A E-Learning Proposal Cover Sheet

Cover Sheet for Proposals	*JISC Capital Programme*

Name of Capital Programme: E-learning

Bid for Call:
(Please tick ONE BOX ONLY, as appropriate)

Supporting lifelong learning					
☐	**Call I – HE in FE**				
Technical developments to support learning and teaching					
	Call II – Assessment ☐ **a)** Item Authoring Tool ☐ **b)** Item Bank Software ☐ **c)** Assessment Delivery Tool		**Call IV – Admissions demonstrators** ☐ **a)** structured personal profiles, course entry profiles and pre-assessment; ☐ **b)** improving applicant feedback; ☐ **c)** accreditation of prior experiential learning; ☐ **d)** e-portfolio based admissions.	☐	**Call VI – Course validation**
✓	**Call III – Technology supported learning environments**	☐	**Call V – Course description and discovery**	☐	**Call VII – Domain maps**

Name of Lead Institution:	**Technology-Assisted Lifelong Learning (TALL), University of Oxford**
Name of Proposed Project:	**Isthmus: Linking the personal and institutional in learning technologies**

Name(s) of Project Partner(s):N/A

Full Contact Details for Primary Contact:

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Length of Project:	**2 years**		
Project Start Date:	01 March 2007	**Project End Date:**	28 February 2009

Total Funding Requested from JISC:	£98,974

Funding Broken Down over Financial Years (April – March):

Apr06 – Mar07	Apr07 – Mar08	Apr08 – Mar09
£3,967	£52,224	£42,783

Total Institutional Contribution:	£48,454	
Percentage Contributions over the Life of the Project:	**JISC – 67%**	**PARTNERS – 33%**

Outline Project Description

The Isthmus project will provide a link between the technological landscape inhabited by many students and the technologies offered by academic institutions. By researching the uptake of user-owned technologies among selected students in the Department for Continuing Education at the University of Oxford, it will establish the requirements for a demonstrator integration of tools and systems between institutional and individually owned technologies. The project team will then pilot these technologies among select cohorts of students, developing not only the technological solutions, but also exploring the wider implications of this type of technology use for institutions and academics, including issues such as the consequences for IPR. The project will then evaluate the outcomes of the pilot and disseminate these and the other project outputs as widely as possible.

I have looked at the example FOI form at Appendix A and included an FOI form in the attached bid (Tick Box)	**YES✓**	
I have read the Circular and associated Terms and Conditions of Grant at Appendix B (Tick Box)	**YES✓**	

B FOI Withheld Information Form

We would like JISC to consider withholding the following sections or paragraphs from disclosure should the contents of this proposal be requested under the Freedom of Information Act.

We acknowledge that the FOI Withheld Information Form is of indicative value only and that JISC may nevertheless be obliged to disclose this information in accordance with the requirements of the Act. We acknowledge that the final decision on disclosure rests with JISC.

Section / Paragraph No.	**Relevant exemption from disclosure under FOI**	**Justification**
None		

Isthmus: Linking the personal and institutional in learning technologies

C Introduction

1. The Isthmus project will provide a link between the technological landscape inhabited by many students and the technologies offered by academic institutions. Focusing on lifelong learning students at the Department for Continuing Education at the University of Oxford, the project will establish requirements by using questionnaires and selective in-depth interviews. This will be enhanced by reviewing previous research into student behaviour, technology use and tools, notably the studies carried out as part of the JISC 'Understanding my Learning' programme[1]. The project will then map its findings against the well-developed systems already found in the Department to suggest how best to integrate the benefits to be found in personal uses of technologies with more formal course offerings, currently delivered or supported through the Moodle VLE. This will be followed by a period of development, to create a prototype solution that bridges the institutional boundary, allowing students to engage with educational offerings using technologies which they own. The project will then pilot this prototype solution and evaluate the outcomes, feeding back into the wider JISC community. The project will take place over two years from 1 March 2007 to 28 February 2009. It will contribute to the programme by adapting or developing flexible, personalised tools that meet the real needs of lifelong learners. It will develop materials to support practitioners and institutions in developing policies and processes to work effectively with these tools and pilot them across a number of courses.

