

Centre for International ePortfolio Development, University of Nottingham (CiePD)

## Opportunities for the Region Trialling X-Border Common Application Process and Course Discovery with XCRI

### Briefing Paper and Terms of Reference

The following project seeks to maximise the efficiency of information flow, supporting access to seamless services and quality information for learners in the region, and supporting implementation of 14-19 FE reforms in terms of both quality and affordability.

The proposal consists of three strands of work, all building on previous projects and expertise in the Centre for International ePortfolio Development (CiePD). Various regional partners are providing practical developments to support cross-consortia and cross-partnership working (14-19 partnerships DCSF "14-19 reform next steps"\*) to develop cross-border information and applications for learners.

The project runs until January 2010.

#### Scope of the project

This five-month project is extending the partnerships and technical developments that collaborated in recent interoperability work to enhance the Area Prospectus services in the East Midlands. The results of this cross-border pilot will be offered to the DCSF and to JISC to inform recommendations for future work.

<b>Strand 1: Trialling a CAP Standard</b>	
<b>Proposal:</b>	<p><i>"To ensure that the information gathered is consistent between areas, we intend to set core fields for the CAP" (p. 29) *</i></p> <p><i>"(we) will work with stakeholders to consult and agree the core fields for the CAP and publish the results of this work in August" (p.29) *</i></p> <p>This strand will identify a set of core data fields used in the 5 East Midlands Area Prospectuses' Common Application Processes, informed by similar work being undertaken in Greater Manchester and DCSF consultations.</p>
<b>Impact:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Will offer a local solution to inform the DCSF standards and vocabulary recommendations</li> <li>✓ Will provide an early prototype for CAP interoperability in the East Midlands region</li> </ul>
<b>Description:</b>	<p>This process will involve:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sharing CAP data structures</li> <li>- Identification of Core elements for all CAPs</li> <li>- Rapid 'strawman' developments for discussion and sharing with a border region</li> <li>- Development of a standard to inform the development of strand 2</li> </ul>
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## Strand 2: Common Application Process Service for 14-19

<b>Proposal:</b>	<p><i>"(DCSF objective) to ensure that cross-border applications are achievable"</i> p.23 *</p> <p>To streamline the Common Application Process (CAP) via a standards-based web service route to enable data to be fed directly into institutional systems</p>
<b>Impact:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Will speed up application processes for learners and allow FE colleges to cope with larger numbers of applications without having to make significant changes to their existing systems and internal processes</li> <li>✓ Will enable FE colleges / Area Prospectus providers to be at the forefront in implementing the 14-19 reform plans supporting choice and usability for learners</li> <li>✓ Will enable learners to apply seamlessly across borders (i.e. to courses from neighbouring Area Prospectuses)</li> </ul>
<b>Description:</b>	<p>To develop interoperability between the Area Prospectuses' Common Application Processes by standardising the export of Common Application Form data either in line with forthcoming Government guidance or in a manner which can inform Government recommendations (whichever comes first).</p> <p>Larger colleges are interested in receiving course application data fed directly into their internal systems. A common XML format shared by all the Area Prospectuses would reduce the data-processing work that these colleges will have to undertake, and also enable learners to make applications across borders without the colleges having to log into several different systems to access these.</p> <p>Learners will benefit both from having access to the full range of options available across the East Midlands, and from colleges being able to offer a more efficient admissions service.</p> <p>This proposal has arisen from work with Connexions Nottinghamshire and with Area Prospectuses and FE colleges. The ClePD has already conducted</p>

	<p>an initial pilot as a part of the earlier RIPPLL Project which succeeded in demonstrating an acceptable model of data transfer for the Nottinghamshire Common Application Form.</p> <p>This process will involve:</p> <p><i>Area Prospectuses together with their respective vendors, Ucas Media and S-Cool</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Comparisons of local Application Forms and implications of standardisation (i.e. local business process vs commonality of learner experience)</li> <li>- Agree on a process for sending to different providers outside of locality</li> <li>- Development of a web service on the Area Prospectus to send data via XML</li> </ul> <p><i>Learning Providers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agreement on sending/receiving protocol</li> <li>- Creation of Learning Provider web service to consume the XML Application into own systems</li> </ul> <p>Both</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use of management data and reporting</li> </ul>
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<b>Strand 3: XCRI X-Border</b>	
<b>Proposal:</b>	<p><i>"It should be possible for young people to search opportunities provided by learning providers in neighbouring 14-19 Prospectus areas by searching once on their own 14-19 Prospectus" (p. 18) *</i></p> <p><i>"(we) would like all local areas to adopt these data standards by 2010" (p.19) *</i></p> <p>This proposal would support the development of XCRI aggregations to accommodate border institutions' course offerings into a course search for the learner to fulfil the DCSF requirements (above).</p>
<b>Impact:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Will enable learners to search for courses across a regional border in a seamless way</li> <li>✓ Will offer a cost effective and sustainable method of providing up-to-date course information</li> <li>✓ Will give learners/employers in the East Midlands access to comprehensive, timely and accurate learning and progression information, with potential for customisation and personalisation.</li> </ul>

<b>Description:</b>	<p>Building on the 14-19 XCRI project, commitment from the Area Prospectuses would involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identification of their existing cross-border traffic</li> <li>- Analysis of requirements</li> <li>- Ensuring that existing XCRI feeds are available for all partners</li> <li>- Review vocabularies (in particular subject areas and provider codes), and extend and standardise where necessary</li> <li>- Agree on how cross-border XCRI is processed and displayed between partners</li> <li>- Develop an aggregation service and seamless interface, by cross-border institutions based on requirements.</li> </ul>
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**\*DCSF requirements** announced in the [Action Plan for the 14-19 Prospectus](#)

