

Supporting Learners in a Digital Age (SLiDA)

Methodology Report

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1. Overview

This is a report of the methodology used to create the case studies which formed the main deliverable from the JISC funded Supporting Learners in a Digital Age (SLiDA) project. Further details about the SLiDA project, including the aims, research questions and main findings can be found in the SLiDA Synthesis Report. The case studies themselves are available at <https://wiki.brookes.ac.uk/display/slidadcases>.

This Methodology Report is intended as an accompaniment to the Final Report for readers who want further information on how the data were collected. It is also likely to be of interest to other projects that are considering case studies as a method for investigating and sharing current practice.

In brief, the SLiDA project ran for eight months (March – October 2010), with the aim of critically examining the strategies, policies and practical developments being implemented by UK higher and further education institutions to support learning in technology rich environments. The intention was to use the creation of case studies as an opportunity to engage institutions with these issues. The project would both result in a collection of 10 case studies recording the innovations at each host institution, and encourage staff in these institutions to look creatively for sources of evidence of learner needs and where necessary, to investigate the impact of their work. For us, the creation of the case studies was conceived of as an active, developmental process.

2. Recruiting and selecting case study sites

2.1 Background and rationale for our case study approach

This project followed on from a programme of research to elicit and capture learners' experiences of e-learning (see <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/learnerexperience>). We were interested to explore the impact of these projects in further and higher education institutions. Putting to one side the detailed findings from the Learner Experiences of E-learning (LEX) studies, they demonstrated the value of listening to learner voices, of engaging learners in decision-making and a need to do more to prepare students for learning in a digital age, including the development of digital literacies.

While institutions have placed 'the student experience' on their strategic agendas, the task of translating learner experiences research findings into teaching and learning practices is just beginning. We know from the LEX studies that the experiences of learners are difficult to elicit, and that they are diverse and complex¹. The Learning Literacies in a Digital Age (LLiDA) project describes how it can be challenging to integrate university services to support learner development at the institutional level². There is clearly much work to be done to understand how individuals learn in the digital age and how this understanding can be best applied at different levels in the

education system from the individual practitioner, department, faculty, service and institution.

The intention of the SLiDA project was to identify institutions that were taking this agenda forward in an institution-wide approach and explore how they were doing this. While we were confident that the case study outputs themselves will be of value to the wider community at the end of the project, the focus on case studies was primarily a way in to the selected institutions. It legitimised the conversations we wanted to have with them about how they were investigating, monitoring and responding to students' needs. We did not attempt to record in detail the full range of institutional practices and policies to support learning in technology-rich environments. Rather, we tried to establish the institutional 'landscape' and context in our early interactions with the case study sites and then focused in more detail on a relatively small number of institutional-level activities that directly addressed our research questions.

It was clear from the start of the project that the selected institutions needed to share our understanding of the rationale and process for the creation of the case studies. In our documentation and conversations we tried to make it explicit that we were interested in their local evaluations, their use of existing research evidence, that we expected openness in their engagement with the project and that we would be asking tough questions and challenging their answers.

2.2 Selecting the case studies

In the project bid we noted that we thought we were 'well networked within the community' and at this stage we had provided a list of 10 possible case study sites to discuss with the JISC. The JISC encouraged us to issue an open call for engagement in the project which was distributed widely through the JISC mailing lists and Regional Support Centres. We very quickly received an additional 20 expressions of interest for involvement in the project.

Although the open call drew our attention to other institutions that we were not aware of and raised the profile of the project, we did not have the capacity to follow up in any detail all of the expressions of interest. Future projects may wish to devote more time to this initial stage of the project. Fortunately for us, there was a JISC initiative running in parallel, creating a group to pilot materials around the development of digital literacies³, and we were able to direct those who had responded to our call to that group.

In deciding which of the 30 available sites to work with, we developed the following selection criteria. We were looking for institutions that:

1. had already begun to evaluate the impact of their initiatives;
2. were taking seriously their responsibility to develop learners' academic, digital and learning literacies;
3. were interested in examining the evidence they had available for making decisions about learner development;
4. would be willing to share their innovations (both progress and challenges) with the sector.

We selected 10 case study sites to work with: seven higher education, two further education and one specialist college. Of these, nine continued to the end of the project and their case studies have been published. One withdrew shortly before the visit stage, citing lack of time to contribute to project and specifically, a clash with the proposed timing of the visit at busy periods at the start and end of term.

