



Application to the Big Projects Fund

Project Name: Web 2.0 e-learning for HE

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1 Background

The use of blended learning is already well established across many HE courses at Worcester College of Technology. However much of this is on a somewhat flat Web 1.0 type format with the delivery of PDF, Word documents and PowerPoints as the dominant approach. Recently however some of the more innovative teachers have begun to use Web 2.0 technologies to support course delivery.

Wikipedia, which is an excellent example of a Web 2.0 application, describes Web 2.0 as follows:-

“**Web 2.0** is a term describing changing trends in the use of World Wide Web technology and web design that aims to enhance creativity, secure information sharing, collaboration and functionality of the web. Web 2.0 concepts have led to the development and evolution of web-based communities and its hosted services, such as social-networking sites, video sharing sites, wikis, blogs, and folksonomies.”

This can be contrasted with Web 1.0 formats which most online courses still follow. Typically this would be largely text based, read only, non participatory and non collaborative. With this approach a VLE is largely a place where a learner goes to “get things” with Web 2.0 approaches to learning a VLE becomes a place where learners go to “do things”.

Examples of the use of Web 2.0 approaches to enhancing learning that have already been successfully implemented at Worcester College of Technology on a small number of FE and HE courses. These include the use of Wikis as a collaborative knowledge building and sharing tool, Blogs as learning journals, Forums for group problem solving and role play scenarios and online Glossaries for collaborative research.

Use of these tools opens up an increase in collaborative learning amongst students, with a more flexible approach to time and place of learning as well as new

assessment opportunities. All of this significantly contributes to more personalised models of both delivery and assessment.

A crucial aspect of this approach is the importance of “user generated content” making up a significant part of the learning and assessment process. This content will not only involve text based contributions but would also involve learners creating and uploading images, sound files and video files.

Particular success has already been achieved in the area through using Vodcasts and Podcasts, partly through an LSN project which Worcester College of Technology has led in partnership with seven other local colleges.

Student satisfaction surveys have shown that these approaches to delivery and assessment are extremely popular with learners. If successful this bid would enable further developments to take place using web 2 technologies thus making this learning technology approach more mainstream across HE courses.

It is planned to do this in conjunction with employers to create vocationally based learning content and activities which will better prepare learners for the world of work and will make learning more relevant to those who are studying while working.

2 Objectives of the Project

1. To develop high quality Web 2.0 based e-learning content and activities for HE courses at Worcester College of Technology, Kidderminster College and Herefordshire College of Technology.
2. To engage with employers to produce work related content and assessment activities based around real life work scenarios.
3. To support, and if required, train HE tutors in using best practice in e-learning and blended learning.
4. To evaluate, once used, and if required, improve all content and activities created through the project.
5. To make all content and activities available for all Hereford and Worcestershire LLN partners to share.

3 Project Approach

1. The e-learning developer would meet with Program Area Managers and lecturers from Worcester College of Technology, Herefordshire College of Technology and Kidderminster College to identify curriculum areas in HE that would benefit from improving flexibility and student engagement by Web based 2 e-learning activities. The project will focus mainly on engineering content and activities but other areas will also be included.
2. The Project Manager and E-learning developer will meet with employers in appropriate curriculum areas to develop real life e-learning scenarios and assessment activities relating to work based experiences. Where possible established contacts and employers of learners studying on HE courses would be used.

3. Employers and employees in the businesses that we will be working with will also be encouraged to take part in Vodcasts and Podcasts that will be used to support learning. The e-learning developer will then work with lecturers to build content and activities that can be used to support flexible work based learning.
4. Where appropriate and required, teaching staff will be trained and supported in using the e-learning content and activities.
5. The content and activities will be used to deliver learning and assessment to students on HE courses within the College.
6. The content and activities will be evaluated by lecturers and students.
7. The content and activities will then be amended by the E-learning developer in the light of the evaluative comments of the students and lecturers.
8. The content and activities will then be made available to other LLN partners. A free training and awareness day would be held for other partner colleges to find out more about what has been learned through the project and to facilitate sharing of content developed.

4 Scope:

A Key Products from the project

1. e-learning content and activities that would be developed through collaboration with tutors and employers. Once evaluated and improved this would be made available throughout the consortium.
2. Improved engagement with employers.
3. Improved staff skills and engagement with e-learning.
4. More vocationally relevant learning activities for learners
5. More flexible learning and assessment patterns for learners.

B Out of Scope

This project would only focus on HE courses. FE courses would be out of scope for this project.

5 Constraints

The constraints of the project will be tutor time, employer time and E-developer time.

6 Initial Project Case

The main argument for this project is that it will build on and develop good practise within Worcester College of Technology in the use of innovative Web 2.0 based e-learning solutions. Evidence from course satisfaction surveys have shown that where tutors use activities such as Wikis, Blogs, online collaborative research activities, vodcasting and Podcasting, students respond favourably and show improved engagement.

The project will also fulfil needs to improve flexibility of delivery and assessment and to improve engagement with employers. In addition to this, the project will meet the need of increasing the use of the quality of e-learning within the HE curriculum.

