

# UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH

## SHELL PROJECT

### Qualitative Research Brief

#### **A: Background**

The SHELL project ([www.shellproject.net](http://www.shellproject.net)) is a joint venture between the University of Plymouth, partner colleges and schools. The project is aiming to link together different record systems at each institution, using modern interoperability standards to exchange data.

By sharing records of results between participating institutions, SHELL is aiming to gather together learner data in the form of a "learner record", to be accessible by students wherever they are in the world using a web based portal. This learner record portal will also be linked to facilities that support learner personal and professional development planning for the future-intended to be available to students long after they leave their place of study.

It is the focus, scope and feature set of this proposed portal that forms the basis for this study.

#### **B: Purpose of the research**

At this stage some qualitative research is required to conduct a 'needs analysis' from the student perspective of a resource such as this.

This research will help inform the strategic planning in relation to the portal development and further work after the lifetime of this project.

#### **C: The Research objectives**

There are a number of objectives that lie behind this research. The questions have the potential to be quite complex so an interview / focus group with selected people is going to be more appropriate than a random sample and/or questionnaire design.

## **C.1: Questions and Issues**

The following sections list questions and issues to focus on in small groups / interviews. Sample screenshots will be provided by Phosphorix.

### **C.1.1 Features available**

- Would students see this kind of website as useful? Why?
- Would students use it? - If so, when?
- What features would students want to see?
- What sort of 'views' of learner record data would students like to see?
- Would students want to be able to 'hide' certain records, such as modules that were taken but failed?
- Would the ability to draw material to send to an employer be helpful?
- Would links to CV builder software be useful?
- Would students like employers to be able to match their data to employer vacancies (with their agreement)?
- If they moved colleges, would they be happy with their new college having access to the previous / existing records?
- Would they like to be able to manage their own personal data & update their details?

### **C.1.2 Personal and Professional Development and Planning**

- Do students record their development planning currently? If so, how?
- Have they used electronic tools for planning personal and professional development before?
- Would they like to integrate this basic learner record with planning software for their personal and professional development?
- What sort of help would they like regarding planning their personal and professional development?

### **C.1.3 Communication / promotion**

- How should a site like this be promoted?
- What would be needed to bring a site like this to prominence with learners?
- What other communication tactics might prove beneficial / effective?

### **C.1.4 Position in relation to other existing web based resources**

- What sort of other similar websites/resources are used by the students?
- In which area(s) is this work duplicating / in competition with other resources?
- What sites should link to the portal?
- What links to other sites should the portal include?
- Should the portal be standalone, or embedded in a different website and if so, where should it be placed?

## D: Student groups to meet

Target Group	Key Contact
Students at a school (Prefer a couple of groups)	Colin Hampton <a href="mailto:champton@lipson.plymouth.sch.uk">champton@lipson.plymouth.sch.uk</a> 01752 294949
Students at further education college (PT/FT) (Prefer a couple of groups)	Jo Johnson Senior Tutor, Exeter College. <a href="mailto:jjohnson@exe-coll.ac.uk">jjohnson@exe-coll.ac.uk</a> 01392 205 399
HE students in HE	David Croot Teaching Fellow, School of Geography <a href="mailto:david.croot@plymouth.ac.uk">david.croot@plymouth.ac.uk</a> 01752 233070
Postgraduate students - Group of PhD researchers	Jon Yorke Lecturer, Educational Development <a href="mailto:Jon.yorke@plymouth.ac.uk">Jon.yorke@plymouth.ac.uk</a> 01752 23 2346
Staff and student practitioners - Group of LTHE students	Jon Yorke Lecturer, Educational Development <a href="mailto:Jon.yorke@plymouth.ac.uk">Jon.yorke@plymouth.ac.uk</a> 01752 23 2346
Students who are returning to study - the 'lifelong learner'	
Staff working with students perspective  Glen Crust, Careers Adviser <a href="mailto:glen.crust@plymouth.ac.uk">glen.crust@plymouth.ac.uk</a> 01752 232763  Sarah Shobrook? HE/FE Partnership perspective?	Jon Yorke Lecturer, Educational Development <a href="mailto:Jon.yorke@plymouth.ac.uk">Jon.yorke@plymouth.ac.uk</a> 01752 23 2346
Employers perspective	Pete Watton – on leave currently

## E: Methodology

The research will be undertaken with the selected groups indicated in Section D of this proposal. Initial arrangement for each meeting with indicated groups is to be made via the 'key contact' listed in the table.

## F: Timing

It would be helpful to complete the research (to report stage) by the end of March for feedback to the forthcoming SHELL Project Board and Team Leader Co-ordination meetings.

## G: Materials

The following materials will be made available

- SHELL Project Briefing Paper (for researcher reference)
- Screenshots of the proposed portal (for student feedback)

**Jon Yorke**  
**SHELL Project**

**23<sup>rd</sup> February 2004**