

JOINT INFORMATION SYSTEMS COMMITTEE

INVITATION TO TENDER

Three studies on good practice and technology-supported approaches in recruitment and admissions

Summary

1. The Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) wishes to commission three studies into good practice and technology-supported approaches in recruitment and admissions. These studies will inform future JISC work within the e-Learning Capital Programme on the use of technology to support admissions to higher education. However, the studies are also expected to draw on good human resources practice in the employment sector.
2. Specifically, the studies will cover:
 - **Study 1:** Improving the provision of feedback to applicants, and the use of technology to support this;
 - **Study 2:** Mechanisms for assessing the fairness and effectiveness of selection processes in admissions to higher education;
 - **Study 3:** Improving support for learners throughout application to and induction in higher education, and in the use of technology to support this.

Proposals that seek to deliver all three studies, or one or two of the studies, are welcome.

3. The main deliverable of each study is a final report with recommendations, intended for the JISC executive. These reports are to be delivered to JISC in March 2007.
4. Up to £20,000 (including VAT and expenses) is available for each study over a five-month period (November 2006 – March 2007). Tenders should be submitted no later than 12:00 on 25 September 2006.

Background

5. JISC supports higher and further education by providing strategic guidance, advice and opportunities to use Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to support research, teaching, learning and administration. JISC is funded by all the UK post-16 and higher education funding councils.
6. JISC's core e-Learning programme aims to identify how e-learning can benefit learners, practitioners and educational institutions, and advise on its implementation. Its goals are to achieve improved quality of learning in the UK through:
 - Practitioners with confidence and skills in managing and facilitating e-learning in different contexts and with different pedagogical approaches
 - A technical infrastructure that supports flexibility, diversity and extendibility
 - Easy access to high quality, flexible learning materials
 - Effective and responsive e-learning policies, systems and structures in place at local, regional and national level
7. The e-learning activity within the Capital Programme will complement and build upon the core activities, with a focus on helping institutions to meet the diverse needs of learners throughout their lives.
8. The e-Learning Capital programme is an £11.36 million investment to support the sector in harnessing the potential of e-learning to support lifelong learners. A particular area of investigation will be around providing a personalised learning experience, meeting the needs of individual learners in a range of settings through the use of technologies such as e-portfolios, e-assessment and social software. The programme also includes work on how

technology can facilitate the more sophisticated administration processes needed for this kind of flexible provision.

9. The programme will build directly on JISC work carried out under the Distributed e-learning programme¹, MLEs for lifelong learning programme², the Pedagogy, Framework and tools and Innovations strands of the e-Learning programme³, and work on the e-Framework for Education and Research.
10. The e-Framework for Education and Research⁴ is a sustainable, service-orientated, open standards-based technical framework, which JISC is working on with the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) in Australia. This initiative builds on work already completed under the e-Learning Framework (ELF) and the JISC Information Environment. The primary goal of the e-Framework is to facilitate technical interoperability within and across education and research through improved strategic planning and implementation processes.
11. The studies in this invitation to tender will inform the work of a number of large-scale technical demonstrator projects on the use of technology to support the admissions process, which are planned as part of the work of the e-Learning Capital Programme. Drawing on the work of the e-Framework Reference Models⁵, these demonstrator projects will seek to pilot a number of web services within systems and processes that:
 - Improve support to the learner making an application to HE
 - Enable admissions staff to make more effective use of information, including the provision of feedback to unsuccessful applicants
 - Support the induction of new students

Aims and Objectives

Study 1: Improving the provision of feedback to applicants, and the use of technology to support this

12. The aim of Study 1 is to identify existing good practice and mechanisms around the provision of feedback to applicants in recruitment and selection in the employment sector that could be applicable to the provision of feedback to applicants for higher education. This feedback could then be used by applicants to enhance their prospects for making appropriate and successful applications in the future.
13. The objectives of Study 1 are:
 - To identify good practice for applicant feedback in recruitment and selection which could be used as potential models for the provision of feedback in the higher education admissions process
 - To identify mechanisms to support the generation of high quality feedback to large numbers of applicants which are practicable in terms of cost including:
 - Computer generated feedback
 - Support systems for human generated feedback
 - Automatically generated feedback from entry profile processing
 - To identify mechanisms to assure the quality of feedback, centred on the needs of the applicant.
 - To identify web services and tools which can be used to support the provision of feedback to applicants, and the data which needs to be available to these. The

1 http://www.jisc.ac.uk/programme_edistributed.html

2 <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/elearningfocus/mle>

3 http://www.jisc.ac.uk/programme_elearning.html

4 <http://www.e-framework.org/>

5 For an introduction to the work of the reference models, see <http://www.elearning.ac.uk/features/refermodels2>

tools and services may have been developed within higher education or e-recruitment.

- To identify gaps in the e-Framework where necessary web services and tools to support the provision of feedback are not available, and scope the business processes and data flows which these services and tools need to support.
- To provide recommendations for priority areas for development in order to provide effective ICT support to personalise feedback processes so that applicants are treated as individuals.