2.3 The welcome pack

As this was a short project and we had specific aims for the case study methodology as explained previously, we produced a welcome pack for the selected institutions.

This included:

- A welcome letter which outlined the expected time allocation needed to engage with the project (Appendix 1)
- A copy of the welcome letter to be signed by a manager and returned, confirming their engagement with the project.
- Participant Information Sheet for the project (Appendix 2)
- Confirmation of the ethical approval obtained for the project and example consent forms that they would be asked to fill out at later stages (Appendix 3).
- Introduction to a named consultant who would be working with them throughout the project.

There was some feedback from case studies sites about the 'heavy handed' legal tone of the introductory letter, particularly around intellectual property. This letter had been produced in collaboration with the Legal Services department of the lead institution (Oxford Brookes University). The letter had to be signed by someone with the authority to sign on behalf of the university – necessary for legal documents but not to express support of a small project such as this. Many of the case study sites passed the letter to their legal support services for checking, which meant that a signed copy was not returned for many months. In some cases, we were still chasing these after the case study had been written.

The welcome letter then did not fulfil its intended function of confirming institutional support at the start of the project. Although we had originally intended not to proceed with data collection until signed letters were received, because we were aware of the delays in the return of the letter, we did not wait for their return before proceeding. There were some losses then in time and costs devoted to the case study which did not complete. Future projects might want to be aware of the time needed to allow for the necessary legal work to be completed. In our case, with hindsight, we could have split the institutional commitment (which largely concerned the visit) and intellectual property notices (which largely concerned the writing of the case study) into two separate agreements.

The welcome packs were sent out in two stages. A group of five case study sites who were ready to proceed received their packs first, with the second group being sent out a month later. This staggered start turned out to be useful. It allowed the case study sites to proceed at a pace which suited them, with some needing a little longer to consider the focus for their case studies. It also gave us the opportunity to reflect on and learn from the earlier case study interactions and feed this into the later case study visits.

3. Data collection

3.1 The case study template

The data collection centred on the information needed to complete a case study template. In devising our template we drew on examples from the JISC Effective Practice with e-Learning Guide⁴ and the snapshot proforma from the LLiDA project⁵. The template underwent multiple revisions and improvements during the project as we developed our understanding of how the case study sites would be able to contribute to the SLiDA research questions.

An early version of the case study template is included in Appendix 4. This maps the questions onto the data collection opportunities to be used to help complete each section. Feedback from the case study sites indicated that the terminology here was too focussed on 'projects'. The initiatives taking place at some institutions had been facilitated by projects – but others had not. In brief the case study template prompted questions related to:

- the rationale for developments
- background, especially institutional context
- technology being used
- implementation process and progress to date
- benefits for learners
- evaluation of the project effectiveness for learner experience
- challenges and drawbacks
- future plans for development
- summary and recommendations.

The draft case study template shows that while several of the broad topic headings listed could be covered in just one interaction with a participant, most would be returned to several times over the course of three or four interactions with each participant. The idea was that over the course of these multiple interactions we would build up a more detailed picture under each topic.

3.2 A cycle of interactions

A cycle of multiple interactions was planned to take place between the case study site and members of the project team. It was noted that this was useful to keep the case study representatives focussed on the questions relevant to the SLiDA project. The planned interactions are listed and then discussed below:

- A phone call to build a background picture of work at the institution.
- An online workshop to share project aims and consider evaluation tools and forms of evidence.
- A site visit to collect and record experiences from others involved in the institutional developments.
- Document sharing to produce a case study outlining what has been done at the institution, how it is being evaluated and any findings and recommendations.

Around these key events, the consultants kept an ongoing conversation with each of their case study sites.

3.2.1. First phone call

Each case study site was linked with a named consultant from the project team. After the welcome pack had been sent out, the consultant made contact with the case study site participants, clarifying who were the appropriate people to talk to and arranging a first phone call. A set of questions were prepared in advance for each phone call (see Appendix 5), which was used to build a background picture of work at the institution. This was also the first key stage in a process of building a trusting, open relationship between the case study participants and their consultant.

3.2.2. Online workshops

After the initial phone call, two online workshops were held (in Elluminate) - one for each of the two groups of case study sites. The purpose of the workshops was to explain the overall aims of the project and create a sense of belonging and commitment to the SLiDA project and its aims. The programme for one of the workshops is shown in Figure 1.

