

# Now.net technology platform



Now.net is a technology platform developed – and hosted - by Axia Interactive for continuous professional development (CPD) assessment and competency testing. Along with Axia's NVQnow (a specialist version of Now.net for NVQ providers), Now.net is an output based system which – in line with recent recommendations from the Institute of CPD - measures the outcomes of learning rather than the materials accessed by a user.

This means that the Now.net platform allows organisations to create learning and assessment applications without having to develop a new technology infrastructure. Consequently, Axia claims, applications can be developed at a fraction of the costs that were previously incurred.

Current applications of Now.net include:

- The Association of Neuro-Linguistic Programmes (ANLP) – an online CPD site for members.
- The Council for Administration (CFA) – for the submission of relevant evidence and online assessment of administration-related NQVs.
- The Institute of Field Archaeologists - to support the introduction of the professional standards that they have developed.
- North Yorkshire Health Authority - to support their mentoring programme.
- The Department of Health in Kwa Zulu Natal - to provide information about HIV/Aids and other clinical issues to nursing staff and to help assess their competence.
- The Chartered Institute of Foresters - to enable their individuals to submit evidence and have this assessed for membership of the Institute.
- The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) – which runs its RCN Learning Zone on Now.net. This includes an e-portfolio section whose information can be presented as a CV or as information for registration and can be accessed by external assessors/mentors, and a personal development section, with learning modules on time management, portfolio and career development.

Now.net has been designed so that each customer can select and combine modules to build new solutions in much the same way that Lego bricks can be used to build a wide variety of structures. So, although a generic solution, the Now.net platform can be customised, with various elements of its functionality being able to be turned on or off, depending on a customer's requirements. This enables organisations to create 'bespoke' solutions based on a modular framework, thereby avoiding the high costs that have previously been associated with such projects.

The Now.net platform enables subject matter experts to write, publish and change learning material via a 'word processor' type interface. Moreover, the

platform's intuitive user interface is extremely 'straightforward', greatly reducing the need for user training, although interactive guides for users are available.

The Now.net platform includes content management tools that allow clients to maintain and increase the functionality on their sites dynamically, as well as a reporting tool that can be 'interrogated' directly by the client, who can also create customised reports from the information that the system contains. The platform has the benefit of having been in use for some three years – so technical teething problems have largely been ironed out, although Axia is continually developing and refining the platform.

Not only does Now.net do 'what it says on the tin' – storing, categorising and managing content relating to CPD - it does it in a manner that should hold no terrors for those who are challenged in terms of IT skills. Administrators, assessors and verifiers should also find that the Now.net platform facilitates rather than complicates their activities. Those looking to develop CPD systems – especially those which attempt to assess learning outcomes rather than inputs, notably where qualifications are involved – should find the Now.net platform to be a convenient, no nonsense option.

*By Bryn Howells.*

City & Guilds, the leading awarding body for work-related qualifications, has endorsed the NVQ e-portfolio solution NVQnow from Axia Interactive Media. This means that NVQnow, has successfully undergone a rigorous process of quality assurance by a team including external verifiers in order to carry the City & Guilds badge of endorsement. As a result, colleges and training providers can be secure in the knowledge that the technology is compatible with City & Guilds' process and quality requirements.



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