


## Appendix A - Proposal Cover Sheet

<b>Cover Sheet for Proposals</b> <i>(All sections must be completed)</i>			
<b>Name of Initiative:</b> Institutional approaches to curriculum design			
<b>Name of Lead Institution:</b> Birmingham City University			
<b>Name of Proposed Project:</b> Technology – Supporting Processes for Agile and Responsive Curricula (T-SPARC)			
<b>Name(s) of Project Partner(s):</b>			
<b>Full Contact Details for Primary Contact:</b>  <b>Name:</b> Professor Stuart Brand <b>Position:</b> Director of Learning and Teaching <b>Email:</b> stuart.brand@bcu.ac.uk <b>Address:</b> Centre for Enhancement of Learning and Teaching, Edge Building, City North Campus, Birmingham, B42 2SU  <b>Tel:</b> 0121 331 5380 <b>Fax:</b> 0121 331 6389			
<b>Project Start Date:</b> 1 September 2008		<b>Project End Date:</b> 31 May 2012	
<b>Total Funding Requested from JISC:</b> £399,227.64			
<b>Funding Broken Down over Academic Years (Aug-July):</b>			
<b>Aug08 – July09</b>	<b>Aug09 – July10</b>	<b>Aug10 – July11</b>	<b>Aug11 – July12</b>
£124,699.80	£124,878.32	£124,711.70	£24,937.82
<b>Total Institutional Contributions:</b> £99,806.91			
<b>Outline Project Description</b> <p>This proposal represents an opportunity for the JISC to support, engage with and facilitate community learning from the Birmingham City University 'Redesign of the Learning Experience' (RLE) project. This nascent initiative is already set to deliver: initial redesign of the entire offering of undergraduate courses during 2008-2009; a redesign of the programme design process itself; and the development of interim streamlined procedures for review and re-approval. Additionally, we will be using this experience to inform the redesign of the substantive institutional review and approval processes beyond 2009 and to move to systems which facilitate higher levels of responsiveness to emergent market needs and deliver lower administrative overheads for staff engaged in programme redesign.</p> <p>This call represents an exciting opportunity to collaborate with the JISC in deploying and evaluating technology that has the potential to support the process of programme design and the facilitation of more efficient procedures to confer institutional approval upon programmes. We are therefore proposing this project: Technology Supported Processes for Agile and Responsive Curricula (T-SPARC) to pursue this opportunity.</p>			
<b>I have looked at the example FOI form at Appendix B and included an FOI form in the attached bid (Tick Box)</b>		<b>YES</b>	
<b>I have read the Circular and associated Terms and Conditions of Grant at Appendix D (Tick Box)</b>		<b>YES</b>	

## Appendix B

### Freedom of information guidance and FOI Withheld Information Form FOI Withheld Information Form

We would like JISC to consider withholding the following sections or paragraphs from disclosure, should the contents of this proposal be requested under the Freedom of Information Act, or if we are successful in our bid for funding and our project proposal is made available on JISC's website.

We acknowledge that the FOI Withheld Information Form is of indicative value only and that JISC may nevertheless be obliged to disclose this information in accordance with the requirements of the Act. We acknowledge that the final decision on disclosure rests with JISC.

Section / Paragraph No.	Relevant exemption from disclosure under FOI	Justification
n/a		

Please see <http://www.ico.gov.uk> for further information on the Freedom of Information Act and the exemptions to disclosure it contains.

Example:

Section / Paragraph No.	Relevant exemption from disclosure under FOI	Justification
2.4	s.43 Commercial Interests	Contains detailed description of our proposed system design which would damage our commercial interests if disclosed, by making this information available to competitors.

## C. Fit to programme objectives and overall value to JISC community

### Rationale for offering a proposal

1 This proposal represents an opportunity for the JISC to support, engage with and facilitate community learning from the Birmingham City University 'Redesign of the Learning Experience' (RLE) project. This nascent initiative is already set to deliver: initial redesign of the entire offering of undergraduate courses during 2008-2009; a redesign of the programme design process itself; and the development of interim streamlined procedures for review and re-approval. Additionally, we will be using this experience to inform the redesign of the substantive institutional review and approval processes beyond 2009 and to move to systems which facilitate higher levels of responsiveness to emergent market needs and deliver lower administrative overheads for staff engaged in programme redesign.

2. Though strategic institutional commitment to redesigning our approaches to curriculum design and approval is already established, we at Birmingham City University have noted with interest the call for projects under Circular 05/08 and we believe this call represents an exciting opportunity to collaborate with the JISC in deploying and evaluating technology that has the potential to support the process of programme design and the facilitation of more efficient procedures to confer institutional approval upon programmes. We are therefore proposing this project: Technology-Supported Processes for Agile and Responsive Curricula (T-SPARC) to pursue this opportunity.

3. The overarching RLE project within which T-SPARC will be situated will deliver the University's aim to migrate from an approach to programme design and approval which has a quality assurance focus to one that furthers our quality enhancement agenda. It has been initiated with full directorate support: the Vice Chancellor chairs the RLE Project Board, the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic) is the RLE Project Director and the University's Director of Learning and Teaching is the Project Manager; the Project Board also has the University's Academic Registrar as one of its members. Letters from the Vice Chancellor, Pro-Vice Chancellor and Academic Registrar extending their support and engagement into the proposed JISC supported variant of our plans are appended to this proposal. Other letters of support have been written by our Director of Information and Communication Technology and our Director of Library & Learning Resources.

