


Cover Sheet for Proposals <i>(All sections must be completed)</i>			
Name of Initiative:		Institutional innovation projects in lifelong learning and workforce development	
Name of Lead Institution:		Buckinghamshire New University	
Name of Proposed Project:		Mentor Support	
Name(s) of Project Partner(s):			
Full Contact Details for Primary Contact:			
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Length of Project:		Two years	
Project Start Date:		Project End Date:	
March 2009		March 2011	
Total Funding Requested from JISC: £100,000			
Funding Broken Down over Financial Years (April-March):			
Mar 09	Apr 09 – Mar 10	Apr 10 – Mar 11	
£4,167	£50,000	£45,833	
Total Institutional Contributions: £107,047			

Outline Project Description

Our proposal for JISC funding is to investigate, develop and implement processes and tools to help us be smarter in support of work based learning, particularly through mentors, with a key objective being to produce an appropriate model for the Management of Change to support mentors, in order to improve the experience of work-based learning students.

The mentor is key to effective Work Based Learning. We have used mentors in the workplace to support students for many years, particularly on our health-related courses. The guidance and support provided to these mentors is well-documented in the course validation documents and has been used as an example of good practice for mentors now supporting students on foundation degrees in the workplace.

The nature of the support we provide to all students, especially those in the workplace, has changed since the introduction of various e-learning methods. In our Higher Education Academy Pathfinder Project last year we investigated the issues concerning general, technical, academic and personal support for students, mentors and lecturers to enable students to gain most benefit from the experience of work based learning. An outcome from this project was a change to the way in which the centre supports the faculties, ie a central support person being embedded in each faculty for a proportion of their time to give more direct support. This work is still ongoing.

We have recently embarked on a major IT Transformation Project with our partners HP and Cisco. Much of this work is invisible to faculties, but part of it is explicitly supporting the work of the faculties. Both Society & Health and Enterprise & Innovation have projects directly related to e-learning, utilising Cisco Webex, Unified Communications and Tandberg video conferencing. The project for Creativity & Culture is indirectly related to e-learning: in the first instance the Digital Media Publishing Hub will be for students producing digital media as part of their course, but phase two of this project will facilitate the use of various media in support of e-learning.

These new facilities for e-learning, used to support work based learning, have provided us with an extended challenge for support. These facilities require us to be smarter with our support model, as increasing support staff numbers is not an option.

I have looked at the example FOI form at Appendix B and included an FOI form in the attached bid (Tick Box)	YES √	NO
I have read the Circular and associated Terms and Conditions of Grant at Appendix D (Tick Box)	YES √	NO