Study 2: Mechanisms for assessing the fairness and effectiveness of selection processes in admissions to higher education

14. The aim of Study 2 is to identify measures and mechanisms for assessing the fairness and effectiveness of the application and selection process in admissions to higher education. These measures could be used as part of the evaluation of the planned programme of technical demonstrator projects on the use of technology to support the admissions process (see paragraph 11.)

15. The objectives of Study 2 are:

- To identify measures and mechanisms for assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of admissions processes to higher education from the point of view of higher education institutions, organisations such as schools and colleges which support applicants, UCAS, and the applicants. Aspects of the process considered are likely to include:
 - o Human time and effort involved (applicants, teaching and non-teaching staff)
 - o Active and elapsed time required to process each applicant
 - o Staff and applicant views on the ease of the process
- To identify measures and mechanisms for assessing the fairness of admissions processes taking into account factors such as the ethnicity, cultural, social and educational background, and disability of the applicants.
- To develop a framework for evaluating the fairness and effectiveness of HE admissions processes which could be used as part of the evaluation of the planned programme of technical demonstrator projects on the use of technology to support the admissions process.
- To identify the data and evidence which would need to be collected in order to implement this evaluation framework.
- To identify web services and tools which can be used to support the collection of the required data.
- To identify gaps in the e-Framework where necessary web services and tools to support the collection of data are not available, and describe the business processes and data flows which these services and tools need to support.

Study 3: Improving support for learners throughout application to and induction in higher education, and in the use of technology to support this

16. The aim of Study 3 is to identify good practice in supporting learners throughout the process of application to higher education, with a view to making recommendations on how to improve learner support throughout this process.

17. The objectives of Study 3 are:

- To identify good practice in supporting applicants to higher education including:

- o Preparation of applicants by educational organisations including colleges, university widening participation schemes, professional associations and initiatives such as the National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth;
 - o Induction to higher education for successful applicants;
 - o Planning services for unsuccessful applicants.
- To identify good practice in supporting applicants within the broader context of application to employment which would be applicable within an HE context
 - To identify web services and tools which can be used to facilitate the support of applicants to higher education, and the data which needs to be available to these. The tools and services may have been developed within higher education or e-recruitment.
 - To identify gaps in the e-Framework where necessary web services and tools to facilitate the support of applicants are not available, and describe the business processes and data flows which these services and tools need to support.
 - To provide recommendations for priority areas for development in order to provide effective ICT-enabled support for applicants, taking account of the different needs of different types of learner including those not in education or employment, applying in later life or in mid-career.

Terms of Reference

18. The main purpose of the studies is to inform the work of a number of large-scale technical demonstrator projects on the use of technology to support admissions processes in higher education. The focus of the work should therefore be on developing practical recommendations for JISC on the processes and technology which will be need to be implemented or developed in order to carry out this work, rather than simply on surveying the domain.
19. The primary focus of the studies should be undergraduate admissions, through UCAS and by direct entry.
20. The technological development and implementation carried out by the demonstrator projects will be within the service-oriented approach of the e-Framework. As indicated under aims and objectives above, the studies are expected to work within this approach when they identify and specify tools, services and data. Successful bidders must therefore be willing to work within an emerging conceptual and technical framework which may be new to them, and will be supported in this by JISC and CETIS⁶ (the Centre for Educational Technology Interoperability Standards.)
21. Successful bidders will be expected to provide an appropriate methodology for each study.
22. Key stakeholders who should be consulted during the studies include:
 - Teaching and administrative staff in universities and colleges who are involved in the admissions process, either directly dealing with applicants or working on business processes;
 - Applicants, successful and unsuccessful, from a wide range of backgrounds;
 - UCAS staff

Successful bidders will be expected to identify and consult with other appropriate stakeholders.

23. Successful bidders will need to share information and findings with the consultants contracted to undertake the other studies, to avoid overlap or repeated requests to stakeholders for information.

⁶ <http://www.cetis.ac.uk>

Deliverables

24. The deliverables from each study are expected to be:

- A revised and detailed work plan two weeks after the start of the contract.
- A report, written in clear, plain English, intended for the JISC Executive which includes:
 - An executive summary of the findings of the study and its recommendations;
 - Brief description of the methodology adopted;
 - The findings of the study, addressing each of the objectives listed above for the relevant study;
 - An appendix detailing service descriptions and formal or semi-formal descriptions of relevant business process (as appropriate to meet the objectives of the relevant study;)
 - An appendix listing the individuals and organisations who provided comments and information for the study.
- A presentation to interested parties (including the demonstrator projects) of findings and recommendations in February / March 2007, at an event to be arranged by JISC.

25. Other expectations are:

- The contractor(s) will be expected to work closely with the e-Learning team within the JISC Executive, with CETIS representatives, and with the consultants contracted to undertake the other studies, to ensure there is a shared understanding of the work and its progress.
- The study's prime function is to act as a source of information for JISC. However the outputs should be produced so they can be shared more widely with the further and higher education community.
- Prior to final acceptance of the outputs a draft should be submitted to the JISC Executive for comment.
- The final report must be delivered in electronic format and will be made available on the web.
- At the conclusion of the study the contractor(s) may be invited to present the results at meetings of the relevant JISC team, committee or advisory group.

