

E-Learning Proposal Cover Sheet

Cover Sheet for Proposals (All sections must be completed)	JISC Capital Programme
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Name of Capital Programme: E-Learning			
Bid for Call: (Please tick ONE BOX ONLY, as appropriate)			
Supporting lifelong learning			
<input type="checkbox"/>	Call I – HE in FE		
Technical developments to support learning and teaching			
<input type="checkbox"/>	Call II – Assessment <input type="checkbox"/> a) Item Authoring Tool <input type="checkbox"/> b) Item Bank Software <input type="checkbox"/> c) Assessment Delivery Tool	<input type="checkbox"/>	Call IV – Admissions demonstrators <input type="checkbox"/> a) structured personal profiles, course entry profiles and pre-assessment; <input type="checkbox"/> b) improving applicant feedback; <input type="checkbox"/> c) accreditation of prior experiential learning; <input type="checkbox"/> d) e-portfolio based admissions.
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	Call VI – Course validation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Call III – Technology supported learning environments	<input type="checkbox"/>	Call V – Course description and discovery
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	Call VII – Domain maps
Name of Lead Institution: University of Sussex			
Name of Proposed Project: SPLASH – Student Personal Learning And Social Homepage			
Name(s) of Project Partner(s):			
Full Contact Details for Primary Contact:			
Name: Tony Hudson Position: Head of Web Email: T.Hudson@sussex.ac.uk Address: Room 230, Sussex House, Brighton, BN1 9RH Tel: 01273 606755 Fax: 01273 678335			
Length of Project: 2 years			
Project Start Date: 01 March 2007		Project End Date: 01 March 2009	
Total Funding Requested from JISC:			
Funding Broken Down over Financial Years (April – March):			
Apr06 – Mar07	Apr07 – Mar08	Apr08 – Mar09	
£2,500	£47,759	£49,622	
Total Institutional Contributions: £48,379			
Percentage Contributions over the Life of the Project:		JISC 67%	PARTNERS

Outline Project Description

1. The project will:

- Help provide a more personalised learning experience by developing a user owned web based portal/mashup service that can be integrated with institutionally owned educational systems. The initial setting up of student homepages will be linked in with university MIS and LDAP systems but will be further developed and maintained by the student in order to aid the fulfilment of personal priorities and needs.
- Enhance the learners' experience by the creation of spaces for independent and peer assisted learning.
- Support the management of artefacts created by learners through the use of portal/mashup technology, for example through the integration of existing photo management systems such as Flickr and existing blogging APIs such as Blogger or Wordpress. Using this technique the creation of student personal homepages will be developed where content can be created or gathered from external sources. This will help breakdown the current barriers of a VLE/LMS based system where content is contained within the institution.

2. The aim of the project will be to achieve the above through a Web 2.0 methodology where both existing content and new content can be used in a way that is not institutionally bound or controlled in a modular course driven way. The project will focus on both social and learning aspects of the student experience and will pilot with a the Student Union Gender Society and the students on the Foundation Degree in Community Studies programme. Some new programming development work will be undertaken but this will be limited in favour of using existing external sources. The project will be documented and all files made available with the intention of establishing the project as a blueprint, which will be flexible enough for other institutions to adapt and develop further.

I have looked at the example FOI form at Appendix A and included an FOI form in the attached bid (Tick Box)

YES✓

NO

I have read the Circular and associated Terms and Conditions of Grant at Appendix B (Tick Box)