2 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
nil		

3 Fit to Programme Objectives and Overall Value to the JISC Community

- 3.1 This project relates to the learning and teaching practice aspect of the JISC vision for lifelong learning and workforce development. It is particularly concerned with improving the ability of mentors to engage fully in supporting and following the progress of work-based learners, as indicated within paragraphs 16 and 17 of the bid.
- 3.2 This project will deliver re-usable use case models of processes and tools to help support mentors in their support for work-based learners. Several previous projects, such as the Staffordshire University SURF WBL-Way, have provided various tools to provide access for all stakeholders to appropriate information, resources, services and communities that they need wherever they are. We looked at these when we undertook our HEA Pathfinder Project (see below) and we believe that both the Pathfinder Project and this proposed project are innovative in that they do not solely provide the tools and services: they attempt to 'cut through the mist' by developing processes that need to be used in connection with the technology in order to replicate the tender, loving care that this University is proud of providing to its on-campus students.
- 3.3 This project builds on the work undertaken here as part of the Higher Education Academy Pathfinder Project in 2007-08. That project identified arrangements to support academic staff more effectively in their work with work-based students, but it did not reach far enough into supporting mentors. The University has identified that effective mentors are vital to the success of students on such programmes and we have initiated a secondment to associate dean for a member of staff in the Faculty of Society & Health, in order that mentoring arrangements across the University can be improved. We aim to provide technology-enabled support to these mentors and to share this experience with colleagues in other universities. The associate dean will work closely on the project in the management of the change to the use of digital, rather than paper-based, support to the mentors.
- 3.4 We currently use several mechanisms, such as e-portfolios, for students to record and reflect on their personal and professional development achievements on an ongoing basis and share these with everybody contributing to the learning process, including mentors. The Bucks e-Learning Forum (a forum of Information Services Management Committee) has a working group that is reviewing e-portfolios. The work being undertaken to review mentor support by the Associate Dean of the Faculty of Society & Health (see below) will examine the relative usefulness of these and work with mentors to assess the most useful for them.
- 3.5 The mentor is a key stakeholder in work-based learning. The Communication Plan, developed as part of the Management of Change model, will include details of the appropriate communications with mentors across the University to identify the core tools and processes to be recommended as best practice for the University. Of paramount importance will be the Use cases detailing the necessary interventions with all mentors to ensure the most effective support for work-based learning students can be provided to them. This will include location-independent information provision and staff development.
- 3.6 Another analogy is also useful to describe what we are proposing: the problems connected with the opening of Heathrow Terminal 5 were not caused by the technology that had been implemented, but because appropriate processes had not been designed around them, and further the staff had not been trained in these (non-existent) processes. There is much history regarding what makes successful implementation of business information systems: good management of change regarding the adoption of new, rigorous processes. Projects regarding technology-enabled learning tend not to do this so are less effective. This project will explicitly follow good practice in the management of change.

- 3.7 We have recently embarked on a major IT Transformation Project with our partners HP and Cisco. Much of this work is invisible to faculties, but part of it is explicitly supporting the work of the faculties. Both Society & Health and Enterprise & Innovation have projects directly related to e-learning, utilising Cisco Webex, Unified Communications and Tandberg video conferencing. The project for Creativity & Culture is indirectly related to e-learning: in the first instance the Digital Media Publishing Hub will be for students producing digital media as part of their course, but phase two of this project will facilitate the use of various media in support of e-learning. We are benefitting from commercial Management of Change that we will also use to inform our model for Management of Change for mentor support.
- 3.8 The University is also working on an HEA Change Academy project to improve student employability. Our partnership with HP and Cisco is a cornerstone of this project too, with curriculum development informed by reality, for example using the experience of the Cisco security team to develop our security courses. Our account manager from Cisco is also one of our graduates and she is pleased to see how she can help transform her old institution. This project will also contribute to our knowledge of good practice in Management of Change.
- 3.9 There are two major outcomes from this project that will be of particular value to the sector:
- 3.9.1 The Use Case models developed during this project to support mentors will be generic, but applied to a specific set of technology-enhanced solutions for our use. These models will be able to be taken and applied in alternative technical environments, thus contributing to the continuing development of a technical infrastructure for lifelong learning and workforce development.
- 3.9.2 This will also provide enhanced understanding of how the use of technology in the process supporting lifelong learning and workforce development can lead to tangible benefits to enhance the experience of students and staff (academic and mentor).
- 3.10 This institution is founded on providing courses and support for industry and business. This was initially the local furniture making business, with companies such as Ercol, but we have since diversified into the security, sport-related, travel and health industries. We now have a very large portfolio of courses that are industry-specific, including Dreams' bespoke management degree, BMW quality assurance, the Oxford Aviation Academy, the Golf Club Managers' Association, RockSteady (crowd safety management and MediaTel. We have many years of experience in supporting mentors in health-related courses, primarily by paper-based guides and portfolios. This experience will be built on to develop a range of on-line and face to face mechanisms to support these mentors, and an increasing number of mentors on other courses delivered by work-based learning across the University.
- 3.11 The University has been awarded funding from Progress South Central – the local Lifelong Learning Network (LLN) to support a small scale project to evaluate the needs of mentors within the Faculty of Society & Health who are supporting students undertaking work based Foundation Degrees. The aim of the project is to evaluate mentors' needs and to offer and evaluate the effectiveness of a formal programme of support. The ultimate aim of the project is to contribute to the design of a comprehensive package of support for the mentor which will indicate to the employer what the employee will receive from the university whilst acting as a mentor. This LLN project has identified the current position: the proposed JISC project will take this forward into a more technology-enabled world.
- 3.12 The Portfolio Leader for mentorship programmes in Society & Health has been granted funding for an internal Learning Enhancement Project to produce a blended

