

Project Acronym: HELLO
 Version: 1
 Contact: Lucy Stone, lstone@lec.ac.uk
 Date: 12 August 2009



Project Document Cover Sheet

Project Information			
Project Acronym	HELLO		
Project Title	Higher Education Lifelong Learning Opportunities		
Start Date	1 st April 2008	End Date	30 th September 2010
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Partner Institutions	Single institution project		
Project Web URL	http://hello.lec.ac.uk		
Programme Name (and number)	11/08: Institutional innovation in lifelong learning and workforce development		
Programme Manager	Ruth Drysdale		

Document Name			
Document Title	Baseline Report		
Reporting Period	June 2009		
Author(s) & project role	Lucy Stone – Project Manager		
Date	12 August 2009	Filename	Baseline Report
URL	http://hello.lec.ac.uk		
Access	✓ Project and JISC internal	✓ General dissemination	

Project Acronym: HELLO
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Document History		
Version	Date	Comments
1	26 th June 2009	Document created by Lucy Stone



JISC Baseline Report – The HELLO Project

1. Introduction

The baseline report investigates internal, organisational issues that have influenced the need for the HELLO social network and the design of Moodle content to support HE learners within the College. Detailed information supporting the concept of the HELLO Project is outlined in this Baseline Report.

A review of other, recent JISC projects in the HE in FE strand will be documented as well as how the HELLO Project fits in with issues in the wider sector.

2. Institutional issues

2.1 E- Strategy 2009 to 2012

This strategy focuses more on the *application* of technology to enable effective teaching, learning and administration.

It has been identified within the organisation that much of e-learning activity is outstanding (both volume and quality). However, there are still pockets of curriculum resistance that still exist and it is believed that the current e-strategy will address this resistance. The strategy has two objectives to overcome this:

1. *Negotiation of SMART targets within programme areas*
2. *Creation and adoption of key e-learning competencies framework.*

Course teams participating in the HELLO Project will have agreed targets set for the sustainability of their on-line courses post project in September 2010.

Areas for development, previously identified in the 2008 strategy have been achieved, relevant to the HELLO Project are:

- *Continue to lead regional and national developments in the application of the Moodle e-learning system.*

The WOLF project delivered on time and to budget. A further £150K worth of JISC funding has been secured for the HELLO Project (Higher Education Lifelong Learning Opportunities). This project will explore the

Project Acronym: HELLO
Version: 1
Contact: Lucy Stone, lstone@lec.ac.uk
Date: 12 August 2009

appropriateness and value of Web 2.0 social networking in an educational context.

However, areas for development that have not been achieved are:

- *Provide generic and bespoke e-learning training opportunities for teachers*

Pockets of e-learning inactivity still exist. Many teachers appear to view the creation and uploading of Moodle content as a clerical task.

Chapman, P. (2009) *E-Strategy 2009 to 2012*, Leicester College, Leicester

Bespoke training to staff involved in the HELLO Project will be provided. This includes teams of staff from across 8 different curriculum areas.

2.2 Reduction in pure student social space

Prior to the Accommodation Project there was a total of 414.47 sqm of pure student social spaces across four College campuses. As part of receiving the LSC grant for the Accommodation Project, Leicester College had to downsize by 19% and closed 1 main campus.

Students now have a pure social space of 268.51 sqm, a reduction of 65% across 3 campuses. The pure social space includes Student Union Offices and seating in atriums and outside areas.

At the new campus the new library is 530.70 sqm compared to 650 sqm an 18% reduction. However, there is now the equivalent of two campuses of students using these facilities owing to the closure of 1 campus. Access "drop in" computers in the libraries are:

- Freeman's Park Campus = 69 PCs *26% of all student usage*
- St Margaret's Campus = 50 PCs including 3 Apple Macs *18% of student usage*
- Abbey Park Campus = 50 PCs *56% of all student usage* (prior to the Accommodation Project it was 71 machines between the two campuses).