### Context of our proposal

4. Following the development of the University Learning and Teaching Strategy for 2007 – 2012 and a review of the Academic Regulations, Birmingham City University Senate took the decision in February 2008 to restructure its programmes from a 12 to a 15 credit framework and has, as a consequence, created an opportunity to review and redesign the learning experience offered to our students. This opportunity has in turn initiated the RLE project which is funded through the Vice Chancellor's Strategic Fund. This project will:

- Facilitate the redesign of all of undergraduate modules and programmes as they move from a 12 to a 15 credit module structure while enhancing the learning experience of our students and improving the working lives of our staff.
- Change the programme review and approval process from one that focuses exclusively on reviewing the *products* of programme development to one that emphasises the review and scrutiny of the *process* of programme development.
- Facilitate an institutional approach to programme design characterised by a more formative approach to programme approval to achieve the aims of enhanced flexibility of provision, enhanced employer engagement and an increased emphasis on embedding innovations in learning and teaching.
- Put in place a system of support comprising networks of staff, a programme of workshops and a suite of supporting resources.

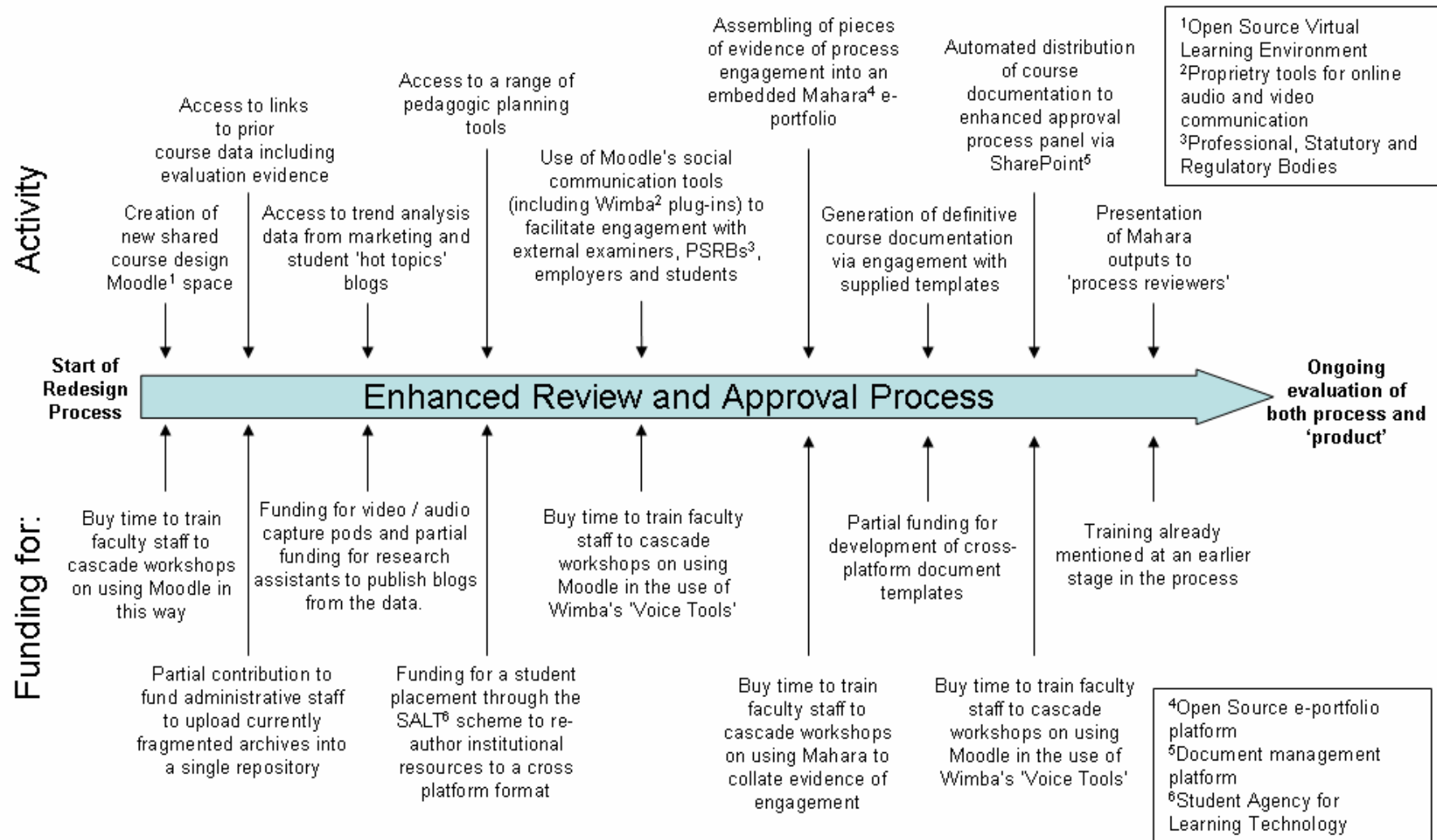
5. In summary the specific aim we wish to address through our proposed work is to accelerate our migration from a culture of compliance with institutional approval processes to one that furthers our journey to full engagement with supported design processes leading to an embedded culture of continuing improvement.

### What would JISC funding be used for?

6. Birmingham City University perceives significant potential in using technology to support curriculum design and subsequent approval. We are attracted to the catalytic effect that the funding associated with the call will have in realising this vision.

7. We perceive the value of T-SPARC, as a facet of our RLE project, is to facilitate workflow efficiencies throughout the programme design process, including approval. We will also provide staff with an information rich environment that acts as a 'one stop shop' for both historical and current course data. Through this project we aim to deliver an opportunity to develop staff through engagement with technology supported programme design by exposing them to a range of online pedagogic planning tools.

**Figure 1: Diagrammatic representation of the proposed T-SPARC process:**



8. The technologies identified on the T-SPARC process diagram on the previous page are expanded upon below and organised under the three themes within the call.