learning version of the mentorship course for professional practitioners such as nurses and social workers. This programme, "Mentorship in Professional Practice" is a short programme requiring eight days attendance at the University (including induction). Currently more than 400 mentors per year are prepared through undertaking this 8 day programme. A blended learning version is intended to convert four of these days to an E based learning programme. A new teaching and learning strategy integrating E based learning with University attendance will be submitted for approval in the coming months in time for the 2009/10 academic year.

- 3.13 Supporting mentors in the Faculty of Society & Health alone is a huge endeavour, with approximately six hundred pre-registration nursing students being actively supported by mentors on placement at any one time in the academic year. Mentors are usually less familiar with technology than faculty staff. Enabling them to deliver the minimum is taxing, but we expect enhancement too.
- 3.14 As mentioned above, this project also complements work begun in 2007-08 in our Higher Education Academy Pathfinder Project. The Pathfinder Project examined issues concerning the provision of general and technical support provided by Learning and Information Services to lecturers and students, and the academic and personal support provided by lecturers to students, primarily on courses with work-based learning or placements as a core part. This project had a very broad remit, and therefore its deliverables were also broad: these included changes to working arrangements for support staff, guidelines on the support issues expected to be covered during course validation and review, and use of particular mechanisms such as blogging between lecturers and students.
- 3.15 The Faculty of Society & Health is also preparing for the relocation of the majority of their nursing education programmes and with the move they will take the opportunity to transform some of the nursing provision into location-independent learning. This includes the use of Webex, partly live and partly recorded so that it can be used at a time and place convenient to students. Recorded Webex sessions will replace the current lectures for two hundred students all together in a large lecture theatre. The support for the students learning in this way will require a change in the way in which their mentors on their practice placements are prepared, enabling the mentors to become more familiar with the use of information technology to support learning.
- 3.16 We have a great deal of experience in running professional teaching and quality enhancement programmes for e-Learning and blended-learning, at all levels including postgraduate. In particular, we have an established Flexible and Distributed Learning Centre which has provided the experience to successfully develop and deliver an extensive range of technology-enhanced learning initiatives. These include short and long professional development workshops in specific areas of technology-enhanced learning, internal and external consultancy, as well as a MSc. Programme. Through the Flexible and Distributed Learning Centre, the University has established a strong engagement with external colleagues in the field. The centre acts as a portal for the dissemination of good practice with the wider community.
- 3.17 The Flexible and Distributed Learning Centre is staffed by experienced colleagues who have extensive technical and educational experience of e-learning and blended-learning, including international publications in the field. This has provided the institution with an opportunity to embed good practice in flexible and distributed learning across all of the faculties. The Flexible and Distributed Learning Centre also works in close co-operation with the university's Learning Development Unit that operates across the university to provide specific skills support for students to ensure that those students undertaking any form of e-learning, blended-learning or distance learning programme are able to access the require resources necessary to fully support their delivery mode. Support for the development/teaching team is provided through staff workshops from the Flexible and Distributed Learning Centre and Learning and Information Services staff

along with a 'consultancy' period pre and post course delivery for the host school and team.

