

Name of Capital Programme: e_learning (e-Learning; e-Infrastructure; Repositories and Preservation)		
Name of Lead Institution: University of Wales, Bangor		
Name of Proposed Project: e-Learning for Life		
Name of Project Partners:		
Full Contact Details for Primary Contact:		
Name:	Dr. Eben Muse	
Position:	e-Learning Research Officer	
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Address:	College of Education and Lifelong Learning Normal Site University of Wales, Bangor Bangor, Gwynedd	
Tel No:	01248 388134	
Fax No:		
Length of Project:	24 months	
Project Start and End Dates:	1 Oct 2006 to 30 Sept 2008	
Total Funding Requested from JISC:	£177,255	
Funding Broken Down over Project Years:	Year 1: £86,659	Year 2: £90,596
Total Institutional Contributions:	£44,314	
Outline Project Description		
<p>The e-Learning for Life project aims to build capacity, knowledge, and skills in the use of e-learning within a lifelong learning partnership in a rural area of North Wales. Members of the partnership will pilot and implement e-learning technologies mainly within an established program of lifelong learning being led by the Department of Lifelong Learning at the University of Wales, Bangor. We would also draw on partner FE institutions to provide suitable modules and courses if necessary. The project will be in three phases. The first phase will use multiple interviews, a workshop, and meetings to elicit the conceptual understandings of e-learning held by the project stakeholders (tutors, trainers, course administrators and learners). This initial research will be used to help the stakeholders plan e-learning interventions within their current programs of teaching and learning support. In the second phase, the stakeholders will be supported in the implementation of their e-learning interventions. The final phase will be a second series of interviews, workshops, and meetings to elicit changes in the conceptual understandings of e-learning held by the stakeholders, and to develop plans for improving the use of e-learning in future teaching cycles.</p>		
I have read the Circular and associated Terms and Conditions of Grant at Appendix B (Tick Box)	YES X	NO

Background

The College of Education and Lifelong Learning provides part-time courses in a range of locations across North Wales. We offer degrees and certificates in a number of subject areas, but have particular strengths in Fine Art, Information Technology and Social Studies. Newly developing areas for us are Business Studies including Law, and Creative Writing. Although we aim to cater for students from all kinds of backgrounds, we are particularly committed to widening participation and to offering opportunities to those who have not previously experienced higher education.

Our 'catchments' area is nearly entirely rural with a dispersed population; it follows from this that tutors and students have significant travelling distances for face-to-face classes, and class sizes are also often quite small. E-learning tools are potentially invaluable in this context, allowing students to engage in learning at a distance, and to make contact with other students in ways other than face-to-face. However there are also impediments to the use of new technologies with our target groups. Part-time adult learners from older age-groups are not always familiar or confident with technology, and they do not always have access to computers at home. Community teaching locations do not always include appropriate resources. Many of our tutors work part-time and away from institutional bases so do not always have the same development opportunities as full time campus based staff.

The department of Lifelong Learning is currently lead partner in an ESF funded EQUAL project (funded until summer 2007) which is looking at developing innovative solutions to the development of lifelong learning in rural areas. JISC funding in the specific area of e-learning and lifelong learning would naturally build on the work of the EQUAL project on the more specific area of e-learning tools. The partnership of the GWLAD project consisting of educational and community sector organisations would also be available for the JISC project.

The department also houses the Reaching Wider partnership for North Wales, which consists of both the higher education institutions and all further education establishments in the area. This initiative (known as Aim Higher in England) as an already existing partnership would also be able to provide partners for work on a JISC initiative.

Aims and objectives

The e-Learning for Life project aims to build capacity, knowledge, and skills in the use of e-learning within a lifelong learning partnership in a rural area of North Wales. Members of the partnership will pilot and implement e-learning technologies mainly within an established program of lifelong learning being led by the Department of Lifelong Learning at the University of Wales, Bangor. We would also draw on partner FE institutions to provide suitable modules and courses if necessary. The project will be in three phases. The first phase will use multiple interviews, a workshop, and meetings to elicit the conceptual understandings of e-learning held by the project stakeholders (tutors, trainers, course administrators and learners). This initial research will be used to help the stakeholders plan e-learning interventions within their current programs of teaching and learning support. In the second phase, the stakeholders will be supported in the implementation of their e-learning interventions. The final phase will be a second series of interviews, workshops, and meetings to elicit changes in the conceptual understandings of e-learning held by the stakeholders, and to develop plans for improving the use of e-learning in future teaching cycles.

