

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.

Project Name	Learner Experiences across the Disciplines (LEaD) University of Edinburgh
Report compiled by	Judy Hardy and Denise Haywood
Project team members	<p><i>List the key staff members who were involved with the project and briefly summarise their current/future professional roles ('what are they doing when the project finishes?')</i></p> <p>The staff members who were involved in the project are listed below. All staff are employed at University of Edinburgh and will continue in their current roles after the end of the project.</p> <p>Project Team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Judy Hardy, Project Manager, School of Physics and Astronomy - Denise Haywood, Project Officer, School of Education <p>Academic Disciplines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Simon Bates, Director of Teaching, School of Physics and Astronomy - Jessie Paterson, IT and eLearning Advisor, School of Divinity - Susan Rhind, Director of the Veterinary Teaching Organisation, Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies <p>Institutional Support Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jeff Haywood, Vice Principal for Knowledge Management and Chief Information Officer - Hamish Macleod, Senior Lecturer, School of Education.
Acknowledgements	<p><i>List the project partners and acknowledge any person or organisation that was helpful during the project or in writing the report.</i></p> <p>The project was part-funded by the JISC under the Learner Experiences of e-Learning Phase 2 theme (Circular 05/06) of the e-Learning Pedagogy Programme. Thanks are due to the Programme Manager, Sarah Knight, and all the members of the Support and Synthesis team; Ellen Lessner, Rhona Sharpe, Helen Beetham, Greg Benfield and Eta De Cicco, for their support, advice and encouragement.</p> <p>We would also like to acknowledge the guidance and</p>

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	<p>support that we received from the members of the Project Advisory Board, namely: Anna Ferguson, Vice President, Academic Affairs, Edinburgh University Students Association (EUSA) (2007/08); Guy Bromley, Vice President, Academic Affairs, EUSA (2008/09); David Beards, Senior Policy Advisor, Learning and Teaching, Scottish Funding Council (SFC); Robert Davidson, Policy Officer, Learning and Teaching, SFC.</p> <p>We would like to thank all of the course and subject leaders who providing time for us in their busy induction and course schedules, Anne-Marie Scott from Registry for provision and analysis of data, and Sian Baynes from the School of Education for her invaluable advice on qualitative data analysis.</p> <p>Many thanks are due to Ivana Marenzi of the Università di Pavia, Italy, for her help and assistance during her sabbatical at the School of Education, University of Edinburgh and at our seminar at Online Educa Berlin 2008.</p> <p>Finally, we are hugely grateful to all of the students from the University of Edinburgh who participated in the project, and thank them for all of their contributions over the course of the project and beyond.</p>
Date of report	10 December 2008
Section One: Executive Summary	

Summarise highlights of the project (one page), including aims/objectives, overall approach, findings, achievements, and conclusions.

Aims and Objectives

The LEaD project looked at the student year through learners' own voices. The overall aim of the project was to undertake a study of first-year students across a variety of subject areas at the University of Edinburgh, including Divinity, Physics & Astronomy and Veterinary Medicine. Its focus was on "critical moments"; more specifically, it looked at the involvement and impact of learning technologies on learners' transition to university and how their use of learning technologies changed as they progress through their first year.

The key research questions addressed by the project were:

- What are learners' expectations regarding learning technologies?
- How do learners adapt their approaches to e-learning over the first year?
- What are the key factors that influence learners' e-learning strategies?
- To what extent do learners use personal technologies to support learning?

Overall Approach

The overall shape of the research was based on two underlying principles. Firstly, to take a *learner-centred* approach, whereby the learners' own views and opinions are central to the study. Secondly, to adopt a *holistic* approach in which learners' use of e-learning is set within the context of their learning experiences as a whole.

With such diverse student cohorts, we could not hope to represent the whole range of learner experiences within this study. Instead, our aim was to obtain a representative cross-section of views and opinions. To capture the breadth and complexity of learners' experiences we used a mixed-mode approach, including a series of reflective diaries recorded by learners (in video, audio or text format) together with surveys and focus groups.

