

Cover Sheet for Proposals (All sections must be completed)	JISC Capital Programme
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Name of Capital Programme: E-Learning		
Name of Lead Institution: London South Bank University		
Name of Proposed Project: Bridging E-Learner Transitions (BELT)		
Name of Project Partners: Open to other JISC cross-institutional partnerships as per paragraph number 48 in JISC Circular 3/06		
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Length of Project: 2.5 years		
Project Start and End Dates: September 2006 – March 2009		
Total Funding Requested from JISC: (Approximately) £147,276		
Funding Broken Down over Project Years: See comments in Budget Section.		
Total Institutional Contributions: See comments in Budget Section.		
Outline Project Description <p>The Bridging E-Learning Transitions (BELT) project supports developing pedagogy that will create more distinctive and effective 'lifelong learners' in Higher Education. Building on institutional strengths in embedding employability skills and widening participation BELT will develop e-learning and blended learning models to support students' transition into employment. It will assess post-graduation the benefits for students of studying a career linked lifelong learning approach as a part of their third year curriculum. BELT will explore this critical transition using 'non-specialist' e-learning communication technologies to track students as they complete their progression into employment to provide evidence of how to better deliver lifelong learning goals in the HE sector. Case studies will explore three cohorts of students in distinct discipline areas focusing on the major JISC e-learning themes of facilitating progression and supporting the independent lifelong learner. Participant graduate learners will develop personal learning goals based on the lifelong learning approach, aided by e-portfolios, and share their experience and reflection with graduate peers, staff and current students through various e-learning communication modes. The project will be guided by work-based learner needs and will provide a sustainable and practical curriculum-based model for the HE Sector. Quantitative and qualitative data will be gathered through a wide range of methodology, making full use of new technologies, to develop findings that deliver a 'fit for purpose' strategy for incorporating targeted lifelong learning elements into the curriculum.</p>		
I have read the Circular and associated Terms and Conditions of Grant at Appendix B (Tick Box)	YES X	NO

Introduction: A brief outline of rationale for and nature of work to be undertaken, the length of the project, start and a summary of how the project will contribute to the programme.

Profound social and economic changes have required equally profound changes to the way learning has been conceived and delivered in Higher Education (HE). Throughout the nineties and into the new millennium, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) has supported Widening Participation within education to encourage non-traditional learners entering HE and support HE Institutions to democratise a traditionally elite educational system. This expansion of learning provision relates to the Labour Government's 'stakeholding society' whose aim is to make education an instrument of social reform (Kearns, 1997). There has been much valuable research about student access, inclusion and retention in recent years. However, Slowey and Watson suggest that HE needs to refresh its concepts of lifelong learning to enable better "links to equity and the creation of opportunities for those who have not found the process so easy, frequently through no fault of their own" (*Higher Education and the Life Course*, Introduction). The BELT project would extend this vision to develop a better understanding of how HE can fulfil student progression aims into employment, with e-learning technology enabling contact with students who have left university.

In *Learning Curriculum and Employability in Higher Education*, Knight and Yorke (2004) suggest that even while HE can prepare graduates for the transition to the workplace, data gathered to measure employability issues about graduate 'employment' may not answer all of the relevant questions there are about 'employability'. It is this period of transition that BELT would like to consider. Current research suggests that this transition is difficult (van, Geert 1994) but is easier when students have followed some form of transitional programme (Bridges 1993). The career literature provides some insights into how new graduates negotiate the move into employment. However there is relatively little research on this area in relation to the experiences of the growing number of 'non-traditional' graduates who are now facing this challenge, and therefore little evidence-based practice to inform either curriculum development or careers counselling that will support their specific needs.

The framework for current HE provision is taken from the Labour Government's White Paper, *The Future of Higher Education* that outlines educational policy in line with broader social policy aims and the lifelong learning approach as guiding principle for HE (DfES, 2003). Lifelong learning theory stresses the importance of access to lifelong learning and the pace of technological change that will require learners to develop the knowledge to up-skill and reskill through out their life in all kinds of settings (Griffin, 2000). The European Commission on Lifelong Learning defines lifelong learning as: "all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective" (European Commission, 2002). Lifelong learning objectives, like developing the ability to learn independently, can become performance indicators. BELT would explore the impact of using a reflective and facilitated approach to personal development planning and career development whilst studying the way in which graduates negotiate and learn in their first year of employment.

