

ACETS Project Report February 2004

Section One

Grant Statement

The ACETS project continues to be conducted under the terms agreed with JISC in the letter of grant and the JISC Terms and Conditions. There have been no changes to the original award, or any extensions or alterations granted.

1. Aims and Objectives

There have been no changes to the original aims/objectives outlined in the project plan.

2. Overall Approach

There have been no changes to the overall approach outlined in the project plan during this reporting period.

3. Workpackages

Workpackage 1: Setting up Project

Completed

Workpackage 2: Metadata Model and Development Platform

Completed except for final release of JORUM+ IntraLibrary build.

Workpackage 3: Resource Discovery

Recruitment of exemplifiers from HE has been completed with 26 active participants signed up. Baseline surveys have been completed for almost all of the HE exemplifiers and they are now working on creating their exemplars.

Recruitment from FE has been devolved to the two FE partners in Suffolk and Edinburgh s Telford Colleges:

- Suffolk College have successfully recruited 3 exemplifiers with the possibility of 1 or 2 more.
- Edinburgh s Telford College contacted the Project Manager shortly before this report was due to be submitted stating that they wished to withdraw from the ACETS project. This was due to particular staffing problems in the discipline areas ACETS was working in and problems with senior managers prioritising local activity over project participation. However, following talks with Telford, it is hoped that their participation will continue but their contribution will take place at a slightly later date than planned and in different subject areas. The possibility of arranging a local staff development workshop for Telford staff has also been discussed. A separate report is being produced on the problems Telford has experienced.

A guide for ACETS exemplifiers has been prepared and is currently being used by our HE exemplifiers. However, the FE partners identified significant problems regarding the language and level of the document and have undertaken to revise the guide for the FE community. This revised version is in its final stages of preparation, the main areas of difference being based on the assumed starting level and familiarity of teachers with the principles and practices of using learning technologies.

Recruitment of exemplifiers has been successful (although a few may yet join the project) and the guides and procedures will be completed by the end of March 2004, thereby completing this work package.

Workpackage 4: Object Acquisition

In progress.

This is an exemplifier task and as such will be completed by them rather than project staff. Exemplifiers are acquiring objects but, as the project is still awaiting the version 2 release of IntraLibrary, no uploading, cataloguing or metadata authoring has been undertaken yet.

When the IntraLibrary v2 build actually goes live then exemplifiers will be expected to register their resources in that system. An IntraLibrary guide has been prepared and is awaiting input on changes to IntraLibrary for

final release, it has however already proven to be of great use and has been shared with JORUM and Intrallect.

Workpackage 5: Creating Exemplars

In progress.

Using the ACETS procedures guide and the new system for exemplifiers to keep and develop their reflective diaries online, HE exemplifiers are currently creating their exemplars. We expect the majority to have completed and returned these to us by the end of the summer 2004. The FE exemplifiers from Suffolk will be working through the ACETS project staff in Suffolk to keep their diaries and it is hoped that Telford exemplifiers will complete by the end of October 2004.

An ACETS workshop has been organised for June 2nd and 3rd 2004 in Manchester, where project staff, exemplifiers and other invited parties will be able to discuss and develop their work in respect of ACETS and the use of RLOs in general. The programme of events is currently in preparation.

Workpackage 6: Evaluation of the Exemplars

Work on the evaluation design has been ongoing, and in particular has focused on the formal pedagogical analysis which draws upon concepts from EML and the IMS Learning Design specification. This instrument — the semi-structured learning design (or ACETS SSLD) has been shared with the X4L and CETIS communities and is developing well with input from individuals in these groups.

The main bulk of the evaluation process will not start until the exemplars are complete and have been returned to the project.

Workpackage 7: Evaluation of the Processes

The main bulk of the evaluation process will not start until the exemplars are complete and have been returned to the project.

Workpackage 8: Dissemination

Dissemination activity has been relatively low-key recently as the project has built up a national profile and successfully recruited exemplifiers. As the exemplars have not been completed or analysed yet there is no big message to disseminate at this stage. Dissemination has therefore had an internal project focus involving ongoing individual engagement with the various groups already involved or interested in the project. It is not expected that there will be any great change over the next 6 months.

Workpackage 9: Exit Strategy

Although this has been discussed, no changes from earlier reported plans have been made.

Summary of Work in the Next 6 Months

- Support for, and engagement with, the project exemplifiers to ensure their exemplars are developed, documented and returned to the project in good time. This will take the form of:
 - The ACETS workshop in Manchester in June when as many of the project's participants will come together, engage with each other and share and exchange ideas and maybe even materials. This event will give the exemplifiers opportunities to engage with the X4L programme in general and with other themes in the cognate areas ACETS is working in.
 - Development and provision of online support and documentation tools in the project's collaborative working environment. These are being developed to allow exemplifiers to share their experiences and their diaries as they work through their exemplars
 - On-site visits — we aim to get an ACETS officer to visit every one of our 30+ exemplifiers at least once in the next 6 months
 - Project guides — an ACETS exemplifiers guide has been written as a
 - Email support will be ongoing for all project staff
 - Further recruitment may occur if an individual is identified as being able to make a significant contribution as an ACETS exemplifier