2. TALL (Technology-Assisted Lifelong Learning) has a successful track record in delivering JISC projects including WCKER, SPIRE and Phoebe. This project uniquely ties in with TALL's other role as an e-learning course development and delivery team for Oxford University's Department for Continuing Education.

D Project Description

3. A recent HE Academy report observed that "There is an increasing recognition that students are making use of their own technology as well as those provided for them and that they are doing this in ways that are not planned for, difficult to predict and may not be immediately visible to their teachers or researchers"[2]. Many contemporary students engage with numerous web-based services and tools that are used both for social purposes and to manage their learning, work and their life[3]. While it is clear that universities may want to harness the power of these to enhance personal and collaborative learning, educational institutions no longer exercise a monopoly over these tools and may be offering redundant or duplicate services, and have gaps in their provision for students who are 'digital natives'[4]. However, what remains to be established is just how far have the majority of new entrants to university been normalised to new ways of working online? The challenge is therefore not just one of implementing new technologies, but also determining what these should be.

4. If it is the case that today's students have appropriated participatory online services and other new tools, it is clear that in the near future, universities will have to change practice and utilise 'bridging' technologies to encourage this type of current (or envisaged) student to engage with institutional online provisions whilst also allowing the flexibility for them to use services they already 'own'. The technologies mooted in relation to this range from web-based services such as Flickr[5] and del.icio.us[6], social software such as Facebook[7], to delivery mechanisms such as the ubiquitous mobile phone. It is worth noting here too that with the increasing computational

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[1] http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/elearning_pedagogy/elp_learneroutcomes.aspx

[2] Sharpe, R., Benfield, G., Roberts, G. & Francis, R (2006), The undergraduate experience of blended e-learning: a review of UK literature and practice undertaken for the Higher Education Academy, available from http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/4884.htm.

[3] Diana Oblinger http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ERM0342.pdf and JISC reports from the LEX http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/elearning_pedagogy/elp_lex.aspx and LearnerXP projects http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/elearning_pedagogy/elp_learnerxp.aspx

[4] Mark Prensky http://www.twitchspeed.com/site/Prensky%20-%20Digital%20Natives,%20Digital%20Immigrants%20-%20Part1.htm

[5] http://www.flickr.com/

[6] http://del.icio.us/

[7] http://www.facebook.com/

power and tools available on mobile phones they are rapidly closing the gap between them and the more expensive, less ubiquitous PDAs (many of which lack the essential communicative component of telephony) to the extent that phones may become (either de facto or by choice) the preferred mobile computing medium for students. If learning remains mediated only by the institutional VLE without engaging in the online environment students may bring to the institution, then there is likely to be a clash of cultures in which the institution will appear inflexible and outmoded in its assumptions and output.

5. As increasing numbers of students engage with education later in life, whether full-time or part-time, they are likely to be mixing education with work, and significant family and other commitments. This makes the requirement for educational technology to be a seamless part of the University and life ever more important. The Oxford University Department for Continuing Education has long offered an Oxford education to the lifelong student, both in traditional academic subjects and in Continuing Professional Development (CPD). In the last decade these lifelong learners have increasingly been supported by web-based technology, with many programmes offered fully online[8]. With a dedicated e-learning research and development team, TALL, the Department offers an unrivalled test bed for a project such as Isthmus.

6. The Department proposes to undertake the preliminary study with two groups of students as outlined below. The eventual pilot cohort will be determined from the results of the study, and will be as broad as possible within the constraints of the project.

Group 1
The first group of students study academic undergraduate-level ten-week courses online. These courses are offered by the Public Programmes division of the Department, and include subjects in the following fields: history of art; philosophy; English literature; archaeology. Each course runs three times a year. This term (Autumn 2006), the Department has over 300 students enrolled on ten different courses, and by May 2007 (the start of the project) the Department will have 20 courses available. Students taking these courses range in age from 18 to 91, and include people from various educational backgrounds with jobs ranging from HGV drivers and care assistants to solicitors and managers.