- 3.18 We also have a well established VLE (Blackboard) and a formal policy for its use within all programmes. We are also active participants within the UK Universities' Blackboard User Group. The range of other learning technologies in use includes blogs, wikis, pod/vodcasts, social networks and development of a University presence within a virtual world (Second Life).
- 3.19 As mentioned above, Buckinghamshire New University has a partnership with two leading international technology companies (HP and Cisco) to work together to transform the University in its provision of learning technologies to enhance the student experience. One of the current realisations of this partnership is the prevalent use of WebEx as the principal architecture for integrated communications, both internally and externally, allowing for synchronous and asynchronous teaching and tutorial sessions to take place online. This business partnership has a primary aim of establishing a good practice 'teaching communication model' using Web 2.0 technologies for dissemination to the wider higher education community.
- 3.20 The University draws on a range of development models for the provision of flexible and distributed learning programmes. We have experience of developing and delivering programmes underpinned by sound educational models. These models have been used to underpin the successful delivery of our courses, work-based and distance learning programmes with international students, in countries such as Sri Lanka and Russia, and to also support students working within the UK along with such diverse locations as Afghanistan and Iraq. The University has received excellent feedback for the support of its teaching staff and student mentors through technology-enhanced Learning supported programmes again this good practice has been disseminated to the wider educational and business communities.
- 3.21 The aforementioned pieces of work are in line with the following objectives of University Strategic Plan 2006-11 (http://bucks.ac.uk/pdf/Bucks_Strategic_Plan_08.pdf) and the related strategies for Teaching, Learning and Assessment and Information:
- 3.21.1 To expand, where appropriate, the delivery methods for our programmes (including work-based and e-learning) and patterns of attendance for our students to be more responsive to student and employer needs, particularly for part-time provision;
- 3.21.2 To maintain excellent working relationships with employers and sponsors.

4 Workplan

4.1 Project Plan

Key permanent staff (H Fletcher, E Chamberlain, C Oldman, B Schaaf, R Jones and J Luker) will be providing a total of 1 FTE on the project as important stakeholders, supplemented by additional staffing: one research assistant full-time for one year to undertake the research into previous work and the baselining of our current position; and a system developer and trainer part-time for two years to undertake necessary development and training. There are staff in place who can start the survey work before the appointment of the research assistant.

The permanent staff referenced here are actively engaged in the activities referred to in section three. All of these activities are relevant to this project.

WP#	Name (short)	Brief description	Outputs/deliverables	Start date	End date
1	Research	Research previous work	Summary of key work	March 2009	December 2009
2	Baselining	Produce a baseline position	Baseline Report	March 2009	July 2009
3	Management of change preparation	Identify stakeholders and detail communication with them	Detailed stakeholder analysis and Communication Plan	March 2009	September 2009
4	Mentor support requirements	Requirements preparation	Use Case model based on needs of our employers	July 2009	December 2009
5	Mentor support design and implementation	Detailed design	Support materials for the mentors in our employers	September 2009	January 2010
6	Management of Change	Process to support the change	Management of Change model		February 2010
7	Mentor training	Our training of all mentors	Fully trained mentors with our employers	February 2010	August 2010
8	Evaluation	Review the process	Lessons learned and applied	December 2010	March 2011
9	Dissemination	Informing the sector	Conferences, website, blog	March 2010	March 2011

4.2 Project Management arrangements

Project management will be within the JISC Project Management guidelines. The University has a programme management board (UPMB) which oversees all major projects in the University. All IT-related projects are overseen by the Information Services Management Committee acting as the University IT Programme Board, and this reports to UPMB. Our governing body (Council) has a sub-committee which considers all major projects from UPMB. The Project Board for this project will report this IT Programme Board, and hence UPMB.