### 9. Theme 1 - Learning and Teaching Practice

- In addition to facilitating access to JISC funded pedagogic planning tools, namely 'Phoebe' and the 'London Pedagogy Planner', Birmingham City University's existing pedagogic planning tool, 'Module Designer', will be disaggregated from its current database linked / document production form allowing the embedded suite of resources to be used more flexibly and presented on an 'on demand' basis through the institution's Open Source VLE (Moodle) using the context sensitive 'glossary' tool.
- The development and deployment of a Moodle based reference package offering strategies for designing flexibility into courses. This includes articulation with a recently created DVD video resource which offers multiple interpretations of the term 'flexibility' and how it applies to curriculum design.
- In addition to making available resources that make the students' voice heard – such as the JISC's 'In their own words' video profiles and other video case studies produced by Xube, we will introduce video-capture 'pod-boxes' to capture our local student voice. These video and audio files will be collated and form the basis of a blog 'The Student Experience – hot topics' which will be constantly accessible by staff.
- We will install the Open Source e-Portfolio software 'Mahara' onto our servers and make the software available to students. Staff will have the opportunity to become proficient in use of the software for themselves by using it as a means to generate a portfolio of evidence to present as a demonstration of engagement with the programme redesign process.
- We are interested in utilising data from a number of sources to inform course design, including those suggested by the JISC in the call. Indeed engagement with these data streams will be a required part of the wider facilitated redesign process and we will use our existing document management system, 'Microsoft SharePoint' to maintain a repository and tiered archive of key course documentation in XML format. A link to the repository and archive of data will be embedded within the programme design Moodle spaces. We are aware of previous work done through the COVARM, XCRI and SUNIWE projects and we will seek to draw upon this experience.

### 10. Theme 2 – Technology and Standards

- Electronic document templates for each module will have fields for the selection of keyword metadata which will allow us to guard against developing overlapping provision across the institution and to facilitate identification of units of study which could be recombined for bespoke offerings (for a specific employer's need for example).
- We will migrate to a policy of using only completed XML templates in our portfolio of definitive programme documentation. This will allow us to maintain separation of content and format for all programme documents, allowing for more efficient re-use of course information across multiple publication types. All of our documentation will be managed by our existing software solution, Microsoft SharePoint. We will take a 'piloting' approach here and will seek to evaluate our use of this technology before considering an upgrade to more powerful solutions such as EMC Documentum. Since there is a low overhead, data-sparing upgrade path from SharePoint to Documentum we believe this offers a low risk solution should an upgrade become an institutional strategic aim.

### 11. Theme 3 – Strategy and Policy

- The supported RLE process has engagement with the institution's Learning and Teaching Strategy at its core. Course teams will work through a process where they will produce a portfolio of evidence of engagement with each of the seven broad aims of the strategy (which address: smooth transition; student engagement; flexibility; diversity; employability; academic and professional standards; and effective learning environments). A suite of electronic resources will be deployed and accompanying workshops on how to get the best out of them will be delivered.
- We intend to disseminate analysis of market information generated by our marketing unit as a blog which will be linked via an RSS feed to the Moodle course design spaces.

12. Our proposal is truly holistic and builds upon and extends the scope of other technology supported learning design process tools, including those integrated into our facilitated design process. Our emphasis on programme design rather than module or sessional design and integration of that design process with subsequent approval procedures through 'joined-up technology' will deliver a way of facilitating curriculum design that transforms our ways of working and will offer a model which may be of great interest to the sector.

13. As can be seen from the lower half of *Figure 1*, the majority of funding is sought to support staff engagement with these technologies rather than its purchase or installation.

## D. Work plan

### Current processes

14. The University's existing curriculum design processes tend to be documentation focussed and culminate in a panel event where representatives from all interested parties search through the volumes of documentation offered to identify and consider the nature of the programme and its delivery. Though these processes are robust from a quality assurance perspective, quality enhancement through the deployment of innovations in learning and teaching for example are not explicitly encouraged by this approach.

15. Some staff view the approval process as a mechanism that leads to the inadvertent stifling of innovation with perceptions of the constraints of University or PSRB regulations, real or imagined, being cited as a rationale for maintaining the status quo. This perception is not unique to us and was highlighted by Phase 2 of JISC's Design for Learning Programme which reported that there was a cultural perception that quality assurance processes inhibit innovation.

16. The involvement of Academic Registry which is responsible for QA (Quality Assurance) processes in our wider RLE project and the proposed T-SPARC variant demonstrates that we wish to meet the challenge of any notion that QA processes necessarily inhibit learning and teaching innovations and we seek to develop design and approval processes that liberate staff to feel free to design the best courses they can in the knowledge that they do so with the full and enthusiastic collaboration of those task with the crucially important task of assuring the quality of academic programmes.

17. Given that our plans for the 2008 – 2009 academic year require us to accommodate near parallel re-approval of a large number of programmes, we have developed a streamlined approval process to meet these needs. Any programme that redesigns the delivery of its curriculum within the overall envelope of the programme level learning outcomes of the extant programme will be assessed under the streamlined process. This streamlined process is modelled on the format used by the QAA for Major Review of Health provision, whereby all programmes must produce a set of documentation, in this case a portfolio of evidence of engagement with the redesign process and key documentation such as module templates, course handbook and an updated map of the programme against all relevant benchmarking statements and competency frameworks. A sampling approach will then be used to scrutinise programmes.

18. It is important to note that external examiners, representatives from PSRBs, and chairs of the streamlined approval panel have oversight of each of the programme redesigns throughout the process and can at any time request that the course team 'switch' to a full review.

19. The JISC Design for Learning Programme (Phase 1) advocated a need for tools that support collaborative design and we believe our proposed infrastructure will facilitate much greater collaboration in course design activity which draws together not just the wider course team including library and information services but also key stakeholders such as employers and students.