As one of the largest universities in London, LSBU has a socially diverse student profile with significant numbers of non-traditional and part-time students. The non-traditional learner can be defined in terms of his/her ability to acquire knowledge, including individuals who are older, ethnically diverse, and ranging in social classification (Bourgeois, 2001). LSBU represents an access point for many learners. Statistically, LSBU exhibits the following profile: Gender Female 59% Male 41%; 50% of students are from Black and Ethnic Minorities; 64% of students are aged over 20 with 36% aged over 25; 48% of students are studying part-time and 4% of our students have disabilities. The University consistently exceeds its benchmark in relation to participation by students from low socio-economic groups. However LSBU also has a recognised reputation for employability. It was ranked 8th, and was the only in the post 1992 institution in the top 10, of the Sunday Times league table for graduate salaries 2005.

LSBU is taking part in the first phase of the national e-learning benchmarking exercise and BELT supports the HEFCE Strategy for E-Learning (2005):

- Early concentration on infrastructure has given way to a focus on pedagogy, and on connecting electronic communications with other processes, in a new blend of approaches to

learning and teaching. Distance learning is now seen as one end of a continuum where e-learning offers opportunities across all programmes and all education sectors (p. 4).

- The Government e-learning strategy defines e-learning as any learning that uses ICT. In embedding this strategy we want to ensure that there is confident use of the full range of pedagogic opportunities provided by ICT. For HE this will encompass flexible learning as well as distance learning, and the use of ICT as a communications and delivery tool between individuals and groups, to support students and improve the management of learning (p. 5).
- To support lifelong learning by joining up our strategy with those of other sectors of education, enabling connections between academic learning and experiential learning in the workplace and other aspects of life. We will do this by adopting a partnership approach to implementation and review; and by providing support for approaches to collaboration, progression and student support that can help embed e-learning in broader policies and activities, joined up across sectors within and outside education (p. 6).

LSBU wants to enhance its existing programmes to support lifelong learning aims and widen the context of student learning. JISC funding of BELT may lead to a more socially inclusive lifelong learner who is better able to negotiate the 'employment interface' after graduation. BELT will explore and formulate a pedagogical model that could inform an integrated and practical e-learning approach to developing employability and lifelong learning.

The rationale for the BELT project builds on well-established teaching and learning initiatives at LSBU. It is clearly linked to the aims and objectives of our Learning and Teaching Strategy and the E-learning Action Plan that relate to: the vocational relevance of our programmes, the commitment to supporting students on progression into employment and the effective utilisation of e-learning. The University has committed TQEF funds to the development of e-portfolios, which would in turn inform and support the BELT project.

BELT will build on and enhance the significant paper-based and e-resources that are already in use within the university to develop career planning and support students into employment. Good practice in relation to this area was noted in the QAA Institutional Audit (January 05) noting materials such as paper-based Personal Development Planners and the embedding of PDP into course curricula. Cross-institutional collaboration between faculties and central departments will enable the development and extension of these resources currently available to further support student progression into employment. Measuring employability is a key means of recognising the progression. As non-traditional learners, some LSBU students are at risk in terms of graduate destinations that have competitive employability cultures. BELT would be investigating the gaps and barriers that prevent non-traditional students from realising their full potential, and there is a sector-wide need for analysis and evidence to elicit change. In many countries alumni have lifelong relationships with their institutions. In the UK, older institutions have this, but newer institutions may not have emphasised how important this link is for the learner as well as the institution. Specific data from graduate interaction could inform effective change within the HE curriculum, to teaching methodologies and to careers counselling. It would form the basis of valuable new theory building in this area of career research.

