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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This final InStePP evaluation report aims to provide InStePP stakeholders with:

- a record of the development of the InStePP project
- evidence and analysis around two key evaluation themes:
  a. InStePP’s institutional impact generally and on student and staff digital literacies in particular
  b. the sustainability of student-staff partnerships for digital literacies

The findings of the evaluation are based on analysis of 16 interviews with student ePioneers and staff partners of them active over semesters one and two of academic year 2012-13; and documents, including meeting minutes and notes, ePioneer records and administrative documents.

The JISC Developing Digital Literacies programme that funded InStePP offered a rare opportunity to experiment with mechanisms to foster student-staff partnerships to enhance digital literacy. Over two years InStePP made a substantial investment – primarily staff time – in developing and testing systems and processes for recruiting, rewarding through work experience and professional accreditation, developing and supporting digitally literate students to work with staff on mutually beneficial enhancements to the digital learning environment at Brookes.

InStePP operated at a much more modest scale than was originally projected. A total of 12 student ePioneers were active over three semesters. These ePioneers worked on small digital development projects called ‘commissions’. 12 commissions were completed and a further seven are ongoing.

Despite its modest achievements InStePP should be looked at as a prototype that has not yet realised its full potential benefits. The foundation has been laid to run a scheme of staff-student partnerships that can make a significant impact on educational practice, especially in developing digital literacy.

Student participants in InStePP derive great personal benefit from partnering with staff in developing the institutional digital learning environment. Through work experience they gain substantial employability enhancements. InStePP provides opportunities for e-Pioneers to be engaged in reflective practice and in a process of continuous and transformative learning in their ePioneer experience. This contributes to developing their critical self-awareness and personal literacy, in the parlance of the Brookes graduate attributes. Student participants also feel empowered and valued by other university members, by having their ‘voice’ heard, gaining a sense of being part of the wider academic community and contributing to the improvement of the digital literacies for the whole university.

Monetary rewards are not necessary to sustain this; the possibility of professional recognition, the work experience opportunity and consequent enhancements to employability, and the chance to work closely with staff as equal partners in a ‘grand endeavour’ to improve the digital landscape, are valuable enough rewards.

We found that student ePioneers face a substantial challenge in the process of role reversal, where they move from being a student to an equal partner with staff. In their partnerships with staff they may sometimes need to proactively ‘manage their (staff) client’. EPioneers need a staff coach to help them manage this process quickly and effectively.

There is material evidence of the validity of the ‘mutual benefit’ concept in staff-student partnerships. Students and staff partners alike testify to the rewards they gained from their partnerships. The main rewards are the joy of creative mutual endeavour, a sense of achievement in what they build together, and pride in the value of their work to the wider institution.

Another major theme that emerged from our analysis was the role of partnership in creating bridges between the different worlds of the university. Both staff and students indicated that involvement in the project prompted increased communication and understanding between different members of the institution and clarification of their roles and perspectives.
Universities and further education institutions have much to gain from students being actively engaged in helping transform the digital learning landscape. InStePP was founded on the premise that students can be key change agents for enhancing digital literacy if tech-savvy, or digitally literate, students can be encouraged to share their expertise. Our data shows that students in partnership with staff can motivate staff to adopt new digital learning and teaching practices. It indicates that the impact on practice is potentially broader than just the use of technology. Student partners have helped staff hear the student voice, gain insights into learners’ perspectives, and stimulated them to think differently about learner needs than they did before.

InStePP partnerships showed creativity, fresh perspectives and new practices being brought to bear on educational problems or issues through students and staff working jointly on them. This is perhaps the key benefit of the InStePP approach. It may be possible to apply a similar approach to developing the curriculum for other graduate attributes than digital and information literacy.

InStePP produced processes and tools that should transfer with minimal adjustment to other institutions in the post-16 educational sector. They include:

- four ePioneer roles and role cards (page 8)
- the 3-way partnership model (page 11)
- ePioneer reflection tools, including a Google sites eportfolio and Google forms for recording activity and feedback (page 16)
- the commissioning process (page 24), including Google forms and sites for registering, monitoring and closing commissions (page 16)
- a package of ePioneer training and development, particularly the ILM-recognised Future Consultants programme (page 21)
- the ePioneer reward and recognition model (page 22)
- staff roles for administration and support of the scheme (page 28)

To be successful, InStePP needs to get substantially bigger. Probably at least twice as many active ePioneers at any one time as it has had up to now. It also needs to be a bit more ‘student friendly’ in two main ways. First, ePioneer ‘commissions’ should be crafted to be achievable within the tempo of student life, i.e. in a single semester, or in the case of ‘larger’ projects have key, achievable milestones that fit within the academic calendar. Second, ePioneers need proactive support from a staff coach, to help them manage the challenges of role reversal, in which they become equal partners with staff and may even have to actively manage their staff partners in some aspects of their project.

We have made 17 specific recommendations for continuation of the InStePP scheme, which we list below.