26. The information provided in the reports of the study, and the rights to all other outputs, shall become the property of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) on behalf of the JISC and the other funding councils.

Timescale

27. The timescale is as follows:

- Bids should be submitted by 12:00 hrs on 25 September 2006.
- If necessary, the panel may need to interview shortlisted candidates. If this is the case, interviews will be held in the week beginning 16 October 2006.
- It is expected that bidders will be notified of the outcome of the evaluation process in the week beginning 23 October 2006.
- The contractor(s) will be expected to commence work as soon as possible after this date, and by 20 November at the latest. The contractor(s) must have met with JISC programme managers and agreed the project plan by the end of November.

- Draft final reports to include all outputs must be delivered to JISC by 1 March 2007.
- The final report must be delivered to JISC by 30 March 2007.

Evaluation

28. An evaluation panel comprising of experts from the educational community and the JISC Executive will be responsible for evaluating submitted proposals on the basis of the following criteria:

- Compliance with and understanding of the requirements. (35%). This includes:
 - the extent to which the proposal demonstrates an understanding of the objectives of the study (paragraphs 12-17) and complies with the terms of reference, deliverables, timetable and other expectations (paragraphs 18-27)
 - the extent to which it demonstrates the knowledge and understanding required under paragraph 31 below.
- Quality of work plan and suitability of methodology in meeting the requirements. (30%).
- Relevance of previous experience of the tendering organisation(s) and of the particular consultants and/or researchers to the study. (20%)
- Analysis and management of risks to successful completion of the study. (5%)
- Value for money. (10%).

Funding

29. Up to £20,000 inclusive of VAT and related travel and subsistence is available for each study. Bidders who are eligible to apply full economic costs (fEC) to their proposals are permitted to do so, but JISC's total contribution to each project will not exceed £20,000.

Proposals

30. Proposals that seek to deliver all three studies, or one or two of the studies in isolation, are welcome. Bidders should clearly indicate on the cover sheet (Appendix A) which of the studies they are tendering for.

31. Proposals should clearly and fully demonstrate the following:

- Knowledge and understanding of the use of technology to support learning, teaching and administration in further and higher education, with particular reference to the work of JISC.
- Specifically an understanding of a service oriented approach, the e-Framework for Education and Research and the e-Portfolio Reference Model. The e-Framework website is at <http://www.e-framework.org/>, and summary information is available at http://www.jisc.ac.uk/capital_bp_soa.html. Information on the e-Portfolio reference model is available from <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/epreferencemodel/>.
- Knowledge and understanding of policy, strategy and processes around admissions to higher education.
- Knowledge of recruitment and selection processes in employment (where relevant to the objectives of the study.)
- Experience in undertaking similar types of work.
- Methodology to be adopted.
- A work plan with milestones and deliverables.

- Details of personnel to work on the study, including CVs. (CVs of no more than two sides of A4 should be included in an appendix and are not counted within the six page maximum bid length.)
- Overall budget and detailed breakdown of main areas of work, including the relevant daily rates/pro-rata salary against each member of the team to work on the study.

Management

32. The contract will be overseen by an e-learning programme manager at the JISC Executive, and will report to the e-Learning Capital Programme Advisory Board. The contractor(s) will report at regular intervals as agreed at the time of commissioning. In agreeing the work plan with the successful contractor(s), JISC will wish to discuss the list of bodies and people who should be consulted in the course of the study (see also paragraph 22), and the way in which the contractors carrying out the different studies work together (see paragraph 25).

Submission

33. Proposals of no more than six pages of A4, typeset in Arial or a similar font at 10 point size, should be submitted as an electronic copy (Word, RTF or PDF format) via email. Proposals must also include the completed cover sheet at Appendix A to this invitation to tender, in addition to the six page maximum bid.
34. Proposals must be received no later than 12 noon on 25 September 2006. Late proposals WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.
35. Proposals should be sent to Georgia Slade, email: g.slade@jisc.ac.uk.
36. JISC reserves the right not to accept the lowest (or any) tender received.

Further information

37. Any queries regarding this invitation to tender should be sent to Sarah Davies, JISC Programme Manager at JISC Bristol Office, tel: 0117 3310773, email: s.davies@jisc.ac.uk

Cover sheet for proposals

(NB: All sections must be completed)

JISC Invitation to Tender: Studies on good practice and technology-supported approaches in recruitment and admissions

Study or studies tendered for (delete those not applicable):

- **Study 1:** Good practice in the provision of feedback to applicants, and in the use of technology to support this;
- **Study 2:** Mechanisms for assessing the fairness and effectiveness of selection processes in admissions to higher education;
- **Study 3:** Good practice in supporting learners throughout application to and induction in higher education, and in the use of technology to support this.

Name of lead institution/organisation

List consultants/partners, if any

Full contact details for primary contact

Name:
Position:
Email:
Address:

Tel:
Fax:

Total cost to the JISC:

Outline proposal description