

Cover Sheet for Proposals (All sections must be completed)	<i>JISC Capital Programme</i>	
Name of Capital Programme: e-Learning (e-Learning; e-Infrastructure; Repositories and Preservation)		
Name of Lead Institution: University of Sunderland		
Name of Proposed Project: WEEBLE		
Name of Project Partners: City of Sunderland College, New College Durham, Gateshead College, Newcastle College		
Full Contact Details for Primary Contact: Name: Alix Pearson Position: Regional Director, Foundation Degree Forward Email: a.pearson@fdf.ac.uk Address: 83 The Link Hexham Northumberland NE46 3AL Tel No: 07917 052 330 Fax No:		
Length of Project: 30 months		
Project Start and End Dates: September 1st 2006-February 2008		
Total Funding Requested from JISC: £196,452		
Funding Broken Down over Project Years: £94,604; £101,848		
Total Institutional Contributions:£226,221		
Outline Project Description This proposal aims to provide an on-line system to support and enhance the experience of learners engaging with individual work based learning programmes. It supports the key outcomes of the e-learning programme in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Widening participation ✓ HE in FE, by providing support for work based Foundation Degrees and Foundation Degree progression routes ✓ WBL, flexible delivery and personalised learning ✓ Developing a technical model which guide and support the different and diverse pedagogical approaches necessary to successfully support and develop WB learners The project is a partnership between the University of Sunderland and its strategic partner colleges, and with Newcastle College, the largest provider of HE in FE in the north of England.		
I have read the Circular and associated Terms and Conditions of Grant at Appendix B (Tick Box)	YES ✓	NO

WEEBLE

Introduction

This project is a partial response to the increasing emphasis, in HE policy, on employer engagement, part time employer led/employment based programmes, and flexible forms of delivery. Work based learning (WBL) is a valuable tool in meeting HE policy objectives of widening participation, engaging employers and reducing the debt burden on learners.

Programmes designed using WBL allow learners to study whilst working full time, in valuable and responsible jobs. They become workers who learn, as opposed to learners who work. Learning in the workplace, when properly constructed and monitored, can make a significant contribution to productivity in organisations, by improving the effectiveness of learners at work. In addition it improves the personal confidence and capability of the individual and adds to the skill base of the UK workforce.

Foundation Degrees are a form of vocational shorter higher education which places WBL, flexible delivery, widening participation and higher skills development at their heart. Generally delivered in partnership with Further Education Colleges, FD's are a major vehicle for HE growth and meeting employer's higher level skills needs. The provision of good quality work based learning within Foundation Degrees is critical to their relevance and success.

Due to the individual, flexible and applied nature of the curriculum in a WBL programme, additional learners can enter HE and arrange for their programme of study to interface to and enhance their workplace performance. In addition their learning will require minimal time away from work. In certain cases, with highly motivated individuals and employers, a full honours degree can be achieved in the same time frame as that studied by full time students.

The way learners are supported in this type of programme is critical to the success of the learners and therefore to the overall aims of the programme.

This proposal aims to provide an on-line system to support and enhance the experience of learners engaging with individual work based learning programmes.

It supports the key outcomes of the e-learning programme in:

- ✓ Widening participation
- ✓ HE in FE, by providing support for work based Foundation Degrees and Foundation Degree progression routes
- ✓ WBL, flexible delivery and personalised learning
- ✓ Developing a technical model which guide and support the different and diverse pedagogical approaches necessary to successfully support and develop WB learners

The project is a partnership between the University of Sunderland and its strategic partner colleges (specifically New College Durham, City of Sunderland College, Gateshead College), and with Newcastle College, the largest provider of HE in FE in the North of England. All partners have a significant portfolio of Foundation Degrees and have generic, work-based progression routes for Fd learners currently under development.

This collaboration will have a significant impact on the capacity to use and understand e-learning and e-enabled approaches, across a range of subject areas within partner institutions, due the generic nature of the WBL framework being adopted.

Finally, the formal evaluation of the project will provide data to a growing national community of practice in WBL, providing exemplar models and procedures that can benefit new providers of WBL, both regionally and nationally. Project activities and

outcomes will be disseminated by appropriate members of the project team at relevant regional and national conferences and fora.

The proposed project will last for 30 months, commencing September 2006. It is intended that project development will take two distinct phases, in the design and testing of a pilot system from September 2006 – July 2007: this will be piloted by a small cohort of users, who will register around February 2007. The resource will be monitored and reviewed, and if appropriate, new versions will be tested with additional cohorts of learners, registering September 2007. It is anticipated that there will be graduates from the first cohort of users by July 2008, whereupon the formal evaluation process will begin.