These courses are centred on online collaboration, facilitated through asynchronous forums and wikis, with rich peer-to-peer interaction supported by academic tutors. There is also a heavy use of online journals for reflective learning, which will be migrating to blogs in 2007. Many students take several courses at once and multiple courses during a year. It is clear that a learning community develops for the duration of a course, but there is no support for this community, or online access to it, beyond the duration of each course. In the past, philosophy students have set up their own forums at the end of courses to extend the learning experience. The project team is especially interested in exploring how online technologies are already being used by students and how these can be developed further to support students not only while they are studying a specific course, but between courses and beyond courses in a truly lifelong learning scenario.

Group 2
The second group consists of CPD students in the Technology portfolio, covering the subject areas of electronics, telecoms and engineering. These courses are delivered to a technologically sophisticated audience in a combination of face-to-face, blended and online modes that reach approximately 500 students each year. The Technology portfolio also hosts a highly-active online discussion forum focussed on future mobile-telecoms technologies, which has over 1000 members. The project would be again looking at the role of user-owned technology in extending provision and support, across all modes of delivery, both within specific courses and beyond them.

[8] http://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/courses/online/

7. Example scenarios the project may explore include:

- Exposing the course calendar in the institution's VLE to allow it to be synchronised with external calendaring systems such as Google Calendar[9] or iCal[10] so that students can see how course dates fit with their other commitments.

- Giving students the option to blog from their profiles on the institutional VLE or to pipe a feed into this from an existing external blog they write. In this way students who already have blogs can use them to join in debates around a course without having to use different tools. Also, students who are new to blogging and so use the blog service provided by the institution could later feed this blog out to services such as Bloglines[11] or Technorati[12].

- Sending SMS messages to students' mobile phone of important course events or announcements.

8. The examples demonstrate the 'bridging' principle. However the understanding of which bridges will work best and how to combine these bridges into effective practice is an important aspect of the Isthmus project. It is also clear from the examples above that some of these bridges would be administrative/organisational and some would be more to do with generating a flow of ideas or information, with pedagogical implications. This would also be explored by the project.

Methodology for Research and Evaluation

9. The project will adopt a methodology consonant with its exploratory nature, seeking to elicit themes and issues and clarify them rather than attempting to prove a particular hypothesis. The LEX and LXP projects in the JISC 'Understanding my Learning' programme have already indicated what a number of these issues might be, and we will use them as starting points in the design of our data collection instruments. In both the preliminary study and the evaluation of the pilot implementation we envisage primarily using online surveys to gather broad-brush quantitative data on the landscape of tool usage by students. This will be triangulated by qualitative data from a small number (up to 10 in each study) of semi-structured interviews with students selected either a) for their typicality or b) for their variation from the "typical" pattern[13]. In designing the research and evaluation aspects of the project we will follow closely the guidance and recommendations in Professor Terry Mayes' Methodology Report on the LEX project, and will base our instruments on those developed by both LEX and LXP. In particular, we note the potential benefits of the "interview plus" technique advocated by the LEX team.

10. The preliminary study will concentrate on refining and extending the understanding of students' usage of personal technologies that has emerged from the LEX and LXP projects. It is envisaged that a single survey will be conducted among a random sample of the 800 students expected to be studying on the courses selected for scrutiny, and that this will be followed up by semi-structured telephone interviews with a subset of students. The survey and interview will act as partial test-beds for the instruments to be used in the pilot implementation.

11. In broad terms, we envisage the following approach for the evaluation of the pilot implementation:

- Conduct a survey of all students immediately before the start of the pilot, in order to elicit baseline data regarding, inter alia, their current use of personal technologies in their learning, and their expectations and intentions for such use during the course.

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[9] https://www.google.com/accounts/ServiceLogin?service=cl&passive=true&nui=1&continue=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2Fcalendar%2Frender

[10] http://www.apple.com/macosx/features/ical/

[11] http://www.bloglines.com/

[12] http://www.technorati.com/

[13] In practice, however, the selection of students for interview will be influenced also by their geographical location, as many reside overseas.

- While the pilot is under way, invite students to create audio logs as snapshots of usage (a technique used with considerable success in the LXP project).

- At the end of the pilot, conduct a "reflective" online survey to capture students' experiences, their use or uptake of the tools and services made available to them, and the extent to which their expectations and intentions have been realised. These will be followed up with a small number of interviews, and case studies will be compiled from these, the survey data, audio logs and any relevant contributions captured within the piloted technologies.