The proposal supports the priorities outlined in the Welsh Assembly Government's "Reaching Higher" strategy for the Higher Education Sector. Specifically, it aims to:

- Improve institutional efficiency through improved integration of e-learning tools and administration
- Provide multiplier gaining through collaboration among community groups, FE and HE institutions
- Build the of capacity in for on-line delivery of HE level teaching and learning in North Wales
- Develop of distance learning in rural areas through the use of e-learning technology.

Aims

- Improve the ability of tutors and trainers who provide lifelong learning courses to make use of e-learning tools to improve the teaching and learning, especially through the use of assessment and feedback.
- Improve the ability of administrators of lifelong learning courses to manage the delivery of e-learning
- Improve the ability of lifelong learning organisations to collaborate with other institutions and to integrate open-source learning tools with commercial learning management systems

Objectives

- Through a collaborative research approach, develop conceptual models of e-learning delivery and administration that are validated by the stakeholders.
- Run three teaching intervention cycles with tutor/trainer staff from five institutions (including community groups, FE and HE) working within rural Wales.
- Raise awareness of e-learning opportunities and pedagogies with tutor/trainer staff
- Achieve a measurable improvement in students' perception of the quality of the teaching and learning provision they receive from project partners.
- Establish methods for integrating open source e-learning tools and materials within the commercial Blackboard product.
- Run three teaching-support intervention cycles with administration staff from five institutions (including community groups, FE and HE) working within rural Wales.
- Raise awareness of e-learning management methods and tools with administration staff
- Provide case studies of at least fifteen successful interventions, to include both teaching and learning and administration.

Outcomes

- Pilot new e-learning technologies within current provision of courses for lifelong learners, including support for HE courses in FE, widening participation and flexible delivery.
- Build capacity, knowledge and skills in the use of e-learning within community and lifelong learning course providers in North Wales working in collaboration with the University of Wales, Bangor
- Develop, pilot and implement technical models that support the integration of open source, interoperable resources with Virtual Learning Environments (both commercial and open source)
- Provide guidance to trainers and short course administrators in North Wales on the use of e-learning.
- Gain knowledge to inform future JISC e-learning developments, through engagement with the ICT industry and through a collaborative e-learning research programme.

Overall Approach

We will implement a cycle of planned interventions into the teaching and administration of a group of courses and modules currently being delivered by the Department of Lifelong Learning and its partners. All courses and modules in the program are accredited by the University of Wales or other higher education institutions and all form part of higher education awards.

These cycles will run in parallel with the teachers and administrators. The cycles will be preceded by a collaborative research intervention exploring the conceptual models of e-learning in lifelong learning held by tutors and administrators in rural Wales. The collaborative research methodology employed will proceed in the following steps

- Online questionnaires using externally validated profiling tools to assess attitudes to teaching and to e-learning
- Interviews which feedback the results of the questionnaires to the participants, both the results of the group as a whole and of themselves individually.
- A group workshop to collate and analyse the results of the questionnaires and interviews. This workshop will lead to the production of a conceptual model of the subject.

Each cycle will include three phases, based loosely on Piaget's learning cycle. The pattern is currently being used by the University of Wales Bangor's academic staff development programme, "teaching in Higher Education".

- Plan an intervention in the teaching or in the administration of a program of learning. The plan must include a purpose for the intervention and a way of evaluating its effect in the learning environment. Interventions must involve the use of e-assessment.
- Carry out the intervention.
- Evaluate the intervention and make recommendations for ways of tailoring it to other contexts
- Plan the next intervention

Teachers and administration staff involved in the intervention cycles will be supported technically by the University Information Services staff and pedagogically by the projects e-learning research officer.

