

THE LIFELONG LEARNING SUPPORT PROJECT 2003 - 2005
Developing Scenarios of Practice¹

A. Why develop Scenarios?

Scenarios describe typical uses of a system as narratives or stories. Experience has shown that projects and system developments can easily fail to meet their purposes if the scenarios in which the systems are to be used are not properly understood. Thus, a vital part of any system development is to ensure that stakeholders share a common understanding of the scenarios of practice. For learner-centred Projects of the kind supported by JISC, scenario building:

1. offers an accessible means by which a range of different stakeholders can develop a consensus which expresses in plain language the processes, centred on the learner, involved in the operation of the system in its intended context;
2. provides flexible resources upon which a wide variety of stakeholders can build common understandings;
3. can enable clear rationales for differential support to learners to be built (because the conventions for scenarios of practice give most attention to different kinds of learner from whom more formal "types" can be derived in the same way as for other stakeholders).

The exercises leading up to this narrative provide quantified materials for more formal representations, for example of the types of "actor" involved². The methodology further provides a starting point for gathering requirements, reaching consensus and developing materials which can be formalised. Scenarios are therefore accessible, tell a story in plain language but lead to and support the development of formal technical representations.

B. Two steps to 'Getting started'.

1. Access the Resource Pack we have provided for developing scenarios and use cases. This incorporates a template to facilitate scenario building, which you can use as is or adapt to suit. A further paper, 'Building on the scenarios methodology' is also available. Both are located at: <http://www.cetis.ac.uk/members/llsp/scenarios/#how>.³
2. Look at what others have done. A collection of the scenarios and use cases from the projects developed using this methodology is located at: <http://www.cetis.ac.uk/members/llsp/scenarios/#what>.

C. Get maximum value from the activity.

Previous experience suggests you can do this if you:

1. write in the first person, and think like a learner when describing a scenario from the perspective of a learner, (so asking "as a learner, what do I want from the system?" rather than "what will the system do to/for me?").
2. Take account of accessibility/ user preferences.
3. Provide a glossary of terms both for meanings of words used in the text, and conventions in your flow charts/diagrams, so that others can understand these when you aren't there to explain them.
4. Show/include in the scenario additional communities of learners who can use the services – e.g. those with a professional qualification entering HE from work.
5. Show the restrictions of the system (e.g. communities of learners who cannot use the services), as well as those who can.
6. Recognise that aspects may be more complex than they appear (e.g. it is not always apparent who owns which information).
7. Make conflicts between different stakeholders (managers, learners) explicit in scenarios or use cases, to facilitate understanding and progress in developing systems.
8. Make sure you are clear on the target audience for scenarios and use cases. This is important for informing vocabularies to be used, and ways in which information is expressed. "We are trying to provide explanations of who uses data, when, precisely how, and for what purposes, in order to give technical colleagues real insight into how systems need to be built to do the job for all users."

¹ Under contract to the JISC, the Centre for Recording Achievement has taken a leading role in the development of a Resource Pack for developing such scenarios and use cases. This has been undertaken through an iterative process of work with Projects participating within the MLEs4LLL Programme, for which the Centre has provided the 'Lifelong Learning Support Project' (LLSP).

² Some of the materials gathered from the projects are currently being rendered as UML2.0 preliminary to a review of the use of Learning Design to express the implicit workflow within a scenario or a part of a scenario

³ Peter Rees Jones is developing a further version of the Resource Pack to take account of the e-Framework. It is anticipated that this will be available in the autumn.