



## Project Document Cover Sheet

Project Information			
<b>Project Acronym</b>	ESCAPE		
<b>Project Title</b>	Effecting Sustainable Change in Assessment Practice and Experience		
<b>Start Date</b>	October 2008	<b>End Date</b>	September 2010
<b>Lead Institution</b>	University of Hertfordshire		
<b>Project Director</b>	Mark Russell		
<b>Project Manager &amp; contact details</b>	Dominic Bygate Email :D.Bygate@herts.ac.uk Address: The Blended Learning Unit University of Hertfordshire College Lane Hatfield Hertfordshire AL10 9AB		
<b>Partner Institutions</b>	Higher Education Academy (HEA) Subject Centres of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business, Management Accountancy and Finance (BMAF)</li> <li>• Biosciences</li> </ul> Inspire Research (the JISC Curriculum Delivery Programme External Evaluators)		
<b>Project Web URL</b>	<a href="http://www.herts.ac.uk/about-us/learning-and-teaching/blended-learning-institute/projects/blu-national-projects/escape-project.cfm">http://www.herts.ac.uk/about-us/learning-and-teaching/blended-learning-institute/projects/blu-national-projects/escape-project.cfm</a>		
<b>Programme Name (and number)</b>			
<b>Programme Manager</b>	Lisa Gray		

Document Name			
<b>Document Title</b>	<i>UH_ESCAPE_Interim_report_to_JISC.docx</i>		
<b>Reporting Period</b>	<i>Oct 2008 – Sept2009</i>		
<b>Author(s) &amp; project role</b>	Dominic Bygate – ESCAPE Project Manager		
<b>Date</b>	14/09/2009	<b>Filename</b>	
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<b>Access</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Project and JISC internal		<input type="checkbox"/> General dissemination

Document History		
Version	Date	Comments

1.0	30/09/2009	Draft report – awaiting comments

**Interim Reporting Template**

<b>Project Name</b>	<i>ESCAPE University of Hertfordshire</i>
<b>Report compiled by</b>	<i>Dominic Bygate</i>
<b>With contributions from</b>	<i>Mark Russell</i>
<b>Reporting period</b>	Project start - August 2009

### Section One: Summary

*Provide an overview of the project to date, highlighting key developments, deliverables/outputs and achievements for the reporting period. This section may be used to inform the Programme and Support team, and may also provide the basis for an update to inform the sector about the project.*

#### Background

The Effecting Sustainable Change in Assessment Practice and Experience (ESCAPE) project is working in partnership with the Business School (BS) and the School of Life Sciences (LS) at the University of Hertfordshire. The project involves the re-engineering from an assessment for learning perspective, of nine modules across the two schools. The ESCAPE project uses a range of curriculum development activities and change management processes to investigate, formulate, pilot and embed the use of a range of blended learning solutions in order to achieve pedagogical change. The objective being to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of assessment practices. As with similar projects, this project provides an opportunity to (re-)surface good practice in teaching, learning and assessment. Hence modules not directly tied to the ESCAPE project will also benefit from the 'good-practice' discussions, and consequent ripple effects.

#### Overview to date

Initial tasks over this reporting period included the formation of the project team and the authoring of the project plan. The plan detailed the anticipated project approach, timeline and milestones along with expected outcomes and deliverables.

Initial activities included meeting with senior managers in the partner schools to agree the project scope, protocols and operating procedures. In addition discussions on access to staff and resources to support the project took place. These preliminary meetings were important also to establish management buy-in for the project at senior and middle management level.

The formal launch of the project within the two schools was followed by two half day ESCAPE workshops. This was the first opportunity for some of the module co-ordinators and their teams to meet with the ESCAPE team. The ideas and thinking behind the project, along with our intended approach, was outlined and some of the initial challenges explored. The Appreciative Inquiry (AI) model was introduced and the reason for choosing it as a way of working with module teams was explained. The change management aspects of the project were discussed and investigated. In addition the timeline, milestones and proposed project outcomes were presented.