The use of technology will stress developing pedagogy that will be as universal as possible in terms of cross-institutional interoperability and make sense to learners on course or in the workplace in planning their own career development. BELT will avoid specialist softwares and endeavour to use the student led usage of technology available from ongoing University strategies. Defined as "an approach to facilitate and enhance learning through the use of devices based on both computer and communications technology (wikipedia.org, Pedagogy of e-learning [Accessed March 25, 2005]. E-learning will be looked at through: the e-portfolio, and student 'social' use strategies, also those e-learning approaches that work with LLNetworks. Data will be gathered in a preliminary survey to establish student needs and preferences. This project follows an approach that uses technology as an essential tool but 'invents' pedagogic directions. However an awareness of interoperability limitations will be used to address e-learning choices. BELT will investigate various e-learning options that include: Blackboard Version 7, My Space, sharing and community plugins for Blackboard, off the shelf

solutions such as 21Publish.com, .mac online community, and shareware software for blogging and journaling.

The BELT project will aim to create Higher Education lifelong learners through a blended pedagogic model. This initiative would enable the capturing of more qualitative data about the learning transition between HE and employment than is currently captured through the Destination of Leavers in HE Survey. BELT will develop a model of learning that extends current good practice to create lifelong learners whose progress through the transition of the first year in employment will be tracked more richly. This will develop a relationship that will encourage and support the development of lifelong learner attributes. The emphasis will be on producing a practical working model that clearly demonstrates long-term benefits for institutions and their students, especially non-traditional learners. BELT will investigate the bridging agents between valuable HE lifelong learning elements within the curriculum and work place experiences. BELT will also address the very real problem of inter-university interoperability, integration, convergence, and international access (i.e. firewalls).

BELT would start in September 2006 and complete its final report by March 2009, a project period of 30 months. JISC funding will enable LSBU to target specific gaps that have been identified by the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit and provide both quantitative and qualitative data for the crucial period of initial graduate employability. Qualitative findings will be analysed in conjunction with statistical data for graduate destinations to provide a deeper understanding for learners and academics about the social and economic environment that graduates enter. As a basic tenant of a lifelong learning approach, the learner will be trained to become a part of the transformative solution, a process documented through BELT tracking.

LSBU has recently completed a number of strategic changes to create structures to better fulfil its duties as a twenty-first century learning institution, and is keen to become more involved in national, regional, and sector developments. BELT will enable a number of LSBU strands to work together to deliver a better experience for the student and enhanced support for recent graduates. JISC objectives from the Capital Programme for E-learning that relate to this project include: the development of personalised learning experiences that meets the needs of individual learners, work-based learning, the use technology to support lifelong learners in real employment contexts.

Project Description: a description of the intended project plan, timetable and deliverables, risks, and an explanation of how the detailed project outcome will be of value to the JISC community, IPR and sustainability.

BELT will use e-learning to investigate the study / work transition. Specifically it will quantify what e-learning students use, and how they use it, within a particular project framework. It will support students personal learning, maintaining relationships with students and using them as a primary resource, especially their personal experiences of transition. The project will be concerned with the research questions:

1. How well prepared are students in their last year of study to manage the transition to work?
What are their expectations? Are they realistic? How have they been formed?
What strategies are they engaging in to support the move to work?
What resources are they accessing? How are they accessing them?
2. What is their experience post-graduation? How do they actually manage the transition?
How well have their expectations been met? What do they feel about their initial work experiences?
Are their strategies working? How have they had to adapt them?
How useful were the resources they used? What did they need that they didn't access or they couldn't find?

The Research Methodology will use both qualitative (semi-structured interviews, observation, storying, and journaling) and quantitative (questionnaires, statistical data) approaches. To identify what student's perception of work will be like. It will attempt to measure their preparedness to make the transition and their perceptions post graduation. It will also capture and measure specific hard

outcomes, eg. type of job, permanence of contract, employment churn, salary etc. This methodology will also allow us to evaluate the appropriateness and utility of our learning and teaching strategies and our careers resources.

The project will focus on three programmes that already have well-established taught modules or curriculum strands focussing on personal development and career planning within their programme. It will involve a mix of students from three disciplines Business, Arts and Science. It is anticipated the sample will be approximately 130+ students. Participation in the first stage will be compulsory in that it will be totally integrated into the taught programme. The project would be built into each existing cohort programme using e-learning resources, as this is the best way to contact students once they complete their transition to employment. Stage two will involve contact post-graduation and therefore on the willingness of individuals to continue contributing to the research. This will rely on individuals seeing the utility of the resources as valuable. There is already a strong tradition of post graduation contact on the Arts-based programme and to a slightly lesser extent on the Business programme. However final design and negotiation of this stage will be critical to managing this risk.