20. The JISC Design for Learning Programme also found that existing curriculum design practice is very variable. We anticipate that our facilitated design processes will offer a way to offer guidance towards necessarily standardised documentation whilst embracing innovation and diversity across programmes.

21. Though our proposal for the T-SPARC project focuses on infrastructure, we agree with the HEA Blended Learning Review that the redesign of courses is a pre-requisite for truly embedding e-learning into programmes. We believe our commitment to redesign our entire undergraduate offering will result in much greater uptake of integrated e-learning provision as much of the emphasis of the overarching RLE project is to create more agile and responsive curricula through more effective and extensive use of technology in our programmes.

22. The Design for Learning (Phase 2) report also identified 'disjunction' between curriculum design as *educational* design and curriculum design as a *business* process – we could contend that the resolution of this dichotomy is our T-SPARC's primary aim. Our core project team and the associated strategic involvement that it offers demonstrate our commitment to structure our policies, processes and crucially the flow of information so as to meet the needs of all of our staff.

23. By focussing on developing infrastructure that seeks to manage programme information more effectively for all staff we will address some of the observations of the JISC XCRI project which identified that the fragmentation of information and difficulties in maintaining version control could introduce inefficiencies in how information is used across the whole spectrum of course documentation including the production and distribution of up to date marketing information.

## Outline work plan

Quarter / Year	Q4/08	Q1/09	Q2/09	Q3/09	Q4/09	Q1/10	Q2/10	Q3/10	Q4/10	Q1/11	Q2/11	Q3/11	Q4/11	Q1/12	Q2/12
Review of current processes and practice	A						F								
Understanding the issue and identifying the changes desired by the end of the project		C													
Planning innovations in curriculum design processes to realise the desired changes	B								H						
Piloting the innovations		D							I						
Evaluation of the new processes			E								J				
Embedding the innovations and planning for sustainability							G				K				

24. We identify a number of phases in our project; these are mapped against JISC's expectations of methodology as laid out in paragraph 25 of the circular. Many of the methodological phases repeat over the duration of the project. This reflects the iterative nature of our proposal and follows a pattern of initial redesign of in the 2008 / 2009 academic year followed by informed redesign of procedures and processes following an initial evaluation of the initial phase. The specific activities of phases A-K (alphabetical reference follows our anticipated schedule) are expanded overleaf with details given regarding the deliverables and performance measures associated with each phase.

Work phase summaries:

**25. A – Review of current process and practice.** The JISC have specified the project should spend its first 6 – 9 months in conducting a thorough baseline review. Through our nascent RLE project, some elements of the review have already begun. We believe this offers us an opportunity to spend this time to thicken our data set and to give a more comprehensive return than might be achievable for a project starting ‘cold’ in September.

**Deliverables** – a report on the current state of processes and procedures for programme design, review and reapproval including descriptive accounts of processes and narrative accounts of a range of University staff who interact with the processes throughout the life cycle of course design through to approval.

**Milestones** – early generation of a ‘map’ of the processes by the end of December 2008; identification of people who interface with the processes at all of the identified points in the life cycle by the end of January 2009; collection of narrative accounts by the end of February 2009; production of a report to JISC for sharing with the wider community by the end of March 2009.

**26. B – Planning innovations in curriculum design processes to realise the desired change.** The institutional decision we have taken to redesign programmes means that work on the support to deliver our aims is already underway. JISC funding will allow us accelerate our developments in those curriculum design processes which would benefit from technological support. For this reason, activity in this phase occurs from the start of the project.

**Deliverables** – a suite of platform and design process independent pedagogic planning resources derived from Birmingham City University’s ‘Module Designer’ tool; programme design workflow templates, both as a .zip Moodle backup file and as a printable document representation for rebuilding by third parties within their own infrastructure; repurposable XML based templates for the generation of definitive course documentation; shared access to a generic version of the market analysis blog ‘Trends in Higher Education’; sector access to a generic version of the blog ‘Hot topics – the students’ views’.

**Milestones** – Much of the above is paralleled activity but it is anticipated that the planning tools will be available to the wider community by the end January 2009; the programme design workflow templates by the end of March 2009; the XML templates by the end of May 2009; and the other resources coming on stream before the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2009.

**27. C - Understanding the issue and identifying the changes desired by the end of the project.** Though the overarching RLE project mechanisms will define those changes desired by the end of the project – the review of processes, especially the narrative accounts, will offer us valuable information as to where to target resources to expedite our overall aims. The tight integration of the T-SPARC process with the strategic management of the University offers almost automatic integration with the institution’s strategic decision making mechanisms.

**Deliverables** – A report on how the review from phase A has been interpreted by the University’s management and how the information has informed policy.

**Milestones** – Early (pre-report) analysis will be presented at the T-SPARC Project Operation Group and RLE Project Board meetings held in the first quarter of 2009. The report from phase A will be presented to the RLE Project Board (chaired by the Vice Chancellor) at the end of the second quarter of 2009 and subsequent action will be tracked via the minutes of these meetings and collated into a report to be shared. It is likely that this work will be continued in phases E and J.

**28. D – Piloting of innovations.** It is important to stress that it is not envisaged that all staff will choose to opt for the technology supported processes during the initial redesign in 2008 / 2009 and we will seek to work with those course teams who volunteer for the technology supported option. We will ensure a minimum of 10 programme teams will engage with the project across the six faculties of the institution. Subject to initial evaluations of technology supported demonstrating viability, we will seek to scale up usage to all programme redesigns from the 2009 / 2010 and beyond

**Deliverables** – A series of case studies to be shared comprising a portfolio of evidence of engagement with the design processes, template based definitive course documentation and narrative accounts from the course team and programme reviewers who will share their experiences of using the technology on offer.