Findings

Learners cannot be considered as a homogenous group, and our research findings are inevitably complex and wide-ranging. However, the main messages arising from the study include:

- Technology is embedded transparently in learners' lives, but there is a wide variation in learners' prior experiences of e-learning.
- The term "e-learning" does not mean a great deal to learners; there is learning with strands of technology running through.
- Learners aim to achieve a balance between different activities and approaches to learning. Technology is used where it offers "added value".
- Skills don't belong to a particular generation; learners learn from each other where they perceive a need.
- Learners are social; peer support and group learning is often mediated through personal technologies.

Achievements

The main achievements of this study are the findings, messages and recommendations arising from the learners themselves. These are directly relevant to practitioners, support staff and learners, and will help inform future directions in the provision and use of e-learning to support the needs of different learners.

There is relatively little prior literature on the use of video diaries for educational research, and our work will be of direct relevance to future research using this methodological approach.

Conclusions

This detailed study based on learners' own voices provides valuable pointers for anyone involved in the provision and use of technology to support teaching and learning at HEIs, especially in the early years as students make the transition to become effective and independent learners.

Section Two: Project Outputs

List the project outputs with reference to the agreed outputs lists at <https://mw.brookes.ac.uk/display/JISCle2/Types> and indicate where they can be accessed.

Account for any variance between this list and the intended outputs listed in the project plan (additional outputs that were not initially foreseen or planned, amendments to the list of intended outputs as the project progressed).

If appropriate, include a statement regarding third party permissions and licences for accessing outputs.

The following agreed outputs are available on the project website

<http://www.epcc.ed.ac.uk/projects/lead>

- Methodological report and critique
- Case studies describing learners' experiences of using technology
- Recommendations for staff, intermediaries and learners

During the course of the project a range of additional outputs has been produced, as listed below.

- Initial Survey Results for participating learners, supplied to the Support and Synthesis project
- Tips on the practicalities of organising and running focus groups, <https://mw.brookes.ac.uk/display/JISCle2/Lead+focus+group+tips>
- Practical strategies on recruitment and retention, <https://mw.brookes.ac.uk/display/JISCle2/Recruitment+and+Retention>
- Notes on using NVivo 8 for mixed types of data source, <https://mw.brookes.ac.uk/display/JISCle2/Dealing+with+Data>
- Data handling in NVivo 8, <https://mw.brookes.ac.uk/display/JISCle2/Dealing+with+Data>
- Plan for checklists for various stakeholders, <https://mw.brookes.ac.uk/display/JISCle2/Types>
- Themed text extracts from learner diaries, supplied to the Support and Synthesis team
- Video and text extracts from learner diaries, <http://www.epcc.ed.ac.uk/projects/lead>
- Presentations, supporting resources, summaries, key points from the seminar at OEB08, <http://groups.google.com/group/leadoeb2008>

Consent has been obtained from the relevant learners where text and video diary extracts are used in dissemination outputs. Please note that learners may request that their materials are to be removed from such activities and outputs at any time in the future.

All data is stored digitally on a secure central server to which only project team has access. This will be reviewed 3 years beyond end of project i.e. September 2011. At that point a decision will be taken as to what will be retained and will be deleted.

Section Three: Project Outcomes

Briefly summarise the main outcomes as a result of the project activities. Specify the contribution the project has made to each of the programme level themes. Refer to the outputs from the previous section as appropriate.

The activities of the project have resulted in a number of outcomes. It has provided rich and detailed data on the ways that learners utilise both institutional and personalised learning technologies, in particular as they make the critical transition to studying within a university environment. Through exploration of learners' expectations of and engagement with a variety of learning technologies, it has provided pointers, insights and examples of good practice regarding the use of learning technologies to support learners, especially during (although not necessarily limited to) their early years at university. Through this, the project has contributed to a better understanding of how best to use technology in support of learning and teaching at university.

These outcomes are encapsulated in the Case Study Report and Recommendations listed above, together with the additional information available on the project website (presentations, papers, text and video diary extracts). The outcomes of the project directly impact on many of the programme level themes, however the main findings are summarised briefly below in relation to each of the specific themes that the project addressed:

Theme: Beliefs and expectations

Learners' expectations of the use of technology at university are generally high. Their expectations in relation to the use of technology to support learning, either independently or in groups, is largely fulfilled, although this is less the case for learners who come to university from work.

