used, what is the trend in terms of number of learners?
  + What have been the reactions and feedback from learners, notably on whether learning objectives have been met, and on quality, originality and attractiveness of the course or resource? *[IEG impact level 1]*
  + What is shown by any evaluation and analysis of such feedback? *[IEG impact level 1]*
  + What are the changes in learners’ knowledge, skills and competencies resulting from the course or resource? *[IEG impact level 2]*
  + How has this been ascertained?
  + What are the improvements in researcher attitude, confidence, behaviour, performance and practice that might be attributable to the activity/resource? *[IEG impact level 3]*
  + How has this been ascertained?
  + What has been the broader impact of the activity/resource, i.e. the extent to which recipients have become better researchers, and the way in which this has benefitted the institution? *[IEG impact level 4]*
  + What has been the feedback from the departments or other units in which the learners work?
  + What challenges/barriers have been encountered in implementing the development intervention (including lack of resources), and how are these managed and/or overcome?
  + What steps were taken to improve the course or resource as a result of any evaluation?

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1. Information literacy is defined in the broadest sense as knowledge, understanding and skills relating to all aspects of discovering, handling, creating and disseminating of research information and data; see <http://www.rin.ac.uk/information-literacy> . [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Vitae Database of Practice, <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice/34837/Database-of-practice.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Jorum Learning and Teaching Competition judging criteria, <http://community.jorum.ac.uk/view.php?id=35> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. CILIP CSG Information Literacy Group, Information Literacy Practitioner of the Year<http://www.informationliteracy.org.uk/2010/12/csg-information-literacy-group-information-literacy-practitioner-of-the-year-nominations-sought/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. HEA evaluation of commercial online tutorial packages [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. DELILA criteria for evaluating information literacy and digital literacy open educational resources (OERs); these are drawn heavily from the original version of the above RIN criteria [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. [www.jorum.ac.uk](http://www.jorum.ac.uk) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. <http://www.sconul.ac.uk/groups/information_literacy/seven_pillars.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/CMS/files/upload/Vitae_Information_Literacy_Lens_on_the_RDF_Apr_2012.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. See <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice/1418/Rugby-Team-activities.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)