Following the half day workshops a series of individual AI interviews were conducted with module staff. The AI meetings led to the development of a set of case studies, based on the issues and challenges that each of the modules faced from an assessment perspective. The case studies also incorporated information gleaned from the baseline study of the module documentation, including teaching and assessment resources. In addition an audit looking at the use of Studynet (the university MLE) across the project modules was conducted.

As part of the baseline study we conducted an online survey to investigate the student view of their assessment diet. The survey was completed by approximately 150 students across the two schools. The survey included both closed and open questions, and was designed to fully capture the student perspective of their assessment experience.

On completion of the information gathering phase of the project - where working relationships between the module and ESCAPE teams were developed - the project moved on to the re-engineering phase. This involved the module teachers reflecting on their current practice; investigating what good assessment practice looks like and considering how they could use the most successful parts of their current practice as a springboard for change. This was done from a pedagogical perspective and in light of what suitable blended learning technologies were available and considered suitable. To facilitate this process a two day off site workshop was run for module teams. One module team were unavailable to attend this and a separate event was held for them that mirrored the two day event.

We have looked at how we can model the secondary effects of the project – that is to say how the project might influence other modules in the partner schools that are not directly associated with ESCAPE. For example we are exploring the development of an *index of influence* that encapsulates an individual's propensity to influence assessment practices across their school. It is interesting to note that module coordinators involved with the project are looking to change the assessment practice on other modules they run in the light of their ESCAPE project experiences.

We have mapped the assessment landscape across both partner schools and identified patterns and drivers that are considered obstacles to change. The assessment landscape is another useful feed to the baseline and will be used to see how the assessment landscape changes during and after the project.

We are at present working closely with the module coordinators and their teams to follow up and support the work done on re-engineering the assessments to ensure that they are in place for the coming semester. This involves meeting with the module coordinators and teams on a regular basis to ensure that the teams have the guidance, support and resources needed.

## Section Two: Activities and Progress

*Report on activities in support of project objectives for the reporting period.*

The following activities have been carried out in support of the project objectives

- Meeting have been held with senior staff in the two partner schools at specific points over the year in order to establish a relationship with the schools and agree protocols.
- We have worked closely with Rachel Harris from Inspire Research on developing an AI approach to working with the module teams in order to facilitate and evaluate the re-engineering approach we are taking. We are also planning to work with Inspire Research on aspects of the project evaluation.
- We have carried out a detailed baseline study of the current assessment practice in nine modules across two schools. This has involved:
  - Carrying out a out a series of individual AI interviews with each of the module teaching teams in order to better understand the challenges of the module
  - We have met regularly with programme managers, associate heads of school and professional staff in order to further develop and strengthen the relationship between the ESCAPE team and the schools
  - An audit of module documentation has been carried out to include module and programme guides, assessment material, Definitive Module Documentation, teaching material, schemes of work, examples of students work and feedback
  - We have reviewed how the modules use “Studynet”, our managed learning environment
  - A student survey has been carried out to capture the student view of the modules assessment experience.
  - We have compiled a series of nine module case studies that detail the findings of the background research that we have done to date.
- We have investigated the wider assessment landscape in the two schools we are working with. We have developed mappings of the coursework/exam assessment ratio for modules at all three levels across the two schools. The mappings also include information on the types of assessment used in the modules. We have been able to use the patterns and trends that have subsequently been identified to inform the scope and direction of the ESCAPE project.
- We are looking to produce a model for the prediction of the spread of secondary effects of the project through mapping the cross school nature of module teams against programme structures at module level. This has enabled us to build up a picture of how individuals can influence assessment practice across a school.
- We have held two half day events with the School of Life Sciences in support of the project. The first to formally roll out and introduce the project the other as part of the reengineering process for a particular module.
- We have held a half day formal launch event at the Business School for module teams.
- We have held a two day off site event with as part of the reengineering of the modules’ assessment process. The two day included: a review of the case studies, examples of what good assessment looks like – drawn from the current practice on the modules, a chance for the module teams to reflect on their current practice and the showcasing some blended learning strategies. The second day involved using some AI techniques (for example fishbone analysis) to start to map out the new assessment for learning strategies that were being adopted.
- This has been followed up by individual and team interviews and discussions with module coordinators with a view to supporting the module teams over the coming academic year as the re-engineered assessments are developed and piloted.