YES✓

NO

SPLASH - Student Personal Learning And Social Homepage - Project Bid

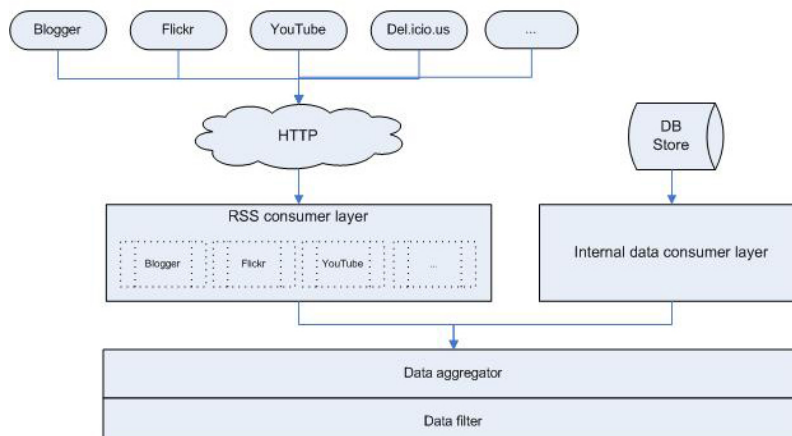
Introduction

3. Within Web 2.0 there is a growing focus on user generated content. The personal benefits of logging and sharing one's everyday experiences using a multitude of media have caused the popularity of sites and web tools such as Wordpress, YouTube and Flickr to grow rapidly. Secondly, the ability to connect with other users through online social networking using sites such as MySpace has revolutionised the way people communicate. Online social networking sites and blogging are especially popular amongst younger users, who are beginning to rely on such services as their main form of online communication and interaction with their peers.
4. There is a growing need in FE and HE institutions to engage with the above and find ways to use Web 2.0 ideologies and practices to help improve the student learning experience. With the push for lifelong learning and some of the known limitations/restrictions of VLE/LMS the developments of Personal Learning Environments (PLEs) are beginning to gain ground in FE and HE.
5. One of the reasons for PLE development is the increasing likelihood that students entering FE and HE institutions will already have existing accounts with external online services and therefore may be reluctant, or find it cumbersome to learn a new system, create a new blog, or use an alternative media gallery type service, which will be only accessible for the few years that they are a student at the institution. Also, typically VLE/LMS systems are very modular and course based and isolate content to an institution or even a particular course limiting the scope for sharing and re-purposing of content.
6. The **SPLASH** project will contribute to the overall JISC e-learning programme by addressing the use of portal technology and its integration into personalised learning environments. Its aim is to allow students to re-purpose existing content as well as continuing to develop new content which will still be available to them when they leave the institution. The creation of student personal homepages based around portal/mashup technology will allow for this to happen. The extra longevity of the content users will be creating, using and sharing increases the benefit to the user of having an investment in such a system.
7. The project will also cater for students who have not used these technologies before and introduce them to the benefits to be gained from the social interaction that blogs and other tools provide and the actual learning outcomes that can be achieved. Students can use such tools to state personal goals, plan a project or essay and for self-reflection. Lecturers can engage with students in ways of learning and interaction.
8. As part of its Web and E-learning strategic vision, the University of Sussex is exploring ideas around Web 2.0 approaches to online communication. The **SPLASH** project will enable students to pull in content from other sources that they choose to have on their homepage using tools such as RSS or ATOM feeds and/or through the use of APIs. The homepage will be customisable in both template design and its syndication with content.
9. The vision is not, however, to stop using VLE/LMS systems. The university will continue to develop Moodle as a learning tool but will look into how integration with university owned systems, including library reading lists, course information and news systems can be developed alongside content developed on external systems.
10. Initially producing student homepages could be an arduous task but the project will explore ways of automatically generating these pages and creating user groups, friends and class lists by utilising already existing data held within the MIS system. The project will draw upon the previous JISC funded MINTED project in this respect.

11. The project will provide a scalable, adaptable model that will come with documentation to support its use in other institutions. It will support the overall direction of the programme by building within an open source environment and by making it available freely with an appropriate open licence. The project will be set up as a blueprint for adoption and further development by other institutions and we will aim to make our product as accessible as possible.
12. The proposed start date of the **SPLASH** project is 01 March 2007 and it is estimated that all functionality will be in place by March 2008. The remaining time until March 2009 will consist of user testing with the pilot groups, further promotion within the student and learning community and organising maintenance and development methods for the future.

