

# ALT Strategy: February 2011 to January 2014

## Improving practice – Promoting research – Influencing policy

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### 1. Approach and purpose

The Association for Learning Technology (ALT) is an independent educational charity<sup>1</sup>. ALT’s charitable object is “to advance education through increasing, exploring and disseminating knowledge in the field of learning technology for the benefit of the general public”.

ALT is governed by its elected and co-opted trustees, and run by its active lay members and its paid staff. ALT operates within the framework of regulations and guidance provided by the Charity Commission, and according to the terms of the ALT Constitution<sup>2</sup>.

Within these constraints, ALT will pursue its vision and mission ethically and openly, with flexibility, commitment, and flair, supported by a staff team that is led and managed well, has the right mix of staff and skills, and is organised efficiently.

This document sets out our strategy for the three years February 2011 to January 2014. The strategy is reviewed and updated annually. Its main purpose is to:

- translate ALT’s single charitable object into a practical strategy;
- provide people and organisations inside and outside ALT with an overview of ALT’s approach;
- set priority activities to shape the work of ALT’s committees, office-holders and staff.

### 2. Vision, mission, and aims

Learning technology is the broad range of communication, information and related technologies that can be used to support learning, teaching, and assessment. At the centre of ALT are people who are actively involved in understanding, managing, researching, supporting or enabling learning with the use of learning technology.

<sup>1</sup> ALT’s area of the Charity Commission web site is at <http://goo.gl/Jy7Jy> (last accessed 20/2/2011)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.alt.ac.uk/about-alt/How-we-are-governed/ALT-Constitution> (last accessed 20/2/2011)

Our **vision** is for ALT to remain the UK's leading independent organisation in the learning technology domain, providing leadership in practice, research and strategic development; and to be so recognised, nationally and internationally.

Our **mission** is to ensure that use of learning technology is effective and efficient, informed by research and practice, and grounded in an understanding of the underlying technologies, their capabilities and the situations into which they are placed.

Overall, we pursue our mission by **improving practice, promoting research, and influencing policy**, through six **aims**, which are to:

1. be an authoritative voice on the place that learning technologists and learning technology have "at the heart of modern learning";
2. support member organisations to achieve their missions more efficiently and cost effectively;
3. recognise and acknowledge excellence in professional achievement, research and practice;
4. bring together those with shared problems across sectors, technologies, pedagogies, job roles and countries to help to provide research-informed solutions;
5. be an agile and transparent organisation, responding quickly and effectively to developments, and espousing open standards and processes;
6. remain an independent membership organisation thereby achieving extra reach and leverage.

### 3. The environment in which ALT works

ALT works in a changing environment alongside a wide range of organisations. These organisations will themselves be subject to change, in some cases substantial change, over the period of this strategy. Within this changing landscape ALT's independence makes it well-placed to provide a stable, consistent, and linking voice.

The organisations with which our activities will intersect include:

- institutions (universities, colleges, schools, training providers, and employers generally - of which over 200 are members of ALT<sup>3</sup>) who will be the main source of activity, the main source of organisational and individual members, and the places wherein delivery and increasingly research will take place, as well as being where teacher education takes place;
- large and small suppliers of technology, services, and content (some of which are ALT member organisations, and several of which are technology leaders at a global level);
- UK and international partner organisations (such as the Association of Colleges, the British Council, JISC, the Sloan Consortium<sup>4</sup>, and ascilite<sup>5</sup>);
- other membership organisations in the same domain as ALT, including several with which ALT has established membership exchanges (UCISA, Naace, eLearning Network, eLearning Alliance, professional and scholarly bodies etc);
- standards and specifications bodies such as the British Standards Institution and the IMS Global Learning Consortium, and regulatory/framework-setting agencies such as the Information Commissioner's Office, Awarding Bodies, and the UK Patent Office;
- UK based government and its agencies with a direct or indirect interest in learning technology, some of which are members of ALT (examples include JISC, BIS, DfE, HEFCE, HEFCW, DELNI, LLUK, SQA, LSIS, IfL, HEA, NIACE, the National College, Ofsted, SFC, Local authorities, Welsh Assembly Government, the Scottish Government).