*Briefly explain any changes to the overall approach outlined in the project plan. Note any changes to the project team, aims, objectives, technical approach, workpackages, deliverables, milestones or the Project Steering Group. If appropriate, attach an amended copy of the relevant sections of your project plan (see checklist at end of document).*

There have been no changes to the overall project approach as detailed in the project plan

### Section Three: Outputs and Deliverables

*What outputs are you expecting to arise from the project? Specify the audiences your expected outputs will be for. (Note: you should have received a mapping tool to help you specify these). This should include a short paragraph summarizing expected technical outputs/system integrations etc.*

We are expecting the following outputs for the project:

- A report detailing the findings of the baseline study carried out for the two schools that we are working with. The report will detail the assessment practices within the schools from both the holistic perspective and the perspective of the 9 modules that we are working with. The report will consider the culture, practices and drivers (external and internal) that influence the assessment landscape.
- A series of case studies that are built around the nine ESCAPE modules. The case studies have been compiled from a review of the module and school documentation and from a series of interviews with module teams, school managers and support staff. The case studies are working documents and will be added to and revised through the life of the project. They are used by the module teams as part of their reengineering activities and will detail the transformative changes that have taken place within the module over the course of the project.
- We are looking to produce a report of the vicarious benefits, gains and unintended consequences from modules not specifically tied to the ESCAPE project but which are influenced by it. The report would look at the interconnectedness of the nine modules we are looking at within their schools and seek to map both the potential for influencing other modules and programmes, and to capture the influence the project has actually had on the assessment landscape across the schools
- We will produce a report that details the changes in the curriculum delivery and assessment methods made as a result of the project. It will contain a description of various assessment activities and processes and their relation to learning. It will also detail the learning technologies used to support assessment for learning activities and processes that have been adopted as a consequence of the project.
- An evaluation report will be produced as part of the project sustainability agenda. The report will include particular reference to; benefits of using specific ICT, transferable activities/ideas, and identification of any recommended changes in institution processes/structures
- We are looking to run a series of ESCAPE workshops sharing our approaches and emerging findings with colleagues from across the university.
- A resource pack – the ESCAPE Toolkit, which details the project processes and activities, including insights into critical success factors and guidance for implementation across other schools.
- A project website acting as a central container for our information / activities
- A project blog describing our ongoing thoughts, activities and progress. The blog is updated on a regular basis and compliments the more traditional end-of-activity evaluation
- A report detailing the Students views of their assessment experience compiled from the student assessment surveys that were carried out as part of the baseline audit
- A series of seminars to share findings with teaching staff in other parts of the university
- A set of sessions on the CPAD ( staff development) programme, to broaden the influence of the project to new teachers and academic staff new to the university

*What outputs, if any, have you produced in this reporting period? Include any outputs, including interim and work in progress, that you have shared with other projects e.g. via the Circle site or workshops. Are there any other outputs you would like to share at this time? Please describe, provide URLs or attached documents etc*

- We have produced a series of nine module case studies
- The baseline study of the assessment landscape for the partner schools is complete but we have not yet completed the formal report.
- We have presented some of our preliminary work on “efficiency vs. effectiveness “, mapping the assessment landscape and capturing the secondary effects of the project to both internal and external audiences over the last six months

## Section Four: Outcomes and Lessons Learned

- *What you now consider to be the key problem(s) or challenge(s) in curriculum delivery within your department(s) / institution?*