12. In both studies, we will additionally elicit, through face-to-face and/or telephone interviews, tutors' perspectives on the acceptability of students' use of personal technologies in terms of the impact on a) the design and running of the course, b) the methods of assessment and c) tutors' own resources in terms of workload and IT skills. We would also expect to elicit feedback from technical staff involved in supporting the courses.

13. From the data collected, we envisage deriving a set of recommendations on how academic and administrative processes might be changed in order to support and foster the expanded purview of technology-mediated learning.

Technological Approach

14. Drawing on the preliminary study it is anticipated that the project will map students' uptake of the new participatory services and tools and provide and test a 'bridging' prototype that will draw together feeds and materials from institutional and non-institutional systems as deemed appropriate by users. The question of whether this prototype should be server-based or client-based will also be reviewed.

15. Many web-based services – such those provided by Google, Amazon, and Blogger – present web service Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) which offer extensive free access to their Service Orientated Architecture (SOA) functionality. These APIs are ad-hoc standards which have seen considerable uptake in the wider Internet, with independent developers combining different services to produce bespoke tools.

16. The use of the web service APIs follows the concept of the E-Learning Framework[14], although ad-hoc standards often provide simpler APIs than a Java/WS-based approach. The loose coupling between components also enables easier integration of disparate services.

17. It is expected that technologies that are likely to be used include REST and SOAP style web services, web feeds in the RSS[15] and ATOM[16] formats, publishing approaches such as the ATOM Publishing Protocol[17], and some of the many web sites and services of interest e.g. Elgg, Moodle, del.icio.us Blogger, Google, Flickr, and Amazon.

18. These technologies and services tend to use open standards, except where there is no existing standard that fills the role. In all cases we will be working with published APIs, so, if necessary. data export functions can be written to ensure that interoperability and mobility of data endures.

Administrative and Academic Approach

19. It is clear that for a project such as this the challenge is as much to develop academic and administrative processes to support learning with new technologies as to develop the technologies themselves. Thus, a key part of the project is not only to assist the implementation of user-owned technologies by making the technical tools available to students, administrators and academics, but also to support this process. We will develop content, processes and systems to make best use of these tools, with resources from guidance materials to support mechanisms. This guidance should be transferable to a wide range of HE and FE institutions and will be a key output of the project.

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[14] http://www.elframework.org/
[15] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RSS_%28file_format%29
[16] http://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc4287
[17] http://bitworking.org/projects/atom/

Project Plan

20. This project will be divided into 13 main phases:

    1. Recruitment of participants: Engage with lifelong academic and CPD students, course authors and tutors to assess their technology usage and map their motivations for using and avoiding certain services.
    2. Literature review: Review existing research from JISC and elsewhere into students' technology awareness and use and the learner experience, and liaise with other projects in this area.
    3. Technology review: Review technologies and schemes that have, or are, attempting to form a 'bridge' between institutions and external online services. The work of the JISC-funded 'Personal Learning Environments' project[18] will be included in this as will reviews of software such as Coloquia[19], Plex[20] and Elgg[21].
    4. Survey: Survey students as outlined in the methodology section above.
    5. Interviews: Interview selected students in more depth.
    6. Results mapping: Assess the mapping and review exercises above to highlight potentially fruitful new modes of usage, based on user needs, preferences and motivation.
    7. Technology specification: Specify the technical requirements for the prototype.
    8. Technology development: Create a prototype 'bridging' solution that brings together relevant services from within the institution with tools introduced by the student body.
    9. Content/Support development: Develop learning materials, guidance, support processes (including exploration of IPR) to support the implementation of the pilot.
    10. Pilot implementation: Pilot the prototype with both academic and CPD lifelong learners.
    11. Evaluation: Evaluate the pilot implementation and disseminate the findings and the prototype to the relevant communities and stakeholders.
    12. Report writing: Write-up of interim and final reports.
    13. Dissemination: Disseminate the work of the project through websites conferences, papers, presentations etc.