4.3 Risks Analysis

Risk	Probability (1-5)	Severity (1-5)	Score (P x S)	Action to Prevent/Manage Risk
Failure to locate suitable staff resources to implement and manage the project	1	5	5	Staff are currently in place who can undertake the necessary work. Extra staff will be recruited during the life of the project but this will not hold up the project.
Failure to resource purchase of suitable hardware and software	1	5	5	Budget has been earmarked.
Failure to engage with mentors	1	4	4	Appropriate communication strategy
Failure to implement in set timeframe	1	3	3	Project plans will be modified and agreed as required

4.4 IPR position

Buckinghamshire New University will own the IPR in the case studies use cases and management of change models developed during the project. The JISC will be given a non-exclusive licence allowing the JISC or its representatives to utilise, archive and disseminate the work as appropriate.

4.5 Sustainability issues

The support for mentors will be embedded in the academic framework of the University. The University's Teaching Learning and Assessment Strategy has embedded within it an e-learning strategy that requires course developments to consider both the benefits of technology to enhance learning, and the training needed for staff and students to benefit from it. This is a requirement for course development and annual review and evaluation. The latter aspect was a major output from our Higher Education Academy Pathfinder Project. This will explicitly include mentor support in the current revision.

The training will be provided in an innovative 'nibble' delivery. This will be even more flexible and mobile than contemporary 'bite-sized chunks' so that mentors will be more likely to use them in short breaks. These will, of course, be available on-line after the project has ended. They will also be classified and deposited in the Digital Media Publishing Hub being developed as part of our IT Transformation Project. There will be additional system developer time needed up front to get this running, but it will be simple to add to once implemented, so requiring fewer staff to support it.

5 Engagement with the Community

5.1 Stakeholder analysis

Stakeholder	Interest / stake	Importance
Senior Management Team	Improve student retention	High
Associate Dean (mentor)	Managing the change with mentors	High
Mentors	More effective and therefore fulfilling	High
Academic staff	More effective mentoring relationship	High
Administrative staff	Improved relationship with mentors	Medium
Students	Improved mentoring	High
Supporting directorates	Effective interaction	Medium
Other universities	Good practice in mentorship	Medium
JISC	Support for the sector, value for money of projects	High
UCISA	Support for the sector	High
Employers	Skilled workforce	High

We work closely with many employers in ensuring that we provide courses that meet their needs, and in ensuring that they can help their employees succeed in these courses.

5.2 Dissemination

Timing	Dissemination Activity	Audience	Purpose	Key Message
Termly from May 2009	Article in Connections in-house journal	Bucks staff	Inform	This channel will be used to provide regular feedback to the Bucks community.
Oct 2009	Setup and population of project web site	All users	Inform and raise awareness	Setup of project and other basic information.
March 2009	Blackboard organisation	Project Team & other relevant staff	Inform, raise awareness, engage	Project organisation will share information with the team and other staff.
Sep 2009	Establishment of Project Board meeting regularly	Project Board and UPMB	Awareness, reporting of progress	Scoping, monitoring and advising project team.
As required	Programme meetings	JISC, other project teams and related bodies	Awareness and sharing of progress	All organised programme meetings will be used to share progress and good practice.
As required	Progress report to JISC	JISC	Progress of project	Progress to date & modifications to plans
Termly	Staff briefing	Champions and key stakeholders	Inform	Basic information on project; timescales and initial progress.
March to Dec 2009	Workshops	Focus groups of staff and students	Engage and provide feedback	Workshops will be used to collect user input through the period of the project.
June 2009, June 2011	Conference papers	All interested parties	Promote and provide feedback on good practice	Paper on development of project, lessons learned to date and other developments via contacts within the community.
Termly	Programme of demonstrations	All stakeholders	Inform and engage	Regular demonstrations of project to date will be provided for staff and students during the life of the project.
Continuous	Multi-media blog and active website	Internal and external stakeholders across the JISC community	Inform and engage	To show early developments and get community feedback.

