

### Completion Report Template

Each project is expected to submit a completion report ***instead of*** a final project report. It should be written with reference to the project plan, as in effect, the completion report closes a process that started with the project initiation document.

<b>Project Name</b>	BLUPs Northumbria University
<b>Report compiled by</b>	Annie Kilner
<b>Project team members</b>	<p><b>Northumbria University staff:</b>                      Carole Moreland (Retired – formerly Assistant Director Library &amp; Learning Services &amp; BLUPs Co-Director )                      Jane Core (Director of Library &amp; Learning Services – BLUPs Co-Director)                      Annie Kilner (Service Manager: Operations &amp; BLUPs Project Manager)</p> <p><b>Warwick University staff:</b>                      Jay Dempster – BLUPs Co –Director                      Ruth Ayres – BLUPs Co –Director                      Mark Childs – BLUPs Project Manager                      Rossana Espinoza Ramos – BLUPs Research Assistant</p>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<p>JISC Support &amp; Synthesis team in particular Patsy Clark and Greg Benfield.</p> <p>Northumbria University student participants.</p>
<b>Date of report</b>	30 March 2009

<b>Section One: Executive Summary</b>
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## Learners Experiences of e-Learning Programme

**Introduction.** The study began in partnership with the University of Warwick with the aim of using UoW Learning Grid and Northumbria University Library as case studies. The study set out to explore the ways in which students at both institutions blended the types of learning available to them, from both the personal domain and the institutional domain. The physical institutional environment (libraries, commons, labs etc.) and personal learning environments (home, cafes and social spaces) were considered in conjunction with 'virtual' electronic environments. The latter included investigating the use of institutional portals, virtual learning platforms, course websites. It also looked at students use of personal virtual environments as an informal resource for study and peer support (eg. MSN, Social networking sites). In the course of the project the team also hoped to identify emerging and evolving technologies with the aim of using the information to inform planning for technology rich study environments. Furthermore, the study expected to unearth some evaluation of pedagogic initiatives in academic practice and student learning, and offer some recommendations for solutions to inform support provision in central services and academic departments. During 2008, the University of Warwick activity on the study ceased and the remaining Northumbria case study data was salvaged with the help of the JISC Synthesis & Support team.

### Aims and objectives

#### Aims:

- i) Explore how students blend their modes of learning – both personal and institutional domain.
- ii) Draw up recommendations on how to draw on those approaches to best support teaching and learning.

#### Key objectives:

- Gather data from a cross section of students representing a mix of age, gender and cultural diversity
- Obtain information on the various tools and environments, including personal adaptations, used by students in the course of their study
- Consider how students structure their learning and engage with individual and collaborative learning experiences.
- Explore students' formal (eg. Institutional resources and e-learning environments) and informal learning activities (social networking websites, texting, phone a friend)
- Produce case study for Northumbria University to include examples and background for typical student learning activity and study preferences.
- Offer recommendations on:
  - how this institution (and perhaps others) might best support students' blending of learning
  - the feasibility of drawing on students' own resources/preferred tools for developing learning
  - how to incorporate students' own blending of learning in Library service delivery

**Approach and methodology.** The project recruited a diverse student sample and encouraged participants to use their own 'voice' to explain their experiences in blending learning tools and environments. This proved empowering to some by encouraging exploration of the e-learning tools. For others it helped to hone skills in reflective evaluation. The research methodology included recorded interviews with students and recruiting some interviewees to build on interview data by keeping logs of their study experiences for a eight to twelve weeks.

**Findings & conclusions.** Six learner 'types' emerged from the interviews and logs. These are summarised as:

- Learner in part-time study and full time employment
- Learner with dyslexia
- Learner in a subject requiring specialist subject software
- Mobile learner
- Solo learner
- Social learner

Although there is considerable overlap in the patterns of study and learning behaviour across these groups, the study highlighted that preferences were often influenced by: course content (some more suited to solo learning); modes of assessment (collaborative work essential component for some courses); knowledge of and confidence with technology; peer and tutor recommendation; availability of resources and suitable study environments. Students are using a range of technologies including laptops and handheld devices to aid their learning. In particular, there seems to be a trend towards recording lectures on mobile phones and the use of podcasts. Students are creating their 'own desktops' and 'blending' their electronic environment, using taskbar buttons to quickly access and move between institutional tools and resources (VLEs and portals) and informal, unfiltered resources of the internet and social networks. For some students this expanded virtual environment allowed them to work from home which was for some a preferred place of study. For others the library was seen as a stimulating scholarly environment offering access to both print and electronic resources, staff on hand to help, and from which students gained motivation from working in proximity to peers. Students want to bring their own tools and technologies with them and require suitably enabled and diverse environments.