**Milestones** – Identification of the pilot course teams to be completed by the end of 2008; interim progress reports produced monthly throughout the first and second quarter – these would emerge as a consequence of engagement with the RLE process anyway but in the case of pilot redesigns will be extended to feedback on the role technology has played in the process; the sharing of all of the deliverables by the end of the third quarter of 2009 will be facilitated (the programmes themselves are also made available to students at that time).

**29. E – Evaluation of the new processes.** This first evaluative phase will evaluate the fitness for purpose of the infrastructure put in place to support their initial redesign of programmes prior to the 2009 / 2010 academic year. We will deploy a mixture of narrative inquiry, scrutiny of the Moodle logs and tracking of the growth of the Mahara portfolios to track, analyse and report progress.

**Deliverables** – Following the evaluation of the pilot programmes as detailed in the account of phase D above, we will move to evaluating the T-SPARC methodology taking an institution wide perspective. During this phase we will seek to

ascertain the alignment between what has been delivered through the technology solution we have deployed and our future needs.

**Milestones** – Publication of a report for both internal use and for sharing with JISC for the wider community. This report will be supplemented by the institution's action plan response and made available to JISC by the end of the third quarter of 2010.

**30. F – Review of current processes and practice.** This repeated phase will review the current practices *at that time* and as such will be subsumed into phase E.

**31. G – Embedding the innovations and planning for sustainability.** The University has already taken a decision that programmes designed after the conclusion of the 2009 / 2010 academic year will be approved via a new process to be informed by our experiences using the streamlined processes which accompany the initial RLE project driven redesign of programmes. Decisions will be taken at this point which will determine the profile of technologies we will deploy to support subsequent programme redesign activity.

**Deliverables** – An interim report from the T-SPARC project, detailing our experiences of a full cycle of technology supported programme design, associated experiences and the institutional response to our findings.

**Milestones** – Publication of the T-SPARC interim report will be made available to JISC and the wider community by the end of the third quarter of 2010.

**32. H – Planning innovations in curriculum design processes to realise the desired change.** This second phase of innovative activity is scheduled to respond to the findings outlined in the interim report and will deliver the infrastructure to support the mandating of technology supported design processes where appropriate.

**Deliverables** – It would be unwise to predict the nature of the deliverables of this phase at this stage as they are necessarily defined by the outcomes of our evaluation and subsequent interim review. We will share any domain knowledge or software solutions we create during this phase.

**Milestones** – Any supplementary tools to support staff in the redesign of academic programmes will be put in place by the end of the first quarter of 2011.

**33. I – Piloting of innovations.** This second phase of piloting will evaluate any new tools or processes developed under phase H.

**Deliverables** – Any new tools, such as supplementary planning tools or template materials will be made available to JISC and the community following their evaluation during phase J.

**Milestones** – It is anticipated that new tools and support processes will be deployed individually into programmes as they are made available. The precise timing of these events will need to coincide with ongoing redesign activity and is thus not specifiable at this stage.

**34. J – Evaluation of the new processes.** This second phase of evaluative activity will evaluate any new tools or technology supported processes deployed as a consequence of the activity laid out in phases H and I. Once again, we will deploy a mixture of narrative inquiry, scrutiny of the Moodle logs and tracking of the growth of the Mahara portfolios to track, analyse and report progress. In addition, the second half of this phase will deliver a definitive end of project report.

**Deliverables** – Publication of a report on second stage processes for internal use. Subsequent publication of the report, supplemented by the institution's action plan response will be made available to JISC for the wider community; production of a final end of project report.

**Milestones** – The publication of a report for internal use by the end of the fourth quarter of 2011; the publication of the subsequent public report which will be made available to JISC for the wider community as part of the final report by the end of the conclusion of the funding period in May 2012.

**35. K – Embedding the innovations and planning for sustainability.** This second phase of embedding will define the state of our policies and processes at the end of the funding period.

**Deliverables** – Definitive institutional documentation regarding the policies and processes of curriculum redesign; detailed specification of information standards adhered to; projected plans and associated costings for maintenance and upgrading of all supporting technology will be agreed by strategic management. All of these documents will be shared in conjunction with our final report.

**Milestones** – Adoption of standards that emerge as a recommendation from the project by the University Senate.

## **Project Management**

36. The project will be led by the University's Director of Learning and Teaching and will be managed through the Lead Academic Consultant to the University's RLE project. The T-SPARC project will be strategically supervised through the small RLE Project Board chaired by the University's Vice Chancellor. Finances will be operated through the University's Centre for Enhancement of Learning and Teaching. The project will be operated through a Project Operations Group (POG) which will involve the core members of the T-SPARC project team together with invited

faculty representatives. It will have monthly meetings for the first year as the project develops. Meetings after that period may be every other month, depending on need.

