

PLPP PROJECT PLAN Version 1.a

Project

Project Acronym	KPLPP	Project ID	?
Project Title	Kent Personal Learning Portal Pilot		
Start Date	Jan 05	End Date	Mar 06
Lead Institution	University of Kent		
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Partner Institutions	Canterbury Christ Church University College (C3UC) University of Greenwich (UG), Mid Kent College (MKC) North West Kent College (NWKC), Thanet College (TC) Aim Higher Kent & Medway (AHKM), Kent Adult Education Service (KAES) Oxford Brookes University (OBU)		
Project Web URL	Not yet known		
Programme Name (and number)	Distributed e-learning regional pilots 07/04		
Programme Manager	Sarah Davies		

Document

Document Title	Project Plan		
Reporting Period	<i>Not applicable</i>		
Author(s) & project role	Dr Edwina Bell Project Manager		
Date	3 Feb 2005	Filename(s)	PLPP Project Plan 1a PLPP Appendix A Feb05 PLPP Appendix B Workpackages Feb05 PLPP Appendix C Feb05
URL	<i>Not yet known...</i>		
Access	<input type="checkbox"/> Project and JISC internal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> General dissemination	

Document History

Version	Date	Comments
0a	20/12/04	First draft
0b	3/2/05	Second draft
0c	10/2/05	Third draft addressing JISC comments
1a	22/2/05	Approved version of 0c

