

What JISC is doing

The further development of tools, applications, systems and infrastructure to support learner transition and lifelong learning across a wide educational landscape is a major theme of the JISC e-Learning Programme.

A number of funded projects are exploring how multi-institutional collaborations within a region can use technology to support lifelong learners and facilitate progression into HE. Many are investigating issues around the use of e-portfolios and PDP to support lifelong learning, looking especially at the issues around transition. Others are concentrating on sharing and reusing learning resources across a region to help raise the quality and range of resources available to local students.

Work is also going on to help students find appropriate local courses, and to support their skills development once they start in HE. Many of these projects are implementing and further developing technologies and applications that were instigated or developed through the MLEs for Lifelong Learning Programme. These include the ioNodes agent, portal technologies for personalising access to information for learners, and the use of IMS specifications for interoperable data transfer.

JISC is leading, with international partners including the Australian Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST), an initiative to build 'the e-Framework for Education

and Research'. This is a common, service-oriented approach to the development and integration of computer systems in the sphere of learning, research and education administration. The Framework is the result of a shared conviction that it is better to expose networked functions, such as user/group data or learning content, as simple services rather than as features locked up inside monolithic systems. This approach offers institutions more flexibility, more scope for pedagogic innovation and better return on present and future investment.

The JISC e-Learning Programme website (www.jisc.ac.uk/programme_elearning.html) is regularly updated with links to developments, outputs and resources, including reviews of systems and products, issues papers, legal studies and FAQs on cross-institutional collaboration, data protection and learner information exchange.

This briefing paper has been produced by Glenaffric Ltd e-learning consultants with support from project representatives from the MLEs for Lifelong Learning Programme and members of the JISC Development Team. Alternative formats of the briefing paper can be found at: www.jisc.ac.uk/publications

Further information and resources

JISC MLEs for Lifelong Learning Programme
www.jisc.ac.uk/elearningfocus/mle
and
www.jisc.ac.uk/mle_lifelonglearning_info.html

JISC e-Learning Programme
www.jisc.ac.uk/programme_elearning.html

Centre for Educational Technology Interoperability Standards
www.cetis.ac.uk

Centre for Recording Achievement
www.recordingachievement.org

DfES e-Strategy (2005) *Harnessing Technology: Transforming learning and children's services*
www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/e-strategy

HEFCE strategy for e-learning (2005)
www.hefce.ac.uk/Pubs/hefce/2005/05_12

Fryer Report, *Learning for the Twenty-First Century, First report of the National Advisory Group for Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning (November 1997)*

Foundation Degree Forward
www.fdf.ac.uk

ioNode
www.phosphorix.co.uk/around/ioNode

Supporting Learners Across the Educational Landscape

The JISC MLEs for Lifelong Learning Programme explored the use of ICT to support lifelong learning across a wide educational landscape, including further (FE) and higher (HE) education, schools and workplace learning. The programme ran for three years (2002–2005) and had a significant impact on understanding in the sector about the practical realities of lifelong learning.

Ten projects explored the issues around student progression between institutions, the support of learners in meeting their personal goals, and building on their achievements as they make their way through different stages of personal and educational development.

The lessons and findings from the programme should help the sector to prepare for a world in which an online learner record accompanies learners throughout their career in education and work, a world in which that record could be used to support personal reflection and development through life, a world in which online mentoring is available to assist with important decisions at important junctures and points of transition.

Providing environments for lifelong learning – the policy context

The case for the development of a culture of lifelong learning was clarified in the 1997 Fryer report *Learning for the Twenty-First Century* and has underpinned much of the subsequent policy and strategy development in FE and HE. The 2005 DfES e-strategy *Harnessing Technology: Transforming learning and children's services* emphasises the use of technology to collate evidence of an individual's achievements over a lifetime of learning and employment. The 2005 *HEFCE strategy for e-learning* highlights the use of technology to support progression and lifelong learning, including workplace learning and collaboration between the education and employment sectors.

Lifelong and personalised learning policy drivers propose that all learners should be able to develop, record, repurpose and transfer a wide range of information about themselves electronically, as they progress through different levels and episodes of learning, training and employment.

To achieve widening participation in HE, institutions need to collaborate across sectoral boundaries to support learner progression and the achievement of potential. The development and management of collaborative relationships for the provision of HE qualifications in FE institutions is an increasingly important aspect of HE expansion.

The policy context also highlights the growing need to combine academic learning with the world of work by providing relevant courses and modules directly to the workplace, and the accreditation of professional experience as integral parts of academic qualifications.

What this means for institutions...

Common to all the projects across the programme was the use of technology to support learners across institutional boundaries, not only FE and HE institutions, but also between educational institutions and the workplace, as well as other bodies such as trade unions and professional associations.

The programme confirmed that support for learners is particularly important for learners on flexible courses such as Foundation degrees based across FE and HE institutions. Projects also explored the use of technology to support transition between institutions and sectors, and between education and the workplace. One of the key outcomes was a recognition of the value of e-portfolios and personal development planning (PDP) for learners moving from a more highly supported learning environment (such as an FE college) to a larger, more diffuse learning context with less dedicated provision for one-to-one support and more emphasis on self-directed learning.

Cultural differences between the HE and FE sectors, and between the academic sector and the world of work, were explored and addressed in different contexts. Some of the cultural and organisational issues raised included different levels of resource and funding, management and control, learner expectation and the rules of discourse.

Central to the programme was its work on interoperability standards and technical solutions. Projects piloted the transfer of data using IMS Enterprise and UKLeAP (a UK version of the international IMS LIP specification

for learner information, approved by the BSI). In the context of workplace learning, projects also explored the implementation of the IMS Re-useable Definition of Competency or Educational Objective (RDCEO) specification for referring to learning outcomes, skills, knowledge and tasks. Projects also implemented the IMS ACCLIP Specification for interacting with an e-learning system regardless of disability, hardware or environment.

Projects also investigated the wider institutional context for technical interoperability, and repeatedly highlighted that technical interoperability is not possible without interpersonal interoperability – in other words, without communication and cooperation between staff and departments across institutions. Various models for partnership working were explored, including a model of inclusive stakeholder management. Projects emphasised the need for a partnership agreement between

collaborating institutions with a clear specification of roles, responsibilities, expected service levels and communication strategies.

Susie's Journey

Susie's journey presents a vision of lifelong learning, demonstrating the need for this to be supported by the seamless transfer of records between institutions

throughout a learner's lifetime. Each of the ten projects highlighted issues and provided examples of good practice that are relevant to the ongoing development of systems and processes to support Susie's journey.

Links to the project outputs and resources are available from the JISC MLEs for Lifelong Learning Programme web pages: www.jisc.ac.uk/elearningfocus/mle and www.jisc.ac.uk/mle_lifelonglearning_info.html