After a brief introduction from the project lead, the first activity demonstrated to the case study sites the aspects of their work that we were interested in. Each case study site spoke for five minutes around a slide they had submitted in advance, and then the project team members generated follow up questions from the presentations. These were used to indicate the kinds of questions we would be interested in following up through the subsequent ongoing conversations and visits e.g. our interest in evaluation as well as implementation.

1.15 - 1.35	Preliminary Elluminate Orientation Activity	GB
1.40 - 1.50	Introduction to the SLiDA project	RS
1.50 - 2.20	Participants introduce themselves	All
	Participants – present a slide to introduce their project (5 minutes each)	JH
	University of Wolverhampton	ML
	Thornbeck College	BM
	London Met	CF
	Oxford Brookes	RF
	Birkenhead College	CH
2.20-2.30	Summarising similarities & differences in projects	JH
2.35- 3.00	Break	
3.00 -3.45	Project evaluation group activity	All
3.45 - 4.00	Questions & next steps	RS, GB & JH

*Figure 1:
Example programme from one of the online workshops*

As an example, the question list from one of the workshops was:

- How has your work been influenced by student feedback and/or student needs?
- How do you know that student voices have made a difference?
- What methods are you using to hear student voices directly? (not mediated/outdated/assumptions?)
- What staff CPD is helping staff to develop their digital literacies?
- How successful has the innovation been? How do you know?
- Did any frameworks underpin your planning to develop students' digital literacies?
- How do we combine strategy with embedding?

The second activity was designed to engage case study participants with the nine SLiDA research questions. Participants were asked to start to map themselves against the research questions. The intention was that they would start to see how each case study would contribute to the whole, for example why we might not be asking them one particular aspect of their work, but not about others.

3.2.3. Document sharing

Case study participants were invited to share documentation to support their claims at every stage in the data collection process. Documents were selected from these as 'assets' to augment the final web-based representation of the case studies (see Section 4.3). In order to encourage an open conversation between participants and

project team members, participants were able to give consent for documents to be used in different ways (see Section 3.3).

3.2.4. Site visit

The visit was the culmination of an ongoing conversation over the previous three to four months. The purpose of the site visit was to conduct interviews with key individuals. The prior conversations allowed us to select appropriate people from across the university. The advance notice given for the visits helped gain access to senior managers. We also tried to see students at all visits, although this was not always possible, and as always, time of year was crucial. Where we were able to see students we found it useful to talk to them first, as their perspectives helped in forming questions for staff.

Consultants prepared a detailed schedule for the visit (see Appendix 6 for an example) and shared this with the case study site in advance, showing how each interview would help to tell their particular story, mapped against the SLiDA research questions. This was a crucial stage to clarify the intentions of the data collection.

Interviews were both audio and video recorded. The audio was used to create full transcripts of each interview, using a professional transcription service.

The intention was that project team members would go in pairs to the visits. We have found in previous projects that a pair of interviewers promotes deeper, more focussed questioning. In a tight schedule it can also allow for interviews to run in parallel. In three of the nine visits, this was not possible due to diary commitments, illness and weather. It is worth noting though that these visits would likely have been cancelled if only a single project member had been booked initially. Pairs offered us some protection in a short project. When working in pairs, we found that we needed to make time to discuss each case study prior to the visit in order to clarify, agree and articulate the story for each institution. This preparation helped to keep the conversations during the visits focused.

Overall the key features of the visits were the need to get as much from a single day as possible by meeting the right people who were well prepared for our visit. Second, was the need for clarity and shared understanding of the story to be told. Sometimes participants and interviewees wanted to tell one story of what was happening at their institution, when we were interested in another. Preparation was crucial, as was the timing of the visits towards the end of our data collection process.

3.3 Ethical considerations

Ethical approval for the project was obtained from the Oxford Brookes University Research Ethics Committee (UREC). In order to obtain approval and in line with established ethical good practice we asked each case study site to return signed copies of the welcome letter and to confirm that sole approval by UREC was sufficient for their institution to contribute (as we would be meeting some of their staff and students). No incentives were offered other than the opportunity to have publicized their institutional practices and policies for learner support in technology-rich learning environments.

