

THE EUMETCAL COLLEGE – A Virtual College for Weather Forecaster Training in Europe

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The concept of distance learning for ‘knowledge’ training is well established. However, for a weather forecaster to assume operational duties requires both a knowledge of meteorology and the competence to apply that knowledge to the atmosphere to produce a forecast. The Eumetcal College is a new concept, instigated by the National Meteorological Services of Europe, under the EUMETNET framework, in which we propose to train weather forecasters through a combination of distance learning, interactive internet sessions and short 1-week ‘summer-school’ sessions. This combination is referred to as ‘blended learning’.

Many of the students will then go on to work in aviation meteorology. Because of the high demands for safety in the civil aviation industry, students will be required to demonstrate that they have achieved the appropriate standard at the end of the course. This will be achieved through competency assessments and successful students will receive a certificate of competence. Establishing such a certification system, recognised throughout Europe, with standards maintained to a prescribed level, is therefore a necessary part of the College. However, there are no obvious routes within the EU to achieve this.

The Eumetcal College is essentially an experiment in applying distance learning techniques to the teaching of competence in weather forecasting across Europe. There is no blue-print as to how this can be achieved and consequently the task that we undertake is to blend many recent developments into a process that will achieve our aim, namely to train weather forecasters in a cost-effective manner to take up operational duties. The paper will therefore outline how the College will operate, the type of courses to be offered, and how we are progressing towards the establishment of pilot courses in early 2007. Additionally, we will discuss some of the issues of certification and the methodology that we will adopt.