The HELLO Project addresses the issues of reduced social space, offering all student participating on HE courses at Leicester College access to a virtual common room on an HE Common Room site where they have the tools to collaborate and communicate with peers and tutors.

2.3 The building of an HE Community

In 2007 to 2008 Leicester College had 644 students participating in higher education courses, across 24 different programmes, validated or franchised by 5

Project Acronym: HELLO
Version: 1
Contact: Lucy Stone, lstone@lec.ac.uk
Date: 12 August 2009

separate institutions. Recruitment to HE programmes had increased by 8%, however 15% of students withdrew before completing the last year of their programme.

Each programme area has HE student representatives who participate in regular meetings with the HE team and HE Coordinator. Entries from minutes from the meetings show:

- *It was suggested that a common room be made available for HE students. A suggestion was made by FD Artistic Make-up that a contact group could be set which would enable programmes to link up and share resources/ideas.*
- *There is no provision for students when having breaks as they are not able to eat in corridors or classrooms. There is also no where to work if not in lessons.*

The suggestion made regarding a common room for HE students was discussed. It was agreed that the idea of a social space for the HE students would be beneficial in order to allow students to network and have an area where they are able to work between lessons. The main reason this has not been addressed is due to the lack of space across the College to accommodate such a room and the fact that students are distributed across the three campuses.

The Social Networking group was successful. The group are hoping to put together a year book to showcase the students' favourite images from the programme. They would require the assistance of the College printing services if this is cost effective.

- *Students are not able to access wireless networks.*
- *Issues around access to computers at APC. It was suggested that students could use their own laptops and they could be linked to the network.*
- *More information should be available to new students regarding their future career progression. Also more information regarding opportunities to top-up to the Early Childhood Studies Degree. Will this be available at DMU in the future?*
- *Some students are still unsure how to access Moodle.*

HE Student Forum, *Minutes from 12th November 2008*, Leicester College, Leicester

HE Student Forum, *Minutes from 25th March 2009*, Leicester College, Leicester

The HELLO Project will address a number of issues raised by the HE Student Representatives:

- Building a virtual common room/social space

Project Acronym: HELLO
Version: 1
Contact: Lucy Stone, lstone@lec.ac.uk
Date: 12 August 2009

- Moodle inductions at the beginning of the year
- Links through the HELLO network with other HEIs with respect to progression routes and advice, top up degrees, and links with peers

2.4 The HE Strategy 2009-2012

The Leicester College HE Strategy states in its introduction that its purpose is to *“provide a high quality learning experience for students that meets the standards of the HE Academic Infrastructure”*.

The HELLO Project addresses a number of points within the strategy. In particular meeting the needs of the individual learners:

“A fundamental aim is to provide teaching and learning of outstanding quality which will enable students to achieve their potential.”

“Secondly, we will build on the current strengths of our provision – supportive tutoring and feedback, high levels of class contact – through innovative projects in teaching and learning. For example, we will continue to develop the level of e-learning support within our programmes; the JISC-funded “HELLO” project will engage a wider group of programmes in this work, building on the work started in collaboration with the University of Leicester.”

“Finally, we will pay attention to the development of learning resources within the College to ensure they keep pace with the changing demands. In particular, we will need to ensure that there are appropriate learning resources available, both within the College and available on-line, to support independent learning.”

Fisk, M (2009) *HE Strategy 2009-2010*, Leicester College, Leicester

The HELLO Project will address some of the key points in the HE Strategy, using Moodle and online learning to enable students to work independently. 60% of the College’s HE provision is part-time students. By engaging in the HELLO project these students will be able to access a similar level of support from peers and tutors as full-time students.