Consent was obtained from each interviewee for participation in the study and for their interview to be audio and video recorded (see Appendix 3). We also asked interviewees to sign the JISC Image Consent Form⁶. We asked each individual to give their permission (which could be withdrawn at any time) for quotes from the transcripts and/or extracts from the videos to be used in the final case studies. Prior to publication of the case studies, we checked back the quotes and extracts we had selected with their originator. Everyone who appears in the final case studies has agreed for their identity to be associated with their quote(s) and/or video extracts.

Each time case study participants provided a document, they specified how it could be used (see Appendix 2) from these four options:

- a. For SLiDA project team eyes only; do not divulge content or sources
- b. Content may be reported but the institution and/or the individuals associated with it should be de-identified in publications
- c. A public document that may be cited and quoted and sources identified
- d. Specific treatment as specified below:

It is worth noting that in some cases this form was not filled in correctly, with the document title and author not being completed and the form may need some minor redesign prior to reuse.

4. Co-creating the case studies

4.1 Telling the story

We deliberately used the terminology 'co-creation' to describe how we envisioned the final representation of each case study would be produced. We had a very specific story to tell about each case study and we used succinct titles, sentences and straplines to help us stay focussed. At the final stage of creating the outputs we used a framework of plain English questions to tell the story from each institution:

- Institution
- Strapline, phrased as a question (e.g. How is Salford University embedding digital literacies into the curriculum?)
- What's the story?
- What has happened?
- What has been the student experience of these initiatives?
- What has been achieved?
- What advice would you give to others?

Even at this late stage, one or two of the case study sites asked to make substantial changes to the text which had been drafted. Such co-creation is complex and requires careful negotiation. It was a feature of this project that we were mining the institutions for information to help us answer our questions, rather than listening passively to the story they wanted to showcase. At times this tension could be challenging, frustrating, productive and all of these things.

4.2 Dissemination events

In order to support the co-creation of the case studies, colleagues from case study sites were invited to participate in project dissemination events from the start of the project. This helped in coming to a shared understanding of their story and became part of the data collection. The dissemination events were:

- 24 June 2010, ELESIG online seminar on supporting learners in a digital age, with contributions from Birkenhead Sixth Form College.
- 13 July 2010, JISC Learning and Teaching Experts Group, with contributions from Edinburgh University and Surrey University.
- 6-9 September 2010, symposium at the Association for Learning Technology conference and pre-conference workshop with contributions from Salford University and Glamorgan University.
- 6 October 2010, ELESIG event in London with contributions from Surrey University, Oxford Brookes University and Wolverhampton University (see the ELESIG site for videos from this event⁷).
- 10 March 2011, JISC Conference with contributions from Birkenhead Sixth Form College and Salford University.

4.3 Online outputs

The final case study outputs were prepared for online rather than print presentation. We worked to extremely tight word limits and tried to keep the language as clear as possible. Having full transcripts of the interviews and a collection of documentation to hand was essential in being able to illustrate the case studies with key quotes.

As well as being succinct, online presentation allowed us to produce rich media case studies. The original intention was that we would collect video at the site visits and edit out a few suitable extracts for each output. We found this was much harder to do than expected. Despite having a high quality video camera, we did not always have the skill or time necessary to set up and operate the camera during the interview. The video obtained was of variable quality and took considerable time to edit. We did find however that most sites already had video and/or audio which they had produced and we linked to or uploaded extracts from what was available.

We used some of the project funded to allow a web developer to make the case studies available online. As well as dealing with the media, the developer created a navigable interface, with multiple ways of finding and browsing through the studies. Working with a professional developer in the final stages helped us with version control of the documents with only two versions permissible: draft and final.

Another reason for our choice of online delivery is that it allows us to provide further resources (or 'assets') to extend each case study. We anticipated that these would be real items used in practice such as course handbooks, activity briefs, strategy documents or implementation plans. As we have found previously, these are quite difficult to obtain, but they are the kinds of resources which are meaningful to practitioners and worth sharing.

We were asked for print versions of the case studies at the end of the project but this would take re-versioning which we were not resourced to do. It might be useful for future projects to anticipate that there is still demand for print versions.