Timetable

Time	**Year 1**												**Year2**											
Task	**Q1**			**Q2**			**Q3**			**Q4**			**Q5**			**Q6**			**Q7**			**Q8**		
1) Recruitment of participants																								
2) Literature review																								
3) Technology review																								
4) Survey																								
5) Interviews																								
6)Results mapping																								
7)Technology specification																								
8)Technology development																								
9) Content/Support development																								
10) Pilot implementation																								
11) Evaluation																								
12) Report writing																								
13) Dissemination																								

[18] http://www.cetis.ac.uk/members/ple/
[19] http://www.colloquia.net/
[20] http://reload.ces.strath.ac.uk/plex/
[21] http://www.elgg.org/

Deliverables

21. The Isthmus project will deliver:

- A prototype demonstrating the integration of user-owned technologies with the educational technology systems of the Department.
- Any software developed by the project on an open-source licence.
- A report covering the areas outlined in the bid.
- A project website to disseminate information about the project.

22. In addition, it will make available other outputs as the project progresses to allow the wider community to benefit from them as rapidly as possible. These are likely to include:

- Questionnaires and interview metrics
- Evaluation of the questionnaire and interview results
- Case studies of technology use
- Review of existing developments
- Map of usage and motivations
- Guidance documents and support procedures
- Evaluation and assessment of uptake

23. The project team will also aim to disseminate more widely the experiences gained by participation in conferences and JISC events and other opportunities.

Risk Assessment

Risk	**Prob (1-5)**	**Sev (1-5)**	**Score (PxS)**	**Action to prevent/manage risk**
Low rates of use of the targeted technologies	2	3	6	Unlikely as we are targeting students who are engaged in online learning and technical areas. Can support uptake throughout the project
Reluctance to use personal technologies for learning	2	3	6	Support use that matches students' wishes
Alternative demands on staff time	2	5	10	Good project management and clearly delineated staff priorities
Unanticipated technical difficulties	2	4	8	Where possible adapt/use existing tools, build in contingency time for developers
Unexpected IPR issues	2	3	6	Work closely with university IPR experts to avoid these (see IPR section below)

Project Outcomes/Value to Community

24. The anticipated project outcomes and their value to the community are listed below.

- The project will develop and pilot a new technical solution to support flexible and personalised education for lifelong learners.
- It will provide guidance and transferable models to support other institutions contemplating the use of similar technologies.
- It will provide learners with a more personalised learning experience through the use of user-defined tools.
- Where applicable, the project will provide practical feedback on models and ideas developed by the JISC such as the e-framework.
- The project will disseminate knowledge gained to inform concurrent and future JISC initiatives.

- All outputs will be developed as open source, with IP to JISC and HEFCE to allow for maximum dissemination.

IPR

25. If this proposal is funded, any information gathered during the course of this work that is not already in the public domain will be deemed to be the property of The University of Oxford. Notwithstanding where existing open-source software that is the intellectual property of a third party is incorporated into any software produced by the project, that existing software will remain governed by the intellectual property rights as previously claimed by that third party. The information provided in the reports of the project, and the rights to all other output, will be deemed to be the property of The University of Oxford. However, project outputs will be made available, free at the point of use, to the UK HE and FE community in perpetuity and will be disseminated widely by the University in partnership with JISC.

26. Any software developed in the project will be open source and comply with JISC's Open Source Software Policy and the Draft JISC Software Quality Assurance Policy.

27. It is anticipated that there may be some IPR issues involved in the merging of "formal" and "informal" technologies such as allowing "course" materials to appear in student owned tools. Exploring these issues will be an output of the project.

Sustainability

28. The Isthmus project is explicitly tied into Departmental goals to improve service provision to its students. The project will only be a success if students perceive that the energy they expend engaging with the process will be of long-term benefit. If this is achieved, any developments will be supported in the mainstream of Departmental e-learning provision.

29. Any learning materials, case studies and staff development materials resulting from the project will be deposited in Jorum.