The last category is currently undergoing significant reorganisation and retrenchment. This increases the complexity in the short term whilst possibly simplifying it in the longer run. It is happening at a

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.alt.ac.uk/corporate\\_members.php](http://www.alt.ac.uk/corporate_members.php) (last accessed 28/2/2011)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.sloan-c.org/> (last accessed 20/2/2011)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.ascilite.org.au/> (last accessed 20/2/2011)

period of major change in the importance of learning technology in institutional missions. In order to influence changes and help members to benefit from them, ALT will need to keep close to those involved and anticipate changes. Overall, however, there is likely to be a major contraction of activity funded directly from government and its agencies, including a contraction of support for learning technology activities, as bodies lose existence and funds and have their remits more tightly defined.

This retrenchment is not unique to the UK. We should expect other countries and partners therein to be undergoing similar changes, albeit to varying degrees.

These changes will also affect the behaviour of the other bodies above. Institutions for instance will become less reliant on government funding for learning technology advances. Suppliers will become more focused on customers rather than on agencies. Again ALT will need to be able to change with the community it serves and with their priorities.

Thus ALT and its members work in a complex fluid environment. However, ALT members and the organisations that use or influence the use of learning technology, have become substantially linked together through formal and informal networks that transcend organisational, sectoral and national boundaries, with new methods of knowledge generation and dissemination playing an increasingly important role. There is a major role for ALT to play in helping to sustain these networks at a time when others may withdraw, wholly or in part, from such activity.

In addition, there is also ongoing substantial activity in what is sometimes referred to as the “Free Culture movement”, characterised, for example, by Wikipedia, Creative Commons, and Open Access.

A particular strength of ALT is in the work of our members, many of whom contribute freely of their time to help ALT achieve its objectives, and to support the learning technology field more generally. This is the essence of why membership bodies provide results more cost effectively than can be achieved by government agencies. However, in order to maximise the advantages of this significant *pro bono* work, it is essential to have the functionality to manage what can be diverse inputs and to pull them together for mutual benefit.

ALT will work across all the above environments identifying common areas and helping to resolve dissonances at the intersection of a number of significant communities.

#### 4. Aims and priority activities

**Aim 1.** *Be the authoritative voice on the place that learning technologists and learning technology have “at the heart of modern learning”.*

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| 1. | Work strongly with partners and others to gather and make available market intelligence about activities and demand outside the UK.  | 01/2012    |
| 2. | Along with partners, become a user voice to suppliers and designers of learning technology on behalf of our members and the community.   | 01/2012    |
| 3. | Comment consistently, coherently and appropriately on policy documents from government, its agencies and funders and others, representing the views of the members.                                  | Continuous |
| 4. | Act as a focus for the breadth and depth of expertise within the ALT community, brokering contact between those with problems and those best able to advise them on and provide them with solutions. | Continuous |
| 5. | Continue to build a reputation for providing timely credible input to consultations and to the media that is cross sectoral, unbiased, evidence based and of high quality.                           | Continuous |
| 6. | Expand the standing and uptake of our publishing activities including the outputs from our annual conference (ALT-C) and the journal <i>Research in Learning Technology</i> .                        | Continuous |

**Aim 2.** *Support member organisations to achieve their missions more efficiently and cost effectively.*

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| 7.  | Establish and support problem solving Special Interest Groups, through conferences and online. These should identify, summarise and disseminate suggestions and common solutions to problems.                    | Continuous |
| 8.  | Produce and publish overview papers through our annual conference ALT-C and otherwise on key issues from research, building on a continuously updated and expanded "What Research Has To Say For Practice" wiki. | Continuous |
| 9.  | Respond (and publish responses) to international and national consultation calls related to learning technology  | Continuous |
| 10. | Contribute to a growing evidence base of good practice with two special editions of <i>Research in Learning Technology</i> by 2014 comprised of relevant papers.   | 07/2014    |
| 11. | Articulate and advocate the use of online media, supported by sound pedagogy, as being efficient and effective.  | Continuous |
| 12. | Create a wiki for good practice in the use of online learning and in strategic thinking on the things necessary to support its use.  | 01/2012    |
| 13. | Produce and publish an analysis of member organisations' missions and the role played by learning technology and online learning therein, identifying overlaps and common problems and omissions.                | 01/2012    |
| 14. | Seek and establish partnerships of varying degrees of formality with organisations in the groups identified in section 3 above.  | Continuous |