We had clear reasons then for creating an online resource. It would be interesting to assess the extent to which the resources are being used in the ways anticipated.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Reflections on a case study methodology

Case studies are widely used in projects such as these, which are attempting to identify, locate and share practice in the sector. We were aware from the start that there was a great deal of variation in the style and purpose of such studies. Rather than collating showcases, we intended the co-creation of these case studies to be a developmental intervention. We saw benefits in both improving our understanding of the challenges of supporting learners from the start of the project and in provoking staff at our host institutions to question the approaches they were adopting. At one of the dissemination events (Section 4.3) staff from a case study shared their reasons for and experiences of being a case study as:

- Sharing and promoting Surrey's work – nationally and internally
- Becoming part of a network; future collaboration
- Opportunity to pause and review; question what we do
- Catalyst for further internal conversation and collaboration
- Part of a process, not end in itself

This goes some way to support our original rationale. However, it also highlighted for us the potential for evaluating the case study's experiences. It would have been

valuable to build in some time to the project to elicit reflections from the case studies on their experiences.

We do know however that at least two of the case study sites are using the experience of the SLiDA case studies to continue such an approach. Edinburgh University, are gathering examples of good practice in learning and teaching from across the College of Science and Engineering to help inform future practice across the college. Based on experiences in the SLiDA project, it has been decided to develop these examples as a knowledge base of short, focused, interactive online case studies grouped into crosscutting themes. At Oxford Brookes University, the model of the SLiDA case studies has informed a project to collect case studies of how modules and programmes are embedding the university's new graduate attributes.

5.2 Recommendations for projects using case studies

- a. Allow time to circulate invitations for case study sites and anticipate the demands of the selection process.
- b. Anticipate institutional legal and financial approval processes and simplify these as far as possible.
- c. Establishing a trusting, open relationship with case studies is important in eliciting data. For us, the knowledge and skills of the consultants was crucial, and they were helped by having a small number of sites each allocated to them. The continuity in contact between the case study site and a single, named consultant was important from the start.
- d. The cycle of multiple interactions helped to keep case study sites focussed on our research questions and assisted in creating a sense of belonging and commitment to the project and its aims.
- e. Visits are expensive and time consuming. For us they worked well as the culmination of the data collection process. Consultants needed at least a day between visits and preferred to work in pairs.
- f. Audio recordings were essential for data collection and subsequent transcription. Most sites were able to provide us with video without us needing to collect it.
- g. Co-creation (as opposed to collection) of case studies is complex and requires negotiation. Engaging colleagues in dissemination events helped to develop a shared understanding of their story.
- h. Build in evaluation from the start: Take time to ask participants what they got out of being a case study and think about how to evaluate how your resources are being used.

5. References and notes

¹ See the final Synthesis Report from the Support and Synthesis project of Phase 2 Learner Experiences of E-Learning programme at <https://mw.brookes.ac.uk/display/JISCle2f/Findings>

² See the final report from the Learning Literacies in a Digital Age project at <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/projects/elearningllida.aspx>

³ See the outputs from the JISC Digital Literacies Pilot Materials project at <http://cloudworks.ac.uk/cloud/view/4293>

⁴ The case study template used in the JISC Effective Practice with E-learning Guide is at www.jisc.ac.uk/uploaded_documents/casestudytemplate.doc

⁵ The proforma used to collect snapshots for the LLiDA project is available at <http://www.academy.gcal.ac.uk/llida/exemp.html>

⁶ The image consent form is available as part of the JISC Intellectual Property Rights Toolkit at <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/publications/programmerelated/2009/scaiprtoolkit/2modelconsentform.aspx>

⁷ Videos of some of the SLiDA case studies presenting at ELESIG event are available (ELESIG login required) at:

Surrey

<http://elesig.ning.com/video/the-slida-project-colab-12>

<http://elesig.ning.com/video/the-slida-project-colab-22>

Oxford Brookes –

<http://elesig.ning.com/video/the-slida-project-codifying>

<http://elesig.ning.com/video/the-slida-project-codifying-1>

<http://elesig.ning.com/video/the-slida-project-codifying-2>

Wolverhampton-

<http://elesig.ning.com/video/the-slida-project-what-works>

<http://elesig.ning.com/video/slida-what-works-for-students>

Appendix 1: Welcome letter

Dear xxxx

Thank you for your interest in taking part in the study of how UK further and higher education institutions are supporting learners in a digital age (SLiDA). We are writing to seek your agreement to become one of the 10 case studies. The study is funded by the Joint Information Systems Committee (the JISC) and this letter contains the provisions for you and the other case study institutions to comply with the terms and conditions of the JISC funding. I would be grateful if you could ensure that the duplicate copy of the letter enclosed is returned to me after signature by an authorized signatory. Further information about the project is provided on the enclosed information sheet.

