



Project Document Cover Sheet

Project Information			
Project Acronym	PALET		
Project Title	Programme Approval Lean Electronic Toolkit		
Start Date	October 2008	End Date	July 2012
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Partner Institutions	None		
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Programme Name (and number)	JISC Curriculum Design Programme 4/07		
Programme Manager	Sarah Knight		

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1	29/03/10	First Draft (GS)
2	10/05/10	Amended (AL)
3	12/05/10	Final draft incorporating comments from Registry colleagues (AL)

Interim Report April 2010

Project Name: The PALET Project

Report compiled by: Andy Lloyd (Project Manager), with contributions from: Georgia Slade (Project Officer) and Simon Bleasdale (Technical Lead).

Reporting period: November 2009 – April 2010

Section One: Summary

While it is recognised that the Project is somewhat behind the original schedule, solid progress has been made, with positive feedback received from both the Project's External Evaluator (Prof. Peter Chatterton) and critical friend (Prof. Stephen Brown). Since the last report a new high-level model for the Programme Approval Process has been endorsed by the University's Academic Standards and Quality Committee, and significant work undertaken to identify the most appropriate technical way forward for the Project. The Project team are now working to address the issues described within the report, and to define the operational detail of the new procedure. This will enable the technical development of the support systems to begin, and ensure that tangible outputs from the Project will be delivered. The challenges that have emerged through this work in the main reflect the complex relationships that exist between curriculum design and related processes and procedures, a theme explored further within section 6 of the report. The Project continues to enjoy extremely positive relationships with a range of stakeholders across the University. The Project needs to build on this success to get a wider and deeper engagement with key stakeholder groups, the maintenance of such positive relationships having been identified as key to the project's success.

Section Two: Activities and Progress

Following the full review of the way the current programme approval process operates (October 2008 – August 2009), the Project has been focussed on engaging stakeholders in the design of a new approval process for Cardiff University, on maintaining the positive relationships already developed, and on ensuring that related projects and links with existing activities are managed appropriately.

Project Management Structures

The project is managed by a Project Management Team, which reports to a Steering Group that is chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students). As the project has progressed, the purpose and remit of the two groups became somewhat confused, and it was felt that clearer definition of the function and role of the Project Management Team was required.

Consequently, the way the Project Management Team operates has been reviewed, this group now being more focussed on day-to-day monitoring and managing of the operation of the Project. This group now meets on a monthly basis to consider standing agenda items, such as the progress made with the Project Plan, the management of issues and risk via the Risk Register, and the expenditure levels within the Project Budget.

A task and finish group has been established (reporting to the Project Management Team), which is working towards developing the technical specification of the new process in detail. This group was established, partly in response to recommendations made by Professor Peter Chatterton in the 'Project Interim Evaluation Report'.

This group reports to the Project Management Team directly on progress in this area of work. The Steering Group receives the minutes from the Project Management Team meetings and remains focussed on steering and guiding the Project at a higher level.

Project Team

The Project Team is seeking to strengthen the range of involvement with its delivery through the approach described above.

In January 2010, Matthew Turner was appointed as Registry Officer, responsible for overseeing Programme Approval at Cardiff University. Matthew, who worked previously in the School of Dentistry, and had been involved with the project previously, is now a core member of the Project Team. Richard Williams, an experienced member of the Student System Development team, is now spending a significant proportion of his time working on the Project.

Project Plan

A number of amendments have been made to the Project plan and the work packages since the last interim report was submitted in October 2009. The plan is being further updated currently, and will be posted on the PALET website when this is completed.

The amendments being made reflect the ways risks are being actively managed, the slippages that have occurred and include changes to the timelines to allow more time to design and develop the operational detail of the redesigned procedure. These changes have also been made in recognition of the need for all stakeholders to contribute fully to the design of the new process, and of the need to ensure that the outputs from the Project can be sustained properly.

Technical Solution

An options analysis paper that outlines the various technical solutions that could be used to support the new approval process has been developed and considered by the Project Management Team. This is based largely on the user requirements gathered so far. Two options were considered in the paper, IBM Process Manager and SITS Process Manager. It has been agreed that the SITS Process Manager was the preferred option, for the reasons outlined below.