7 Benefits of the Project

For Learners

Learners would benefit from this project in many ways. By shifting the delivery of the curriculum further towards a blended learning model there would be a significant increase in the flexibility of where and when learning would take place. This would be of particular benefit to learners in full time employment and/or learners with caring responsibilities.

Learners would also benefit from the experience of taking part in collaborative Web 2.0 style learning activities. A lot of “traditional” e-learning involves people working alone at a PC on content that is often little more than an electronic form of paper based materials. Many learners don’t find this a very exciting way to learn. However feedback from learners at WCT who have participated in collaborative e-learning experiences or made use of m-learning (mobile learning) such as podcasting and vodcasting has been much more positive. This approach provides a more active learning experience through collaborative research and the opportunity for learners to be partners in the creation of content (e.g. through participating in wiki’s, blogs, podcasts and video blogs) This change in emphasis reflects an overall change in the way that young people engage with the Internet with the increase in “user generated content”

A further benefit for learners would be the use of content and activities that have been created in consultation with employers. This would ensure an increase in relevance of what they learning to their present and future employment.

Parts of the project would involve creating new methods of assessment of this content in partnership with employers. This would benefit learners through increasing the flexibility in how they are assessed as well as making assessment activities more vocationally relevant.

Most of these activities and assessments would take place through the College Moodle site. Experience from courses already using these approaches to learning where learners participate in collaboratively building and sharing resources on their Moodle courses have been very positive. Usage logs and learner feedback have shown that this substantially increases a learner’s level of engagement with Moodle and gives them a greater sense of “ownership” over the course.

For the Colleges and their Staff

The Colleges overall would benefit from greater flexibility in delivery. This would have positive impacts on both timetabling and usage of rooms.

Lecturers who have not had experience of this particular approach to e-learning before, would have an increased awareness and learn new teaching skills that would hopefully be transferred to other courses on which they teach.

A further benefit would be the sharing of best practice and e-learning skills across LLN partners. Initially this would be for the 3 colleges involved but other partners would benefit through sharing of findings and resources as well as training through a one day training and awareness raising event at the end of the project.

	Build e-learning content and activities	
	Use and evaluate content and activities	
	Amend content and activities in light of evaluations	

11 How will the project be evaluated?

e-learning content and activities will be evaluated by learners, lecturers and employers following usage. This will be done through the use of questionnaires for all parties and smaller focus groups. The feedback from these evaluations will be used to amend the content and activities. Any changes will then be fed back to the focus group for further comment and evaluation.

12 How will the project be sustained?

All materials and activities will be updated and maintained by subject lecturers in partnership with the ILT team for at least the following three years.

It is hoped that lecturers involved in the project will see the benefit of Web 2.0 based content and activities for promoting blended learning and that this practice will continue on the courses that have been enhanced, as well as being used on more courses in the college.

13 Which aims, outcomes and/or targets will the project achieve for the HWLLN? Please also state which funding criteria this project meets and how.

This bid will help the LLN meet a number of its aims, outcomes, targets and funding criteria.

Aims

1. To increase the numbers of students entering higher education with vocational qualifications
2. To increase the number of part time students entering higher education whilst continuing employment
3. To help the target groups of students succeed in higher education
4. To facilitate a change in the design and delivery of curriculum in H & W to meet the needs of the target students
5. To involve employers in the development, design and delivery of curriculum where possible

Outcomes

1. An increase in the number of courses delivered flexibly.
2. The provision for the region of more flexible and accessible range of courses and modules.
3. Increase employer engagement in LLN activities within each curriculum theme.
4. An increase in the number of Vocational Learners in Higher Education.
5. The creation and adaptation of innovative content for e-learning and blended learning. Embed this into course design.
6. The building of online content and communication.

The bid also meets with 3 of the 4 funding criteria outlined in the bidding documentation. These are –

1. Does the project provide new links, or strengthen existing links with employers, resulting in new modules or courses or accreditation of existing training?
2. Does the project make courses more accessible to students in employment (this might be by, for example, ‘chunking up’ a course, introducing a revised pattern of delivery, introducing substantial e learning)?
3. Will the project result in more students with vocational qualifications entering HE, by introducing new progression opportunities, or by providing newly developed IAG?

14 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.

Risks	Probability	Impact	Containment Plan
Difficulty in finding sufficient employers to engage with the project	Medium	Medium	If we could not identify interested employers through the college’s contacts then we would approach the local Chambers of Commerce.
Difficulties in finding sufficient lecturers to engage with the project	Low	High	Heads of Faculty would be approached and asked to help identify staff who would be interested in taking part in the project.
Some learners who are not experienced ICT users may have initial difficulties in using Web 2.0 Content and Activities.	Medium	Medium	Extra support and training would be provided for these learners.

15 Project Team

Worcester College of Technology

Project Manager Peter Kilcoyne
Director of ILT

e-learning Developer(s) From Adam Salem/ Helen Brady/ Louise Davies

Kidderminster College

Graham Mason
ICT Manager

Herefordshire College of Technology

Emma Ball

ILT Manager