Project Description

13. As mentioned in the introduction the **SPLASH** project will develop a user owned web based portal/mashup service that can be integrated with institutionally owned educational systems. The development will be focused on the use of such as system for both e-learning and social networking purposes and two initial cohort groups have been identified for the pilot; the Student Union Gender Society and the Foundation degree for Community Studies. As the project develops other groups may be introduced to the pilot.
14. The Student Union Gender Society (around 25 students) will focus on using web based tools for social interaction and networking and will also be assisted in their learning of organisational and group management skills. These students will benefit from the use of personal homepages which will provide communication and publishing tools within the group. Outside sources such as Flickr, MySpace, Facebook and news feeds, blogs, wiki's will be used to cater for this.
15. For the e-learning focus of the project the Foundation Degree in Community Studies (around 40 students) group of students will be used for the pilot. This group is ideal as the students study part-time for 2 years and are generally sponsored by employers. They also come into the university at varied times including day-release and weekends. Not being part of a 'traditional closed and complete course' and being somewhat a disparate body of students this group, as well as their employers, will benefit greatly from the use of personalised homepages and web based communication tools.
16. The project will develop the integration of these homepages with established services such as Flickr and Blogger with the use of APIs and other devices such as RSS feeds. The homepage will become an aggregator for such content. Further research and analysis will take place on the development of an aggregator for this purpose and this is an area where systems development will be needed. The diagram below shows the generalised concept of an API aggregator.



17. The diagram above shows the consumption of open, standard APIs from various websites over HTTP, such as RSS and RDF and be adaptable to differing versions such as RSS 0.9, RSS 2.0 and FOAF. The system will be able to draw in information from a local store, such as internal news feeds, library reading lists and Moodle installations, and then merge the information together and filter it for presentation. These processes will be built upon techniques and skills learnt from the MINTED project, allowing for interfaces to the differing APIs to be easily added. Any programming will be written in PHP, an open source programming language.
18. The ability to integrate with a range of other inputs will be the main factor in choosing/developing the baseline software for the aggregator. It is essential that the great majority of the content will be hosted outside the institution in order for the content to remain under the ownership of the user after they have left the institution and for accessibility and re-purposing.
19. A major aspect of the project will explore the use of privacy settings and friends lists using FOAF methodology for user-controlled contact lists and the initial default setting up of class lists generated from the University MIS system. These will vary between completely public, students only/staff only, contacts only or completely private. Creating a ready-made network of classmates will encourage support between peers. These granular publishing options will be as automated as possible by using existing data of class groups and other teaching group data. This would make communication between classmates easier; would facilitate discussion about studies; would enable students to advise each other on projects; and would enable better activity coordination between students for cooperation on projects
20. Alongside this integration development with Moodle (the University VLE/LMS), the **SPLASH** project intends that students will be able to traverse seamlessly between their teaching-focused learning environment and their personal peer-focused homepages, whilst support for e-learning is maintained throughout. From this integration the lecturer will also be able to establish separate groupings for specific assignment work where the use of a blog, for example, could be as a used as a self reflective tool, assignment journal or to provide evidence of students' progress on a given project.
21. The student homepage will have two aspects: the student's own portal which will be LDAP authenticated and where the student will have access to tools which allow for the customisation of their homepage, and the user presentation level view which will allow for, by selected users or, public viewing according to privacy settings. Some of the contents of a user homepage may include:
 - A blog
 - Images, hosted externally by a manageable image gallery service
 - Embedded videos, hosted externally by a manageable video gallery service
 - A music taste widget, provided by an external music preference site
 - News feeds from internal or external sources
 - A list of links to classmates' homepages
 - A list of links to contacts' homepages
 - A personalised colour scheme chosen from a range of style sheet templates
 - Links to the user's profiles on other social networking sites such as MySpace or Facebook
22. Options will be extensively customisable by the user. This addresses the concern in paragraph D91 of the call, that "VLEs are not easily customised to suit the needs and preferences of individuals". Alongside a number of different layout and colour style templates that will be available for users to choose from, any extra media, such as images or video included in the user's homepage, will be controlled by the user.

23. As the project progresses, it is envisaged that users will suggest further functionality for this development and alongside organised usability feedback and user testing, these comments will determine and shape the end result of the project.
24. Research into the risks of using third-party services will be needed, alongside I.P.R, reliability and sustainability issues. This will take place throughout the project with a large proportion of the research being completed by the end of the first year. The second year will focus on piloting the project with students and analysing their feedback.
25. In terms of our working approach, the project will be managed within the appropriate JISC framework using Prince 2, which we use in-house for all our major projects. The project will be overseen by an experienced project board who will function as a steering group. It will be managed by Amy Walker, an accredited Prince Project Practitioner who worked on our previous JISC-funded project (MINTED).
26. We will release the project deliverables using an appropriate open source license that promotes their reuse and makes them freely available to the education and resource communities.
27. As mentioned a major aspect of the **SPLASH** project is to use content that is hosted externally – setting this up as a blueprint to be adopted by other institutions as easily as possible will be of great value to the JISC community. Alongside this the project will support lifelong learning in that learners will still have access to content when they leave the institution and will be able to customise their learning environment to suit their needs.