Project Description

This project aims to provide an on-line system to support the creation and execution of learning agreements, defining individualised curriculum, in WBL programmes, particularly Foundation Degrees and work based progression routes to Honours. The on-line system will be applicable to the WBL framework to be developed by the project proposer, and will be used by all learners registered for awards within the framework, whether through the programme proposer, or its partners.

A web-based system which will offer a diagnostic entry-level gateway to a work-based learning top-up programme for foundation degrees. The system will provide a potential learner with an appropriate question set, filter responses to provide advice and guidance on a blend of work which would optimally suit and benefit that individual. It would then provide support mechanisms for both learner and tutor in the construction of a learning contract to meet that individualised blend of work, including version control and record-keeping. The system would subsequently support the learner and tutor during the life of the learning contract by providing appropriate tracking, monitoring and record-keeping facilities. The system will link to an institutions' VLE or be delivered via the Web. It will also link to the institution's student record system.

The WBL framework will allow learners to gain HE awards, initially at Foundation Degree and undergraduate level, using knowledge and experience gained in the workplace. Programmes of learning and accreditation will be built up, step by step, with the support of tutors.

The proposed system will support this process of exploration, negotiation, design and execution of a learning agreement, creating an individualised programme of blended learning, based in the workplace.

Learners, (or cohorts of learners) will complete a diagnostic process, on-line, designed to establish:

- ✓ Suitability of the learner for this individualised approach
- ✓ Aims and objectives of proposed programme of learning
- ✓ Learning needs and preferences
- ✓ Previous experience and learning
- ✓ Current responsibilities in the workplace
- ✓ Level and scope of proposed learning programme

Once the diagnostic process is complete, the on-line system will then support the learner as they work with a tutor to design their individual learning programme, recording inputs and proposed outputs, start and completion dates for sections of learning, and the type and level of accreditation sought.

The system will generate version control of the learning agreement as it is being built and negotiated, establishing a tracking system for administration purposes. It will also generate a monitoring and review timetable for the learning agreement, tracking both learner and tutor activity as the programme progresses.

The system will be web-based, accessible either directly through the Internet, or through provider's VLEs.

The on-line system will be designed to be a valuable plug-in adjunct to existing e-portfolio systems, in particular the ePET system from the Newcastle University School of Medical Education Development used to demonstrate interoperability between institutions through the EPICS project, utilising open standards such as IMSLIP.

Proposed Functionality and Work Plan

Pre-entry

The learner will enter:

Personal details, employment details, previous qualifications, professional sector and qualification aimed for.

This will establish a record of the learner on the system.

Pre-entry diagnostic

The system will provide a series of yes/no questions to assess the learner's suitability for the programme approach. There will be free text input for a learner statement about their motivation the study and to use WBL.

This will build an application profile for the learner that can be processed by an administrator and programme leader.

Admission to programme and Learning Agreement Process

On successful completion of the pre-entry stage, the learner will be interviewed, offered a place, allocated a tutor and given password protected access to the learning agreement development (LAD) stage of the system.

LAD 1

The learner will use free text to describe, as aims, what they would like to achieve from the programme. The system will provide prompts aligned to level descriptors from the HE infrastructure.

LAD 2

Individual programme learning outcomes. The tutor and the learner will agree the intended learning outcomes for the individual. This will specify the level and size of the award.

LAD 3

Learning programme design. The learner will be registered on the Learning Agreement module and commence work with a tutor to explore and specify component learning activities to comprise the individual learning programme content. Prior experience will be considered and utilised to claim credit where appropriate and assessment evidence to be presented and dates of submission will be agreed. This section will require constant revision and updating, version control is important.

LAD 4

Learning agreement approval. All parts of pre-entry, application and diagnostic process are married with Learning Agreement and presented to the programme board for programme approval. Creation of learner's own area within system, which is also accessible by tutor and administrator.

Programme Monitoring

The system will use the learner timetable and assessment schedule to generate a monitoring schedule with electronic prompts to administrator, tutor and learner.

Administration System

The pre-entry and application process will interface with the SITS student administration system currently used by the Universities of Sunderland and Northumbria in the north east, through common standard text file (CSV) interchange. The learning agreement will be archived and monitored within this system.

This system does not deliver content, which, if applicable, will be specified within the learning agreement and accessed through the relevant VLE.

Project Organisation and Plan

Project Sponsor: Gary Holmes

Project Leader: initially Alix Pearson, during 2006-7 this will be a senior member of staff appointed to coordinate the University's overall WBL Strategy.