5.3 Evaluation

Timing	Factor to Evaluate	Questions to Address	Method(s)	Measure of Success
Monthly	Project progress	Is it on schedule?	Project Board meetings	Progress in line with the plan
Quarterly	Affect on other University projects	Is it linking with other projects as expected?	UPMB	Resource issues, interlinking with other projects, value for money
As required	Project progress	Is it on schedule?	JISC Programme meetings	Progress in line with the plan
April 2011	Lessons learned	What can we learn for the next project?	Post Project Review	Lessons identified

6 Budget

Directly Incurred staff	Mar-09	Apr 09 – Mar 10	Apr 10 – Mar 11	TOTAL £
Non-Staff	Mar-09	Apr 09 – Mar 10	Apr 10 – Mar 11	TOTAL £
Travel and expenses		£5,000	£5,000	£10,000
Hardware/software		£10,000	£10,000	£20,000
Dissemination		£1,000	£2,000	£3,000
Evaluation		£	£1,000	£1,000
Other		£	£	£
Total Directly Incurred Non-Staff	£0	£16,000	£18,000	£34,000
Directly Incurred Total	£4,700	£72,400	£69,700	£146,800
Directly Allocated	Mar-09	Apr 09 – Mar 10	Apr 10 – Mar 11	TOTAL £
Staff	£1,650	£19,800	£18,150	£39,600
Estates	£176	£2,113	£1,936	£4,225
Other		£	£	£
Directly Allocated Total	£1,826	£21,913	£20,086	£43,825
Indirect Costs	£684	£8,211	£7,527	£16,422
Total Project Cost	£7,210	£102,524	£97,313	£207,047
Amount Requested from JISC	£4,167	£50,000	£45,833	£100,000
Institutional Contributions	£3,044	£52,524	£51,480	£107,047
Percentage Contributions over the life of the project		JISC 48%	Institution 52%	Total 100%
No. FTEs used to calculate estates charges, and staff included	1	CO, BS, RJ, JL, EC		

- 7 The work proposed here will be of immense benefit to improve the relationship of our army of mentors with us and with our students, thus encouraging more people to be mentors whilst improving the student experience. This is a win-win situation that will see this aspect of the University's work growing. We have always worked closely with employers, from our inception as a college of art and technology in the late nineteenth century supporting the local furniture industry, through the provision of part-time and day-release courses for local industry, to our twenty-first century provision of innovative courses for the Crowd Safety and Close Protection industries across the globe, as well as our health-related courses for local NHS trusts.

The additional funding from JISC is being sought to enable the University

- To survey good practice more widely
- To enable the University to undertake accelerated development of tools, models and training for mentor support
- To enable other universities to benefit from our Use Case and Management of Change models
- To contribute to JISC outcomes

8 Previous Experience of the Project Team

Project Lead: Helen Fletcher

Director of IT, with seven years experience of managing large projects, including Finance System, Virtual Learning Environment, Higher Education Academy Pathfinder Project. Current Chair of Universities and Colleges Information System Association (UCISA) Support Services Group

Project Manager: Elizabeth Chamberlain

Support Services Manager within Learning and Information Services. Project Manager for JISC Institutional Repository project (ends March 2009).

Crystal Oldman

Head of School with the Faculty of Society and Health for several years, now Associate Dean with specific responsibility for looking at mentoring across the faculties and deriving a model of good practice for all to follow.

Bill Schaaf

Head of School within the Faculty of Creativity & Culture for several years, now Associate Dean with specific responsibility for looking at the use of IT across the faculties to recommend good practice, as well as 'blue skies' computing curriculum developments.

Richard Jones

Head of the Flexible and Distributed Learning Centre developed in the faculty of Enterprise & Innovation. Richard has spent many years as an e-learning champion in the faculty, including as a Senior Teaching Fellow and has widely published in the field along with presentation at international conferences and Academy workshops.

Justin Luker

Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Enterprise & Innovation. Justin previously was employed as a learning technologist within Learning and Information Services and was a key member of the HEA Pathfinder Project team and has undertaken major roles in supporting technology-enhanced Learning (t-eL) within the University.