Timetable – A more precise detailed timetable will be produced with the project plan which will outline key responsibilities. Throughout the project the project team and key stake holders will arrange regular meetings and a discussion forum and email list will be established – key members of JISC involved in the project will be invited to join the forum and list.

Tasks	Who	When finished
Establish project team and write project plan and involve pilot groups	Tony Hudson, Amy Walker	March 07
Recruit client manager/developer	Tony Hudson	March - April 07
System analysis	To be agreed	July 07
Design and programming	To be agreed	December 07
Systems testing	To be agreed	January 08
Usability testing	To be agreed	January 08
Training with pilot groups	To be agreed	February 08
User testing with pilot groups	To be agreed	February 08
Feedback sessions	To be agreed	March 08
Further systems analysis	To be agreed	March 08
Further systems development	To be agreed	September 08
Further usability and systems testing	To be agreed	September 08
Sessions to plan further dissemination and address continuation of service.	To be agreed	September 09
Establish new groups of students to extend pilot or push further out across University	To be agreed	September 09
Project sign off	To be agreed	March 09

Deliverables:






- A blueprint for implementing a highly personalised learning and social environment using user owned tools facilitating content creation and management.
- Very detailed documentation to allow other institutions to deploy a similar or adapted service for the creation of the above.
- Making available under an open source licence all files developed for the project with examples of use, the methods and model used and how to implement.
- A case study outlining the key stages and experiences of the project. This will include usability reports and feedback from the project team and users.

Risk Analysis

Risk Description	Risk Category	Probability	Impact	Score (P x I)	Responses
Risk of costs escalating beyond the budget we have set	Economic	1	3	3	We will use PRINCE2 project methodology to ensure that we manage project resources correctly.
Risk that we will not be able to recruit to the project within the time scales.	Management	1	3	3	Some of the key personnel have already been identified. One new post needed.
Risk of staff turnover impacting on completion of deliverables within project timescales.	Management	2	2	4	We will draw up contingency plans to take account of this possibility. A contingency budget should be set to ensure that resource can be bought in if required.
Risk that we will find it difficult to fulfil the additional management and reporting requirements of a JISC project.	Management	1	3	3	Our institution has already successfully managed one JISC project (Minted) so we have some in-house experience to draw on. We will use available project management expertise.
Risk that we might have problems recruiting students to the pilot groups and maintaining their interest.	Management	1	3	3	We have already mitigated this risk by identifying potential pilot groups. We will build links with these students during the initial development phase where possible. We will provide support and input to the pilot.
Risk that we might fail to produce appropriate key project deliverables that are required by the project plan.	Technical	1	3	3	We will use the SQA and other key documents in conjunction with the PRINCE2 project management methodology to ensure that the deliverables are produced to a high standard and in a timely fashion.

Risk Description	Risk Category	Probability	Impact	Score (P x I)	Responses
Risk that the system will not be sufficiently stable.	Technical	2	3	6	We will carry out thorough testing of the system.
Risk that the system will not be acceptable to its end-users, the students.	Quality	2	3	6	We have already been working closely with the Sussex Students Union and study group in drawing up the project outline. Part of our project plan involves regular sessions where we trial our current version of the system with students, gather their responses and feed that back into our development cycle.
Risk that the system will not be easy for other institutions to deploy.	Quality	1	2	2	We will work within the framework of the Open Source Maturity Model so that we build links with the community, and will ensure that all software is properly documented for ease of deployment.
Risk that external sources are out of the control of the project team	Quality	1	2	2	The popularity of Web 2.0 type services is a growing trend and there are many very well established services being used. We will evaluate the various services in our systems analysis and will encourage students to either continue using these agreed sources or adopt them.