At the end of the three cycles the initial research program will be repeated to assess changes to perceptions of e-learning delivery and administration, and to develop a revised conceptual model.

A wide range of lifelong learning modules will be used in the project, including some from the following subject areas

- Art/Creative Writing
- ICT
- Business Studies/Management
- Personal Development
- Counselling and interviewing
- Community development

The courses will be held in community and FE classrooms as well as with students working at home. Staff to be involved in the project will mainly consist of full-time and part-time staff from the Department of Lifelong Learning (DoLL), partner organisations in FE colleges, and other community organisations such as CAIS and Communities First. It will also be possible to draw in staff from departments of Lifelong Learning in other Welsh HEIs via well-established contacts through UALL (Universities Association of Lifelong learning) Cymru. Many of these organisations are committed to face-to-face teaching but wish to enhance that provision through online services and teaching. This project will give them the opportunity to do so in a supported fashion.

Work packages

- 1) **Prepare** During this work package the project plan will be finalised. Tutors and administrators will be recruited onto the program.
- 2) **Initial research** The project team will work closely with the tutors and administrators in an action research program designed to raise the awareness of e-learning (its implications and potential) while developing a model of how tutors and administrators who work in community and lifelong learning programs conceptualise e-learning within their domain. Participating staff will complete validated questionnaires to profile their attitudes to teaching and learning as well as their attitudes toward e-learning and ICT. The results of these profiles will be presented back to the participants for discussion as part of a follow-on interview. The results of these interviews will then be collated and analysed. This analysis will be presented to participants at the initial workshop for further discussion and elaboration. At the end of the work package the initial models will be documented and the staff members will be prepared to plan learning interventions
- 3) **Raising awareness.** Workshops will be held with participating staff to introduce them to the opportunities available through e-learning. They will be introduced to the e-learning framework (ELF) toolkit, as well as other e-learning tools. They will also be introduced into an on-line learning community which will actively support them through the project.
- 4) **Intervention One.** The staff members will be supported in planning a learning intervention. For teaching staff, this will take the form of a change to their normal teaching methods through the use of e-learning tools for assessment (formative or summative) in a class or learning situation that they have taught before. For administrative staff, it will involve altering the way they either support the teaching staff and students, or how they integrate the course administration into their institutional structures. The plans will include a description of the purpose of the intervention, expected outcomes, and a method for assessing the results of the intervention. Staff will conduct the intervention in the course of their teaching. Project staff will interview staff on the results of the intervention and report the results of the interview back to the group.
- 5) **Intervention Two.** See #3 above
- 6) **Intervention Three.** See #3 above
- 7) **e-Learning support.** Project staff will support the staff members in conducting their interventions through a virtual learning environment supplemented as needed by face-to-face tutorials. Support will include locating suitable learning materials and tools, providing guidance on e-teaching techniques, advising on the design of the learning interventions, and interoperability issues. Technical support will also be available to staff for the installation and maintenance of software.
- 8) **Closing interviews and workshops.** Upon the completion of the interventions, the research project conducted in #2 above will be repeated. This time the results of the questionnaires and interviews will be compared to the initial results. A final workshop with the participants will be held to assess the changes that have occurred and to re-define their conceptual model of e-learning for lifelong learning.
- 9) **Final conference.** A conference will be held at Bangor to disseminate the case studies and conceptual models developed during the course of the project.
- 10) **Evaluation and reporting.** The teaching interventions will include evaluations of the effect of the e-learning on the learning situation. This will be collated by the project team and analysed with the course evaluation forms that are completed by students as part of the normal quality

assurance procedures. An evaluation report analysing areas in which the project has been more and less successful, highlighting the implications and challenges of implementing e-learning to support cross-institutional delivery of lifelong learning, will be produced in addition to the final project report.

Project outcomes

We envisage that the outcomes of the project would include the following

- Staff, particularly part-time staff would have been trained in the use of e-learning tools and pedagogies – this would improve the quality of their teaching in the long-term.
- Students would be more confident / skilled in e-learning which would enhance their lifelong learning skills for future educational activity in any context.
- There would be some cultural change among both staff and students with greater willingness to engage in e-learning activities
- Enhancement of lifelong learning capacity in adult learners; this would be relevant to any future learning, not tied to any particular institution. This capacity is particularly relevant to those living in rural areas where there are always likely to be fewer face to face learning opportunities.
- Good practice case studies in integrating open source, interoperable e-learning tools (such as those provided through the ELF) with a commercial learning management system (such as Blackboard).