We have found

- A lack of formative assessment opportunities in many modules
  - A lack of opportunity for students to engage with feedback and subsequently feed forward any feedback into future assessment activities
  - Large class sizes (in some cases > 300)
  - Concern over students lack of engagement with the module material
  - Lack of opportunities for practical work
  - Concern about students attendance at lectures and seminars
  - Uneven assessment loading. The assessment appears skewed towards end-of-semester assessment and a heavy reliance on formal examinations.
  - A different assessment profile between level one, level two and level three of the programmes.
  - Concerns over an overloaded curriculum
  - Increasing class sizes
- *How your project will enhance curriculum delivery and/or address the problem(s) within your department(s) / institution in light of your baseline activities?*
    - We are working with nine module teams across two schools to tackle the issues highlighted in the module case studies.
    - We are developing a blended learning approach for curriculum delivery underpinned by research informed principles of effective assessment for learning, and accepted principles of good assessment practice.
    - We have taken an AI approach to the re-engineering process – that is we are looking to expand what works well on a module and use this as a spring board for change.
    - The modules have a range of issues which are being addressed on a module-by-module basis
    - We are re-engineering the modules assessment practices in the light the findings of the case studies and the benchmarking exercise in order to specifically address the challenges outlined above.
    - We are using the students' voice to show teachers the likely consequences of the assessment diet and the influences on the overall assessment landscape
- *What measures you will use to assess the impact of enhanced curriculum delivery on the range of stakeholders in your department(s) / institution, and what sources of data will be used to evidence the changes? What evidence have you collected so far?*
    - We have compiled a baseline study of the current assessment landscape
    - We have conducted a student assessment survey in order to capture the student view of their assessment experience.
    - We will work with the module staff over the coming academic year to glean data that will inform us of the effects of the curriculum delivery changes – such as attendance, achievement etc. In addition we will repeat the student assessment survey with students that have completed the reengineered assessments
    - We are working with Inspire Research to develop evaluation strategy
    - Over a period of time we would expect to see a shift in the assessment landscape. We would want to see less reliance on formal end of semester examinations, a more consistent assessment profile at level one, two and three, more opportunities for formative assessment and assessment activities that support learning per se and not simply the measurement of learning.

*Outline any emerging outcomes or lessons that have been learned during this reporting period that could be passed on to other projects Please identify those that could be passed on to other projects, and those that are confidential and require further discussion as to how they could be used to help others. Also outline any new ideas or opportunities that have emerged.*

- The AI approach has worked well with the module teams and has enabled us to develop a good working relationship with the schools for what can be a difficult process. Even though we framed the evaluation and engagement within an AI approach it is interesting how quickly conversations move to failure.
- The case studies captured the stories of the module development and history and of their place in the wider curriculum – what has become apparent is that the modules are never developed in isolation but form part of a complex pattern of interlocking components. Subsequently changes to one module can have unanticipated consequences across a programme.
- Often real issues that underpin problems in a module can take a long time to emerge. These tend to emerge at the end of a session where the module team has been working on a task and there is a sense of community emerging. These issues can be perceived by the module team to be quite sensitive.
- Module teams are often not aware of blended learning approaches and cases of good assessment practice that are taking place in their school. There is in many cases a lack of cross fertilisation of ideas and adoption of good practices that already exist within their school.