However, learners' expectations for innovative uses of technology are limited by a lack of prior experience and knowledge of what university can offer. They are not pushing for the use particular technologies have no clear vision of a technology-rich education and are quite conservative and traditional in their views. This is reflected in a strong desire for face to face, supplemented and enhanced by technology.

Theme: Change and transition

Learners use technology to suit their own ways and styles of learning. They aim to achieve a balance between different types of resource and activities, for example electronic, paper and face to face, in order to achieve their personal comfort zone and way of studying. Some learners are more digital than others, and there is still a small minority who prefer not to engage with technology.

Learners become acclimatised to the technologies used in their particular disciplines, which then become the norm. They recognise that some staff utilise technology less than others, but would prefer more consistency. However learners don't in general know what the leading edge of technology might look like, so they don't suggest uses that e-learning "experts" would suggest. They also tend not to see the university making use of the technologies that they all have (e.g. mobile phones, laptops)

From a learners' perspective there is nothing "special" about e-learning, there is simply learning and teaching with strands of technology running through. Technology has become mainstreamed into learning and teaching, research and administration processes and the lines between these and personal uses of technology use are becoming blurred.

Theme: Specific learners/contexts

Learners are not a homogeneous group. This does not appear to be strongly related to age, gender or background but rather is do with the experience that they have gained from school, work, home etc. or within the teaching of their subject. Skills don't belong to a particular generation; learners switch skills and learn from each other if they find the skills useful and there is a need.

Learners use the technology that suits their particular needs. For example, non-native English speakers may use podcasts as a language aid. Technology plays a very important role for visiting and exchange students, before, during and after their visits.

Technology, particularly non-institutional systems such as social networking sites, is used widely to facilitate group learning. either face to face or online. However, there is still a small

Section Four: Dissemination

List the dissemination that has taken place and is planned, about project findings and outcomes, e.g. workshops, journal articles, conference presentations. Attach or provide URLs for any appropriate dissemination or presentation materials.

List (and reference where appropriate) any publicity the project has received, e.g. press coverage, awards.

A range of dissemination activities have taken place over the course of the project. We are committed to disseminating the key messages arising from the project as widely as possible, and to this end further dissemination activities are planned beyond the funded lifetime of the project.

Completed and planned dissemination activities:

- Panel contribution and poster by Judy Hardy at JISC Pedagogy Experts Group meeting, 27 June 2007, <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/elearningpedagogy/elearningexperts/jun07.aspx>
- Presentation at NLC08 by Judy Hardy, as part of the Symposium "Learners' Experience of e-Learning: Research from the UK", 5-6 May 2008, <http://www.networkedlearningconference.org.uk>
- Conference Paper: Judy Hardy, Denise Haywood, Simon Bates, Jessie Paterson, Susan Rhind, Hamish Macleod and Jeff Haywood (2008), "Expectations and Reality: Exploring the use of learning technologies across the disciplines", Sixth International Conference on Networked Learning, http://www.networkedlearningconference.org.uk/abstracts/PDFs/Hardy_475-483.pdf
- Presentation "Learner experiences across the disciplines" by Hamish Macleod at the HE / FE Special Interest Group of the Scottish eLearning Alliance, Inverness College, 17 October 2008
- Article by Judy Hardy in "BITS", the University of Edinburgh's online bulletin of Information Technology, November 2008, <http://www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/bits>
- Presentation "Learner experiences across the disciplines" by Judy Hardy at the Support and Synthesis pilot National workshop, York, 12 November 2008, <https://mw.brookes.ac.uk/display/JISCle2/National+workshops>
- Workshop on the project by Judy Hardy and Denise Haywood to the University of Edinburgh eLearning Professionals and Practitioners Forum, 26 November 2008, <https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/eLPP/2008/10/20/LEaD+Project+Event>
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- Article by Denise Haywood and Judy Hardy and "Interchange", the newsletter of the University of Edinburgh Centre for Teaching, Learning and Assessment, December 2008, <http://www.tla.ed.ac.uk/interchange/>
- Article by on the project by Judy Hardy and Denise Haywood in the "elearningeuropa" newsletter, <http://www.elearningeuropa.info>
- Half-day Seminar "The Google Generation in Higher Education: Entrant Students and Learning Technologies", Simon Bates, Judy Hardy and Hamish Macleod, Online Educa Berlin, 2-5 December 2008, <http://www.online-educa.com/workshops-half-day-afternoon-15>, <http://groups.google.com/group/leadoeb2008>
- Invited lecture "e-Learning, e-Libraries & e-Research" by Jeff Haywood at the TEMPUS Project strategic review of e-learning, University of Zagreb, 8-9 December 2008
- Presentation on "Technology and the student experience" by Jeff Haywood, CISA conference, Liverpool, 11-13 March 2009