Our intention is that the case studies will document, not just the developments taking place at your institution, but also the way in which they are using what is known about learners' needs, expectations and experiences. We are keen to find out what evidence you have drawn on in developing your institutional innovations and how you are involving learners in the ongoing evaluations of your developments. The SLiDA project team will work collaboratively with you to identify what evidence you have available from learners and what further evaluations you could conduct. If you agree to take part in the study, we would expect that we would have access to local sources of evidence and we will also ask you to share with us documents exemplifying your institutions' policies and practices in supporting learners.

In terms of your time commitment, you will need to be available for

- a phone call (about an hour) to take a history of developments at your institution and answer any questions you have about the study;
- a ½ day workshop (online), together with some of the other institutional case study sites, to discuss forms of evidence and evaluation tools. This will be held on **27 May 2010**;
- a site visit, at a mutually convenient date before the end of July 2010, during which we would need to speak with a range of staff and possibly students;
- checking the text of the case study prior to publication.

There is no funding available to support your time to this study. We hope though that you will find it valuable to work with the project team to identify, find and collect evidence which helps you to improve the development of effective learners at your own institution, and which enables us to make recommendations of use to the sector more broadly.

It is a condition of the JISC award of funding that Oxford Brookes University owns the intellectual property (IP) in the project and then grants the JISC an absolute licence to use all the project outputs. In addition, the JISC has the right to insist on the transfer to it of the ownership of all the project IP from the University. Note also that a standard clearance letter must be approved by the

JISC and used where third party IP is proposed to be incorporated so you will need to alert us if that is likely to become an issue.

The award conditions include the requirement for the case study institutions to consent to the use of quotes, images and references on the JISC website as part of the dissemination delivered by the project. We expect to have access to local sources of evidence and we will also ask you to share with us documents exemplifying your institutions' policies and practices in supporting learners. Individuals will be asked to sign the enclosed consent forms when providing documentation and participating in interviews as part of this study; the individuals will be acting on behalf of their institution where the copyright is not their own, e.g. where it belongs to their employer institution.

Consequently, you are asked to sign the duplicate copy letter enclosed to show you agree that:

- 1) you assign to the University all existing or future intellectual property you create for or incorporate into the project
and
- 2) you will not include any intellectual property belonging to a third party unless this has been discussed and approved by the University and the JISC

Each case study site will be linked with a named member of the project team. Your link person will be Shalni Gulati. Shalni will contact you within the next two weeks to arrange an initial phone call. If you have any questions in the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact us.

I thank you for your co-operation and look forward to working with you in progressing the study.

Rhona Sharpe

Enc

Participant information sheet

Sample consent forms (for information)

I, an authorized signatory for the institution addressed by this letter, have read, understood and agree to the terms of participation set out above.

Signature.....

Printed name.....

Printed job title.....

Date.....

Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet

Supporting Learners in a Digital Age (SLiDA)

Participant Information Sheet (Staff Participants)

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?

The aim of this study is to critically examine the strategies, policies and practical developments being implemented by UK higher and further education institutions to support learning in technology rich environments. The ultimate aim is to promote strategies that support learners to develop the access, skills, strategies and attributes they need to learn effectively with technology.

Why have I been invited to participate?

Ten case study institutions — universities and colleges of further education — were chosen as sites for this study, based on consultations by research team members with practitioner networks and the JISC. You have been chosen to participate as a staff member within one of the case study institutions, because of your knowledge of and/or involvement with your institution's support of students' use of technology for learning. There are between two and three staff participants in each case study institution.

Do I have to take part?

Taking part in the research is entirely voluntary. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign consent forms. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be invited to participate in a group web conference involving the research team and several other participating case study institutions, a group interview on site at your institution and a series of telephone and/or web conference calls in the interim period between these two events. Each of these will be audio/video recorded to provide us with accurate records of what you said. We will also ask you to share with us documents exemplifying your institutions' policies and practices in supporting learners. We would expect the total time commitment by you to this project to be about 8 hours, possibly up to 12 hours if you are the primary contact between your institution and the research team.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part? (where appropriate)

There is no risk to you beyond that involved in normal working life.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

By participating in this study you will assist us to disseminate effective policies and practices for supporting learners in technology-rich learning environments and gain publicity and reputation for your institution's policies and/or practices in this regard.