- Development of the evaluation methodology. As this is a major contribution from the ACETS project and is based on the rapidly moving learning design frameworks, we are constantly refining and developing the ACETS evaluation model. This reflects a degree of a grounded theory thinking in our approach in that we have not assumed that we knew all of the questions to ask but are letting the development of the project and the data inform the development of the methodology.
- Engagement with the X4L programme. This takes the form of:
 - Working closely with JORUM+ and their IntraLibrary build
 - Working with Scotland & North cluster members (L2L and HN) on a number of themes
 - Attending programme meetings and workshops

4. Project Management

Overall the project staff remain fairly stable both in role and activity. The technical advisor/consultancy input has by agreement been moved to year 3 in the absence of any technical input being required at this stage. Responsibility for the FE activity has been devolved to the FE project partners with a matching budgetary change.

5. Programme Support

ACETS has had staff in attendance at a number of X4L workshops. In addition to regular participation in the Scotland & North cluster, Ms Leeder has started to attend the SE cluster group meetings.

There was a flurry of activity on learning design in January 2004 with an informal meeting between ACETS, L2L, M&LG and HN followed by an open cluster meeting on the topic in Newcastle. Unfortunately no JISC staff were able to attend but a report and a series of recommendations did arise from this activity, predominantly from ACETS and L2L staff.

Contact with, or even awareness of, other projects in X4L and in other JISC-funded programmes remains regrettably low. It would be useful to have more effort put in to making these programmes and projects more aware of each other, perhaps through a regular newsletter or equivalent easy to digest format. Because the ACETS project has a strong disciplinary theme most engagement is with non-JISC supported projects within the disciplinary area such as IVIMEDS, IVINURS and contact with the LTSN-01.

6. Risk Analysis

The problems experienced by Telford College demonstrate how the best intentions of a partner can be overruled by local management policy. Significant effort has been put in to rearranging aspects of the project to allow Telford to continue to participate.

One of the exemplifiers has refused to follow the guidelines set (for instance he is refusing to use third party materials). This individual is not expected to complete an exemplar. All other exemplifiers are working happily within the project guidelines and beginning to produce work for us.

7. Budget

Total Grant: £197,401

Duration of project: 3 years

Budget Headings	Total budget allocated	Expenditure this reporting period	Total expenditure to date	Further information
Staff	£76,301	£19,555	£28216	Extra staff costs will be incurred during data analysis
Travel & Subsistence	£26,000	£3900	£7880	More travel will occur from now on as we support our exemplifiers
Equipment	£3000			
Dissemination activities	£40,000	£1590	£2190	Dissemination mostly takes place once the project has substantive findings to work with

Evaluation activities	[£12,000 (but included in staff costs)]			
Other (please specify)				Exemplifier payments will take place on delivery — this will only start in the next reporting period
1. Payments to exemplifiers in HE, FE	£50,000			
Consumables	£2100			

Section Two

8. Project Outcomes

The project has:

- Developed a web-based project work environment in support of project management, resource discovery and reflective diary authoring.
- Designed the exemplar package and its parameters.
- Recruited its quota of HE exemplifiers and half of its quota of FE exemplifiers.
- Created documentation, procedures and user guides for various parts of the project for both HE and FE audiences.
- Developed an innovative evaluation methodology design and developed tools and instrumentation within this design

The main findings will arise from the analysis of the exemplars, but in the meantime the following interim observations have been made:

- There are simply not sufficiently high quality RLOs out there, particularly in the area of anatomy. Communication skills is better placed, in as much as it is able potentially to draw upon a much wider range of materials.
- The differences between HE and FE are very small pedagogically but are very large organisationally, logistically and culturally.

9. Use of JISC Subscription Collections and NLN Materials

The ACETS project is commissioning case studies of academic and teaching staff using RLOs in real world settings. As such the project does not itself make use of any materials but rather it observes others who may or may not choose to use these collections. The resources [jump page](http://www.acets.ac.uk/jumppage.asp) provided at <http://www.acets.ac.uk/jumppage.asp> highlights JISC resources in orange and employs an Amazon -style star rating system.

10. Intellectual Property Rights

This is devolved to our exemplifiers and although guidance is given in the Exemplifiers Guide this remains the responsibility and task of each exemplifier within their local organisational context. Negotiation of IPR issues will be one of the evaluation criteria when the exemplars have been submitted.

11. Use of JORUM

We intend to use IntraLibrary, as Xtensis does not support the many Mac users in the project. However as the release of the full version of the system has still not happened, despite many failed deadlines, we have been unable to start using it as we would have liked and indeed need. We have, however, put quite a lot of time into working with JORUM and Intralect over these and related issues.

12. Evaluation

The development of the evaluation methodology continues to evolve, in particular regarding the use of learning design principles in analysing the pedagogical context of RLO use. Subsequent reports will go into this in more detail.

13. Dissemination

Dissemination activity has been relatively low-key recently as the project has successfully built up a good profile across its various constituent communities and successfully recruited its exemplifiers. However, as the exemplars have not been completed or analysed yet there is no big message to disseminate at this stage. Dissemination has therefore been focused on ongoing individual engagement with the various groups already involved or interested in the project and its activities.

It is not expected that there will be any great change over the next 6 months.