

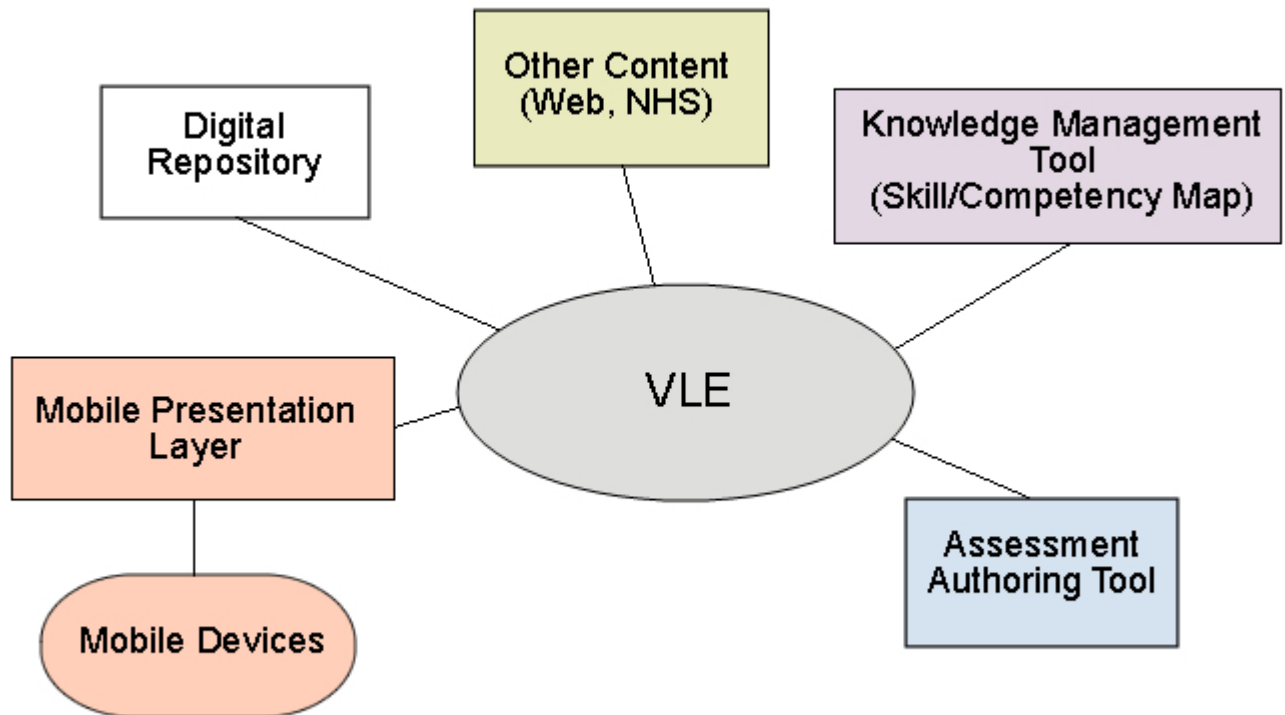
# Extending the Capabilities of the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)

9 August 2006

At the end of July 2006, the ALPS Programme achieved its very aggressive goal of using the Additional Capital that was awarded in mid March 2006. This document provides an update on how this was spent. ALPS was awarded £285,800 by HEFCE to “extend the capability of the Virtual Learning Environment” for assessment and for mobile technologies. This update describes where this additional capital has been spent, with whom it has been spent and how it contributes to the overall programme of Assessment & Learning in Practice Settings (ALPS).

## ALPS Architectural Vision

In May 2006, I presented to the architectural vision of the IT infrastructure that was needed to support the ALPS programme. The basic structure was as follows.



The general approach was approved at the ALPS Joint Management Group meeting on 5 June 2006 and a plan was put in to place to use the additional capital by the end of July 2006 to support this vision, develop the VLE environment and widen our understanding of assessment for ALPS.

## Areas of Spend

As part of this plan we have now made investments in the following areas of ALPS:

Understanding who the major Actors and Players are in an assessment and what assessments are currently in place in the ALPS partners, NHS and professional placements.

Building a framework through which we can advance our understanding and definition of skills and competency mapping.

Investigating how we can enhance the experience of undertaking an assessment through the use of digital objects, mobile technology and new media techniques.

Understanding how we can search digital repositories to access these media objects and build them in to assessments.

Understanding how we can connect mobile technology to the VLE to undertake the collection of assessment data.

The procurement plan has been undertaken by purchasing products and services from a mix of University services, ALPS partner teams and commercial organisations.