BELT will use a cross-institutional approach and will be supported by the LSBU Centre for Learning Support and Development, the Learning & Teaching Enhancement Unit, Computer Services Department and Media Services. It will bring therefore together faculty-based academics, careers advisors and learning support.

This E-learning project could be developed into a model that embraces a wider view of how an HE lifelong learner is defined. The project will give deliverables that will be useful to a wide range of HE institutions including:

Proven implementation and delivery methodology

An extended advice and mentoring service

Standards and tools that reflect the sector's requirements

Learning plans from courses – adaptable to other disciplines and specialisms

Identified best practice, issues, barriers gaps, reliability

Resources and quality assurance for delivery modes

Staff development to support delivery of employability and lifelong learning

A model for embedding career and personal development planning

Availability and demonstration of methodologies for content discovery and reuse.

BELT Timetable and Evaluation Plan – 2.5 years

Phase 1:

- June 06 BELT Proposal due to JISC
- Sept 06 BELT Project Start, Project Coordinator hired, BELT management team agrees final project plan.
- October 06 research with Cohort 1 (3rd Year students in 3 disciplines) to establish baseline pedagogy and technology use, follow any job placement activities, research student knowledge as lifelong learners, instructional baseline and design.
- July 07 graduation, track graduates to employment, interim evaluation
- Interim Project Report Sept 07

Phase 2:

- October 07 Cohort 2 using evaluation from Phase 1, links to Careers provision - extra staff may be needed to deliver extended learning units and e-learning components to students
- July 08 track graduates to employment, interim evaluation
- Interim Project Report Sept 08

Phase 3:

- October 08 Cohort 3 lifelong learning pedagogy built into curriculum and staffed, evaluation of final phase completed
- March 09 BELT Final Report due to JISC

Phase 4:

- Pedagogy models embedded should have curriculum in final state from evidence. Sustained Lifelong Learner curriculum monitored through Careers/Departmental surveys to inform HE sector and institutional planning for expanding Lifelong learner findings to other disciplines

Evaluation of the project will be carried out continuously, with monthly and Interim progress reports based on the Phase planning. The Co-managers will evaluate progress monthly and at significant project milestones to ensure planned activities are implemented on time and within budget. Project work and research findings will be reported within LSBU project management structures, and adhere to LSBU quality assurance procedures. Work with Student Participants, Staff and Employers will refer to LSBU ethical standards for research. Analysis of risk includes access to student needs based on technology and the quality of the student data.

Wider contextual outcomes from the BELT project will include:

1. BELT's lifelong learning intervention scheme for students and staff in HE might impact on the way students approach jobs related to graduateness. Ideally, more students who go through the HE system of education would use their appropriate level of skills in the work-place, benefit financially and thus support the public expenditure that has supported their learning during their HE degrees.
2. Data feedback on course content for lecturing staff- analysis from lifelong learner analysis and project feedback on methods that work give sustainable benefit analysis not just on cost savings but in sustainable relationships with alumni that can be developed through cross-institutional – knowledge transfer.
3. Any economic benefits that might occur from creating lifelong learners in HE. Past students who do not enter the job market are put at a disadvantage personally and means that the government money spent on their education has not been effective. The first 6 months has been acknowledged as an important time – this project tracks progression beyond this to test against current Careers data the impact of graduateness on student progression. Social mobility for the non-traditional learner may be increased by the ability to pursue their personal learning goals over time, and transfer these values to community and family members.
4. Creating HE lifelong learners might in turn influence the views of family and friends are important for recruitment (Brooks 2003), and might encourage other non-traditional learners. As with other lifelong learning framework research, investigating peripheral benefits will be considered.

The impact of BELT will be an advanced pedagogic model for managing the transition to employment and work-based learning. The lifelong learner will understand the implications of globalism and the risk society; they will also understand the operation of the knowledge society and the learning society. They will be given the means to interpret future learning to understand its needs and to enable them to seek personal, social and economic determinants for themselves.

