

### Interim Reporting Template

<b>Project Name</b>	Learners' Experiences of Blended Learning in Practice-Based Contexts: The Open University
<b>Report compiled by</b>	Mary Thorpe
<b>With contributions from</b>	Rob Edmunds; Gráinne Conole
<b>Reporting period</b>	15 April 2008, (delete as appropriate)
<b>Section One: Summary</b>	
<p>The project researcher (Rob Edmunds) started in June 2007 half time until October 07 from which point he has been full time on this project. Negotiations with each of seven course teams have been underway since March 07 and at each stage thereafter – recruitment of volunteers and consultation around interview schedules. A survey instrument has been developed that seeks to identify whether there are influential factors to do with use and attitudes towards ICT, comparing and contrasting across the three contexts of study, work and social life. Email followed by interview contact with students from six of the seven courses is well underway and the seventh is on track. Early reports for two course teams have been produced and once others are available, these will be discussed at a Project Advisory Group meeting. Videos of face to face workshops have also been taken, for the benefit of the course teams and for use in disseminating the project. A conference paper has been accepted as part of a JISC-led symposium at the Networked Learning Conference in Halkidiki in May 08.</p>	

## **Section Two: Activities and Progress**

### **Survey of attitudes and practices around ICT usage**

In-depth discussion of the purpose of this survey, in particular as a result of a workshop held with our CETL representatives, led to a change from the original idea of a survey of a random sample of students on the selected courses at the start of their studies, to one which reflected their use at around mid-course. This enables students to reflect experience on the course being researched rather than at a point before they have had the chance to be affected by it. Many drafts were produced in order to explore the three contexts of work, study and social life, so that comparisons and contrasts might be made across the three. It was also difficult to list all the technologies that students might use, in order to capture a snapshot of usage – and we have doubts about the value of doing so, although the survey does ask for these data. A link to the current form of the survey questionnaire is here:

<http://kn.open.ac.uk/workspace.cfm?wpid=8482>

The survey is designed to capture attitudes and perceptions about technology in three contexts – study, work and social. It is based on existing theoretical frameworks relating to use, usefulness and affective issues. Our aim is to explore differences between these contexts and any implications one might have for another. We have also included questions at the request of the S&S team, on study times, duration, location, employment and tool usage. We drew on the literature as well as other surveys to generate the questionnaire, as outlined in the T228 analysis (see link below)

<http://kn.open.ac.uk/public/getfile.cfm?documentfileid=13220>

### **Survey of T228 and M883**

Both courses started in November 2007 and a sample of students was surveyed in January 2008. The response rates were not high – c20% for T228 for example. 52 respondents results were analysed and presented at the JISC Edinburgh workshop in February 2008. These (T228) students showed high ratings of technology for relevance to both work and study contexts, increasing performance and generally as a tool for learning and for work. Lower ratings were given in relation to flexibility, enjoyment, control and personalisation as aspects of technology use.

LINK: T228 report on the survey

<http://kn.open.ac.uk/public/getfile.cfm?documentfileid=13230>

### **Recruitment of volunteers on selected courses**

Negotiation individually with each course team has been undertaken for all except one of the 7 courses – B857 does not start till May 08 – and volunteers are in place – 5 on five courses and 4 on the sixth. This is bigger than the plan in order to ensure we draw in as wide a range of experience as possible.

### **Video of activities at workshops for T228 and T885**

This was undertaken in February and March and is an addition to the plan, capturing face to face activity and the design of this element in the blend.

### **Interview schedules and second stage interviews**

Interview schedules have a common framework but detailed questions on the ICT usage of each course, negotiated with each course team. This is a change from the plan, which was based on collecting data from students via email largely. We have not found email responses sufficiently rich and will interview at mid and end point of course instead. This change has also required transcribing and we have now recruited secretarial support here to enable this to be completed by degrees.

First stage interviews have been completed for T228, M883, B201, K113 and K216. These will be analysed with the second stage interviews – in April/May for the K courses, and May for T885 and B201.

Second stage interviews have been completed for T228 (5), T885 (4) and M883(3). T228 and M883 are being analysed now together with the survey data for each course, so that first draft case studies can be produced by mid-April. Case studies for T885, B201, K113 and K216 will be produced in May/June.

### **Project Advisory Group**

The Pro Vice Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) has agreed to be a member of the Advisory Group and first stage dissemination of project findings is planned for a meeting in late May/early June.

### **Other Changes to the Project Plan**

As outlined above, we have increased the number of students we have taken on as volunteer respondents on the project. The original total was 3/ 4 on each of six courses. We now have 7 courses with six courses having recruited a total of 29 students who are actively involved. The seventh course starts in May and will probably add a further 5 students to the total.