Project Advisory Board: Gary Holmes, Project Leader, Project Manager, John MacIntyre, relevant programme leaders from FE partners,
Stakeholders: Foundation Degree Forward; NE Chamber of Commerce, JISC Regional Support Centre Northern, JISC

Project Timetable

activity	Sept 06	Jan 07	July 07	Sept 07	Jan 08	July 08
Project startup	■					
Design and test pilot	■	■	■			
Full cohort testing				■	■	
Formal evaluation						■

Deliverables

The project will deliver a pilot on-line system for the creation and monitoring of individualised WBL programmes using a learning agreement.

The system will be tested on a single cohort of learners at level 6, who will be undertaking a top-up to a work-based Foundation Degree. After revisions, it will be further tested using FD learners at Level 4.

Interim and final project evaluation reports. Project highlight reports in accordance with JISC requirements. Project web-site. All reports will be posted on project website, which will also act as a vehicle for dissemination.

Risks

Risk	Impact	mitigation
<i>Delays in system development</i>	Slippage in project delivery, unable to access target group of test learners	Solution – contract for job output not days work, and oblige contractor to bring in extra programmers

<i>Difficulty in interfacing with existing IT systems</i>	May be unable to maximise potential for straightforward information transfer, resulting in underuse of system	Set appropriate expectation and use open standards.
<i>System insufficiently user friendly</i>	Poor uptake, process not embedded in curriculum design	Build on-line help. Frequent testing in building stages, thorough tutor training in use of system. Emphasise visual design issues at specification stage (utilise specialist HCI skills from School of Computing and Advanced Technology)
<i>Scope Creep</i>	Loss of focus and relevance, poor distribution of project resources	Clear project management.
<i>Poor benefits realisation</i>	Loss of system credibility, perception of quality and poor reputation	Dedicated resources identified for staff training and development

Value to the JISC community

As the completed system will be a shell, with diagnostic statements related to the HE infrastructure, it is applicable to WBL approaches throughout HE. Further financial investment may allow increased functionality to increase the system's desirability as a retail product. Even without such investment, the system would provide a model by which smaller providers, particularly of HE in FE (or smaller provision, perhaps in a fledgling WBL unit in a large University) can access and use the benefits of WBL programmes.

Project representatives will disseminate through the medium of the Regional PDP Forum, established as part of the JISC EPICS project, thus adding value from the areas of Foundation Degrees and Work-Based Learning. The Regional PDP Forum draws membership from all five universities in the North East, as well as the FE community. The IPR of the system will be retained by the project proposers, who are also the contracting institution. The project will also disseminate through the RSC Northern content and curriculum group, potentially reaching all FE colleges in the region.

Sustainability

When the system is in use, supporting registered WB Learners, an appropriate percentage of the administration overhead will be directed to system revision and upkeep.

Organisational Context

The project will be addressed within the context of substantial University of Sunderland objectives, namely: strategic partnerships with FE colleges to widen regional participation in HE including work-based and work-related learning, linked with Regional Economic Strategy objectives to increase graduate employment.

The University of Sunderland partners with FE colleges in the region through the HEFCE Lifelong Learning Networks initiative.

Regional Context

The project will explore the areas of foundation degrees and work based learning, building on work commenced by the distributed e-learning EPICS project, and the Regional PDP Forum. Inter-institutional issues relating to information governance, data sharing and security, have been extensively explored as part of EPICS and the EPICS consortium have agreed to continue this debate. The University of Sunderland's Information Security Group (drawing membership from IT, Legal, Corporate Governance, Student Administration) and IT Technical Advisory Group will be available to advise on practical questions of information security and governance, and technical feasibility, arising from the project. Costs of this contribution will be waived.

The project development and delivery consortium has considerable strength derived from many years of collaborative activities, particularly in the development of Foundation Degrees, but also in the broader arena of curriculum and material development. For example, the Tyne & Wear sub-regional Foundation Degree prototype project and the OWL project.

Budget

Staff oncosts are included at 30% of salary.
Institutional overheads at 105% of salary are waived including office space, telephones, computers, as existing staff will resource the project.

	salary 6 days @ £520	FTE	2006-7	Overheads 105%	2007-8	Overheads 105%
Gary Holmes			1,560		1,560	
AD	54,000	0.2	14,040	22,140	14,461	22,804
S4	19,627	0.3	7,654	12,070	7,884	12,433
Gary Unthank	20,688	0.6	16,136	25,446	16,620	26,209
John Cartledge	24,825	0.8	25,818	40,713	26,593	41,934
Alix Pearson	54,000	0.1	7,020	11,070	7,230	11,402
Sun server			5,875			
Project mgmt			6,000		4,500	
External evaluation			5,000		10,000	
Travel and subsistence			4,000		2,000	
Dissemination/events			1,500		7,000	
staff training					4,000	
Column totals			94,604	111,439	101,848	114,782
Total project costs			206,043		216,630	
total claimed from JISC			94,604		101,848	
total institutional contribution				111,439		114,782

total over both years	total	422,673
	claimed	196,452
	contribn	226,221

Evaluation

The project will be formally evaluated to establish if it has met its stated aims and objectives, the process commencing shortly after the initial cohort of learners have registered, and following them through their individual programme journeys.