37. The core members of the project team are identified in bold font in the staffing profile given below. Funding is only sought for those persons shaded in the table below. Those for whom funding is not suggested have also indicated their willingness to contribute to the project:

Name	Existing role	Role on project	Time spent on project per year
<b>Mary Carswell</b>	Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic)	Directorate Strategic Lead for T-SPARC project	12 days
<b>Stuart Brand</b>	Director of Learning and Teaching and CETL Director	T-SPARC Project Director	13 days
<b>Paul Bartholomew</b>	Academic Lead Consultant	Half-time WTE T-SPARC Project Manager	108.5 days (52 days funded by JISC, <b>56.5 as matched funding</b> )
<b>Alan Staley</b>	Head of Learning Technology Development Unit	Adviser to T-SPARC Project Operations Group (POG)	12 days
<b>Ros Boyne</b>	Academic Registrar	Adviser to T-SPARC POG	12 days
<b>Trevor Potten</b>	Director of Corporate Information and Communication Technology	Adviser to T-SPARC POG	12 days
<b>Luke Millard</b>	Project Manager (CETL)	Adviser to T-SPARC POG	12 days
To be identified	Faculty Senior Learning and Teaching Fellows	Supporters of faculty staff engaged in curriculum developments and staff training	Six x 26 days for two years from March 2009
To be appointed	Research Assistant	To support evaluation of the T-SPARC project and specifically to operate and evaluate video capture pods	Full-time
Administrative support		Uploading resources to create repository and general administrative support	26 days for year one
To be appointed	Student placement (s)	Author resources	Full-time for one year

### 38. Risk Analysis

A: Probability (1 – 5); B: Severity (1 – 5); C: Score (A X B)

Staffing	A	B	C	Mitigation
Loss of key members of the project team.	1	3	3	The key staff to run the project have already been identified from the existing staff base. If there is difficulty in attracting the calibre of additional support staff required, the University will second staff from existing roles. A similar approach would be adopted should any key member leave the project during its operation. Not all academic staff are intended to take the 'technology enhanced route' to the wider RLE project. Alternative face-to-face support with manual methods will also be provided. Incentives can be provided to encourage staff engagement with this technology based approach
Academic staff do not fully engage with the process	2	2	4	
<b>Organisational</b>	1	3	3	The Vice-Chancellor has committed to fund elements of some key roles in the project from his strategic fund and to chair the Project Steering Group. In addition, the project is being driven through the University's central Centre for Enhancement of Learning and Teaching ensuring institutional commitment.
<b>Technical</b>				
Inability to map processes to SharePoint	1	3	3	SharePoint is already used within the university, and expertise is available within the University's Corporate ICT who have helped to prepare the bid and fully support the project. External consultants can be recruited should the need arise. Technical Moodle expertise within Corporate ICT, and forums freely available to support Mahara. Alternative open source e-portfolios can be explored as a last resort.
Problems installing Mahara and integrating with Moodle	1	2	2	
<b>External suppliers</b>	1	1	1	The only new external suppliers would be the Open Source software community who have developed Mahara (see previous risk element)

<b>Legal</b>	1	1	1	Statutory problems that may occur relate to Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body approval for new courses. This approval will be sought through negotiation and therefore the risk is minimal to the courses involved and would not significantly impact on the project as a whole. If intractable difficulties occur, then modification of the sample of programmes can be accommodated.
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### Sustainability

39. The long term future of the project's outputs are assured as they will be viewed by staff as integral to the University's course approval processes from 2008/9 onwards. Processes and tools that are developed will be viewed as the standard by which courses receive approval within the institution and adopted as such.

### E. Engagement with the community

40. The T-SPARC project will generate domain knowledge that will be of interest to a number audience groups and we plan to address each of these in a targeted way using relevant subsets of our data. We also believe that simply communicating findings is not enough to ensure sector impact and we will engage interested parties through reciprocal visits and through mutual commitment to translate any lessons learned into their own institutional contexts. In the first instance we envisage that interested parties might be drawn from 'fellow travellers' undertaking bidding under this call.

41. We understand that under this call JISC are hoping to generate domain information and representations of experience to be shared. We would be most interested in evaluating the JISC perspective on emergent outputs prior to delivery to the wider community, allowing us to respond to any concerns of translatability as they are articulated by the JISC

42. Our externality is not confined to our dissemination strategy and as part of our RLE project; we already have statements of commitment from two external experts to support staff development in curriculum redesign and to offer external perspectives on any aspect of our project. We have secured a commitment that this support will extend into the technology supported facets should we be chosen to be funded.

43. Additionally, Birmingham City University through other learning and teaching initiatives are well represented within a number of national networks; as such, we are well placed to identify and engage with interested parties through our targeted dissemination strategy.

### F. Budget

<b>Directly Incurred Staff</b>	<b>Aug08– Jul09</b>	<b>Aug09– Jul10</b>	<b>Aug10 – Jul11</b>	<b>Aug11 – Jul12</b>	<b>TOTAL £</b>
Research Assistant, RA1, Full-time – begins February 2009					
Student placements (SALT scheme) – 37 hours per week for the equivalent one year – rate of £12.75 per hour					
<b>Total Directly Incurred Staff (A)</b>					
<b>Non-Staff</b>					
Travel and expenses					
Hardware/software					
Dissemination					
Evaluation					
Recruitment costs / advertising					
<b>Total Directly Incurred Non-Staff (B)</b>					
<b>Directly Incurred Total (C) (A+B=C)</b>					
<b>Directly Allocated</b>					
Staff					
Estates					
Other					

<b>Directly Allocated Total (D)</b>					
<b>Indirect Costs (E)</b>					
<b>Total Project Cost (C+D+E)</b>					
<b>Amount Requested from JISC</b>					
<b>Institutional Contributions</b>					
<b>Percentage Contributions over the life of the project</b>	<b>JISC 80%</b>	<b>Partner 20%</b>			<b>Total 100%</b>

<b>No. FTEs used to calculate indirect and estates charges, and staff included</b>	<b>No FTEs 5.735 in total over life of project</b>	<b>Research Assistant (tba) full-time for 2.5 years Prof Stuart Brand 5% for life of project (+ additional 5% from University) Paul Bartholomew 20% for life of project (+ additional 30% from University) Administrator (tba) 10% for one year Six Faculty Learning and Teaching Champions for 10% for 2 years Student placement SALT scheme – full time for the equivalent of one year</b>
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**G. Previous experience of the project team**

44. This project will have tight integration with the wider RLE project owing to the Project Director and the Project Manager having significant responsibilities in the delivery of the wider RLE project. Additionally, the proposed project is supported from within the Directorate since the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic), Professor Mary Carswell, has welcomed the opportunity to join the T-SPARC project team as Directorate Strategic Lead.