### **Why the Centre for International ePortfolio Development (ClePD)?**

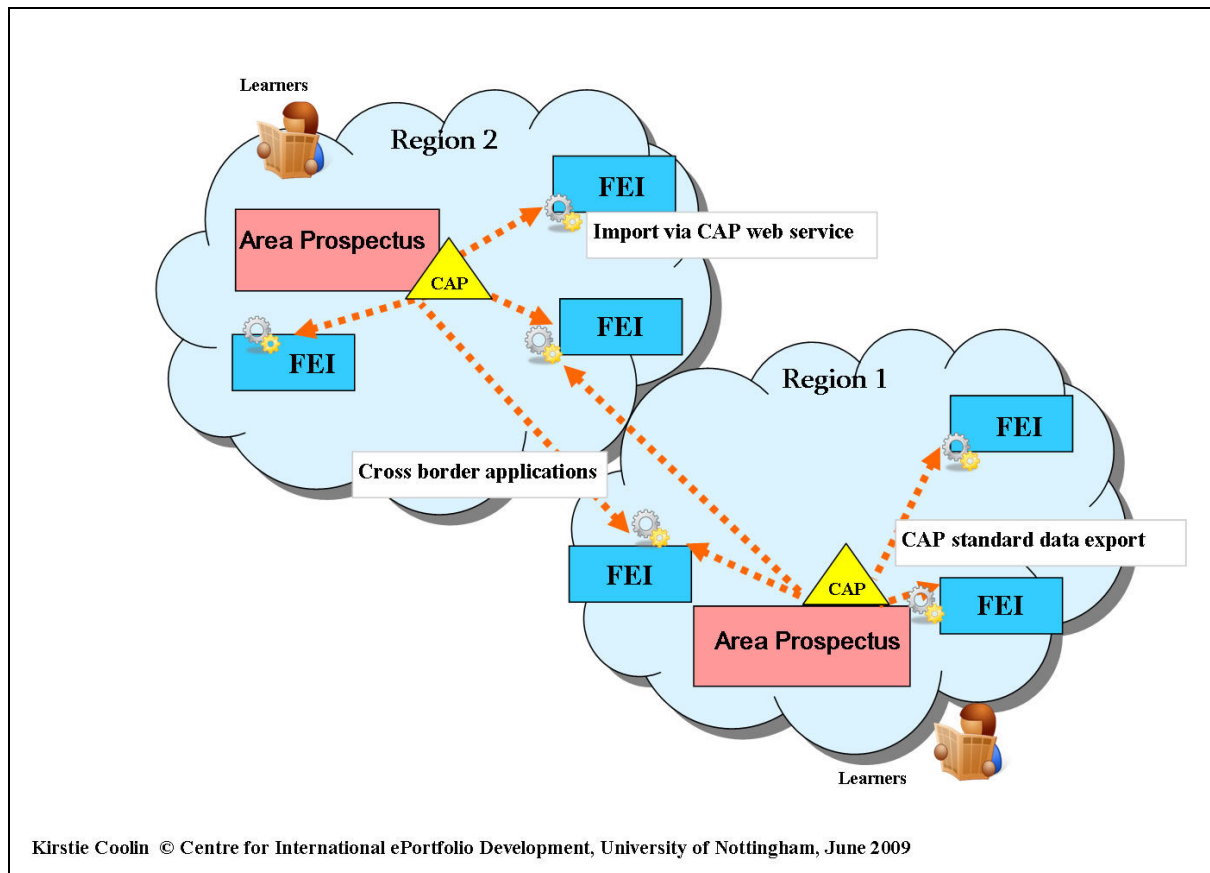
The University of Nottingham's ClePD team has been involved in development and trialling of data standards in an educational context since 2006. Previous JISC-funded work prototyping web service interoperability using the CAP was undertaken in a previous project (RIPPLL), and working partnerships exist with regional stakeholders through the Lifelong Learning Network, and the JISC-funded JOSEPH and 14-19 XCRI project.

The ClePD team is also leading a number of XCRI initiatives within the East Midlands region sponsored by JISC, Leap Ahead (the Lifelong Learning Network for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire) and Skills for Sustainable Communities (the Lifelong Learning Network for Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Lincolnshire and Rutland) to support the flow of information about learning opportunities around our regional landscape. Involving over ten partners, projects have centred on immediate requirements to supply learners with accurate and up-to-date information about courses and progression routes.

XCRI stands for "eXchanging Course Related Information". XCRI-CAP (Course Advertising Profile) is the UK XML data standard for representing course advertising data and is used to share information about courses between UK education institutions and aggregators. Use is growing amongst institutions, data agencies and vendors and in 2009, the UK Government Information Standards Board for Education Skills & Children's Services approved XCRI-CAP 1.1 as the national e-prospectus standard.

Partnerships together with technical expertise and national networks enable the ClePD to take the work forward. Our recent project work to standardise and aggregate the 5 East Midland Area Prospectuses has directly influenced DCSF policy, and as a region we are well ahead and well placed to meet the cross-border challenges. The East Midlands already has the largest implementation of XCRI in the UK, here.

**Appendix 1:**  
Cross-border partnership working



**Partners**

APS Ltd –Alan Paull  
Connexions Nottinghamshire  
Connexions Leicestershire  
Connexions Lincolnshire  
Connexions Derbyshire  
Connexions Northamptonshire  
S-Cool  
UCAS Media  
New College Nottingham  
Derby College

**Further information**

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