FOUR | **SELECT SUITABLE LEARNING RESOURCES**

How will you know which type of learning resource is most suitable for your programme? The nature of the programme and the way you intend to use the resource determines to a great extent what is appropriate. For example if you want the students to learn how to use the keyboard it is possible to use an interactive e-learning keyboard skills tutor software programme or a print manual that has a variety of exercises for students to practice their typing. Students would probably be interested in the e-learning keyboard tutor programme and for the purpose of learning keyboard skills this may be a better option than the print manual. But the teacher who teaches this class is used to the print manual which she has been using for many years and is reluctant to change because students have been very successful using it. When making a decision about the type of resource to acquire you will need to consider the purpose and learning outcomes of the programme, how the resource will be used by educators and students, the expertise of educators and the readiness of students, what it costs to acquire and use and the time needed to develop it.

Sometimes people do not know what to choose because they are unaware of the range of resources that exists. The table below provides a good overview of the types of resources that can be created. They can be developed in print or as computer assisted learning resources.

Table 4

Types of learning resources

Resources that teach course content	Resources that build on other resources	Resources that support specific learning activities	Resources that support learning processes
• Open learning materials • Lecture notes • Readers • Reading sets • Resource packs	• Textbook study guides • Reading guides • Course guides	• Manuals • Laboratory guides • Seminar guides • Fieldwork guides • Project guides • Work-placement guides • Staff use of student guides	• Skills guides • Skills profiles • Logs

[Summary based on information from Course Design for Resource Based Learning, Wisdom and Gibbs, 1994]

The descriptions that follow will enable you to make an informed selection.

Resources that teach course content

Lecture notes

These may vary from an outline with listed headings, to summaries of main points and full texts. Notes can be prepared when the need arises and can be handed to students before and after the lecture.

Readers

This is a collection of notes for which copyright has been cleared. Suitable articles from journals, newspaper articles and extracts from chapters of books are compiled in a pack. The pack provides core reading for the course or programme and can be duplicated at relatively low cost. Readers can be arranged in an accessible way by using headings, short introductions, and questions to guide the learner. Often an extended bibliography is included.

Reading sets

A pack of readings can be collated for a specific topic or subject. Like readers it consists of various articles, extracts and notes. Instead of duplicating it for each individual, one copy of the set is kept in a file in a place where it is easily accessible to learners. Reading sets are an inexpensive way of creating suitable learning resources.

Resources that build on other resources

Textbook study guides

It can be a much more cost effective option to design a study guide around a suitable book than to develop materials from scratch. Study guides are well structured and have features such as brief overviews, questions that can be answered by reading specific sections of the book, comments, additional information to help with difficult parts or to fill in some gaps, and self assessment questions or assignments. They are often referred to as wrap around study guides. This can be an appropriate option if a good textbook is available.

Reading guides

Reading guides help students to find reading resources or suitable alternatives. The guides look like expanded reading lists and they contain useful comments and advice on which parts of the readings to focus on and which parts to skip.

Course guides

Also known as study guides they provide a comprehensive framework that guides students through the course. Some or all of these features are included:
- aims and statements of learning outcomes
- a summary of the course content
- an indication of how the course links to other courses and programmes

- a description of how the course is structured and sequenced with a timetable of deadlines
- a list and brief description of all teaching sessions including lectures, seminars, workshops, laboratory time
- a list of available resources including print, audio, video and computer assisted learning software
- information about assessment
- study guidance

Resources that support specific learning activities

Manuals

Manuals explain how to do things and they are excellent resources for supporting processes, such as how to manage projects, how to learn word processing skills, learning how to do field work. The advantage of a manual is that students can refer to them when they need to.

Laboratory guides

Laboratory guides contain all kinds of useful information about the apparatus and equipment, how to use it, advice on carrying out experiments and writing lab reports. They also contain data recording tables and graphs that student can use to record their observations and findings.

Seminar guides

Seminar guides include any information and guidance that help students prepare for seminars. They may include a reading list, suitable reading materials and handouts.

Fieldwork guides

A guide can be compiled with supporting information and questions that encourage students to use the time in the field optimally by behaving as active explorers. Photographs and diagrams can be included to draw attention to specific areas being investigated.

Project guides

A project guide gives advice and support on how to carry out projects and usually includes a schedule of deadlines for each phase of the project. It contains practical information gleaned from previous experiences of students.

Work-placement guides

This is a particularly helpful guide for students who are in work-placements. It can contain information about the responsibilities of the student, host organization and tutor. Guidelines for keeping a work diary and preparing a final report as well as questions to help the student prepare for structured meetings with tutors can also be included.

Staff use of student guides

Any guides prepared for students can also be used by staff who are involved in the programme.

Resources that support learning processes

Skills guides

These guides can be simple single page worksheets that offer guidance on how to write reports, use the computer lab, work in groups, and compile a portfolio. They are developed in response to particular needs.

Skills profiles

Clear descriptions of the skills and rating scales that indicate the level of attainment are included. Skills profiles can be used to help students assess their own performance. They have to be linked to assessment in the programme for maximum benefit.

Logs

Logs are diaries that contain various bits of information deemed important for students who are have to work independently during practical work sessions and work placements. The log may include relevant articles, review questions and a skills profile.

REFLECT & ACT

Regular reflection on your experiences can be a valuable way of helping you improve your practice. Record your ideas inside this space.

Select suitable learning resources

You can review and refine your initial ideas about the use of learning resources in your programme.

1. Which type of resource will be most suitable for your programme? Why?

2. What are some of the advantages of using this resource?

3. Can you think of any disadvantages?

4. How will you help your students to engage with this resource?