

JISC BUILDING CAPACITY PROGRAMME (WALES)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Building Capacity Programme and Projects sought to make best use of existing resources developed in both JISC and HEA projects to meet the needs and align with the host institution's strategy with regards to technology enhanced learning (TEL). Whilst all of the projects had a key objective regarding this, most opted to exploit niche areas within TEL, including: assessment, employability, staff development and collaborative working and peer assessment.

The common success factors identified in the projects were mainly related to better institutional dialogues internally and externally, effective needs analysis and involvement of stakeholders. The projects also identified that having strong senior management involvement from the outset of the project was also very important, both during the project and for sustainability as well as the external validation by JISC (and HEFCW) of the priority of TEL

The majority of projects have now submitted their final reports. These are being combined with reports from the wider Building Capacity Programme (13 projects in England) to produce a series of synthesised reports highlighting issues and potential solutions. These reports will be disseminated from September onwards, but will be also form the basis of wider institutional briefing.

A large part of any successes at the programme level have been made possible by the excellent 'community' around technology enhanced learning in Wales and the excellent advice and guidance from the JISC RSC Wales.

INTRODUCTION

Institutions are driven by quality and governance issues; maintaining significant institutional and individual reputations locally, nationally and internationally; and attending to proxy measures of success such as league tables, widening participation targets, and student satisfaction ratings. Politically they are driven by the wider economy; are expected to operate within the current finance regime; and need to focus on selected societal challenge themes as well as maintain financial and environmental sustainability.

The JISC Building Capacity Programme (Wales) aimed to help institutions in adopting the outputs and outcomes of JISC and HEA funded projects, programmes and services in order to meet their strategic objectives with regards to Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL). This activity has resulted in a series of contextualised case studies regarding various previous JISC and HEA activities and how the outputs from these have been used to support an institution's strategic needs. It is expected that the analysis of these case studies should also provide JISC with some evidence of benefits realisation¹ for a range of resources and outputs produced by previous projects, programmes and services. The case studies are currently being analysed and synthesised by the Programme team and JISC Advance to abstract wider lessons.

¹ Benefits realisation refers to the validation, transfer to non-native institutional contexts, and building upon of outputs developed by innovation projects in order to embed them in their intended (and other) communities, thereby helping to ensure that they are useful, usable and used by users. They may be designed to realise benefits within the original target stakeholder group (though outside the originating institution) of the innovation project to which they are 'anchored', or they may intend to affect change in another stakeholder community entirely (because the outputs and benefits are seen as directly relevant, applicable, and transferable to a different context). Project outputs may also yield unintended benefits in contexts new to those than for which they were originally designed.

PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAMME

Rather than an open call formula funding was offered to all eligible Welsh HEIs on submission of an appropriate bid document and project plan, these were then marked by the staff from HEFCW, JISC and HEA and results fed back to the institution asking them to amend where appropriate. During this period there was some uncertainty and problems in distributing funding from JISC and the process was slowed down as a result from directives from BIS. This was eventually resolved, but did delay projects starting.

An overview of issues identified and reason for each project is at appendix one.

SENIOR MANAGEMENT ENGAGEMENT WITH PROJECTS

The Building Capacity Programme is not just about getting existing resources embedded into practice it is also about recognising and finding a vehicle for dialogue between those involved in innovation in institutions and the Senior Management Team. The senior managers involved in the projects were usually at PVC level, with responsibilities for student experience, learning and teaching or quality. The projects identified a range of activities that senior managers undertook including:

- Getting institution-wide agreement to difficult business issues.
- Enforcing compliance with the project by other stakeholders / departments.
- Ensuring the project supports institutional strategy
- Raising the profile of the project with other senior managers
- Making decisions or supporting the decision-making process.
- Obtaining resources.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS TO THE PROJECTS

The projects were asked to identify the factors that most affected the successful elements of the projects. Below is a synthesis of the different responses from 9 of the 10 institutions

- Dialogue between academic staff (identifying their needs), teams deploying technology and senior managers.
- Identifying appropriate technologies and access to resources, from JISC OER projects.
- Effective needs analysis (using a variety of sources such as NSS, Student Withdrawal Survey, focus groups and tutor feedback) ensured that key areas for development were identified and that an appropriate choice of JISC outputs could be made.
- Quality of the project outputs, including original outputs and those developed or adapted as part of the project.
- Senior management involvement was crucial, especially in ensuring that activities matched the institutional priorities.
- External validation by JISC helped in gaining institutional leverage for change.
- Input from the consultants.
- Production of appropriate guidance materials from projects.
- Involvement of key stakeholders to represent existing initiatives.
- Developing new channels for communication and collaboration, in particular between the registry and information services.
- Access to members of project teams for previous external JISC projects, where necessary.

BEYOND THE PROJECTS

All of the projects that have reported have indicated a degree of sustainability of the project beyond its funded lifespan. All of the projects have indicated that a positive movement along from early adoption of technology toward it being embedded was achieved. Other positives have included:

- The engagement of staff not usually engaged with technology enhanced learning.
- Improved guidance and advice for all staff who engage with technology via support and advice materials
- “Engaging colleagues in this project has raised staff confidence and competence using technologies that can be used to support and enhance student learning and retention.”
- One colleague said that using outputs from other projects would encourage them to 'stop reinventing the wheel'. It is possible that by changing this perception, a culture of sharing (resources, materials, good practice, etc.) will be promoted, thereby spurring pedagogical innovation.
- The review of classroom technologies has informed thinking about resource allocation in subsequent years.
- Further enhancements to technology use by those engaged in technology enhanced learning.
- Embedding of OERs.
- The continuing updating and maintenance of an information commons is now embedded in the E-Services and Communications group processes, and informal information monitoring and forwarding among members of our group is already part of standard practice.
- As a result of the project we have a new framework for evaluating outputs that may be relevant to a key priority area for us. We have also changed the process by which hardware and support can be provided so that open source software outputs can be piloted.