We have also shifted to interviews as a richer source of data than emails proved to be. This is more time consuming at the transcription stage and possibly also in terms of analysis but we can select the richer cases for detailed analysis if necessary. We have also taken on video of some face to face activities, and plan to invite a small number of students in to our Lab in IET for one to one interview and video. Two other elements in the original plan have changed. We will not be able to capture opportunistic data given the workload in completing existing commitments. We have also not kept an issues log but the issues are documented in the form of the interview data and we plan to capture these in terms of final reports (see dissemination section below).

### **Section Three: Outputs, Outcomes and Deliverables**

The original plan did not specify as many deliverables as we are now planning to create.

Deliverables:

- Course case studies: x7 case studies, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data
- Overall survey report across all courses
- Overview of the research issues – presenting overview data against the issues identified for the research
- Practice and Policy report – considerations for the Pro Vice Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) arising from all aspects of the study
- Interim reports as necessary for the Project Advisory Group
- Research papers for conferences and publication

Key findings thus far relate to the key themes:

Choices – a skills focused course (T228) shows little choice and personalisation by students whereas issues-based courses may show more individual routes by students

Critical moments – not yet showing through but this probably reflects the highly IT proficient students on the 2 courses almost completed – T228 and M883

Institutional policies – course teams have not identified – to our surprise – major issues of institutional policy as barriers. This may change as we explore that with the Advisory Group

Institutional systems – no big issues are coming through under this heading

Skilled e-communicators – Students on T228 and M883 are highly ICT skilled and some are giving details about study practice that we can highlight and bring out

Personalising tools and environments – to our surprise the skilled ICT proficient students show little interest in this

Learning outcomes – Evidence of ICT usage being used very effectively to support LO achievement but also examples where the strategy does not – e.g. the timing of workshops on T228 and the policy on booking time on Netlab. Specifics like these impact on even able students such as are responding to this research.

We are finding also that work experience creates a motivational and expertise framing for student responses and this is something we intend to continue to explore.

### **Section Four: Dissemination**

## Learners Experiences of e-Learning Programme

### CETL workshop October 16<sup>th</sup> 2007

Staff from the Birmingham CETL (CEIMH), SCEPTRE at Surrey, CLIP and Sheffield and members of the PBPL CETL at the OU contributed to a day reviewing project issues and tools. Discussion of the survey questionnaire draft proved extremely useful in moving to the revisions. Members have received the revised draft and a follow up event is planned for the end of the project

<http://kn.open.ac.uk/document.cfm?docid=11154> (link to the powerpoint presentation for the event)

Dissemination Outputs we expect to produce:

Case studies	One per course, intended for internal OU audience that relates strongly to a course framework
Survey report	Project Advisory Group plus JISC: detailed account of survey findings across all courses
Project report	Any reader: Overview of the outcomes of the project as research, downloadable from the wiki and IET Knowledge Network for anybody accessing our work via those routes
Issues reports	ICT/policy and practice reader: There is a need to report on issues to do with tool usage, design and blended learning generally, that arise from across the project e.g. the need to combine print with online; strategies in using particular tools, such as wikis etc We think it likely that two shorter reports will be the best way to communicate such issues and bring them to attention. One report will be drafted for an internal audience so as to include institution-specific details; the other will be accessible to any reader of JISC work.
Student vignettes	OU audience – and wider once agreement with student is documented A small number of our participants have particularly interesting ideas and experiences. We think these deserve highlighting certainly for the course team but for others from the same faculty. These may include students who have agreed to come to the User Lab in IET for interview and video of their responses so some multimedia clips can be added
Video data	Videos of face to face workshops have been made for Technology course teams. They will use the footage directly, and we hope to include short clips in presentations
Conference papers	One produced for Networked Learning Conference in Greece, May 08. Others to come
ELESIG	Attended the launch of the ELESIG special interest group and all three team members have joined the associated social networking site.

### Section Five: Evaluation

Provide brief details of progress in terms of the development and implementation of the project evaluation plan.

Outline any emerging evaluation issues of interest.

Our project is not evaluating itself – we are indirectly evaluating the 7 OU courses we have selected but otherwise nothing to report for this section.

### Section Six: Issues and Challenges

The main impact arises from a shift of data collection strategy to interviews rather than email. We are convinced this is the only way to get findings that will tell us anything of value, but it may be necessary to focus on a smaller number of respondents who obviously have much to tell. The knock on effect is also making it difficult to see how we can use nVivo until later in the project when we have collected data that can only be collected over the next 5/6 months. We will be analysing both qualitative and quantitative data before then in order to feed back to course teams, complete reports and ensure we do explore important issues at each interview point. We would like to discuss the relationship between the findings on our project and the more cohort oriented approach of the other projects – or some of them.

### Section Seven: Support

## Learners Experiences of e-Learning Programme

The support workshops have been extremely effective and have built good contact and relationships across the projects. I have been in touch briefly with Rob Howe at Northampton and it may be that we can liaise more on the issue of ICT on practice-based courses in future. The only barrier against more contacts across the project is time. We would also like to find time to do a report with Edinburgh – and Oxford? – on the surveys they have carried out. A programme level overview could be useful.

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