E Budget

30. The budget below uses TRAC methodology to outline how funds will be spent over the lifetime of the project. The University of Oxford's Department for Continuing Education is committed to providing flexible forms of continuing personal and professional development opportunities for lifelong learners and fostering innovation in the use of IT to support teaching and learning. The Department continually reviews the latest e-learning developments and regularly updates its e-learning course development processes, course delivery infrastructure and support systems to improve services provided to lifelong learning students. The Department proposes to contribute a sum of £48,454 towards the cost of this project in recognition of the benefits it expects to receive.

Directly Incurred Staff	**March 07**	**April 07–March 08**	**April 08–March 09**	**TOTAL £**
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
Total Directly Incurred Staff (A)	**£504**	**£6,298**	**£2,059**	**£8,861**
Non-Staff	**March 07**	**April 07–March 08**	**April 08–March 09**	**TOTAL £**
Travel and subsistence	£0	£1,545	£1,061	£2,606
Hardware/software/equipment	£0	£515	£0	£515

Dissemination (inc. conference fees)	£0	£824	£848	£1,672
Research assistant (non-staff)	£150	£1,854	£1,750	£3,754
Consumables/Other	£20	£206	£212	£438
Total Directly Incurred Non-Staff (B)	**£170**	**£4,944**	**£3,871**	**£8,985**
Directly Incurred Total (A+B=C) (C)	**£674**	**£11,242**	**£5,930**	**£17,846**

Directly Allocated	**March 07**	**April 07–March 08**	**April 08–March 09**	**TOTAL £**
[redacted]	£2,323	£28,706	£27,487	£58,812
Estates	£518	£6,507	£5,229	£12,254
Directly Allocated Total (D)	**£2,841**	**£35,213**	**£32,716**	**£70,770**
Indirect Costs (E)	**£2,493**	**£31,226**	**£25,093**	**£58,812**
Total Project Cost (C+D+E)	**£6,008**	**£77,681**	**£63,739**	**£147,428**
Amount Requested from JISC	**£3,967**	**£52,224**	**£42,783**	**£98,974**
Institutional Contributions	**£2,041**	**£25,457**	**£20,956**	**£48,454**
Percentage Contributions over the life of the project		**JISC 67%**	**Partners 33%**	**Total 100%**

[redacted]

31. Staff costs are justified as outlined in the budget above. The non-staff costs are essential directly incurred costs related to this project and include:

- Travel and subsistence: cost of travel and travel-related expenses (subsistence & accommodation) for project staff to attend JISC events and other conferences to disseminate results of the project.
- Hardware/software/equipment: software required to support the project and a digital audio recorder for recording interviews with project participants.
- Dissemination (inc. conference fees): conference fees for one member of project staff to attend a major conference in each of financial years two and three of the project and funds to produce printed materials to disseminate information about the project.
- Research assistant (non-staff): consultancy fees for educational researcher Russell Francis (see Key Personnel section for further details).
- Consumables/Other: essential consumables for the project.

F Key Personnel

32. **Lead Researcher: Dr Elizabeth Masterman** (Oxford University Computing Service). Liz has over 25 years' experience in IT. She holds an MSc in Human-Centred Computing Systems from the University of Sussex, and a PhD in Educational Technology from the University of Birmingham. She has conducted evaluations at all educational levels since 1997, and since August 2004 has worked with the University of Oxford's Learning Technologies Group as an evaluation specialist on many JISC-funded projects. Liz has worked closely with TALL on the JISC-funded Phoebe project.

33. **Learning Design Manager: Marion Manton** (TALL). Marion has over eight years' experience as a learning technologist, acting as a bridge between pedagogy and technology. Working closely with course teams to specify the learning they want to achieve within their programme, and to identify the best uses of technology to do this, she ensures that all TALL programmes are best-practice examples of learning online for their audience. She has project managed several research projects including Phase 2 of the JISC-funded WCKER project and the Phoebe project.

34. **Developer and Standards Expert: David Balch** (TALL). David has over seven years' professional experience in web development, implementing major web and e-learning standards and following the development of standards not yet in direct use in TALL's production work. Particular areas of expertise include W3C recommendations: XML, XSL, HTML, CSS and WAI; and IMS standards: learning design, metadata and content packaging.