The evaluation framework will be discussed and agreed with the contractors when the process is commissioned. The evaluation will be commissioned from colleagues with national expertise in delivering work based-learning, through the National CETL in WBL, based at Middlesex University.

Key Personnel.

Professor Gary Holmes

Dean, School of Education and Lifelong Learning, University of Sunderland

Role: Project Sponsor

Originally a school teacher, GH has been in HE since 1980 and has worked in 4 Universities. Previously Head of Oxford Centre for Education Management (1986-95); Head of School at Leeds Metropolitan University (1995-2003); currently Dean of Education and Lifelong Learning at Sunderland. National project activity has included work on NPQH and LPSH. Research and publications focussed on education leadership management. GH has had a long involvement with work based and professional learning. The School of ELL has a significant work-focussed and professional portfolio and works in partnership with very many local and regional interests.

Professor John MacIntyre

Associate Dean

School of Computing and Advanced Technology, University of Sunderland.

Role: Foundation Degree Programme Leader

An engineer, John MacIntyre is programme leader for the developing suite of Foundation Degrees through which this software will be tested. John has considerable experience of innovative programme design and development, using ICT for both content delivery and process management.

Alix Pearson

Role: initial project leader

Regional Director, Foundation Degree Forward

Alix has been working in Work Based Learning and corporate and vocational education for 17 years. She has significant experience in guiding learners through vocational and negotiated routes of learning, and of programme design and validation at undergraduate and post-graduate levels. Her current work as RD of FDF cuts across institutions and disciplines and she is the national lead in FDF for Foundation Degree WBL top-up programmes. She was an inaugural member of the staff team at the OWL project and was awarded a teaching fellowship at the University of Sunderland for her work on PDP.

Dave Webster

Role: project management, responsible for linkage with JISC Regional Support Northern and dissemination through Content and Curriculum Group.

Dave Webster is Assistant Director for Strategy and Development and joint Acting Director of the Student and Learning Support Service at the University of Sunderland. This Service comprises library, IT, MIS, student welfare, and e-learning development. Dave has a long history of developing strategies and project planning for information systems and business process review and deployment. He is Director of the JISC Regional Support Centre Northern, and has close involvement in regional groups tasked with developing and implementing strategic approaches to eLearning on a regional and sub-regional basis. He has a keen interest in regional collaboration towards process frameworks for information exchange and the possible development of shared services

John Cartledge

Role: Software developer

John is a Programmer in the Systems and Programming Team of the School of Computing and Technology. He has more than 15 years software development experience with a key skill set clustered around the design, implementation and administration of database systems. Other areas of expertise include Unix Systems Administration, programming with SQL and related 4 GLs and scripting skills in Unix and PHP. In recent years he has worked on numerous projects which have web-based and on-line access to information systems at their core, most notably the School's on-line electronic feedback system, an online tool for capturing the opinions of students on the modules they have studied.

John has taken a leading role in the implementation of a Content Management System for the School's revamped web site that is currently under development.

Gary Unthank

Role: Software developer

Gary is a Principal Lecturer responsible for the management and development of undergraduate programmes in the School of Computing and Technology. In this role he has overseen development of many programmes including a suite of Foundation Degrees which incorporate work-based learning and work-related learning modules. He is Chair of the School's work-based learning sub-group which is a task group of the School's Learning Enhancement Board. Gary is also the School's APA officer and has responsibility for student retention. He was responsible for liaising with Macromedia and School staff to ensure that the School were able to incorporate that curriculum within our programmes thus strengthening their vocational relevance. Gary's teaching is focussed in the area of multimedia and web development. He has led the BSc Multimedia Systems for many years and, as part of that programme, he developed a very successful community-based group project which was honoured nationally. In this module, the students produce software/multimedia artefacts for real clients within a controlled time-frame. Gary is also a key member of the School recruitment team, having acted as Admissions tutor for many years, and has fostered extensive links with regional schools and colleges. He has a keen understanding of course curricula at all of these levels. Gary has extensive understanding and experience of the development and deployment of web-delivered systems and is at the forefront of staff using the University's VLE, a tool he has used creatively with both his modules and at the programme level.