Overview of Project

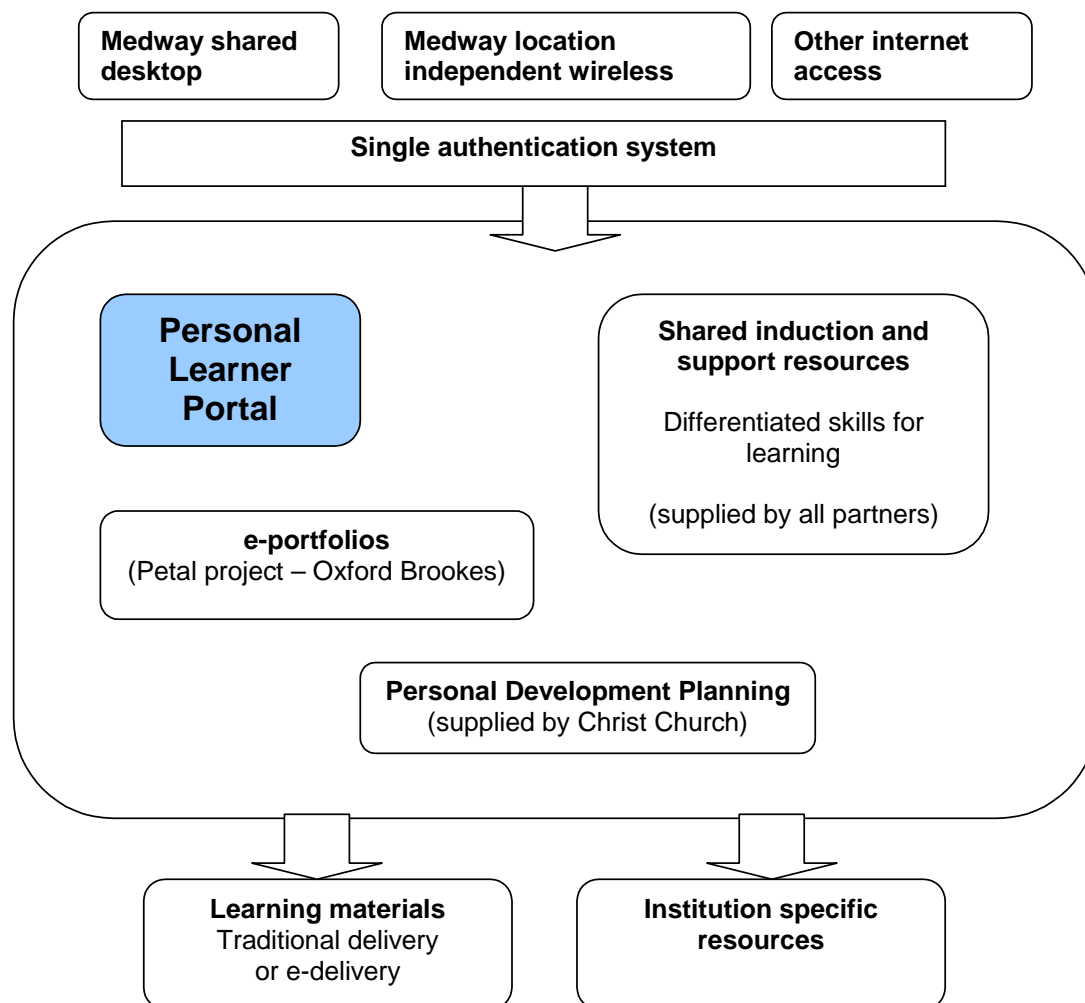
1. Background

The Personal Learning Portal Pilot (PLPP) project builds on the existing work to develop joint services at Medway allowing “seamless” use by students from all four partner institutions involved at Medway. This collaborative work will be supported through the deployment of a number of key technologies and the development of common infrastructure and shared services. The three key areas to be addressed are:

- Common shared desktop (Already funded)
- Radius-based wireless services (Already funded)
- Common open standards based portal (PLPP – subject of this bid)

These services are extendible beyond the Medway partners, and in particular the PLPP delivered using web technologies provides services at any internet-enabled location.

The primary objective of the Personal Learning Portal Pilot (PLPP) is to provide non-traditional learners with simple access to a range of services that will help them optimize their personal learning experience whether their actual course includes on-line course materials or not.



With the emphasis on widening participation it is important to find innovative ways to provide a seamless learning experience that extends beyond the course delivery and which makes it

much easier for learners to engage and stayed engaged. There are many more links between institutions than there were (particularly with foundation degrees) and this project seeks to make the most of resources that can be shared across institutions, thus saving duplication of effort, whilst allowing individual institutions to look after their own learners.

2. Aims and Objectives

Summary: This project will result in a pilot of a personal learning portal. At this stage it is not clear how much true portal technology can be used, this will be determined as the project progresses. The primary objective of the portal is to provide non-traditional learners with simple access to a range of services that will help them optimize their personal learning experience whether their actual course includes on-line course materials or not. The services to be included are induction and support services, personal development planning and e-portfolio. The portal will be linked to existing projects to provide shared desktop access at the Universities at Medway project and VLEs at partner institutions.

The project intends to set up shared services accessed through the web that will also serve to develop an awareness of the HE learning environment and support the development of information skills required by this environment. This will be achieved through building on strategic e-learning partnerships between existing KNTI partners, within the region as well as the institutions directly involved at Medway.

VLE materials will be accessed from the partner institutions web services directly via a single authentication process, which goes beyond web access, originating at the student's "home" institution. Part of the project will be to establish the best way of handling authentication given the level of access that will be required and it may be necessary to have an interim solution whilst different options are explored further.

The PLPP should help to address the following objectives in the call for proposals:

- Facilitating wider participation
- Sharing support resources and services across institutions
- Delivering tools and information from a wide range of sources to the learner at home or in the workplace
- Identification of issues which need to be addressed to offer cross-institutional eLearning systems and services.

The PLPP will provide access to both PETAL(e-portfolio – Oxford Brookes) and Personal Development Planning (C3UC). There may well be some crossover between these two services which this project will investigate. The long term aim is to find a way to maintain the records for both in such a way that they go with the student rather than being identified with their time at a particular institution. This will enable relevant aspects to be accessed by pre-registration students.

The shared induction and support services provide a differentiated service by including self-testing which will direct learners to the most appropriate learning materials.

3. Overall Approach

The project will be tackled in three phases

- Phase 1 – Technical infrastructure and development of PLPP
- Phase 2 – Identification and linking of resources into PLPP
- Phase 3 – Testing and evaluation of PLPP

The PLPP will be designed bearing in mind the needs of learners who may well benefit from a substantial level of support so that they can engage with the learning experience effectively – predominantly part-time students and those in employment or those just beginning to engage with education.

Each of the three phases will provide a modest but attainable outcome to demonstrate the implementation of a set of shared resources to support online learning in the HE, FE or adult learning environment. This will be achieved through some or all of the following components:

- The development of a single authentication system providing access to a range of learning resources
- The provision of the services and learning objects to be accessed via a virtual desktop, allowing secure access to these resources for targeted students in partner institutions
- The assessment of the viability and effectiveness of the online services and learning resources
- The dissemination and evaluation of developments on shared materials through out Kent.

As the key objectives for the project relate to the user experience the technical approach will follow two strands:

- Establishing a system that provides the user with access to the different services and which looks and feels much the same as a full portal and so would to enable this project to evaluate the usefulness to the end user but which may, technically, only emulate the way a true portal would work. Every effort will be made within the project to do as much as is possible with the portal development to ensure it is a true portal.
- Establishing a basic portal service with at least one true portlet which will enable the project to tackle the technical issues around developing a full portal and plan for moving the proof of concept portal towards a true portal in the future.

