

## **Project Name: Wider Horizons: an open educational online environment**

### **Amendment History:**

Version No.	Date	Reason for Amendment
1	15/02/07	First draft

**Project Manager:** Viv Bell

### **Document Distribution**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Action/Information</b>
Andrew Rothery	UW	Director of E-learning, UW	Co-author of proposal
Debbie Lambert	LLN	Manager of the LLN for H&W	Co-author of proposal
Viv Bell	LLN	Learning Technology Co-ordinator LLN for H&W	Project manager
Geoffrey Elliott	UW	Members of LLN steering Group	To approve project
Gail Rothnie	UoB		
Mike Rookes	OU		
Chris Morecroft	WCT		

### **Background**

The framework outlined here for an open educational online environment for the LLN (referred to as *Wider Horizons*) has been developed by Anne Hannaford, Director of Information and Learning Services, Andrew Rothery, Director of E-Learning, in collaboration with Debbie Lambert, LLN Manager and Geoffrey Elliot, Director of Lifelong Learning and Viv Bell, LLN Learning Technology Co-ordinator.

We are proposing collaboration between LLN and ILS since after the three-year lifetime of the LLN project we would expect the university and its partners to take over the continuing support and development of *Wider Horizons*.

### **Objectives of the Project**

To provide

- an online environment to support the work of the LLN and deliver its online activities
- an online environment focussed on the needs of the individual learner, and provide learners with personal tools, social networking and other services which they can continue to use independently of the courses of study they undertake over the years

- communication channels for members of the network organisations
- a community portal to enable access to lifelong learning opportunities
- facilities for stakeholder organisations to collectively interact with new learners

## **Project Approach**

**Stage One:** to agree the overall vision and conduct planning with key stakeholders; to produce the project plan and milestones

**Stage Two:** to build components of the environment, to use and evaluate them and then to build further components, use and evaluate, repeated in a cyclic manner to allow Wider Horizons to evolve appropriately

**Stage Three:** to incorporate wider community initiatives, and plan for sustainability

### ***Key Product from the project***

#### **A Scope:**

The key product is the online environment, as described below

#### ***B Out of Scope***

Wider Horizon's services will complement and enhance the online learning provided by the colleges. They will not duplicate the e-learning activities which individual specific courses will provide for students who have registered. Access will be controlled to ensure that access to "paid" courses and resources is restricted to those entitled to use them.

## **Constraints**

- Must meet the needs of the Lifelong learning network during the three year period.
- Must also help UW develop its strategy to provide an online communication and information environment for learners across the region.
- Must use local expertise and services where possible.

## **Initial Project Case**

Wider Horizons will enable all learners in the region to interact with each other, to use open resources, and gain access to support as they move from one course to another. It will provide learners with a personalised learning experience which will continue during their lifetime. The open online environment is essentially a portal where learners can register and log in to access the services and information. It will be available to students on the LLN courses but also available to any member of the public who is interested. Therefore, as well as having a role in supporting students taking courses and progressing from one to another, it will also have a role in attracting people into education and the courses on offer. It will also play a role in providing resources for staff within the network, in sharing good practice and aiding collaboration.

The following list gives some examples of the information, tools and services envisaged within Wider Horizons to support LLN:

- Information about colleges and courses
- Information about progression ladders
- Links with regional area prospectuses
- Online taster courses – either samples of actual courses, or self-contained mini-courses
- Online discussion areas

- Collaborative tools such as wikis to support the development of online communities around specific topics or themes
- Information for members of the network
- Access to information and resources, collections and repositories
- Links to the virtual learning environments of colleges providing courses
- Personal web space to enable learners to maintain portfolio and other information
- Personal communication tools for learners' use such as blogs
- Information and guidance on e learning and work-based learning for tutors

### ***Benefits of the Project***

Benefits to the LLN:

- Electronic means of providing access to current information about courses and modules available within Herefordshire and Worcestershire (and the OU)
- Electronic means of communication for staff in partner institutions to be kept up-to-date about the LLN, to share best practice and information, and to have discussions

Benefits to students:

- Communication with each other
- Development of academic communities
- Electronic means of providing access to, and information about, learning support for students

Benefits to the wider educational community

- Access to library resources
- Access to county council resources
- Access to services provided by the Chamber of commerce

### ***Key Assumptions***

The development of Wider Horizons depends on

- the continued support of partner organisations for the Lifelong Learning Network and its activities,
- finding appropriate expertise and funding to provide a secure technical infrastructure and
- the continued support from UW Information and learning services
- gaining support for sustained provision after the end of the LLN project

### ***Costs***

It is anticipated that the project will cost approximately £130 000 over the three years. This will cover equipment costs, but the larger part will be payment to companies or to colleges to carry out the technical work needed to create the online environment.

### ***Initial Risk Log***

The following table summarises the risks that have been identified that may prevent the project being completed to the required quality, budget and timescale. The probability and impact of each risk has been graded as low, medium or high to indicate the relative importance attached to each element of risk.

<b>Risks</b>	<b>Probability</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Containment Plan</b>
Project leader unavailable or leaves the project	L	M	Recruit a new project leader
Unable to find appropriate local expertise for carrying out technical work	M	H	Seek national, commercial organisations
LLN project fails to engage local support for its activities	L	H	Increase promotional activity
A partner institution is unable to contribute enough time and effort for effective involvement	M	L	Involve a large number of partners
UW ILS is unable to contribute enough time and effort for effective involvement	?	?	Meeting with Director planned
Failure to find sufficient partners or sponsors to undertake ongoing management of Wider Horizons after the end of the LLN project	L	M	Involve commercial organisations and charge for some services or participation
Costs rising beyond those estimated	M	M	Regular review of budget and re-prioritise as appropriate
Students, members of the public or members of the network fail to engage with and use the service	L	M	Involve users in planning

### **Project Team**

Viv Bell plus LLN team

Use of an executive group (a team of representatives from key stakeholders who will work together to implement the project)