- Integration: - that the data can be more easily managed within SITS Process Manager; - that the user experience will be more familiar and consistent; - that it offers a 'better fit' with related developments in the management of existing programmes.
- Sustainable and extendable: - that the required resources are already in place to support and maintain the system; - that we will be better placed to manage any changes to approval arrangements and programme information requirements consequent of changes in the external environment.
- Ready and available: - that, the IBM Process Server has not been tested sufficiently or integrated within the MWE Portal environment, and that using it would therefore present an unacceptably high risk for the Project.

To complement the tools that will be developed to support the formal elements of the process, the Project team are also exploring making materials available and allowing links to be made through Connections (a professional networking tool in the MWE) to both support a more collaborative process to programme development, and a 'knowledge-base' on which support materials and advice will be held.

Section Three: Risks, Issues and Opportunities

The Project has taken a progressively more active approach to risk management. All risks are recorded on the Risk Register, which is considered and reviewed on a monthly basis by the Project Management Team. In the period since the last report, there has been a reduction of some risks and an increase in others to the point where they have become live issues that require further action. A number of examples are outlined below.

- 1) Scope / Sustainability - the risk of scope creep and the need to define this clearly. Without intervention it was thought that this could become unmanageable within the Project's budget and timescale. To mitigate this, the Project team have developed a document defining what is within scope clearly and highlighting areas that will need to be further considered and taken forward at the end of the project by utilising existing resources.
- 2) Timescales – the risk of not delivering outputs by the end of the project's funding. The time taken to produce the baseline report, which has provided an invaluable evidence base and snapshot of the current processes and mechanisms for the approval of new programmes, was not something included within the original project plan. This has resulted in a knock-on delay to subsequent work packages, lost time that is proving difficult to recover. This risk is being monitored closely by the Project Management Team, which has agreed a number of amendments to the original timelines.
- 3) Technology – the risk that the technology may be delayed, and/or unsuited to the redesigned process. As noted in section 2 above, a range of different options have been considered, and that the project will now seek to utilise the SITS Process Manager to support the formal parts of the approval process.
- 4) Integration – the risk that the new process and/or the supporting technology do not fit with related projects and developments. The wide-range of related policy and operational matters linked to curriculum design and programme approval are captured in the Project scope map [<http://www.palet.cf.ac.uk/aims.html>]. The management of these have created an ongoing challenge for the Project Team, a number of increased risks and some unexpected opportunities. These include the need to ensure alignment with other quality assurance / enhancement processes, and the chance to feed in data and contribute to ongoing discussions on the University's future portfolio of taught provision.

Section Four: Outputs and Deliverables

Since the last report, the project has produced/ is working on producing the following outputs:

- Programme Information Templates: The PALET team have worked with colleagues from the Registry to develop new templates that will help ensure a streamlined and more consistent approach to the management of programme and module information. These include a new Programme Specification Template, a Module Description template and a framework to help manage programme structures. The revised Programme Specification and Module Description templates can be found on the Academic Registry website: <http://www.cf.ac.uk/regis/ifs/programmes/>.
- Project Scope document: To mitigate the growing risk of project scope creep, a 'project scope document' was produced to more clearly articulate what will be delivered by the PALET Project, and what needs to be taken forward when the PALET Project comes to an end. This has been uploaded to the Design Studio and can be found at <https://jiscdesignstudio.pbworks.com/PALET-Curriculum-approval-process-map>.

