



Commonwealth of Learning – eLearning for International Organisations

2015 Programme Evaluation

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Prepared by:

Lee Sentes
Development Action
www.developmentaction.ca

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Purpose of the 2015 eLIO Programme Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation was to:

1. Update information last collected during a formative programme evaluation in 2008/9.
2. Survey and interview a broad selection of individuals drawn from past course participants, elearning tutors, training chiefs who are eLIO clients, selected staff at COL and the eLIO team.
3. Gather quantitative and qualitative data that evidenced how eLIO courses impact different programme participants.
4. Create a broad picture of the health of the programme.

The report will be used to help COL and eLIO management decide if the programme has performed as intended, to highlight areas where the programme could grow or adapt, and to provide a benchmark against which to gauge future evaluations.

Thanks to all evaluation participants

The smooth running of the evaluation was due to the eager participation from past course learners, eLIO tutors, COL staff and eLIO staff. The evaluation was able to be completed ahead of schedule as a result of the flexibility and willingness of all participants to take part in surveys and phone interviews.

Special thanks goes to Angela Kwan, Claire Carigi and Aaron To who provided excellent guidance as well as a considerable amount of data gathering for the evaluation.

Independent evaluation

The evaluation was carried out by Lee Sentes from Development Action (<http://www.developmentaction.ca/>), who was hired as an independent evaluator for the duration of the research.

Limitations

Determining the impact of training programmes, especially programmes that do not have pre-course tests to benchmark and post-course tests to measure change, is challenging. The 2015 eLIO Programme Evaluation used a variety of methods to probe impact, triangulating data from eLIO's comprehensive end-of-course evaluations and course records, and designing tailored surveys and interviews to examine fresh areas. The resulting data, once compared, showed consistency and agreement across different sources. While not the same as direct measurement through pre and post-course tests, the proxy measures demonstrate that impact exists and that past course participants recognize and value the change created by the eLIO Programme.

Executive Summary

eLIO Programme: skilled staff + good design = high customer satisfaction

The eLIO Programme is currently well received and a wide range of data collected for the 2015 programme evaluation demonstrates high customer satisfaction. The eLIO Programme continues many of the strengths highlighted in the 2008 evaluation. The 2008 evaluator found that the programme enjoyed:

"...a rather overwhelming degree of satisfaction expressed by all the participants, including the learners, the partners, the tutors, the COL staff and the eLIO section employees." [McGreal, 2008]

Data compiled from 2009 to 2014 indicates that eLIO is achieving its goals of being cost neutral to COL, providing good quality elearning services, operating an elearning model which is identified as unique from other training providers, and is well received.

eLIO Programme main research findings

Five main statistical findings emerged from the evaluation which speak to the eLIO Programme's overall health and sustainability:

1. 92% of all respondents selected either "Excellent" (57%) or "Above average" (35%) to the question "Overall, my assessment of the course content is".
2. 97% of all respondents selected either "Strongly Agree" (69%) or "Agree" (28%) to the question "The feedback I received on my course work assisted my learning.
3. 97% of all respondents selected either "Strongly Agree" (54%) or "Agree" (42%) to the question "The course activities and assignments improved my skills [writing and analytical] [debt management] [data management]."
4. 88% of past course participants indicated they would definitely recommend eLIO courses to a colleague.
5. 81% completion rate average from 2009 to 2014.

Financial sustainability is a key aspect of the eLIO Programme. Financial sustainability is defined by the eLIO Programme as operating a cost recovery, fee for service model. Any profits that arise from the programme are expected to pass into COL's pool of unrestricted funds. Interviews with COL and eLIO staff demonstrated that costs are being covered, often with a surplus, and that the fee for service model works well for eLIO.

Evaluation participants described a range of ideas for eLIO to consider. These included broadening the courses offered (either by adding new courses, or by adding levels to existing courses), experimenting with different learning models that are more self-directed such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), and also adding more audio-visual elements to courses, including the opportunity to interact with tutors and fellow students in real time. Past

course participants wanted the courses to have greater career value, linking course completion with job advancement, and also having courses accredited by universities and colleges.

Additionally, COL and eLIO staff expressed interest in considering how the eLIO model of tutor-focused, fee-for-service, and humanitarian-focused online training could be rolled out to organisations with strong corporate social responsibility values, thus extending the impact of eLIO courses, penetrating into new markets, and advancing human development values enshrined within COL.

eLIO Programme main recommendation – keep doing what you are already doing

There is overwhelming evidence that the eLIO Programme is meeting a need. It is well received by all key actors, most importantly by the course participants.

Staff and tutors expressed both appreciation and admiration for the course participants. Much of the satisfaction felt by staff and tutors came from the fact that they were part of the wider human development initiative, and many links were made between skills improvement (such as writing) and the effectiveness of development initiatives undertaken by client organisations.

Recommendations for capturing data that reflects programme impact

Four main recommendations have been added to the evaluation to help the eLIO Programme gather ongoing data and answer the question “is the programme having an impact?”

1. **Increased standardisation of end-of-course evaluations** – standardising a selection of impact-focused questions asked will ensure that the end-of-course evaluations have greater utility.
2. **Pre-course questionnaire** – used in conjunction with the end-of-course evaluations, the questionnaire can provide benchmark data related to a course participant’s perceived skill level. Comparing results with questions asked in the end-of-course evaluations can demonstrate change.
3. **Create measurement alongside innovation** – when a new idea is implemented by eLIO, create a measurement tool to gauge impact.
4. **Post course evaluations** – ask questions related to course impact and barriers to implementing training in the workplace approximately six weeks after the end of a course.

Conclusion - eLIO Programme contributes to the production of quality work

The lack of mediocre and negative ratings within the quantitative aspects of the surveys and six years of evaluations, as well as the positive reviews received during interviews, reflects highly on the work of eLIO staff, course tutors and COL.

It is reasonable to advise that the eLIO Programme should continue operating using its current

design. In particular, this means keeping true to the core elements that define the programme, and replicate those elements forward into any new initiative. eLIO has road tested a way of doing business and the model seems to work well from a customer appreciation perspective. eLIO's model defines its programme culture and is a factor that can differentiate the brand within a global pool of training suppliers.

To the best of this evaluation's ability, the breadth of data collected supports the claim that eLIO contributes to improving a participant's ability to produce quality work and work effectively.