### Section Five: Communications and Dissemination Activities

*Provide details of any activities or events which have involved liaison or collaboration outside the project consortium, including key project stakeholders. Attach or provide URLs for any appropriate dissemination or presentation materials.*

*We have been involved in dissemination of some preliminary findings at :*

- **The University of Hertfordshire International Blended Learning Conference, Hatfield June 2009**  
As part of his keynote address ESCAPE Project Director Mark Russell discussed the ESCAPE project in general. He also discussed and demonstrated how the ESCAPE project was tentatively trying to model assessment influences across school.
- **JISC Assessment and Feedback Workshop, York April 2009**  
Mark Russell presented on the development of how the ESCAPE project was modelling the assessment landscape across a curriculum and demonstrated the dynamic nature of the assessment model. The before and after scenarios were discussed with the model being used to illustrate how a change management project might influence assessment practice across a range of module and programmes.
- **Project Blog** – a record of the project detailing the progress made news and current activities on the project. There are also more discursive postings dealing with the wider educational landscape that can influence the project.
- **University of Ulster 8<sup>th</sup> e-Learning Conference** - Invited to present at the University of Ulster 8<sup>th</sup> e-learning conference, to talk about the ESCAPE project. January 2010
- **JISC Learning & Teaching Practice Experts Group** . Mark Russell - invited speaker presented on aspects of the ESCAPE Project

*Outline any publicity the project received during the reporting period.*

- Over the last year the ESCAPE Project has been featured in a number of articles for the university newspaper, "Horizon".

**Section Six: Evaluation**

*Provide brief details of progress to date in terms of the development and implementation of the project evaluation plan, including what you feel has worked, what has not, and any aspects you have changed.*

*Ref evaluation plan*

	<b>Evaluation Factor</b>	<b>Evaluated via</b>	<b>Success Measure</b>
1	<i>Current status of assessment practice</i>	<i>Desktop study of Module Documentation</i>	<i>Mapping the current assessment landscape – successfully completed</i>
2	<i>Rationale for current assessment activity</i>	<i>What is the motivation for deploying the assessments found in item # 1</i>	<i>Gain insights into the thinking of staff relating to Assessment. Completed as part of AI interview and generation of case study</i>
3	<i>Student view of the learning benefit of the assessment task</i>	<i>Student questionnaire</i>	<i>Baseline data of student assessment experience - student assessment survey carried out and data analysed</i>
4	<i>Staff and Student perceptions of current assessment experience</i>	<i>Comparison of data collected from items 2 and 3</i>	<i>Case studies incorporate findings from the survey and Rationale for current practices examined in light of student data</i>

- Through our work with the partner schools we have mapped the current assessment landscape both from the institutional, module and student perspective. We have worked closely with nine module teams and with senior management in order to build up a picture of the school practices and procedures dealing with teaching and assessment.
- We are aware that teaching staff and the academic schools that we are working with are under immense pressure time- wise, and their engagement with the project is vital to the project's success. Consequently we have devoted major project resources in order to support and facilitate this

## Transforming Curriculum Delivery through Technology Programme

*Please outline the key evaluation activities you will undertake in the next 6 month period. Please tell us briefly, the rationale/purpose for activity, planned method, participants, and timing.*

<b>Item #</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Factor to Evaluate</b>	<b>Rationale/Purpose</b>	<b>Method(s)</b>	<b>Measure of Success</b>
1	Feb 2010 – March 2010	Status of assessment practice	What is the (post ESCAPE) status of the assessment practice in the partner schools	Desktop study of Module Documentation	Mapping the developed assessment landscape
2	Feb 2010 and June 2010	Rationale for developed assessment activity	What is the motivation for deploying the assessments found in item # 1	Questionnaire (Staff variant of AEQ+Nicol+Rust), individual discussions, video diaries and production of case studies	Gain insights into the (changed) thinking of staff relating to assessment
3	Feb 2010 and June 2010	Student perception	What is the students' perception of the benefit of the developed assessment experience	Questionnaire (Student variant of AEQ+Nicol+Rust), Focus group and case study production	Production of baseline data of the student experience
4	June 2010	Staff and Student perceptions of current assessment experience	How do the different stakeholders views and experience of current assessment practice compare #'s	Comparison of data collected from above	Descriptions of similarities and differences
5	July 2010	The shift in assessment practice	What difference did ESCAPE make to thinking and Practice	Comparisons pre and post escape landscape	Descriptions of differences.