Institutional Approaches to Curriculum Design Programme

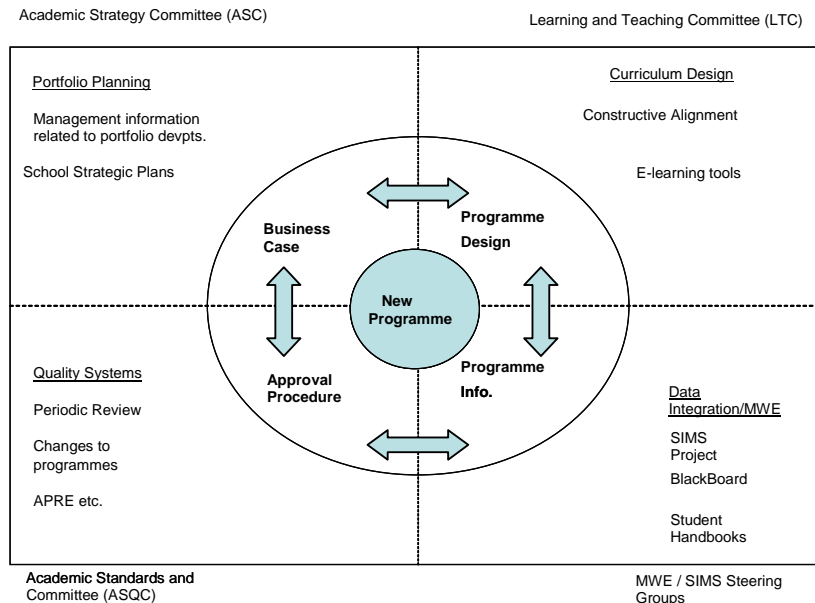
- PALET Aspirational State Images: A workshop was held in November 2009 at which representatives from Schools and Directorates were asked to draw a perfect programme approval process, in the form of a ship. This technique is similar to the soft system methodology of 'Rich Pictures', and was useful in encouraging participants to think 'outside of the box' and focus more on the *features* of a perfect process, rather than the practicalities of how it might work. The drawings will be added as assets to the design studio as soon as possible. Video clips from the workshop in November can be found on the PALET Project Blog at the following link:
http://blogs.cf.ac.uk/palet/entry/the_new_programme_approval_process
- PALET High Level Process Map: A key output from the series of process redesign workshops held during November/December 2009 is the high level map of the proposed new programme approval process. The project blog includes the high-level diagram, which is accessible via: http://blogs.cf.ac.uk/palet/entry/%C3%A2_plans_are_only_good
- A generic, customisable process for programme approval: At the last Cluster Group CAMEL meeting, the group explored the potential for producing a generic and customisable process map for programme approval as a programme level output. It was agreed that this would be based on the high-level map developed by the Project, and we are working with the other institutions in the cluster currently to explore this further and investigate other opportunities to share and collaborate on developments.
- Typology of programmes: The PALET team are helping to support colleagues in Registry to develop a new programme 'typology', to try to categorise the different types of programme coming forward for approval. We also hope to collaborate on this with other institutions in Cluster Group B, who have expressed an interest in this piece of work.

Section Five: Evaluation

Professor Peter Chatterton (PALET External Evaluator) visited Cardiff in February 2010 to conduct a second round of evaluation interviews with a range of project stakeholders. Professor Chatterton has prepared a formal evaluation report which will be considered by the Project Management Team and Steering Group. It is also planned that the Evaluation Plan will be further developed, and additional measures added as the project progresses into its next stage. At this point, the evaluation measures have been largely qualitative indicators of stakeholder engagement, rather than more tangible project outputs that will be produced as the project progresses.

Evaluation has featured on the agenda of two CAMEL meetings of Cluster Group B, during which we have shared our approaches to evaluation, and the benefits and pitfalls of each of them. Through these meetings, we have commented and reflected on the added value that has been achieved from the appointment of an external evaluator.

Section Six: Outcomes and Lessons Learned



The above figure, developed at the outset of the Project, was designed to illustrate both the areas that the project is centrally concerned with, and the areas of ongoing activity that it relates to and needs to take account of. This has proved a useful tool (it has been put into the 'Design Studio' at <https://jiscdesignstudio.pbworks.com/PALET-scoping-model>) to illustrate the Project's broad remit, although in practice it has proved difficult to determine the precise scope of the Project, and where the boundaries lie between the Project and the other areas of activity. This has led to a number of issues arising. In some ways it has felt that the Project has opened a 'Pandora's Box', in that a number of significant policy and practical issues have been identified that impact on both the project and the related areas. A number of these are proving challenging to address and align with related developments outside of the project. This is illustrated further in the brief analysis below, arranged around each of the quadrants in the above figure.

Portfolio Planning / The Business Case

The findings in the Baseline Data report revealed that the University had approved a number of new programmes in recent years that had recruited few if any students. The evidence from this report has been fed into a number of different University fora, and somewhat ironically given the nature of the Project, contributed to discussions that might lead to a reduction in the number of new programme developments. High-level discussions within the University have further identified the need to review and possibly reduce the range of taught provision offered, in part in recognition of the pressures on funding that exist across the sector currently. These discussions supported the outcomes from the earlier consultation with academic schools, which found that a formalised process to develop a more rigorous 'business case' for new programme proposals should be developed. It has however been recognised that further consultation should be undertaken on this to ensure that all of the relevant stakeholders have bought into this idea completely, given that this is a significant change for a University in which the 28 academic schools continue to enjoy significant levels of autonomy. Questions have also arisen as to who should have the authority to make judgements on the completed business case, how the different levels of risk attached to different programmes should be managed, and how this part of the process can be supported effectively by technology. Further work is required to address all of the above questions, something that needs to be aligned properly with the related developments described above.

