

# SAMSON

Shared Architecture for eEmployer, Student and Organisational Networking

# JISC

## An evolving infrastructure for expanding collaborations between universities and business

The SAMSON project aims to provide the university sector in the UK with access to a generic, scalable infrastructure model, to support the expansion of processes and services needed for new higher education/business partnerships and learning activities.

The SAMSON infrastructure will be capable of continuous evolution, drawing in an ever-widening range of stakeholders across institutions and generating increasingly rich information and connections.

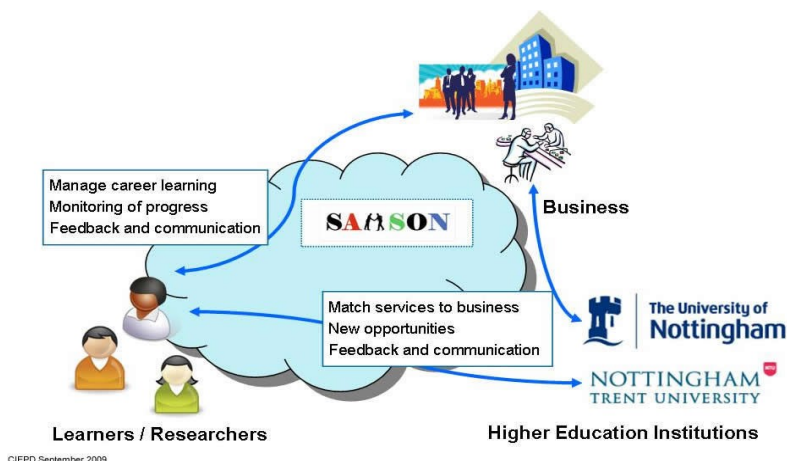
This underpinning model, based on flexible services, roles and processes, will transfer to other scenarios where relationship building outside of the institution can be enhanced by IT without compromising security.

## Enhanced university-business communications for students' work placements and short courses for employees

This project's main focus is enhanced communications between learners, universities and employers for postgraduate students' placements and continuing professional development (CPD) and/or learning and development (L&D).

Led by the University of Nottingham's Centre for International ePortfolio Development, both Nottingham universities are taking part in SAMSON. Activities so far involve Graduate Schools, Business Schools, Biosciences, Engineering and other academic disciplines. Employer partners include small and medium-sized businesses and large companies across the East Midlands region, with national and international reach.

The project will provide a joined-up experience for postgraduate students, employers and employees, and for university staff developing employer engagement activities.



## Benefits 2009-2011

- Improved efficiency and integration of activities around employer engagement in the universities and region
- Technology enabling users and service providers to collaborate securely and dynamically, joining up existing systems
- Enhanced progress tracking, feedback and relationship-building
- Demonstrated through the engagement of a minimum of 100 learners and 10 businesses in at least 3 different disciplines/sectors.

## Securely shared architecture for partnership working

SAMSON aims to provide portals to give users secure access to relevant and role-based data and to show how this provision can enhance the relationships an institution has with its employers. It will demonstrate how an 'all-in-one-place' employer service can enhance a university's strategic co-ordination of its relationship-building with business.

## A Window onto the University

### Pilot 1

#### Biosciences research project placements for MSc students

The Mahara Open Source ePortfolio is being used to support communications between the University academic staff, the students, the University placement manager and employer mentors. Students create weekly updates on their project progress, access announcements, record and track professional and academic skills gained while on the placement.



Mahara, hosted at the University for SAMSON, is fully available to the students and University staff. Employers based in the East Midlands, and as far afield as Canada, are being offered a portal interface to view the aspects of the students' ePortfolio that they need to see. A clean, targeted interface enables the employer to view only relevant information that the student has chosen to share with them.

Using common standards means that the workplace manager's portal can present required information about employees in the same way, irrespective of which one of many different ePortfolios and systems they may be using.

This 'window onto the University' enables the employer to access information about other opportunities within the University, through secure access to relevant data, and allows the University to promote further relevant services in a targeted way to develop partnerships further.

#### Reusable web services

The technical developments prioritise re-using working systems and transforming existing data in real time into open standards, moving via web services.

#### Standards used

XCRI	LEAP2A	SAML/ XACML
Shibboleth	OWL-S	RDF
BPEL4PEOPLE	HR-XML	

### Who are we?

The University of Nottingham Centre for International ePortfolio Development (ClePD) is funded by JISC, the EU and others to carry out research projects into how eportfolios support learning, transitions and collaborations between institutions and between learning and work, widening participation, and Information, advice and guidance (IAG).

We work with a large number of regional partners including Connexions, schools and colleges, other universities, Lifelong Learning Networks, employers and national agencies.

### Pilot 2

#### Secure sharing for employer partners, placement opportunities and student researchers

The University of Nottingham's Graduate School is delivering a joint ERDF project with Nottingham Trent University to place students into Nottinghamshire SMEs. SAMSON has developed the Open Source OPUS work placement system to support the specific requirements of the project, enhancing both the administration and the advertising of placements.

The project is providing a secure Shibboleth environment for both universities to share the system, with single sign-on for the students and improved administration for the staff.

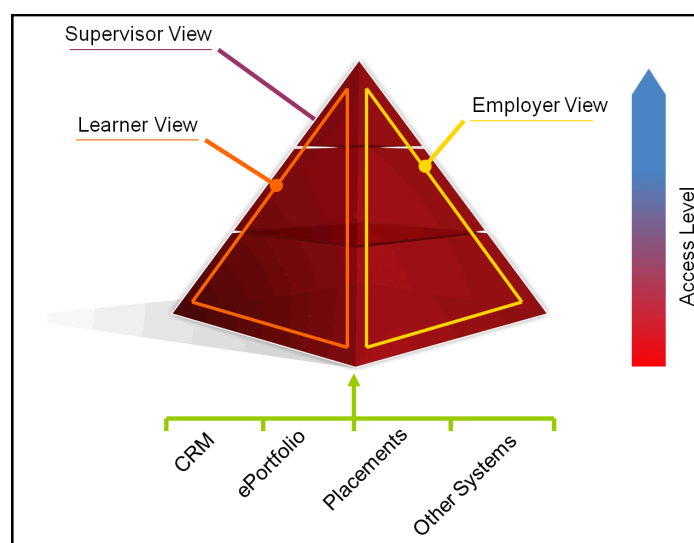


Fig 1 illustrates the technical challenge of managing the many facets of user type and data access. Each user has their own 'view' - the data is re-used and displayed through web services underpinning the architecture.

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#### References:

[www.nottingham.ac.uk/eportfolio/Samson/index.shtml](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/eportfolio/Samson/index.shtml)