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?

The published case study materials will identify all the case study institutions and also the respondents within them. Do not join this study if you want to remain anonymous. Please note as well that as a named participant it is possible for data you have provided to be subject to subpoena, freedom of information claim or mandated reporting by some professions.

The data generated in the course of the research will be kept securely in paper and electronic form for a period of five years after the completion of the project.

What should I do if I want to take part?

You should sign a consent form and return it to the SLiDA researcher who contacted you. They will then make an appointment for a further meeting with you.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

Please turn over ... The results of this study will be published as ten individual case studies, with the possibility of supporting video clips. They will be widely disseminated at conferences and the case studies will be freely available at the JISC web site (www.jisc.ac.uk).

Who is organising and funding the research?

This study is funded by the JISC (www.jisc.ac.uk). The research team consists of: Dr Rhona Sharpe and Dr Greg Benfield (OCSLD, Oxford Brookes University), Dr Shalni Gulati (Answers 2000) and Dr Judy Hardy (School of Physics and Astronomy, University of Edinburgh).

Who has reviewed the study?

This research project has been submitted for approval by the University Research Ethics Committee, Oxford Brookes University (decision pending)

Contact for Further Information

For further information about this project please contact Dr Rhona Sharpe on rsharpe@brookes.ac.uk or +44 1865 485923.

If you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted you should contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee on ethics@brookes.ac.uk.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Rhona Sharpe

28 April 2010

Appendix 3: Example consent forms

Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development

Wheatley Campus Wheatley Oxford OX33 1HX UK
t. +44 (0)1865 485774 f. +44 (0)1865 485937
ocslid@brookes.ac.uk
www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocsd

Supporting Learners in a Digital Age (SLiDA)

Name, position and contact address of Researcher:

Dr Rhona Sharpe, Principal lecturer, OCSLD, Wheatley Campus, Oxford Brookes University, Wheatley OX33 1HX

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.
3. I agree to take part in the above study.

Please tick box

4. I agree to interviews being audio recorded
5. I agree to interviews being video recorded and have signed the JISC release form regarding this
6. I agree to the use of identified quotes in publications

Yes

No

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of Researcher

Date

Signature

Supporting Learners in a Digital Age (SLiDA)

Consent to use supplied document form

Most of the documents you share with us will probably be public. However, you may have reasons to share with us internal documents that you do not want reported publically, or whose authors' identities you wish to remain anonymous. In order to tell us how you want your documents treated in this regard, please attach this form to the document you are supplying to the SLiDA research team. Mark the relevant box to tell us how you want us to treat its contents with regard to public dissemination.

Title and author of document:

Please treat the contents of the attached document as follows:	Initial (one box only)
1 For SLiDA project team eyes only; do not divulge content or sources	
2 Content may be reported but the institution and/or the individuals associated with it should be de-identified in publications	
3 A public document that may be cited and quoted and sources identified	
4 Specific treatment as specified below:	
5 If the documents you supply to us for our research purpose contain personal data, then please make sure that the disclosure of that personal information does not breach data protection guidelines.	

Your name

Your signature

Appendix 4: Early version of case study template

This template is being designed to highlight the key areas to be presented in the final Case Study reports

Headings	Further explanations/Questions (& which data collection opportunities will help to complete these sections)
Abstract/brief description	A short description of this case study designed to give a reader the key points of context, the focus of the development project, approach and outcomes. It is usually best to write this section last.
Rationale for the development project	A description of the original challenge including the background/changes in institutional practices, priorities, strategies and learners, subject and/or societal needs, that led to this development project. Why do you feel more needed to be done to support the learners? <i>(Initial phonecall, Elluminate session, Visit)</i>
Context	Characteristics of the institution: student profile, research/teaching balance, size, location, programme portfolio Institutional strategies, and how is the support for digital literacies and using technologies to enhance learning rated in these strategies and existing practices <i>(Initial phonecall, Elluminate session)</i>
Development project - Which technologies ?	Which technologies were the students using for their learning for the project and how? Which technologies did you introduce to the students to support their learning and how? <i>(Elluminate session & Visit)</i>
Implementation of the project	The process of implementation including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • description of the process • including challenges and opportunities & how these were utilized to benefit the development and enhance student support opportunities? • how many learners are engaged in the project and over what period of time? • is the project embedded in practice? • is learner involvement assessed /