Quality Systems / The Approval Procedure

It was envisaged originally that the Project would be concerned solely with 'new' taught programmes. It has become apparent however that a number of key stakeholders had different understandings of what a 'new' programme actually constitutes, and that there have been very few 'completely new' programmes (i.e. those that do not utilise existing content) developed in the last few years within the University. The majority of 'new' programmes draw on existing modules. This further supports the decision to utilise the SITS Process Manager, in that it would have been extremely complex, for both technical and logistical reasons, to take existing data out of the student record system, repurpose this data, and then reload it. The Project also needs to further clarify the purpose and function of approval events, and to explore the relationship between the approval process and other aspects of the University's quality assurance system. This needs to be aligned with and undertaken in the context of an ever changing environment; at Cardiff University, in Wales, and across the UK as a whole.

Data Integration / The MWE

As described in section 2 above, the level of risk attached to using the IBM Process Manager has been deemed unacceptably high to allow the Project to proceed with this option, and that the Project will now seek to utilise the SITS Process Manager, which will be accessed via the portal within the MWE. It is hoped that the redesigned process and supporting technology will fulfil the aims of making consistent, comprehensive and timely information about programmes available to staff, students and applicants. It is recognised, however, that further work will need to be undertaken to achieve this. In particular, further discussion will be required as to whether the University will adopt a much more consistent approach to student handbooks. Work undertaken to date has identified broad support for this concept, and for this handbook to comprise standard University-level information, School specific information, and programme specific information generated for and as an outcome from approval. The devolved nature of the structure within Cardiff University makes this a challenging task. This is something that needs to be aligned with and considered alongside other planned University projects, as well as with the changing external context, such as the proposed moves to expand and make more consistent the range of published information provided to applicants and students [1].

Curriculum / Programme Design

One of the main ideas that informed the Project proposal was a desire to better support academic staff in this area, and to help staff develop programmes that were not only academically sound, but also offered a stimulating learning experience, were accessible to learners, and demonstrated a clear alignment between teaching, learning and assessment. Of all of the quadrants in the above diagram, this is the one in which progress has been the slowest. While the Project now has a very clear plan as to how technology will help support the formal aspects of the approval process, it is less clear how the Project will support the preliminary stages of curriculum design, and how staff will be supported in, for example, ensuring teaching, learning and assessment are aligned. Part of the challenge will be to find ways to help staff see beyond subject content, and to focus more explicitly on the nature and the quality of the learner experience. Further work needs to be undertaken to explore how collaborative tools within the MWE, such as 'Connections', can support this kind of dialogue.

The Lean Approach

The lean process review methodology used to review the existing procedure and develop the new high-level map has proved to be a very effective tool, and one that could be applied more widely within the sector. It does however require buy-in from stakeholders across the institution,

1 See Department for Business Innovation and Skills (2009) Higher Ambitions [WWW] <<http://www.bis.gov.uk/Policies/higher-education/shape-and-structure/higher-ambitions>> [Accessed 06/05/10]

something that has increased over time. It is however fair to say that some academic staff remain unconvinced of its utility, particularly within the academic context. A key question for the Project is whether the resultant process proves to be more efficient and effective. It is already apparent that by using SITS Process Manager, the number of manual tasks required to prepare a programme for operation will be reduced. It is further worth noting that the role of the Lean Team in the Project has been an invaluable one to date, not just in the tools they have offered, but also through their facilitation skills and constructive support.

Collaborative and Partnership Working

The participatory approach taken has proved to be extremely valuable to the Project. Very positive relationships with a whole host of stakeholders across the University have been established with an overwhelming majority of academic schools (or at least the nominated contacts from each school) continuing to contribute where they can. Similarly, those directorates not part of the core Project Team have expressed an interest and desire to support and contribute to the Project where possible. It has on occasion proved difficult to get such a wide and diffuse group together on particular occasions, something not helped by the huge range of other commitments and activities that many staff have.