IPR

The project is not expected to produce any new IPR. It is focused on developing a better understanding of e-learning in the lifelong learning framework and feeding that understanding directly into the working community in order to improve the skill base in North Wales and disseminating the results to improve JISC's knowledge base.

Sustainability

The Project is built on a set of existing partnerships between the University of Wales, Bangor and local colleges, governmental groups and community groups. The results of the project will be fed directly into the partner organisations, improving their quality and their ability to increase provision. By also involving the organisations themselves and their full-time staff, the project results will become organisationally embedded and be sustained through the life of the institutions.

Stakeholders

Beneficiaries

- Tutors and administration staff working at FE colleges and community organisations will gain skills and understanding in ways to use learning technology, particularly open source and interoperable tools, to improve the quality of their work.
- The University of Wales, Bangor will improve its ability to integrate learning and assessment tools from a variety of providers and platforms into the institutional learning environment (BlackBoard).
- Students in North Wales who are working on courses that can lead them into higher education will receive improved provision, and will have an increased opportunity to integrate the results of their learning (including assessment and certification information) from a variety of learning providers.

Project participants

- Tutors and administration staff will actively change the way they perform their duties
- Project staff in the Department of Lifelong Learning will offer the tutors and administrators the support to allow them to try new techniques.
- The Department of Lifelong Learning will provide the tutors and administrators with extra funding and administrative support in order to allow them the freedom to experiment
- The University of Wales, Bangor's Educational Technology Services will provide technical support to allow staff to experiment and trial interoperable systems. In particular they will support the integration of the e-learning tools and administration environments with BlackBoard.

Risk identification

The following potential difficulties have been identified.

- Courses may be pulled for lack of registrations
- Courses may be cancelled for poor participation
- The e-learning tools available may not be customisable for the needs of specific courses
- The e-learning tools available may not be suitable for the needs of specific courses
- The learners may lack technical resources to use the e-learning tools
- The learners may be unwilling to use e-learning tools
- Partners may have institutional reasons for not using the e-learning tools or platform
- Staff turnover may cause set-backs
- Tutors may be unwilling to use the e-learning tools
- Learning venues may not have suitable resources to use the e-learning tools

Project staff

- **Project manager.** The project will be managed by Dr. Eben Muse of the College of Education and Lifelong Learning. Dr. Muse has been active in e-learning research and practice in the United Kingdom and Europe. He is the designer of several open source e-learning systems, including the NeGES guidance systems, CARIN collaborative library system, and the GO Wales Reflective Diary tool. His research work since coming to the University of Wales in 1999 has been focused on the pedagogy of e-learning, especially in post-compulsory and workplace learning.
- **E-Learning officer.** Dorothy Jones of the Department of Lifelong Learning will conduct the research interviews and workshops and provide e-learning support to the staff members who participate on the project. Ms Jones manages the department's on-line B.A. degree ("Internet, Learning and Organisations").
- **Learning technology team.** Technical support will be provided under the guidance of Deborah Sapsed. Dr Sapsed has been engaged in the area of e-learning since starting a Ph.D. in 1995. She worked initially as a software developer on modern languages based TLTP project, but later moved into more general e-learning support. She has gained experience of the wider implications of the uptake of e-learning through working as part of the Teaching and Learning Technology Support Network, helping to support other institutions in their early adoption of learning technology. She has managed the UWB e-learning development team within IT Services for 7 years.

Other members of the e-learning development team have worked within the field for between 4 and 9 years. Their expertise covers implementation of a wide range of learning technologies, including the Blackboard VLE and a variety of tools which can be used within this. They have considerable experience in supporting staff in exploring the possibilities offered by learning technology, from both a technical point of view and in terms of the enhancement of teaching and learning. The team has also worked on an internally funded project focusing on the use of e-learning to enhance Welsh Medium provision and the translation of the Blackboard Interface. One member brings additional experience in the use of electronic resources, having worked as a librarian for 17 years.