45. The T-SPARC Project Director, Professor Stuart Brand, has wide experience in managing the operation and budgets of major projects. Stuart is the Director of our CETL which attracted £4.2 million of funding from HEFCE. Stuart is also Birmingham City University’s Director of Learning and Teaching.

46. The T-SPARC Project Manager, Paul Bartholomew has significant experience in supporting staff to embed technology within academic programmes. Paul is the Learning and Teaching Consultant (e-Learning) for the Health Sciences and Practice Subject Centre of the Higher Education Academy and as Academic Lead for evaluation of the University’s CETL he has significant experience in the evaluation of complex projects.

47. Professor Alan Staley is Head of the Learning Technology Development Unit in the Centre for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching. He is currently tasked with setting the strategic direction for the use of learning technologies within the University, and to operationalise strategies that embed curriculum innovations and change working practices. Alan is a member of the JISC Learning and Teaching Experts Group.

48. Ros Boyne is the University’s Academic Registrar and as such is responsible for the maintenance and development of the University’s Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement procedures. Ros chairs the working group charged with revising the University’s review and approval mechanisms and is a member of the RLE Project Board.

49. Luke Millard is the Learning and Teaching Project Manager for the University’s CETL and as such has extensive experience in managing multiple parallel projects across a wide spectrum of staff groups; Luke also coordinated the staff consultation exercise that informed the development of the 2007-2012 Learning and Teaching Strategy.

50. Further details of the experience of the project team are included within the abridged curriculum vitae appended to this proposal but we believe their experience and crucially their positions within the institution offers compelling evidence of their ability to return excellent value in return for JISC investment in this project.

## Annex 1



19 June 2008

Dear Sir/Madam,

I write as Vice-Chancellor of Birmingham City University to endorse fully the University's bid under Call 05-08: Institutional Approaches to Curriculum Redesign. This call came at a most propitious time in the transformation of the University. We have committed ourselves, not only to the change of our undergraduate credit structure from 12 to 15 credit modules, but also importantly a systematic redesign of our students' learning experience.

I have personally led on the infrastructure changes needed to underpin this initiative and have committed the University to effective collaborative working between our Centre for Enhancement of Learning and Teaching, Corporate Information and Communications Technology and Academic Registry working with Faculties and Library and Learning Resources to achieve new and improved learning opportunities for our expanding range of students.

The JISC call for projects is therefore in my view very well attuned to our own priorities. Our emergent focus on quality enhancement and our ambitious plans will be catalysed through your support. I have the fullest confidence in the experienced team who have worked with Directorate to assemble this bid.

I look forward to hearing from you in due course and would be happy to deal with any further questions you may have.

Yours faithfully

Professor David Tidmarsh  
Vice-Chancellor

**Vice-Chancellor's Office**  
Birmingham City University

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Birmingham City University, formerly the University of Central England in Birmingham



18 June 2008

To the E-Learning Bids Team

**JISC Invitation to Bid - Institutional Approaches to Curriculum Design**

I would like to confirm that the bid from Birmingham City University has significant support at a senior level within the University. You will see from our proposal that we have already committed to a major project to redesign our programmes so when I first saw this opportunity to bid I felt the synergy was so great that we really had to pursue it.

Gaining this funding will allow us to take what it already a significant project for the University to a higher level. It will allow us to radically improve our processes and approaches so that we can far more readily adapt our programmes as the needs of our students and employers change. In discussions with colleagues from other HEIs I have already found a real interest in what we are planning to do and a desire to learn more about how we get on. Being successful in this bid will allow us to share our approaches through JISC with others in the sector to help make the whole sector more agile – essential as we increasingly need to be 'fast on our feet'.

I hope JISC feels able to support our proposal and if I can be of help in any way during the decision process please contact me.

Yours sincerely

**Professor Mary Carswell**  
**Pro-Vice-Chancellor**

**Directorate**  
Birmingham City University  
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18 June 2008



To whom it may concern

Letter of Support from the Academic Registrar for the JISC-funded Project

T-SPARC Project

The purpose of this letter is to express the Academic Registry's commitment to this proposal and, secondly, to outline the rationale for our involvement and support for the project.

Underpinning much of the work of the Academic Registry is the necessity to collect and retain accurate course and student-related information. Accurate information is essential if we are to provide effective support for the University's quality enhancement processes. Therefore, we are constantly striving to improve our mechanisms for collecting and storing information. Our aim is to create a single source of comprehensive and accurate course information which will serve a multitude of purposes. We recognise that in order to achieve this aim we will need to invest significant time and resources into utilising technology to improve the flow of information between central service departments and academic departments. Historically, retention of course-related information was fragmented across departments which created difficulties for course teams when designing or reviewing courses. Therefore, one of the Academic Registry's priorities has been to look at ways of drawing this information together to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the services we provide.

Involvement in this project provides a valuable opportunity for the Academic Registry to collaborate with colleagues from key areas of the University to take this strategy forward and to implement integrated systems for sharing information. In furtherance of this aim to facilitate close collaboration, we have already released a member of our Academic Registry team on a half time secondment to support the wider RLE project within which the T-SPARC project will be situated. One of our particular interests in the T-SPARC project lies in realising the capability of Sharepoint. We believe that, with appropriate investment in staff training, its capacity for storage and creating workflows will help us to foster a culture of continuous development and enhancement in relation to the design, approval, review and re-approval of courses.