**Aim 3.** *Recognise and acknowledge excellence in professional achievement, research and practice.*

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| 15. | Press government and funders for learning technology research to be supported, and encourage activities that recognise the importance of such research, through sponsorship and the provision of dissemination channels. | Continuous |
| 16. | Promote <i>Research in Learning Technology</i> as a high status international journal and endeavour to raise its profile and ranking in the REF processes and more widely.   | Continuous |
| 17. | Develop and enhance the value of CMALT and relate it to other activities through partnerships with organisations such as IfL and the Higher Education Academy.   | 02/2012    |
| 18. | Encourage the adoption of CMALT as a normal requirement for the recruitment and the continuous professional development of those working as learning technologists.  | Continuous |
| 19. | Identify and analyse the basic requirements of different roles of CMALT holder including academic, support, research and management, and develop CMALT to accommodate these roles.                                       | 01/2012    |
| 20. | Work to establish uptake of CMALT from outside the UK.   | Continuous |
| 21. | Consider the introduction of further levels of membership for CMALT holders and provide publicity for achievement through membership and other award schemes.  | 12/2011    |

**Aim 4.** *Bring together those with shared problems across sectors, technologies, pedagogies, job roles and countries to help to provide research-informed solutions.*

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| 22. | Develop the website and rules to allow the formation of groupings based round problems, regions, technologies with a target of at least 10 such groups within two years. | 02/2013          |
| 23. | Continue the foundation of Special Interest Groups based round problem areas.  | Continuous       |
| 24. | Bring together people from different sectors, in partnership with other bodies to identify areas of mutual interest or those where one can help the other.               | Start by 08/2011 |
| 25. | Have “emerging technology” and “emerging pedagogy” based presentations and activities.   | 01/2012          |
| 26. | Have a problem solving theme at the annual ALT conference ALT-C.   | 09/2011          |

**Aim 5.** *Be an agile and transparent organisation, responding quickly and effectively to developments, and espousing open standards and processes.*

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| 27. | Update the content, style and format of our annual conference ALT-C to respond to the changing profile and circumstances of members.                                      | 09/2011 and Continuous |
| 28. | Cut the cost of publication activities by increasing our use of web technologies.   | 01/2012                |
| 29. | Identify and pursue new sponsorship opportunities in the changing landscape.  | Continuous             |
| 30. | Provide channels for partners and other agencies to have access to the input of the community and other partners.   | Continuous             |
| 31. | Demonstrate through ALT’s activities good practice in the use of online and web technologies including in support of home working and remote participation in activities. | Continuous             |
| 32. | Ensure that <i>Research in Learning Technology</i> is open access.  | 02/2012                |
| 33. | Ensure that all ALT SIGs are open and inclusive in their operations.  | 02/2012                |
| 34. | Ensure that publicly available ALT materials are licensed under Creative Commons and made freely available in the ALT Repository.   | Continuous             |

**Aim 6.** *Remain an independent membership organisation and obtain extra reach and leverage as such.*

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| 35. | Involve members in liaison with suppliers, government and partners by involving practitioners appropriately in consultations and related activities. | Continuous |
| 36. | Provide infrastructure within which members can engage with partner organisations through joint activities, shared involvement and exchanges.        | Continuous |
| 37. | Encourage <i>pro bono</i> work on community projects through ALT.  | Continuous |
| 38. | Work with the NUS and others on issues concerning satisfaction of staff and students, enhancing the learning experience, and                         | Continuous |
| 39. | Influence, through the coordinated activities of members, the societal impact of the use of learning technology in the UK and internationally.       | Continuous |
| 40. | Encourage members to advertise their association with ALT through email signatures, letter heads, use of badges etc.                                 | 05/2011    |
| 41. | Encourage organisations outside the UK to join ALT, with an appropriate fee structure.   | Continuous |