35. **Project Manager: Deborah Goodbody** (TALL). Deborah has over seven years' experience of project management and has managed many varied projects for TALL, including the Postgraduate Certificate in Nanotechnology. In her role as Project Manager she is responsible for delivering projects on time and to budget. Working closely with clients, both internal and external, she recognises the importance of establishing open communication channels between stakeholders and is responsible for the application of quality standards to projects.

36. **Learning Technology Development Manager: David White** (TALL). David is a web developer with extensive experience of e-learning. He has worked closely with the Moodle and Blackboard systems and is responsible for ensuring that the technical output of TALL conforms to the relevant standards. David has worked for ten years in the overlapping areas of web-based media and education. He has been involved in a number of JISC projects including the WCKER, SPIRE, and Phoebe projects.

37. **Systems Administrator and IT Support Manager: Mike Taylor** (TALL). Mike manages the implementation of TALL's learning environments and IT support for distance-learning students. He was a major contributor to the adoption of Moodle within TALL and has made significant contributions to the JISC-funded SPIRE and WCKER projects.

38. **Educational researcher: Russell Francis**. Russell holds an MSc in Educational Studies and is currently studying what it means to be literate in the new media age. He takes an ethnographic approach, interviewing students about how they utilise a host of online tools to pursue hobbies, interests and self directed learning agendas. In addition to his research Russell coordinates an E-learning research group and teaches on the University of Oxford's E-learning MSc course.

39. **Support Staff**
Administrative support for the project and support from the programmes under which the students are studying will be provided by the following Departmental staff:

Nicola Warren – TALL Administration Manager
Thomas Box – TALL Administration Assistant
Claire Kelly – Public Programmes Online Course Manager
Mark Sandham – CPD Operations Manager

G Supporting Letters

Letter of Support from University of Oxford Department for Continuing Education

UNIVERSITY
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Heather Williamson
Programme Manager
JISC Executive
University of Bristol
2nd Floor, Beacon House
Queen's Road
Bristol BS8 1QU

21 November 2006

Dear Ms Williamson,

Re: JISC Circular 04/06: JISC Capital Programme: e-Learning
Technical developments to support learning and teaching
Call III – Technology supported learning environments

I am writing to express the Department's strong support for the "Isthmus: Linking the personal and institutional in learning technologies" project proposal submitted under the e-learning section of the JISC Capital Programme.

The Isthmus project will research the uptake of user-owned technologies among selected students in the Department for Continuing Education and then develop and pilot a demonstrator integration of tools and systems between institutional systems and individually owned technologies.

This project addresses a number of key objectives in the University's Corporate Strategy[1] including:

- Learning and teaching strategy II(j) to "Review part-time and other flexible forms of provision in the context of the growing regional, national and international demand for continuing personal and professional development."

[1] University of Oxford Corporate Plan 2005–6 to 2009–10: http://www.ox.ac.uk/gazette/2005-6/supps/corporate.pdf

A Kellogg Centre for
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- Academic and student services strategy VI(d) to "Foster innovation, best practice, and value for money in the use of ICT in teaching, learning and research across the university."

The proposal also fits in with our broad strategy of exploiting open sources software and educational interoperability standards. We feel such an approach to software development is cost effective and sustainable in the long term.

Oxford is constantly striving to improve the learning experience of students and looking at ways the University can provide high quality, innovative learning opportunities to support the needs of students.

I support the innovative approaches being investigated in the Isthmus project and therefore strongly support the Department's participation.

Yours sincerely

Dr G. P. Thomas
Director

Letter of Support from University of Oxford Research Services Office

University of Oxford

University Offices, Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JD

From Research Services

Ms Heather Williamson
Programme Manager
JISC Executive
University of Bristol
2nd Floor, Beacon House
Queen's Road
Bristol, BS8 1QU

Reference: R04901/GA001
Please quote this reference on all correspondence with this office

21 November 2006

Dear Ms Williamson

JISC Circular 04/06: JISC Capital Programme: E-Learning
Technical developments to support learning and teaching
Call III - Technology supported learning environments

I am writing in support of Mr David White's application entitled "Isthmus: Linking the personal and institutional in learning technologies" to confirm that the appropriate facilities can be provided and that if the application is successful, the University of Oxford will administer the award.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Linda Andrews
Research Services Manager

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