Press Coverage

- Contribution to JISC-sponsored supplement in the Guardian Education section, November 2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/digitalstudent/academia>

In addition to the dissemination activities outlined above, there has been a high level of

Section Five: Key Messages

Briefly outline the key messages from your project which you would like to see inform future work. Be bold and ambitious in making recommendations for:

Policy and practice in further and higher education sectors

The key messages from the LEaD project have already informed future approaches to the provision and use of technology to support learning and teaching at the University of Edinburgh, both at course and institutional level. As the use of technology becomes more firmly embedded across the whole HE sector, it is essential that the learner's voice continues to be heard and used to inform future policy decisions.

Future learner experience research

The Technological landscape, especially the use of Web 2.0 tools, will continue to grow and develop. These technologies have huge potential as a resource for teaching and learning at all levels of education, but it is essential that their use is driven by pedagogical need rather than being "product driven". Learners' own experiences and perspectives provide a unique insight that should form an essential component of any research in this area

The methodologies developed in this project, especially the use of video reflective diaries, will be helpful for future learner-centred research projects.

Other JISC projects

Among the wide range of important topics in this area, key themes include the use of technology for assessment & feedback; to support group learning; and personalisation, for example to support students with particular requirements or disabilities.

Section Six: Synergy & Sustainability

List and briefly describe any links established with other Learner Experience projects, other national programmes, projects or services which contributed to your project or which you feel your project contributed to.

Explain how the outputs and outcomes of the project will be taken forward and how these synergies could be built on in the future.

The workshops and other activities organised by the Support and Synthesis project have provided many excellent opportunities for sharing ideas, issues and outcomes with other Learner Experience projects. One concrete outcome has been a joint book chapter based on the project outcomes which is currently in development by Judy Hardy and Amanda Jefferies of the University of Hertfordshire:

- J Hardy and A Jefferies, "How learners change: critical moments, changing mind", in "Listening to Learners in the Digital Age" in R Sharpe, H Beetham and S de Freitas, eds., book chapter currently in production in collaboration with Amanda Jefferies from the STROLL project, University of Hertfordshire.

The JISC Learning and Teaching Practice Experts Group have provided an ideal forum to disseminate information on the project outcomes and as a helpful source of advice and ideas.

We plan to maintain light-touch contact with the LEaD student participants over the remainder of their time at university. This will provide additional insights on learners' experiences and use of technology to support their learning throughout their university education. It will also give us a valuable opportunity to obtain direct feedback on future initiatives and developments in e-learning at the University. To support this work, a bid has been submitted from the project team to the University of Edinburgh Principal's Teaching Award Scheme

(<http://www.tla.ed.ac.uk/centre/PrincipalsTeachingAward/PrincipalsTeachingAward.htm>)

The project outcomes have fed into the University of Edinburgh evaluation of the Principal's e-learning fund, a 5-year £5m programme to build excellence and expertise in e-learning and to innovate and spread the use of e-learning more widely through the academic community. The review has been established so that future policy and practice can build appropriately on this initiative.

Section Seven: Issues and Challenges

Report on issues or problems that impacted on the development and implementation of the project. What advice would you give to others embarking on learner experience projects? What advice would you give to anyone undertaking learner experience research within their institution?

A number of issues and challenges have been identified in the interim project reports. These are summarised below, together with their resolution and comments (“For the future”) offering pointers to researchers undertaking similar projects in the future.