**Next steps.** Data is still being analysed in order to pull together a set of case studies which will draw out a deeper examination of the following themes: Patterns of study and learner behaviour; Student study & support requirements; Barriers to learning; Emerging technologies; Library as 'place'. The case study will then be disseminated with the aim of informing academic practice and future plans for designing technology rich learning environments.

## **Section Two: Project Outputs**

### **Final outputs.** (Northumbria University outputs only)

- Set of case studies of six Northumbria University learner types offering examples of students blended learning experiences and study preferences.

### **Intended outputs.**

- Literature Review (undertaken by University of Warwick)
- Interview analysis reports (University of Warwick)
- Research reports (planned studentships not undertaken)

## **Section Three: Project Outcomes**

### **Main outcomes.**

- Case study unique to Northumbria University which will inform future planning for supporting student experience and designing technology rich learning environment.
- Contribution to the wider investigation of the learner experience, student study preferences and the impact of technology on pedagogy.

## **Section Four: Dissemination**

Awaiting final draft of case study. Dissemination at conferences etc. still to be decided – currently working with JISC Synthesis and Support team for publication of case study.

## **Section Five: Key Messages**

Key messages that may inform future work.

Institutions and Libraries –

- must look into the implications and feasibility of students recording and filming lectures using handheld technologies
- must plan for an infrastructure in future which offers flexible, technology rich study environments and facilitates of mobile technologies

Future learner experience research -

- Continue to explore the blending of virtual and physical learning environments and consider how they each touch each other and expand and enhance learner experience

## **Section Six: Synergy & Sustainability**

There were most certainly links with several of the Learner Experience projects. These clearly emerged at the Support & Synthesis workshops and conference events attended by the BLUPs team.

<b>Section Seven: Issues and Challenges</b>
<p><b>Communication.</b> Clear communication strategy and clarification of project team roles at the outset essential, especially if project team membership is likely to change and roles shift.</p> <p>Form a good relationship with student participants and nurture their initial enthusiasm by offering rewards after each stage of the project or after each log is submitted.</p> <p><b>Risk assessment.</b> Needed if the project is to i) survive the inevitable shifts in focus as the study encounters new paths and ideas ii) continue if there are changes in project personnel.</p>
<b>Section Eight: Support</b>
<p>The Support and Synthesis team have been an inspiration and great support. They have helped guide us through some uncertain ground and offered excellent workshops and activities which have really helped us to focus on the study and ensure outputs. It also helped to meet with other project teams and understand how BLUPs fitted in with the whole Learner Experience programme.</p> <p>What did I most value? The chance to meet and work with experienced researchers.</p> <p>What would I have liked to be different? I would have preferred to have been involved from the bidding stage of the project so I could understand the full background of study. I spent the first few months playing catch-up. I would also have liked to have a clearer understanding within the project team of roles and responsibilities.</p>
<b>Section Nine: Financial Statement</b>
<p>University of Warwick led on the project and therefore held the budget of £79,748.</p> <p>Northumbria University received an allocation from this budget in respect of costs already incurred and work still to be undertaken after UoW closed its side of the study.</p>

<b>Total Grant</b>	<b>£79,748 (£8,230 allocated to Northumbria University in Dec 2008)</b>	<b>Duration of project</b>	<b>2 years</b>
<b>Reporting Period</b>	<b>May 2007 to March 2009</b>		

<b>Budget Headings</b>	<b>Total budget allocated</b>	<b>Expenditure this reporting period</b>	<b>Total expenditure to date</b>	<b>Further information</b>
Staff				
Travel & Subsistence				
Equipment				
Dissemination activities				
Evaluation activities				
FEC Overheads				

**Please note that the Completion Reports, including attachments, will be made available on the JISC website and on the programme wiki with the budgetary information removed.**