2.5 Good practice and use of Moodle

The College recently went through a Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) “Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review “(IQR). This is a process being called out in all FE Colleges involved in HE teaching. Although, at the time of writing this report the full IQR Report is not available. However, we are able to see comments relating to good practice and the use of Moodle in their post review letter:

“Core theme 2: the quality of learning opportunities

In the course of the Developmental engagement, the team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination across the College:

- *Innovative practice in providing feedback through electronic marking systems on the FD Educational Studies for Teaching Assistants enhances the timeliness of feedback”*

The team also agreed the following areas where it would be desirable for the College to take action:

- *To continue to develop the virtual learning environment to enable students to access more readily information on assessment.*

Hill, S (May 2009), *Integrated quality and enhancement review – Developmental engagement in assessment at Leicester College, QAA*

The first key element of the HELLO Project is to replicate the features identified during the IQER process as “*innovative practice*” across at least 40% of the HE Provision, meeting the desirable action to be taken.

3. Wider issues

3.1 Other JISC funded projects

One of the two key elements of the HELLO Project is to take lesson learnt, and some outputs of the WoLF Project and implement these to a wider audience at Leicester College – impacting on approximately 250 learners and 8 or 9 course teams. The WoLF Project was part of the HE in FE Strand which comprised of 9 projects. Of the 9 projects, 3 were about technology-enhanced learning environments.

Of these three only one produced research reports on social networking software and its use in an educational context (Glamorgan).

“Where the use of social networking software was successfully integrated into the learning process it was seen to be of great value – especially for group working for part-time and distance learning students. Facebook was favoured as a collaboration tool. (Glamorgan)”

Project Acronym: HELLO
Version: 1
Contact: Lucy Stone, lstone@lec.ac.uk
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“Social networking requires a group dynamic to be successful – which arises from two key motivators – clear benefits to the learning process and the creation of a social aspect to the networking (Glamorgan)”

“Usage of social software with adult learners is not widespread enough to use consistently for learner support, but is likely to be important in the future. It is indicated that social networking might provide the solution to social isolation (Glamorgan)”

These findings will help us in planning student and staff inductions and show that to engage all stakeholders we need to outline the clear benefits. The Glamorgan findings also reassure us of our original bid and Project Plan, to separate the curriculum side of the e-learning experience to the Moodle platform and to use that for supporting learners through their learning journey rather than relying on the “social” platform for this function.

It is from the “lessons learnt” from a project at Hull that their findings also relate to HELLO:

“It is a mistake to assume that although students may be using social software they know how to transfer those skills to educational use. Need to establish expectations of its use as a semi-professional network. Does the term mislead? (Hull)”

“Can’t just leave students to use it – a ‘take it or leave it’ approach meant not surprisingly some students left it! Integration into course requirements is the only effective approach (Hull)”

These issues highlight the need for a thorough induction for both students and staff with the implementation of both the Moodle and HELLO Social Networking platforms. It is also key to have staff “on board” who can begin to see the advantages of embedding a TEL within their day to day course management and curriculum design.

There were key themes emerging from all 9 projects that were relevant to all. These issues will be addressed in the Work packages of the HELLO Project and are:

- *Staff buy-in: tutor attitude was key to students acceptance, support and commitment from staff is vital to success (Hull, Gateshead and Kingston)*
 - *However FE ‘contact time’ needs to factor in online support as well as face-to-face (Leicester)*
- *Staff development: initial training should go beyond simply showing how to use the technology – both is required (Hull, Gateshead and Kingston), and support for tutors is a major consideration to enable embedding (Derby, Glamorgan, Sheffield)*

- *Learners aren't necessarily all technically competent, despite expectations (Hull, Derby, Glamorgan, Sheffield)*
- *Engage staff and students by delivering a thorough induction into the technology from the start (Leicester)*
- *Pedagogy underpinning learning design and delivery is important to successful use - as is full embedding (Leicester, Sheffield, Bradford)*
- *Early profiling of learners is important for the provision of personalised support (Leicester)*
- *Learning 'anywhere at anytime' should go hand in hand with 'support anytime in any location' – and it's important to integrate formal and informal support mechanisms (Leicester)*
- *Timing is key. Staff need time before integration into the course, and time to practice is essential (Gateshead, Sheffield)*
- *Need to align external assessment and validation frameworks with the emerging technology (Bradford)*
- *Development of Industrial Support Groups, which facilitate interaction between employers, industry, students, and academic staff can enhance employer engagement (Bradford)*