LSBU wants to create lifelong learners who will use whatever technology is available to support their learning goals. While the curriculum already supports the development of a lifelong learner, this project will enable us to explore ways of supporting this development more effectively and with greater flexibility through the integration of the use of new technologies. BELT will provide specific findings about pedagogy that will make a difference to institutional e-learning support of non-traditional students who have become graduates. The sustainability will be built into the existing curriculum structure at LSBU, and delivered as a part of future programmes. The transferability aspect of BELT for universities is high, and the findings will enable other HE institutions to implement similar components into their own curriculum. Dissemination will be given a high priority by LSBU and by those directly involved in the BELT project. Outlets will include: JISC, HEFCE, HEA, London Consortiums, LSBU Learning and Teaching Workshops throughout project period, and web-based project dissemination.

BELT Proposed Budget

The BELT proposed budget only reflects an estimation of the direct costs to the project. As explained earlier this project is being submitted without consortia since time limitations have made it very difficult for LSBU to establish a consortium. LSBU does not have an established profile when applying for JISC funding and as such this application is aspirational. However LSBU is working towards establishing consortia links for future projects. In lieu of this LSBU are submitting an estimated costing for direct project costs. LSBU has a comprehensive system for the production of full economic costing but since we have been unable to form a consortia bid then we are unable to submit a full economic costing. Given the opportunity to join a consortium then accurate full economic costing figures can be produced quickly.

ESTIMATED DIRECT COSTS

- .5 Project Research Coordinator over 30 months £41,610 (including all on costs, HERA adjustment and pay increases)
- Hardware/software (PC, printer, Blackboard) £30,000 over 30 months
- Consumables (office consumables, stationary) £1,000 over 30 months
- Conferences to attend for e-learning (UK only) research £3,000 over 30 months
- Travel & Subsistence £2,500 over 30 months
- Dissemination- brochure design, printing, mail out, conference organisation mail out speakers £15,000 over 30 months
- Hourly Paid Lecturer (including all on costs, HERA adjustment and pay increases) £245 per day x 60 = £14,700
- .5 Administrative Assistant over 30 months = £31,966 (including all on costs, HERA adjustment and pay increases)
- Instructional Designer (Consultant) - £250 a day x 30 = £7,500

- Total direct costs over a 30 month project £147,276

Qualitative and Quantitative Benefits to Institution

Qualitative – BELT project will provide direct benefits to students and graduates through enhancement of e-learning in HE and graduate work-based employability skills, benefit for Staff training/conferences and vital experience in JISC project work.

Quantitative – allow LSBU to enlist extra staff to research/facilitate programme work with Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit, Careers, Media and Computer Services.

Key personnel – Names and brief career details of staff expected to contribute to the project, including qualifications and experience in the area of work proposed and evidence of any projects of similar nature successfully completed.

Internal LSBU Staff (fEC)

Executive Stakeholder

Pro Vice Chancellor: Learning and Teaching: Peter MaCaffrey

Head of Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit: Helen George

Head of Media Services: Jim Nottingham

Head of Centre for Learning Support and Development: Robert Hall

Head of Computer Services Department: Shaine McInnes

Administration Staff

Technical Staff

E-learning Support Co-ordinator/Blackboard Staff

Estates – Central costs

Directly Costed BELT Staffing

Project/Research Coordinator

Hourly Paid Lecturers

Instructional Designer

Student/Graduate Participants (volunteer - not costed)

21st June 2006

Dear JISC

Cross-institutional use of e-learning to support lifelong learners

Please accept this letter as a pledge of support for London South Bank University's application to JISC to the capital-funding programme for the Cross-institutional use of e-learning to support lifelong learners. The project developed by London South Bank University is known as BELT (Bridging E-Learner Transitions).

London South Bank University has a strong record in placing students into employment and this project could further enable this strength and disseminate good practice to potential partner institutions. The BELT project also aims to inform how learners can become lifelong learners and how educational institutions can support and nurture a lifelong learning approach to career planning and sustainable employability

Yours Sincerely



Dr Peter McCaffery
Pro Vice Chancellor