- *Poor uptake of online survey* (Oct 07 Interim Report). Resolved by widespread distribution of the survey in paper form.
 - o For the future: Advertise links to online surveys as widely as possible but do not assume high take-up. If possible, ensure that completed paper surveys can be scanned electronically. An optical mark reading (OMR) method might be considered, although not everyone will have access to this type of expensive scanning equipment which is only really necessary for complex analysis. Plan in detail for distribution and collection of paper surveys; a targeted approach may work best. However, it is important to note that although our first institution-wide survey was largely unsuccessful online, the second online survey received 100% response, because it was directed at a committed and motivated target group and made easily accessed by an email with a URL.
- *Students’ availability* (Oct 07 Interim Report). Resolved by a flexible approach, including attendance at multiple timetabled sessions and setting up “drop-in” sessions. Students who returned overseas were paid using PayPal.
 - o For the future: This approach worked well, and will be used in similar projects in the future.
- *Technical issues associated with uploading large files* (Oct 07 Interim Report). Resolved by supplying students with CDs and pre-addressed envelopes.
 - o For the future: Consider possible approaches well in advance, pilot them if possible (see below) and do not underestimate the technical challenges. Watch out for new technologies. If uploading data to an external (i.e. non-institutional) site, consider any data protection issues.
- *Establishing robust data collection techniques* (Oct 07 Interim Report). Resolved by piloting the questionnaires, diary information sheets and collection methods before the start of the semester. Also, being part of a wider JISC initiative facilitated sharing of ideas across projects.
 - o For the future: Piloting is a very useful step and should be included in project plans wherever practical. Examples from our project include: methods of distributing surveys; wording on questionnaires, methods of making and collecting videos; fact sheets for participants.
- *Qualitative analysis tools for video data* (Apr 08 Interim Report). Resolved by the use of NVivo 8, however video and audio data was not fully transcribed which makes detailed analysis time-consuming and difficult.
 - o For the future: Include time or budget in project proposal for transcription of audio/video data.
- *Permission to use video/audio diaries for dissemination purposes* (Oct 08 Final Report). This was included in our original submission to the University’s Ethics Committee and was approved, but was not included in the participant consent forms. Resolved by contacting individual participants to seek permission.
 - o For the future: Seek Ethics approval for all expected uses of data, and ensure that participant consent forms fully match Ethics approval forms. However, it is always good practice always to go back and ask for permission again at the end of the project to re-confirm agreement. Although participants may give ethical approval at the start, they will not know what they have contributed and whether they are still happy for their diaries to be used until the end of the project. Also, it is likely that the ways materials will be used for dissemination activities will not be known in

Section Eight: Support

Please comment on the value to your project of the Support and Synthesis team, workshops, visits and activities. What did you most value? What would you have liked to be different?

The support workshops have been a very useful and valuable source of advice and support. We have received many specific suggestions and ideas, both from members of the Support and Synthesis team and from other projects. In addition, the Support and Synthesis have helped to ensure that the project stayed closely aligned with the aims and objectives of the programme as a whole.

Section Nine: Financial Statement

Provide a final financial statement, accounting for any variance from the agreed budget.

The table below is designed to help this reporting process. Additional budget headings may be added to fit an individual project's budget. Projects may find it more appropriate to use a spreadsheet to report financial information.

Total Grant	£93,088.00	Duration of project	19 months
Reporting Period	1 March 2007 – 30 September 2008		

Budget Headings	Total budget allocated	Expenditure this reporting period	Total expenditure to date	Further information
Staff	£80,368.00	-	£76,450.77	-
Travel & Subsistence	£5,000.00	-	£4,651.45	Includes support & synthesis workshops, conferences (NLC08, OEB08)
Equipment	£1,501.00	-	£1,204.52	Includes laptop, webcams & CDs for students
Dissemination activities	£0.00	-	£0.00	-
Evaluation activities	£0.00	-	£0.00	-
Other (please specify)	£6,219.00	-	£4,822.21	Includes student incentives, software licences (NVivo8, Inspiration), conference registration (NLC08, OEB08)

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.