Section Seven: Communication and Dissemination Activities

The Project team has been involved with a number of activities and events in order to raise awareness of the work that the PALET Project is doing, and to disseminate project outputs:

- Association for Learning Technology Conference 2009 (7-10 September) – Involved in running a symposium session with Design Cluster B, ‘Herding Cats? Engaging stakeholders in complex institutional change projects’ [<http://altc2009.alt.ac.uk/talks/show/6782>], and the symposium session with the JISC, ‘Curriculum Challenges – Big words that make us so unhappy’ [<http://altc2009.alt.ac.uk/talks/show/6835>].
- May 2010: Presented at the SEDA Conference on ‘Communities of Learning; with Design Cluster B. The abstract is available at: [http://www.seda.ac.uk/resources/files/23_Parkeretal.pdf]
- Proposal accepted for ALT-C 2010, “A rich and strange journey of involvement, influence and change in 5 HEIs”
- Scheduled to present at the October meeting of the JISC Learning and Teaching Experts Group;

We have received positive feedback from colleagues across the University on the regularly updated PALET blog, which now receives over 80 hits per day (on average). Twitter is also still proving to be a useful tool to share snippets of project progress and to direct followers to the blog.

A number of findings and developments related to the Project have been fed into high level strategy groups within the University, including the University Board and the ‘Cardiff Futures Group’.

Section Eight: Collaboration and Support

Institutional Approaches to Curriculum Design Programme

Critical Friend

Since the last report, Professor Stephen Brown, critical friend to the PALET Project, has visited Cardiff University to catch up with progress and attend a meeting of the PALET Project Management Team. The External Evaluator for the Project attended the last meeting of the PALET Steering Group. The Project has benefited significantly from the external perspective offered by the Critical Friend and External Evaluator, who have both been supportive and not afraid to question aspects of the Project's work. The Project Team have also interacted with Professors Brown and Chatterton via email and telephone.

CAMEL Collaboration

Since the last report, Design Cluster B has enjoyed two very successful CAMEL meetings. The first of these, hosted by the PALET team at Cardiff, included discussion of approaches to evaluation and consideration of equality and diversity matters. The second CAMEL meeting, hosted by the UG-FLEX team at Greenwich University, focussed on Process Mapping, QAA processes, and continued the discussion around evaluation. The cluster interact online in-between CAMEL meetings, but find it invaluable to meet face to face, as it provides a more supportive and trusting environment encouraging greater honesty from projects.

The Cluster has presented on the benefits and pitfalls of the CAMEL approach at the SEDA Conference (May 2010).

Programme Engagement and Support

The last programme meeting was an opportunity to share progress and initial project findings with other institutions in the programme. The Project has welcomed the variety of *Illuminate* sessions hosted by the programme support team.

Clive Alderson, a JISC InfoNet consultant, visited Cardiff University in March 2010 to help facilitate a workshop concerned with the Business Case for a new Programme Approval and assessing risk.

The PALET team have been unable to devote much time to the deposit of project assets into the Design Studio, as at this time, workloads are full with delivering the core Project aims. It is hoped that in the future, time will be available to dedicate time to learning more about the Design Studio.

Section Nine: Financial Statement

Total Grant	██████████	Duration of project	3 years 8 months
Reporting Period	November 2009 – April 2010		

Budget Headings	Total budget allocated	Expenditure this reporting period	Total expenditure to date	Further information
Staff	██████████	██████████	██████████	
Travel & Subsistence	██████████	██████████	██████████	
Equipment	██████████	██████████	██████████	
Dissemination activities	██████████	██████████	██████████	
Evaluation activities	██████████	██████████	██████████	
Other (please specify)	██████████			
Total	██████████	██████████	██████████	

Checklist:

Before you return this report:

- Ensure that your project webpage on the JISC site is up to date and contains the correct information. Attach details of any required amendments to this report. Project web pages can be found from: www.jisc.ac.uk/curriculumdesign
- If there have been any changes to the original project plan and/or work packages, ensure that amended copies of the relevant sections of your project plan are attached to this report.
- Identify and name any areas within this report that you'd like removed before the report is made public (*see below)

***Please note** the interim reports will be made available on the JISC website and on the Circle site with the budgetary information removed. We recognise that projects may occasionally address very sensitive issues. We would like you to present as full a picture in this report as you can as the lessons you learn are valuable to us. We assure you that any issues you identify as confidential are removed before the report is made public. Where such issues do represent valuable lessons for the community we will involve you in further discussion as to how they could be passed on without identifying institutions or individuals.