## **Details of Commissioning**

The ALPS additional spend has been made with the following organisations:

### **1. BlackBoard / WEBCT**

ALPS have engaged consultants from BlackBoard (including WebCT) to investigate how to develop the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) for assessment and mobile technologies. In order to do this, a programme of interviews has taken place with members of the ALPS partners and professions to understand what assessment methods already exist in practice settings and who the major players are. We have used BlackBoard to do this work as they are the main supplier of VLE's to ALPS partners (BlackBoard x 2; WebCT x 2) and they will deliver a report by mid August 2006.

<http://www.blackboard.com/uki/>

### **2. MyKnowledgeMap (MKM)**

One of the key areas for ALPS is the development of the Skill and Competency maps. MyKnowledgeMap have been engaged to help us develop the framework and process for achieving a first release of a map for Communication Skills. This will enable the group to have a reusable framework and process which can be applied to other competencies such as teamwork and ethical practice.

[www.myknowledgemap.com](http://www.myknowledgemap.com)

### **3. WirelessCiC**

The WirelessCiC (Centre for Industry Collaboration) is a joint University of Leeds and Bradford University partnership who undertake innovative research and collaboration projects with industry in the area of wireless and mobile communications. They have been engaged to assist the ALPS team develop the proposals for implementing a mobile environment for ALPS. We are very pleased to be working with the WirelessCiC team as it brings resources and expertise from two of the ALPS partner institutions in to the programme. These are Electrical Engineering at Leeds and the Mobile and Satellite Communications Research Centre, joint with School of Informatics at Bradford.

[www.wirelesscic.com](http://www.wirelesscic.com)

### **4. University of Leeds Library**

The University of Leeds has just begun the deployment of a digital repository so that they can store non-textual objects in an electronic environment. The repository will store new-media objects, such as audio, pictures and video which will be used to investigate how to enhance the scripting of an assessment.

The repository will support pilot projects from Leeds Metropolitan University and the University College of York St John who will investigate and evaluate the area of digital objects for assessment. Both partners will also be supported by their own University Library teams.

<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/library>

## 5. Leeds Metropolitan University

Leeds Metropolitan has been awarded a pilot project to develop the understanding of using digital objects in assessment. They will establish a link between their VLE (based on WebCT) and the Leeds University Digital Repository MiDESS (based on Endeavor Curator). They will pilot the management of rights to new media on behalf of ALPS and will look at how to build these objects in to composite objects which can form part of an assessment script. The Leeds Metropolitan team will also take advice from Intrallect who has the contract for the deployment of the national HE repository service, Jorum.

[www.leedsmet.ac.uk](http://www.leedsmet.ac.uk)

[www.intrallect.com](http://www.intrallect.com)

## 6. York St John University College

York St John will collaborate with the Leeds Metropolitan University pilot project by developing a second pilot project which looks to develop objects for assessment using their media unit to generate sample content. York St John will work on innovative ideas to deliver assessment through the use of new media objects.

[www.yorks.j.ac.uk](http://www.yorks.j.ac.uk)

## 7. EMC Documentum / SynApps solutions

An objective of the IT strategy is to provide an environment where content appropriate to assessment can be retrieved from diverse sources such as local Higher Education repositories, NHS content and national HE content can be searched for suitable material which can then be used within the VLE and mobile assessment scripts. In order to achieve this we have:

1. Purchased some software from EMC Documentum which will be used to investigate the process of searching repositories and other sources of media objects and then linking these to the Virtual Learning Environment.
1. Commissioned SynApps solutions, who are a partner of EMC, to support the implementation of this work. This will be important for future links with the NHS as Documentum is the chosen repository for NHS content.

[www.documentum.co.uk](http://www.documentum.co.uk)

<http://www.synapps-solutions.com/>

## Summary of Partner Involvement

The ALPS programme is a partnership of five Higher Education Institutions and the partners are involved in delivering elements of this capital spend as follows:

Partner	Group	Project
University of Bradford	WirelessCiC	Mobile Technology
University of Leeds	WirelessCiC	Mobile Technology
	University Library	Digital Repository
Leeds Metropolitan University	ALPS partner	Digital Objects and VLE
York St John	ALPS partner	Generating Digital Objects

## Summary of Commercial Involvement

Company	Role	Task
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BlackBoard (inc WebCT)	Advice on extending the capabilities of the VLE	Analysis of Actors and Players roles in assessment
	VLE supplier	Connection to Digital repository (via Leeds Met)
MyKnowledgeMap	Advice of Skill and Competency mapping	Guidance on a framework for mapping
EMC Documentum / SynApps Solutions	Digital repository searching and NHS content access	Build a VLE connector and use to perform specific searches of Digital non-text information
Endeavor	Provider of Digital repository product – Curator and connector to VLE	Via Leeds University Library – storage and rights management of Digital objects such and voice, picture and video
Intrallect	Advise on building digital objects in to assessments	Consultant via Leeds Met on Learning objects

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