We are also very interested in progressing the role Academic Registry has in delivering against the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy. In the past many staff have drawn a distinction between quality assurance and quality enhancement, we feel that through this work we are adding an additional dimension; by focussing on the process as well as the products of course design we are, in effect, involving ourselves in the assurance of quality enhancement.

Ros Boyne  
Academic Registrar

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Birmingham City University

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18 June 2008



To whom it may concern

Letter of Support from the Director of CICT for the JISC-funded Project

T-SPARC Project

The purpose of this letter is to confirm my support for this bid. The CICT Department has been very closely involved in its development. If we are successful we will play a key part in supporting the project and its implementation. During the preparation of this bid I have worked very closely with the Director of Learning and Teaching and the Academic Registrar to ensure a fully co-ordinated approach to achievement of the proposed technical solutions.

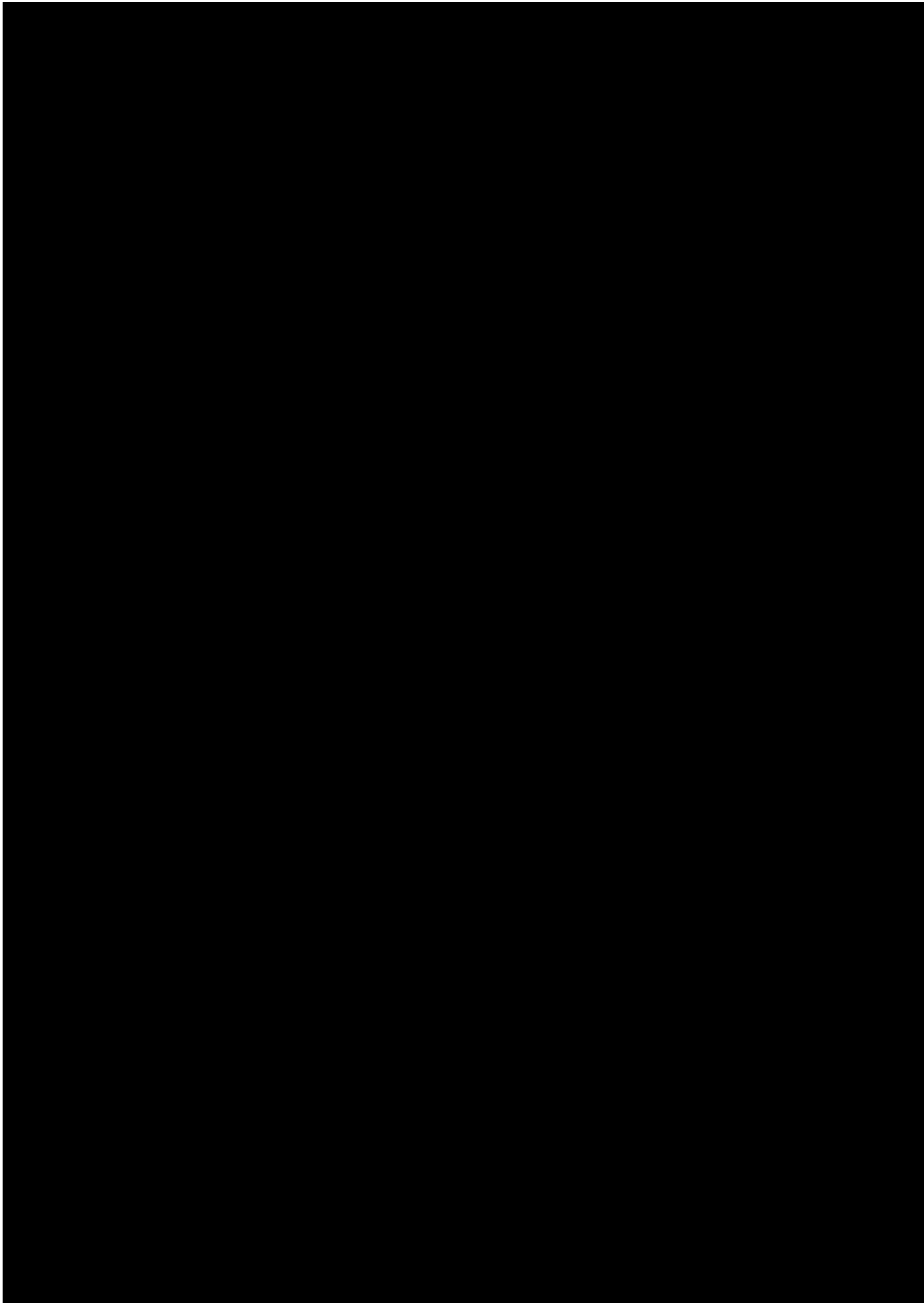
The timing of this call is very helpful because it will facilitate the plans we already have to improve considerably the support we provide for our academic colleagues, students and other central departments within the University. We are undergoing a period of institutional transformation and the role of CICT is key to the realisation of our new institutional vision.

We are all aware that some of our processes and business systems are fragmented and have inefficiencies which require unnecessary duplication of effort. The needs of the RLE project have been a prime consideration in our business and systems review. We are working very closely with our colleagues in faculties and central departments to address these challenges and to ensure that we exploit developments elsewhere in the higher education community in their solution. However, we want to do more than this: our intention is to support institutional transformation by ensuring that our systems support academics and administrators to work in new ways. I am confident that CICT will play a full part in the well constructed technical aims of this project, for example, the incorporation of Mahara and the disaggregation of module designer.

We believe that this is how CICT can make a very significant contribution to the student learning experience and the transformation of the curriculum. Thus the synergy between the aims of the T-SPARC project and our vision to support development by exploiting the synergies in data is both uncanny and very timely.

Trevor Potten  
Director  
CICT

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