Important issues to be addressed, e.g. interoperability

Phase 1: The technical development of the PLPP is seen as an opportunity to road test technologies of interest to the partners in developing their portals. Wherever possible, the use of standards should improve the likelihood of being able to import existing components and also of being able to re-use any components developed during the project.

Authentication and authorisation is seen as a significant technical issue – we believe that the resources available to this project may not allow a complete and general solution to be implemented but this will not affect our ability to run user trials on the PLPP.

Phase 2: Interoperability will depend on the extent to which the portlets from partner institutions can be linked through the portal.

- Web-based static resources will require design for interoperability, at a look and feel level. The use of templates will be explored to test the portability of resources between institutions or into a central resource.
- Web-based interactive resources should be designed in a way that enables them to be used as learning objects capable of being used within a variety of VLEs or web resources, e.g. XML.
- The PDP system should be prepared in such a way as to facilitate transfer using emerging interoperability standards (e.g. IMS, XML). In the pilot, output from e-portfolio or PDP should provide interoperability through export from an SQL database to individual institutional (PDP) systems, e.g. Rich Text, XML

Scope and boundaries of the work, including any issues that will not be covered.

This is a pilot project and as such the key objective will be to test the concept with real students between Sep05 and Feb06 even if the technical solution has to resort to work a-rounds rather than optimum solutions and the resources may not be as extensive as is planned in the longer term.

Critical success factors.

- Phase 1** PLPP available for testing with a basic range of services by early Sep05 using a non-federated user authentication model.
- Phase 2** A illustrative set of shared induction and support services is incorporated in the PLPP by early Sep05
Personal development planning and e-portfolio services are available from early Sep05
- Phase 3** Tutors trained to make use of the PLPP with their students
At least two courses testing each aspect of the PLPP.
Two open meetings held
Evaluation completed

4. Project Outputs

Milestones in italics are reports

Phase	Milestone	Deliverables
1	1	Project website
1	2	Test portal deployed
1&2	3	Test version of e-portfolio deployed
1	4	e-portfolio available from PLPP
1	5	Small service portlets available from PLPP
1&2	6	Personal development planning available from PLPP
1&2	7	Support services/resources available from PLPP
1	8	<i>Technical report on portal issues for between institution services</i>
1	9	Authentication model implemented for PLPP
1	10	<i>Technical report on authentication issues</i>
1	11	PLPP ready for use
2	12	Bank of catalogued learning objects for support services
2	13	<i>Development report on how PETAL e-portfolio software will be used in PLPP</i>
3	14	Courses for testing identified and Memoranda of Understanding signed.
3	15	Training handbook and programme ready
3	16	Tutors trained
3	17&18	Open meetings held
3	19	Evaluation plan produced
3	20	<i>Evaluation report completed</i>
-	21	<i>Quarterly project progress reports</i>
-	22	<i>Dissemination plan</i>
-	23	<i>Final project report</i>

5. Project Outcomes

The project will provide shared access to online training for many beneficiaries through the partner and member providers using web based materials with remote tutor support via the VLE. These outcomes would be:

- The provision of a web based catalogue of learning objects that have been evaluated and assessed in terms of their implementation and level.
- To enable the beneficiaries to enjoy a more positive learning experience and as a result, participate more effectively in the community
- To improve retention for part-time learners by supporting them as life-long learners and so encourage progression
- To enable the partners both as an education and training provider and as an employer to develop their online delivery skills and to participate more effectively in the community
- To understand some of the issues and possible solutions around developing a networked learning community across institutions
- To increase the commercial development opportunities for all members through assessment of the viability of an online platform to deliver specific training and to therefore increase their potential as an education and training provider.

6. Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder	Interest / stake	Importance
Kent Computing Service	Technical development during the project and technical support after the project	High
Senior Management of all partners	Approval required for implementation and rollout	High
Oxford Brookes	Testing of Petal e-portfolio	High
FE partners	Involvement in testing using specific courses	High
AimHigher Kent and Medway	Evaluation	High
Part-time students	Improved learning experience	High
Partner departments support new learning technologies, student support and retention programmes	On-going development of resources to support access to HE. Student retention and support for at-risk students Involvement in new learning technologies	Medium Medium Low
Kent Adult Education Service	Linking initiatives and possible testing	Medium
KNTI partner institutions	Interested in the dissemination of the PLPP	Medium
C3UC Computing Services	Technical solutions in design of portals	Low

7. Risk Analysis

Risk	Probability (1-5)	Severity (1-5)	Score (P x S)	Action to Prevent/Manage Risk
Staffing	4	5	20	Explore options for secondments, short-term contracts and using existing permission to recruit
Technical	3	4	12	Authentication is likely to be the greatest problem and fall back positions have been identified so that there will be something to test
Organisational	2	2	4	Dissemination of clear information and agreement for support from Heads of School and appropriate senior executive managers
Legal	3	2	6	Letter of co-operation between partners. Use of open-source materials. IPR agreements between partners.
External suppliers	2	2	4	Develop good communication with Oxford Brookes

8. Standards

Wherever possible we intend to adopt open standards and open source software. In particular it is likely (subject to investigation) that we will use:

- Apache and tomcat to provide web and servlet capabilities;
- uPortal as the portal framework offering the ability to run uPortal channels or JSR 168 portlets, any development of portlets will therefore be written in Java;
- Authentication and authorisation require further investigation but the standards to be considered include: LDAP, RADIUS and Shibboleth.
- Where appropriate, standards for content packaging (e.g. IMS) will be used

9. Technical Development

Phase 1: It is envisaged that any development work will concentrate on back-end features (authentication and authorization, providing channels to applications etc) rather than work on the presentation which will largely come from uPortal – as a result the project should adhere to JISC standards for middleware projects. As indicated above, any development will be undertaken using mainstream languages and standards.

Phase 2: The prototyping approach will be used for the development of learning objects and other deliverables.

10. Intellectual Property Rights

Every effort will be made to use open source material.

The open source software used by this project is covered by GNU or other similar licensing.

Support resources will be drawn from different partners and we will ensure that partners supplying material are acknowledge as the original source and that they understand that the material will be made publicly available. Third party software and content will remain the intellectual property of the originating provider.

Project Resources

11. Project Partners

Development partners

These are the partners who will be actively involved in the development of the PLPP. A consortium agreement which indicates clearly the role and responsibilities for each partner will be drafted in February 04 with a target date for getting it signed of 12th March 04.

Partner/Role	Main contact
University of Kent: Computing Services Phase 1 leaders	John Sotillo Head of Computing Service
Canterbury Christ Church University College Phase 2 and 3 leaders	Phil Poole Director of Learning & Teaching
Kent New Technology Institute Project Management	Edwina Bell Director
AimHigher Kent & Medway Evaluation	Sharon Smith Research & Evaluation Officer
University of Greenwich Training of tutors	Simon Walker Principal Lecturer in Education
Oxford Brookes University Provider of PETAL e-portfolio	George Roberts Development Director, Off-campus e-Learning
Knowledge International Technical support for PETAL e-portfolio	Neil Smith Business Development Director

In addition to the development partners there will be other partners involved in the testing of the PLPP. The partners are expected to include Kent Adult Education Services, North West Kent College, Mid Kent College and Thanet College as well as departments from the development partners. Full contact details are given in Appendix C

12. Project Management

An executive group will meet on a regular basis (probably monthly using a combination of face-to-face and telephone conferences) to review project progress and will comprise the phase leaders and the overall project manager. Phase leaders will call together relevant groups as required for the different activities. Information on progress will be maintained on the project web-site. The overall project manager will monitor the project closely to ensure that risks are managed effectively, problems identified early and dealt with appropriately and that progress is maintained throughout the lifetime of the project and all partners kept fully informed of the status of the project.

Reporting pathways: Work package leaders report to Phase leaders who report to the Project Manager.

Decision processes: The executive group is the decision making body and decisions can either be made at meetings or by e-mail.

Project team

The project team details are attached as Appendix C.

The project manager will spend 50 days over the project period (funded by JISC) with additional secretarial support (funded by the University of Kent)

Training requirements

The project executive and wider development team will need training and familiarisation time with different aspects of the project.

A key part of the project will be to involve the course tutors at an early stage both through the open meetings and through specific training. This part of the phase will involve training in the use of the specific portlets and may also require some training about the role of e-learning for those who have not been involved before. The aim is to ensure that course tutors are fully familiar with the parts of the PLPP that they intend to use on their courses and are able to act as a personal tutor for those using the portal.

Induction and training resources for students using the portal will be provided to support a mixture of face-to-face and on-line modes.

