



ACL Initiative Project Report

Name of project lead	Richard Heath
Name of organisation	Warwickshire Adult and Community Learning

Brief description of what you proposed to do

Before the project, we envisaged the following use:

Essential Skills: use the camera to take pictures that would then form the starting point for some creative/personal writing

Visual arts: use the equipment for recording learner progress, through photos, video, sound recording and text.

Summary of your project *(How did your organisation integrate the mini laptops and camera into e-learning in your Adult Education Service?)*

In practice, the use of the equipment turned out somewhat differently!

In recent months, we have been developing some work in partnership with the Probation Service, delivering learning opportunities to their clients, mostly at Probation hostels. The programmes offer literacy, numeracy and ICT skills development, in the context of employability skills (e.g. job search, health and safety, etc.) We were able to incorporate the equipment in a variety of ways, for example:

Creating a CV – typed on the Eee PCs, and incorporating photographs taken with the digital camera

Health and Safety awareness – camera used to photograph potential hazards, and incorporated into a written document.

Because of the need for portability, the size of the Eee PCs was ideal – for example, one of the tutors travels by motorbike, making the use of full-size laptops impractical, but she was able to transport an adequate number of the Asus machines (we bought several to supplement those provided under the project). The small size of these machines meant they could be available as a 'casual' resource, without dominating the classroom (this arguably made them less threatening to less confident learners).

Evaluation of project

As staff and learners are relatively used to using digital cameras, most of the feedback has been in relation to the Eee PCs. Here is a summary:

Pros

Very portable – ideal for transport to remote venues, and represent a substantial improvement over full-size laptops
Linux version very quick to boot
Simple, user-friendly interface (Linux)
A realistic option as a 'casual' resource

Cons

Limited application software on Linux
Limited hard disk capacity (e.g. unable to install Target Skills software)
Keyboards too small

NB as provision took place at a probation hostel, where internet access is unavailable, arguably some of the machines' biggest strengths could not be utilised.

Project outputs

Some key outputs and outcomes:

A number of learners were able to undertake ICT SfL Entry Level qualifications.

Retention and satisfaction levels for the courses were strong, though as this is relatively new provision, there are no benchmarks with which to make effective comparison.

Any plans for the future?

The service has purchased a number of other 'netbooks' to be used for this work. These are Samsung NC10's, which run Windows, have a larger keyboard and a full-size hard disk, overcoming some of the identified shortcomings.

We will now pursue some of the uses in the original proposal (!). We also intend to experiment with combining Eee PCs with Optoma Pico projectors, to create 'go anywhere' presentation kits for tutors.