## Section Seven: Issues and Challenges

*Report on issues or problems that are impacting on the development and implementation of the project. Detail what impact any issues may have on the achievement of project targets, and set out how you plan to tackle these issues. Report on any unexpected project achievements.*

At present we are at a critical phase of the project – that of working closely with the module teams to re-engineer their assessment activities for the start of the teaching semester, at the beginning of October 2009. We are working to tight deadlines with the modules in teams in order to have the assessments in place.

The Business School has begun a process of revalidating all its undergraduate provision over the next two years. The effect of this process on the ESCAPE projects ability to generate sustainable change may be influenced by this process. We are working with senior managers in the Business School as part of the ESCAPE project but are not at this stage able to predict the influence that the revalidation process will have on the medium to long term effects of the project across the Business School.

*What strategies have you found useful for engaging stakeholders at this stage of the project?*

- *Getting the support from senior managers within the schools from the inception of the project*
- *Working with the senior managers to negotiate access to the resources and support that we need right from the start of the project*
- *Identifying and working with key opinion formers and identifying agents for change within schools and using them to support the project*
- *Using an AI approach to working with the module teams and reminding staff that 'all is not broken'*
- *Targeting resources on a modular level where module teams are empowered to effect change*
- *Holding a off site two day workshop for module teams to crystallise relationships and commitment for the project*
- *Looking to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of what the modules are currently doing well in respect of current assessment practice.*
- *Talking to staff about incremental change and recognising the two dimensions of: resource efficiency and educational effectiveness, in our discussions*
- *Giving module teams opportunities to reflect on their current practice, both individually and as a team in a structured and supportive environment*
- *Use of opportunities for cross fertilisation of ideas between the different module teams and different schools*
- *Showcasing good practice and possible blended learning approaches*
- *Mapping current assessments regime to established principles of good practice*
- *Use pre-existing initiatives to support the project (e.g. the Cable project)*
- *Tailor the approach taken with teams to account for to individual team and module characteristics.*
- *Providing guidance and support to teachers on how technology can respond to good educational practice and also to their specific challenges*
- *Building a strong relationship with the teams we are working with so that open, honest and timely communication facilitates the changes the project seeks to effect.*

**Section Eight: Collaboration and Support**

*Briefly summarise contact with the programme manager, critical friends and support team, formal or informal links with other projects, programme-related activities, and ways in which you have been able to influence the development of the programme.*

*We have met with the programme manager both formally and informally on a number of occasions throughout the year. This has been at for example JISC organised events in support of the project, specific ESCAPE project visits to the university and at conferences and meetings held at various venues. In addition there has been email and telephone contact.*

*We have been in contact with our critical friend- Malcolm Ryan, through various CAMEL support activities and steering group meetings. In addition we have met with him at various times over the year at JISC organised events, where informal meeting and discussions took place.*

*We have found our cluster (the universities of Bristol, Exeter and Westminster) and critical friend to be a very useful and supportive mechanism for supporting the development and evolution of the project. In particular the CAMEL meetings are a useful open and objective forum for sharing experiences and for seeking advice and guidance on the project*

**Section Nine: Financial Statement**

<b>Total Grant</b>	Contribution from: JISC	£200,000	<b>Duration of project</b>	Two years
<b>Reporting Period</b>	Expenditure to 31 July 2009			

Budget Headings	Total budget allocated	Expenditure this reporting period	Total expenditure to date	Further information
Travel & Subsistence	£6,500	£826	£826	
Equipment	£4200	£382	£382	
Dissemination activities	Nil			This does not include planned external evaluation activities – such as conferences etc., which are covered by the first two budget headings
Evaluation activities	Nil			
<b>Other :</b>				

**Checklist:**

## Transforming Curriculum Delivery through Technology Programme

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 webpages can be found from: [www.jisc.ac.uk/curriculumdelivery](http://www.jisc.ac.uk/curriculumdelivery)

**N/A** 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.

**N/A** 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.