There will also be two open meetings to include both those who will be testing the PLPP directly and others who may be interested in using the PLPP including other partners in the KNTI, the University of Sussex and the Open College Network. The first meeting would be held at the launch of the early pilot and will provide an opportunity to understand what is proposed and provide wider feedback. The second meeting would be held towards the end of the evaluation period and would enable all involved to provide further feedback, discuss modifications needed and begin the dissemination process of rolling out the production version of the PLPP.

13. Programme Support

None known at this stage but an understanding of related projects would be useful.

14. Budget

See Appendix A

Detailed Project Planning

15. Workpackages

See Appendix B

16. Evaluation Plan

The evaluation will be led by AimHigher Kent and Medway and will be built in to the structure of the project. An evaluation plan will identify the key elements to be evaluated, methods of evaluation, data collection systems and impact measurement against project outputs that can then be included in later versions of this document.

Monitoring will include types of students involved (social and demographic), numbers of students, parents, tutors involved and quantitative data relating to outputs. The evaluation will aim to measure project achievements and will include measurement of the impact of the project against baseline attitudes, knowledge and experience. The evaluation will monitor the effectiveness of the PLPP by collating information from learners, tutors and developers and will provide a summary of findings to the second open meeting.

In the pilot groups each beneficiary will have access to a personal tutor, either on site or via a digital link, who will guide the beneficiary through the learning experience toward gainful personal development. This can be provided with tutorial support to enable the beneficiaries to have access to small group and/or synchronous training, using a VLE if required for live online delivery and tutor support.

17. Quality Assurance Plan

Timing	Compliance With	QA Method(s)	Evidence of Compliance
	Fitness for purpose	Review by PLPP users	Evaluation report
	Best practice for processes	Prototyping approach	Records and documentation will be kept
	Adherence to specifications	Testing by the project team	Design review
	Adherence to standards	Testing by the project team	Design review
	Accessibility legislation (WC3 and TechDis guidelines)	Specific independent review undertaken as part of evaluation to include testing with accessibility frameworks	Evaluation report

18. Dissemination Plan

Timing	Dissemination Activity	Audience	Purpose	Key Message
Sep/Oct 05	Open meeting 1	All involved in the project. Other interested staff from partner institutions. Other interested organisations.	Launch of the pilot	Opportunity to understand what is available through the pilot and provide wider feedback
Feb 06	Open meeting 2	All involved in the project. Other interested staff from partner institutions. Other interested organisations.	Review of project	Further feedback, discuss modifications needed and begin the dissemination process
Jan 06	Dissemination plan	JISC, JISC RSC and project partners	Plan how to disseminate PLPP	
March 06	Final report for JISC	JISC and project partners	Lessons learnt	

A number of options for dissemination will be considered including the HE Academy Resources Database, the Centre for Recording Achievement website as well as JISC routes and the open meetings.

We expect the project to have an impact on the resources we could make available to support access into learning in HE from schools or FE regionally (linking with AimHigher).

We have collaborative programmes with FE partners who need access to this type of resource and this project will provide an exemplar for sharing resources for other partnerships of institutions and the wider community, including overseas partners.

19. Exit/Sustainability Plan

The Exit/Sustainability plan needs to be developed over the lifetime of the project.

Project Outputs	Action for Take-up & Embedding	Action for Exit
PLPP	All the resources (support, personal development planning and e-portfolio) will be hosted on a University of Kent server for a minimum of a year after the funding for the project has finished.	Usage of the resources will be monitored and decisions on the maintenance of the service will be taken will depend on the outcome of this monitoring.
Project web-site	All reports will be posted on the project web-site and the web-site kept live for a minimum of three years after the funding for the project has finished and will also be kept live all the time the PLPP service is available.	Web-site can be kept live but not maintained if it is decided not to maintain the PLPP service in the longer term
Learning objects	Learning objects produced will be made available to the wider KNTI consortium to use as required	Source material of use to others (e.g. portlets developed) will be placed on the project web-site.
Dissemination	The PLPP will be offered to all the KNTI partners	

Project Outputs	Why Sustainable	Scenarios for Taking Forward	Issues to Address
PLPP	If effective this will provide a useful service for both pre-registration and registered students	Using KNTI consortium to encourage wider use of the PLPP	Moving from pilot to fully supported production model

Appendices

Appendix A. Project Budget

Please see separate file

PLPP Appendix A Feb05

Appendix B. Workpackages

Please see separate file

PLPP Appendix B Workpackages Feb05

Appendix C: Primary contacts

Please see separate file

PLPP Appendix C Feb05