

21 July 2004

## **Invitation to Town Meetings for Regional eLearning Pilot Projects around Distributed eLearning.**

**To:** Heads of Heads of Higher Education Institutions funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)

**Hard Copies:** Vice Chancellors, Principals and Directors of HE Institutions in England  
Directors of Information Services

**Electronic Copies:** Learning Resource Managers  
JISC Committee Members  
JISC Executive Staff  
JISC Regional Support Centres  
JISC Services

### **Summary**

1. This letter invites Higher Education institutions to attend Town Meetings in September/October 2004 to discuss regional collaborations of institutions to set up projects to pilot distributed eLearning tools and services. These projects should build on the outputs of previous JISC programmes and underpin strategic regional development programmes such as the Lifelong Learning Networks outlined in the joint letter from HEFCE and the Learning and Skills Council, HEFCE Circular number 12/2004, published on 3 June 2004 at [http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/circlets/2004/cl12\\_04/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/circlets/2004/cl12_04/).

### **Introduction**

2. The JISC through the distributed eLearning programme intends to pilot a technical architecture to provide better opportunities for lifelong learners through the use of appropriate learning tools, easier access to personal learning information and access to greater quantities of quality assured learning materials.

3. Each pilot project will consist of a regional collaboration of Higher Education Institutions, Further Education Colleges, the JISC Regional Support Centre and as appropriate HE Academy Subject Centres. Other partners may be included at a local or regional level.

4. The Regional eLearning Pilots will build on previous and current JISC development programmes in Managed Learning Environments for Lifelong Learning, eLearning and the

Information Environment. They will also build on existing initiatives such as the AimHigher Partnerships and the Lifelong Learning Networks. Further information on the outcomes of these programmes/initiatives and the tools and ideas that could be explored through the regional pilots is available in the support briefing at [http://www.jisc.ac.uk/programme\\_edistributed.html](http://www.jisc.ac.uk/programme_edistributed.html)

5. Examples of pilots may include collaborative projects that:

- better facilitate learner progression into and through Higher Education, e.g. through the use of e-Portfolios across a group of institutions;
- enable learners to discover and access learning across a region/area;
- collaboratively teach students, for example those studying for
  - a Foundation Degree offered through FE Colleges, or by modules offered at separate HEIs; and/or
  - a course offered across institutions in a region where student numbers are currently not sufficient to justify a course at one institution.
- integrate learning with the work place using eLearning Tools
- provide a learning service from which other institutions within a local area can benefit e.g. computer based assessment service, learning objects repository.

### **Purpose of the Regional Town Meetings**

6. The town meetings in each region will be used to discuss regional priorities and allow institutions to identify potential partners. Each meeting will consist of a briefing on the Regional eLearning Pilots circular (to be circulated in early September) and the regional agenda in the morning. This will be followed by a workshop at which institutions will be invited to discuss options for regional pilots and identify priority areas for each city, area or region.

7. Dates and venues of the regional town meetings are at Annex A. Institutions are invited to register for the meetings before the 15 September 2004 at <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/regionaltownmeetings.html>. You are also invited to bring with you any potential collaborators from colleges or other regional organisations.

### **Bidding Process, Timescales and funding**

8. Partnerships consisting of HEIs, FE Colleges and other learning organisations should liaise with their Higher Education Regional Association (see <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/partners/consortia/regional.htm>) who have been invited to coordinate bids to ensure proposals are complementary within a region and appropriate to the regional priorities. An HE Institution in England must lead each proposal.

9. Funding of £350,000 per region is available to pilot regional e-learning tools and services that address strategic targets for widening participation and lifelong learning in Higher Education in England. Additional funding will be allocated where higher population or regional geography requires more resource. A detailed circular will be available in September with a closing date for proposals 12:00 noon on Monday 15th November 2004. Projects should start in January-April 2005 and finish in March 2006.

### **Further details**

10. Information on the eLearning Programme can be found at <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/eLearning> and includes details of the currently funded programmes and projects relevant to this area.

11. Enquiries about the Distributed eLearning Programme should be addressed to: Paul Bailey, JISC Executive, University of Bristol, Beacon House, Queen's Road, Bristol, BS8 1QU, tel: 0117 954 5074, email: [p.bailey@jisc.ac.uk](mailto:p.bailey@jisc.ac.uk).

JISC Executive  
Bristol

## Annex A

### Regional Town Meeting Schedule

Thursday 23 September	Yorkshire and Humberside Region – venue York
Friday 24 September	North West Region – venue Manchester
Tuesday 28 September	South West Region – venue Exeter
Thursday 30 September	South East Region – venue London
Friday 1 October	London Regional – venue London
Tuesday 5 October	East Region – venue Cambridge
Wednesday 6 October	East Midlands Region – venue to be confirmed
Thursday 7 October	North East Region - venue Newcastle
Friday 8 October	West Midlands Region – venue Birmingham

(Please check the web to confirm the dates and venues: see <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/regionaltownmeetings.html>.)