



e-Sgoil, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

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Using the e-Sgoil virtual learning approach to overcome barriers to learning across a range of local authorities and aspects of pedagogy.



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E-Sgoil began in August 2016 as a response to challenges faced in securing teaching staff in specific subjects and locations in the Western Isles.

Using direct, real-time and interactive teaching approaches through video conference facilities, an initial cohort of learners was supported towards success in National Qualifications. This was developed with funding from Scottish Government and [Bòrd na Gàidhlig](#) to include a greater range of subjects and cater more widely for needs across Scotland.

Currently e-Sgoil provides services ([1](#)) to eight local authorities ranging from P1 Gaelic Medium Education to Advanced Higher Mathematics and including opportunities for staff development and adult education, including parental engagement.

E-Sgoil is staffed by a mixture of full and part time staff based the Western Isles and other areas of Scotland, delivering a range of subjects remotely to multiple locations.



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An initial needs analysis identified the need for learning provision which would be best served using the e-Sgoil model.

A number of international models of virtual learning approaches were explored but none matched the requirements identified by the needs analysis, so the unique approach of the e-Sgoil was developed.



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Some initial research was carried out into virtual learning approaches which might address the needs identified in the initial report, however this did not produce models and approaches which might be useful in the unique contexts under consideration. Specifically, the models considered were focused on adult learners and could not be directly and successfully transferred to school settings and tailored to individual needs. The e-Sgoil approach is very practical and is evolving according to the realities of individual situations rather than broader theoretical principles. The focus is on a problem-solving approach to need. The e-Sgoil is founded on the principle of equity in educational provision and it is this principle which is the starting point for all its activities, from the provision of the technology to the provision of the teaching expertise.

The effectiveness of the programme is currently measured using quantitative data from SQA results and qualitative data-gathering approaches using questionnaires completed by parents, staff and learners involved in the e-Sgoil. A range of quality assurance procedures is in place, and there is a clear set of guidelines in place for participating establishments, their staff and learners (2). The e-Sgoil felt that it was important to have a physical base for its activities, to be a 'physical school' but which engaged with learners virtually, because the process is about real-time interaction between learners and teachers. At the start of any virtual interaction process, staff are encouraged to carry out introductory visits to the establishments and their learners to build relationships which supports the subsequent virtual learning experiences. Where possible subsequent visits are encouraged. A typical learning experience would mirror normal interaction in a classroom environment – the only difference being that the environment is a virtual one. In the receiving schools, cover arrangements for learners involved are in place in line with school and local authority policies.

Since August 2016 there have been a number of early indications of the success of the approach, for example, in the first year, all learners involved achieved success in National Qualifications at or above predicted levels (3). There has also been large growth in the number of participants and questionnaire responses have indicated high levels of satisfaction on the part of users. The e-Sgoil has always considered that it is important to be proactive in gathering feedback from users which can support and direct future developments. (4)

The e-Sgoil is keen to consolidate the approach in a meaningful way and to a realistic timescale. Since the e-Sgoil is predicated upon the principle of ensuring equity of provision, it is keen to respond to need in a measured way which maintains the integrity of the process.



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Useful information

- [E-Sgoil welcome pack \(1\)](#)
- [Vscene teaching/learning tips leaflet \(2\)](#)
- [E-Sgoil report year \(3\)](#)
- [E-Sgoils FAQs \(4\)](#)
- Join the [SAC Live Narrative Yammer Group on Glow](#)