Project Management

Management and support of the project will be undertaken by Student and Learning Support, University of Sunderland, who currently plan and implement major University projects and have substantial experience in following these projects through to completion managing risks, reporting and administration. The available project management team include registered PRINCE2 Practitioners and follow essential PRINCE2 principles. Project Start-Up will entail assembly of the Project Team, establishment of planning documents and Advisory Board, development of the detailed meeting and dissemination timetable, reporting schedule, quality and communication plans. Online communication is available using web-based file sharing and Listserv mailing lists.

Supporting Letters

Jim Bradshaw, University of Sunderland
CoS College (to follow)
Gateshead College
Newcastle College (to follow)
New College Durham (to follow)
Foundation Degree Forward (to follow)

Primary Contact:

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Secondary Contact:

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15 June 2006

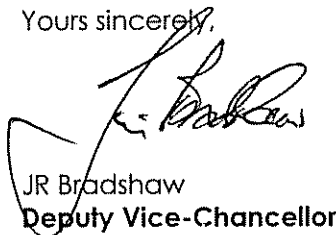
Ms Lesley Hawkins
JISC
Northavon House
Coldharbour Lane
Bristol
BS16 1QD

Dear Lesley

JISC Circular 03/06: bid for funding: e-learning

The University of Sunderland is fully in support of the application for funding by Gary Holmes, Dean of the School of Education and Lifelong Learning, for a project to develop a framework and online support system to enhance the experience of learners engaged with individual work based learning programmes. The proposed project is wholly supportive of major University initiatives for work-based foundation degrees and progression routes in collaboration with our strategic FE partners and assists our mission of widened participation and the regional economic strategy.

Yours sincerely,



JR Bradshaw
Deputy Vice-Chancellor

DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR
J R BRADSHAW
CPFA FCCA

VICE-CHANCELLOR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE
PROFESSOR PETER FIDLER
MBE MSc DipTP DipSoc MRTPI MInstD



Awarded for excellence



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

City of Sunderland College

CH/EMR

26th June 2006

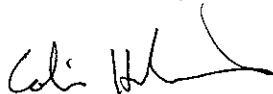
Professor John MacIntyre
University of Sunderland
Edinburgh Building
Chester Road
Sunderland
SR1 3SD

Dear John

I am very pleased to be able to offer the College's support for the WEEBLE project.

Work based learning will become increasingly more valuable in meeting HE policy objectives of widening participation, employer engagement and reducing student debt burden. The provision of an on-line system to support and enhance the experience of learners engaged with individual work based learning will be vital to the success of any programme.

Yours sincerely



Colin Hindmarch
Vice Principal

14 June 2006

Lesley Hawkins
JISC
Northavon House
Coldharbour Lane
Bristol
BS16 1QD

Dear Lesley

Re: JISC Capital Programme - e-Learning Programme

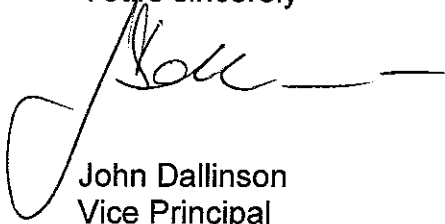
We would like to support Foundation Degree Forward's bid proposal for a work based learning support system.

Newcastle College is one of the largest providers of vocational higher education and currently offers over 50 Foundation Degrees and 12 Honours Degrees to over 2000 students. Our most recent Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Academic Review in March 2006, reached the judgement that they have confidence in the provision and that the provision was commendable, the highest judgements possible.

One of the College's higher education objectives is to increase the number of work based learners accessing Higher Education. This is in line with our key drivers to widen participation, deliver personalised learning programmes and meet the needs the employers in the region.

The development of the diagnostic framework proposal in this bid will provide all members of the consortium with a valuable tool to engage with employers in the region and support their workforce in ascertaining their learning needs. We welcome its development and are keen to support initiatives that will increase the number of work based learners able to access higher education.

Yours sincerely



John Dallinson
Vice Principal

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Our Ref DAC/LH

12 June 2006

Ms Lesley Hawkins
JISC
Northavon House
Coldharbour Lane
Bristol
BS16 1QD

Dear John

BID FOR JISC FUNDING

I am pleased to confirm Gateshead College's full support for the bid to JISC for £200k to fund the development of an on-line diagnostic tool to support entry and curriculum planning in Foundation Degrees and their top ups. This initiative will be useful to the programme and broader aims/objectives of the College.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Cheetham". The signature is written in a cursive style with a period at the end.

David Cheetham
Principal/Chief Executive