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The Programme in Wales was aligned with the existing Building Capacity programme in terms of approach. However, significant differences were apparent, such as the inclusion of the HE Academy outputs alongside JISC outputs, the references to the previous Gwella project and the concentration on technology enhanced learning (the programme in England had a broader focus across teaching, research, enterprise and institutional support functions).

The funding model in Wales also differed from England in formula funding was applied to institutions and no funding was available to undertake separate support projects or activities. However, where the latter was concerned capacity was found from within the existing programme to include the Welsh Projects and their outputs with the synthesis projects.

At an early stage it became apparent that members of the Welsh TEL community were well connected with each other and that there was an emerging relationship with the JISC RSC in Wales. During the programme these two factors were essential to the Programme Manager, being able to utilise projects as mentors to each other and also being able to call upon the RSC for support and guidance in particular local cases. These aspects, the strong community and the role of the RSC, were largely responsible for any programme level successes, and should this kind of activity occur again more emphasis should be placed upon them.

APPENDIX 1 OVERVIEW OF ISSUES BEING ADDRESSED

The text in the third column 'reason for project' is sourced from the initial bidding process and includes the institutions rationale in their own words.

| Institution | Project area | Reason for project |
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| Aberystwyth University | Embedding support for the use of Technology Enhanced Learning through the use of peer learning and an Information Commons. | The institution identified that support for technology-enhanced learning has traditionally been done through group training sessions and consultations, but once staff have been trained, they work primarily on their own and may not be aware of what other staff in the University are doing with technology-enhanced learning. Through the E-learning Benchmarking exercise sponsored by the Higher Education Academy in 2007, they found that peer support among academics is important for promoting good practice, and this often takes place in informal contexts such as the coffee room. We also found that many staff were not aware of relevant publications in the sector. |
| University of Glamorgan | Extending existing work of the Technology-Enhanced Learning Team in CELT to increase awareness of the benefits of technology within the University, to make JISC resources and other OER more accessible to University staff, and to explore the barriers to engagement with technology and find ways of overcoming them | The GWELLA project ² helped to progress this TEL agenda, however in line with the HEFCW Technology-Enhanced Learning (TEL) strategy ³ , further work was needed to accelerate the process. The JISC Building Capacity Project provided the resource to explore barriers to engagement with technology, to improve access to quality resources including JISC outputs, and to establish infrastructure needs for the institution. Previous JISC projects and publications have been highly influential in directing the project and the institution has begun to see the value of such an intervention at institutional level. |
| University of Wales Institute, Cardiff | The project identified and implemented JISC project outputs, such as tools, services, resources, models and good practice in order to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contribute to the development, endorsement and execution of key UWIC objectives relating to technology enhanced learning • support UWIC in meeting the priorities of the Welsh Assembly Government for Higher Education, including workforce development, graduate employability and enhancements in flexible, part-time provision • complement UWIC's JISC-funded project, Technology Enhanced | A review of UWIC and Welsh strategic documents (for example, The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, Technology Enhanced Learning Plan, Retention Action Plan and Welsh Assembly Government Plan 'For Our Futures') highlighted four main areas of priority. These were: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. enhancing student employability 2. improving work-based learning provision 3. increasing student retention 4. mainstreaming technology enhanced learning |

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| | <p>Learning to Support a Welsh Centre for Workforce Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support the activities of the Retention Action Plan | |
| Cardiff University | The project aimed to enhance online assessment and feedback. | The focus on assessment and feedback has arisen from student feedback which has emphasised its impact on the overall student experience, its importance in learning (feeding forward) and some differences between staff and student expectation. |
| Swansea Metropolitan University | Developing a culture shift to allow adoption of TEL | The project is driven by the key objectives of the HEFCW strategy: Enhancing Learning and Teaching through Technology: a Strategy for Higher Education in Wales. In particular creating the conditions for the achievement of the enhancement of learning, teaching, assessment, the curriculum and core processes. We also recognise the importance of accelerating the shift from 'pockets of innovation' to the mainstreaming of learning and teaching provision, processes and practice. |
| Swansea University | Collaborative working and Assessment | Collaborative working is something that is being encouraged for pedagogical reasons and for reasons of employability. Two of our Gwella enhancement projects, "2-Evaluate" and "Peer Support", were based around students working collaboratively. However, students are often reluctant to work in groups for a variety of possible reasons that this project seeks to address. |
| Glyndwr University | Embedding e-learning across the University | The institution is focused on using portals and communication and collaboration tools for Learning and teaching and the enhanced communication throughout the staff of the University in order to embed e-learning strategically. |
| Bangor University | Technology supporting employability | The institution is enhancing student employability outcomes, embracing the QAA newly revised QAA Code of Practice for Career Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (February 2010), and using technology underpin learning activities. There will also be a "Bangor Employability Award" building on best practice in other institutions such as Southampton and York supported through technology. |
| Newport | Assessment and Feedback | As part of its strategy to enhance the student experience the university is moving to enabling e-submission and e-feedback to students. There is pedagogical emphasis on assessment feedback through various these technologies. This |

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| | | pilot implementation explores various approaches to students in supporting their feedback / feed forward processes and enhancing their learning experience. |
| University of Wales Trinity Saint David | The project identified that TEL in general was patchy and the project was seeking to take a more strategic approach. | The broad aim and objective of the project is to raise institutional awareness of JISC / HEA activities and resources, and to establish institutional process models for wide future engagement with JISC / HEA. A review of JISC / HEA projects and resources will inform and support an institutional TEL needs and latterly, gap analysis to establish engagement models for future research and development. |