	<p>contributes to final grade?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support strategies developed for learner • changes in staff roles/responsibilities due to the project (<i>Illuminate session & Visit</i>)
Benefits for the learners	Details of tangible benefits (need to review original research questions for guidance & add here)
Evaluation of project effectiveness for learner experience	<p>Evaluation completed by the research team and the institutional teaching & project implementation teams etc.</p> <p>Student evaluations & feedback</p> <p>Quotes : video/audio clips</p> <p>Focus group interviews</p> <p><i>(Visit & support for and engagement of institutional project lead in ongoing evaluation)</i></p>
Challenges & drawbacks of the project	<p>Description of any unintended outcomes</p> <p>Consequences on staff time and commitment</p> <p>Problems of scaling up the project, sustaining the project and/or cascading it to other areas/students</p> <p><i>(Visit and subsequent email exchanges/phone calls)</i></p>
Future plans for developments	<p>How is the project going to progress and develop further?</p> <p>How is the project going to scaled up?</p> <p>Has the project influenced policy and practice in such a way that these influences will affect other areas of practice in the future?</p> <p><i>(Visit and subsequent email exchanges/phone calls)</i></p>
Summary	<p>How is this approach supporting learners in a digital age?</p> <p>Project implementers/leaders understanding of digital literacy</p> <p>Value of this approach for other institutions</p> <p>Recommendations for others who may take on this approach</p>

Appendix 5: Initial phone call questions

This working draft following includes the processes we need to consider before, during and after the phone calls. In addition there are questions we need to ask during the phone call and prepare for the Elluminate workshop.

Pre- phone call prep *Prior to the phone calls the consultants may want to search institutions' websites to review and search for the following. About us page? policy / strategy documents? Webpages describing online learning developments? Webpages describing the projects to be explored Search for any publications by contacts and others identified in the initial summary (Google Scholar).*

Email contact to arrange time for phone call and remind them of the project aims etc. (Could send them the following list of questions prior to the phone call)

Initial Phone call

(These questions are intended to get an overall picture of the institution's focus on digital literacies and to identify key contacts for the development project; questions can be selected during the phone call and emailed to the contact to get more detailed information, e.g. documents, numbers of students etc)

Introduce the project and how data collection is organised. Inform the purpose of the phone call.

The institution

- Name of institution

-
- Institution type: College/ Russell Group/ Post-1992 / Pre-1992

1. Understanding the context

a. Policies/strategy

- What would you say is the main vision/philosophy of your institution?
- Access to institutional vision/mission document (send via email)
- Institutional approach/focus on teaching/ research/ e-learning: Is the focus of institutional vision on Research and/or teaching balance? Why? (time and resources put into research and teaching?)
- Is there a separate e-learning strategy?
- How important is e-learning within your institution's overall learning and teaching framework? Please explain.

- What were the pushes and pulls? Drivers? Opportunities? Challenges?)
- Access to documents (send via email): Learning & Teaching strategy; (?) e-learning strategy; Research strategy
- What is the significance your institution gives to developing students' digital skills and other learning skills/literacies? How is this evident?

b. Students

- Demographics of the students in institution & the department where the innovation is based?
- What is the ratio of students in the following groups:
 - Traditional : non-traditional groups
 - Postgraduate : Undergraduate population
 - PhD student numbers
 - Home students : Overseas students
 - Age groups

c. Support & Access

- How are staff and learners supported to develop learning and digital skills?
- Who is responsible for providing this support?
 - learning support unit for students
 - staff development support unit
 - e-learning unit
 - Information services
 - Other?
- Are the above units based in each department/school/faculty or do they run centrally?

Evidence Projects to support and enhance learning in a digital age

Can you please confirm the original development/project you identified to be the focus for the SLiDA project? The project should support and enhance learning through use of digital technologies. (please see original summary sent to the SLiDA team re the project.

If the institution's position has changed and you would like to propose an alternative development project for SLiDA, please can you identify an alternative project with description.

- Can you please give contacts of people who are involved in and leading this developments and will be willing to share information on this project?
- Are you aware on any publications, documentation and/or evaluation associated with these projects?

Inform them of the future plan for gathering data through illuminate workshops and one institutional visit.

Answer their questions.

Follow up with email summary and request for any documents