- **Administration.** The Department of Lifelong Learning will provide a member of staff to offer administrative support to the team.

Project Budget

See separate sheet

<u>DIRECTLY INCURRED COSTS</u>							FULL ECONOMIC COST			JISC FUNDING @ 80%			
							Year 1	Year 2	TOTALS	Year 1	Year 2	TOTALS	
Name/Job Title	Salary Scale and Point	Start Date	End Date	Duration (months)	% FTE	% on Project							
Eben Muse	Research II Point 15	01 Oct 06	30 Sep 08	24	100.0%	10.0%	4,300	4,701	9,001	3,440	3,761	7,201	
Debbie Sapsed	ALC 4 Point 21	01 Oct 06	30 Sep 08	24	100.0%	50.0%	5,182	5,396	10,577	4,145	4,316	8,462	
DOLL Admin person	ALC 1 Point 4	01 Oct 06	30 Sep 08	24	100.0%	20.0%	5,076	5,582	10,658	4,061	4,466	8,526	
Learning Technology Officer	Research 1A Point 8	01 Oct 06	30 Sep 08	24	80.0%	100.0%	24,658	26,966	51,624	19,726	21,573	41,299	
Learning Technology Officer	ALC 2 Point 10	01 Oct 06	30 Sep 08	24	100.0%	40.0%	13,472	14,801	28,273	10,778	11,841	22,618	
TRAVEL AND SUBSISTENCE													
Data collection and collaborator meetings							6,190	6,357	12,547	4,952	5,086	10,038	
Conferences							1,032	1,059	2,091	826	847	1,673	
									0			0	
EQUIPMENT													
Laptop							1,000	0	1,000	800	0	800	
Digital camera							300	0	300	240	0	240	
									0			0	
OTHER													
Printing of questionnaires and materials							3,095	3,178	6,273	2,476	2,542	5,018	
Publications and reports							1,032	1,059	2,091	826	847	1,673	
Stationary & office supplies							1,032	1,059	2,091	826	847	1,673	
Postage, telephone							516	530	1,046	413	424	837	
12 x Researcher/Tutor @ £500 per year							6,190	6,357	12,547	4,952	5,086	10,038	
									0			0	
<u>DIRECTLY ALLOCATED COSTS</u>													
STAFF - TIME ON PROJECT													
		Estimated HOURS working on the Project											
Name/Job Title	Grade	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5							
									0			0	
									0			0	
LABORATORY TECHNICIANS													
Not Applicable: Non-Laboratory based project		NO							0			0	
MAJOR RESEARCH FACILITIES													
		No. of HOURS to be charged to project											
Facility		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5							
									0			0	
									0			0	
									0			0	
ESTATES COSTS													
Estates costs related to Project Staff							3,911	4,017	7,928	3,129	3,214	6,342	
<u>INDIRECT COSTS</u>													
Indirect costs related to Project Staff							31,338	32,184	63,522	25,070	25,747	50,818	
TOTALS							108,324	113,246	221,569	86,659	90,596	177,255	

Swyddfa'r Dirprwy Is-Ganghellor
Prifysgol Cymru, Bangor
BANGOR
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Pro Vice-Chancellor's Office
University of Wales, Bangor
BANGOR
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LL57 2DG

21 June, 2006.

For the attention of : Sarah Davies
Cross-institutional use of e-learning to support lifelong learners
JISC Capital Programme
JOINT INFORMATION SYSTEMS COMMITTEE

Dear Ms Davies,

This is to confirm that the "e-Learning for Life" project bid being submitted under the JISC Capital Programme by the Department of Lifelong Learning has the support of the University of Wales, Bangor. The project as outlined will further the aims of the University and improve its ability to support local community and its commitment to the Reaching Higher / Reaching Wider agenda.

Yours sincerely,

Meri Huws
Pro-Vice Chancellor

c.c.: Dr. Brec'hed Piette, Head of Lifelong Learning

Meri Huws
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