SPLASH Project Budget

Directly Incurred Staff	March 07	April 07– March 08	April 08– March 09	TOTAL £
				
Total Directly Incurred Staff (A)	£0	£29,894	£32,422	£62,316
Non-Staff	March 07	April 07– March 08	April 08– March 09	TOTAL £
Travel and expenses (inc attendance at programme meetings)	£0	£1,000	£1,025	£2,025
Hardware/software				
1 x PC	£1,000	£0	£0	£1,000
Software	£1,500			£1,500
Dissemination	£0	£0	£0	£0
Evaluation	£0	£0	£0	£0
Other	£0	£0	£0	£0

Total Directly Incurred Non-Staff (B)	£2,500	£1,000	£2,025	£5,525
Directly Incurred Total (A+B=C) (C)	£2,500	£30,894	£33,447	£66,841
Directly Allocated	March 07	April 07– March 08	April 08– March 09	TOTAL £
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Estates Overhead	£0	£3,411	£3,411	£6,822
Other				
Related training and conferences	£0	£1,000	£0	£1,000
Directly Allocated Total (D)	£0	£7,638	£6,948	£14,586
Indirect Costs (E)				
Administration Overhead	£0	£9,227	£9,227	£18,554
Total Project Cost (C+D+E)	£2,500	£47,759	£49,622	£99,981
Amount Requested from JISC	£2,500	£47,759	£49,622	£99,981
Institutional Contributions				
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
2 x Laptops	£1,500	£0	£0	£1,500
Software	£0	£1,000	£1,025	£2,025
Travel and expenses		£5,000	£5,000	£10,000
Overheads				
Total Institutional Contributions	£3,700	£26,403	£18,276	£48,379
Percentage Contributions over the life of the project	JISC 67 %	Partners 33 %	Total 100%	

Note:

The University of Sussex expects to receive considerable benefit from the SPLASH project. Students and staff will be able to utilise a personal learning environment system enhancing their learning experience at the University and their continued learning when they leave. Staff will gain considerable expertise from both a technical and learning aspect and new ways of thinking around learning can be developed from the project and its involvement with the JISC community. We have, therefore, included an institutional contribution to the project.

Key Personnel

all staff are in Web Team at University of Sussex unless otherwise stated.

Tony Hudson

Head of Web

Many years experience of website and e-learning development – expertise in usability and design issues.

Beth Granter

Web Team Developer – MA in Digital Media and a great deal of experience in participating in and researching social networking sites.

Andy Collington

Web Programmer

Member of JISC-funded MINTED team –

Expert knowledge in PHP programming and web development – responsible for in-house systems development including the Web Content Management and News system.

Carol Shergold (ITS)

Programme Director, E-learning

IT Services

Team member of previous JISC project, Minted

Responsible for team delivering University's Moodle service, branded as "Study Direct"

Amy Walker (ITS)

Senior Project Manager,

IT Services

Project Manager on JISC-funded Minted project and on ResNet project with over 2000 end-users and projected income of £120k

Qualified PRINCE2 Practitioner

Paolo Oprandi (ITS)

Educational Technologist

IT Services

Team member of previous JISC project, Minted

Responsible for Study Direct, and for Moodle PHP development

John Davies

Project Officer with responsibility for E-learning

Teaching and Learning Development Unit

Member of Minted Project Board

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		

Lesley Hawkins
JISC Executive
Northhavon House
Coldhabour Lane
Bristol
BS16 1QD

22 November 2006

Dear Ms Hawkins

JISC Capital Programme - E-learning

I am very pleased to endorse this proposal to instigate the SPLASH project which will benefit the University of Sussex and other institutions in Higher and Further Education. The bid builds upon the techniques and expertise developed as part of the JISC-funded MINTED project that was completed successfully in September 2006.

Whilst the project is very much e-learning focused, with the emphasis on helping provide a more personalised learning experience with the development of a user owned web based portal/mashup service, it will also help establish improved communication facilities for students in general with its use of Web 2.0 based social networking tools.

This proposal has my wholehearted support.

Yours sincerely



Professor Joanne Wright
Pro-Vice-Chancellor

**Professor Joanne
Wright
Pro-Vice-Chancellor
(Education)**

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