Gray, L (June 2009) *HE in FE Programme Report*, JISC, Bristol

3.2.3 HEFCE Strategic Plan 2006 to 2011 (updated June 2009)

Employer engagement and skills

Point 12. HEFCE identifies *“Engagement with employers will come through continuing to develop two-year foundation degrees as well as other forms of flexible, relevant and accessible provision that addresses the demand for skills. Further Education Colleges (FECs) have a key role to play in this, not only as providers of HE in their own right, but also because they bring particular strengths in meeting local and regional skills needs.”*

Progression for vocational learners and lifelong learning opportunities

Point 97. HEFCE recognises that *“progression is not just one way: people with HE qualifications increasingly progress to further education courses to acquire specific skills. They will work to strengthen HE in FECs, both to improve local access to HE and to provide opportunities for higher-level learning throughout life. They will encourage close working relationships between HEIs and FECs to help expand opportunities in both HE and further education.”*

Point 98. Within the strategy HEFCE identifies the need for *“Lifelong Learning Networks bringing FECs and HEIs together are a key driver for*

improving progression opportunities, aiming to put learners on vocational programmes on the same footing as learners following more traditional academic pathways.”

Point 99. HEFCE are committed to *“providing more opportunities for HE throughout people’s lives. They will continue to support work with a broader age range and different ways of studying such as part-time and distance learning.”*

Collaboration

Point 146. HEFCE *“anticipate that the partnership between the higher and further educational sectors will be important in the context of new further education knowledge transfer pathfinders which were recommended in Lord Sainsbury’s review”*. HEFCE realise *“these links will be particularly important in the economic downturn when communities and businesses need the complementary and co-ordinated approaches of HE and further education.”*

Innovation and new technologies

Point 73. HEFCE believe that they *“should support the sector in innovating in all aspects of learning and teaching to ensure HE continues to meet the changing needs of learners...”*

Point 74. HEFCE identifies that *“HE has engaged with the rapid development in the use of information technology”* and that the use of the internet and new technologies has an impact on the use of technology in HE.

Point 75. HEFCE sees it as their *“goal to help universities and colleges to use new technology to enhance learning and teaching as effectively as they can”*. They will continue to *“encourage innovation in institutions”*.

E-Learning is a measure of success for Key performance target 4 of *“Enhancing excellence in learning and teaching”*.

KPT4: To increase innovative, flexible approaches to the delivery of HE across the planning period.

Increases in support for innovative, flexible delivery of HE, including flexible learning pathfinder projects (such as compressed honours programmes), Lifelong Learning Networks and e-learning by 2009-10.

The updated, HEFCE Strategy clearly identifies key issues that can, in some way, be associated with the HELLO Project:

- The need to engage employers to ensure the skills learnt are meeting their needs
- The importance of links with other HEIs to inform and aid the route of progression
- The broader range of learners with varying needs

Project Acronym: HELLO
Version: 1
Contact: Lucy Stone, lstone@lec.ac.uk
Date: 12 August 2009

- Opportunities to learn part-time and distance learning
- The need to support institutions with innovative practice in e-learning

Higher Education Funding Council for England, (June 2009), *Strategy 2006-2011 (updated June 2009)*, Accessed 30th June 2009,
http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2009/09_21/09_21.pdf

Conclusion

The baseline report reviews current processes and practices at Leicester College, in particular how the HELLO Project is relevant to both the E-Learning and HE Strategies. Synthesis of relevant, completed JISC Projects in the HE in FE Strand has taken place including key findings and lessons learnt. These factors will be taken into consideration during the implementation of the HELLO Project.

A great deal of information is available about what is happening in the wider sector. However, to be concise it was decided to focus on how the HELLO Project is relevant to the recently updated HEFCE Strategy.