**Recommendations**

To get the most out of continuing InStePP as a regular scheme in the University we recommend that:

1. the entrepreneur role be withdrawn as inappropriate for a voluntary scheme whose incentives and rewards are intended to be academic and employability-related.
2. the ePioneer researcher role be actively promoted. InStePP should make contact with dissertation and independent study module leaders in the relevant faculties to promote the idea of ePioneer researchers. The InStePP team should elaborate the support that it can provide for such students, including mentorship by experienced technology-enhanced learning researchers, a suite of possible investigation topics, and supporting access to relevant investigation sites.
3. ePioneer recruitment should be increased, with an aim of about ten new ePioneers engaged in a sustained way each semester and preferably a minimum of five continuing on from the previous semester, i.e. aiming for at least 15 active ePioneers at any time.
4. InStePP actively seek ePioneer recruits from all course levels: foundation, undergraduate and postgraduate. In general there should be wider promotion of the project for better recruitment and for more information to staff. Epioneers’ accounts
reveal a need for a greater awareness of the project so that staff and students both know what is expected from the ePioneers.

5. InStePP consider providing Future Consultants as an ILM recognised but non-certificated course in future to eliminate the cost of providing this service.

6. when ePioneers are recruited and sign up at their very first Future Consultants session they choose a commission to work on in partnership with a staff member. This will enable them to move straight into working as an ePioneer, avoiding the present hiatus between recruitment and initial training and finding a digital literacy partnership to work on.

7. the range and scope of possible commissions be substantially increased to provide ePioneers sufficient choice of varied and interesting projects partnering with staff on digital literacy development. A possible drawback of having a large pool of commissions is that InStePP might end up with unfulfilled demand, i.e. commissions not taken up. If that happened, consequences could be loss of enthusiasm by staff for posting commissions, staff frustration and negativity about the commissioning process, and fewer new commissions over time. This possibility might be mitigated if there is a sufficiently proactive filtering and approval process between InStePP and staff commissioners, so that staff whose commissions are not taken up quickly are notified promptly and offered advice about other means to address their goal or possible refinements to make it more attractive or suitable for an ePioneer partner to work on.

8. commissions be carefully crafted so that they can be completed within the tempo of normal student life. They should have explicit objectives that are achievable within a single semester, or if they must be longer than one semester they must be specified with key, achievable milestones that fit within the academic calendar.

9. the option of doing InStePP commissions within the structure of Independent Study Modules should be widely promoted among prospective staff and students. The benefits are multiple. There is the added incentive of academic credit for completing a commission. Additionally the framework of the academic structure of a module may well add a level of external discipline; failure to see the commission through to its conclusion could threaten academic achievement on the module. Furthermore, the academic structure means that the ePioneer has a rigid timetable and set of objectives they need to translate into outcomes for their commission, as well as an academic advisor in their module leader who can provide some additional support.

10. InStePP facilitate better communication about ePioneer projects to the DMeLDs through the mechanism of the existing Learning Technologists Forum. As a matter of course ePioneers doing a commission should be put in contact with the relevant faculty DMeLDs and see it as their responsibility to discuss their project plan with them. This is essential to a) ensuring that ePioneers have good access to development opportunities from skilled learning technologists and b) to ensuring that knowledge and learning from digital literacy development projects are disseminated effectively.

11. provide the feedback form, activity record and eportfolio only on request to ePioneers to avoid wasting administrative resources, as they are rarely used. The Moodle Community site is by far the most important and widely used site by ePioneers and in future record keeping and monitoring would be most efficient if performed within that environment. The commissions form is the most important tool for establishing partnerships and should be enhanced in its functionality.

12. the role of a formal ePioneer mentor be maintained, since it fulfills both an important administrative function within the commissioning process and also a necessary mentoring and induction one for new ePioneers. The role does not need to be carried out by a staff member as at present: it can probably be fulfilled by one or more existing ePioneers wishing to maintain involvement more than one semester. In this case there should be a minimal selection and recruitment process that ensures transparency and fairness in the selection of the student ePioneer mentor.
13. The ePioneer Coordinator role be continued into the foreseeable future if InStePP is to be able to successfully step up its intensity by effectively doubling its number of regular active Pioneers. Learning Resources has agreed to continue its commitment to InStePP by its annual intern in the coming year. A new appointment has been made and will take up the ePioneer Coordinator role in Semester one 2013. If the LR intern cannot do it then the role would need to be filled by someone else or InStePP would fail through lack of administrative resource.

14. the old ‘development lead role’ intended for PLSEs be scrapped. In future the role of the PLSEs be radically reduced to promoting InStePP among staff and students in their faculties and helping initial recruitment of ePioneers each semester.

15. the role of ePioneer Coach be established, provided by an OCSLD staff developer, in place of the ‘development lead role’. The ePioneer Coach will support ePioneers though regular, structured briefing and feedback meetings designed to facilitate ePioneers in evaluating progress with their commissions and helping them maintain adequate records of their work and their own development.

16. to maximise learning on all sides of the partnership the ePioneer coach ensure that ePioneers implement a commission closure event with their staff partner(s). This would evaluate the project, provide the parties opportunities to offer feedback, and formally close it or hand it over.

17. in the next period InStePP should develop promotional activities to follow up on successfully completed commissions, ensuring that they are known about and used and the crowd sourced resources continue to be developed.
INTRODUCTION

This is the final evaluation report for the InStePP project. The InStePP project had six phases. Phases 1 & 2 spanned year 1 from October 2011 – July 2012. Phase 1 was the preparatory phase of base-lining and establishing ePioneer roles, professional body partnerships, project administration, systems and tools. Phase 2, from Feb 2012 – July 2012, was a trial phase, in which a limited number of ePioneers were recruited into ePioneer roles. During this phase the various tools and processes involved in becoming and working as an ePioneer were developed and trialed. Phases 3 (Aug-Dec 2012) and 4 (Jan-May 2013) corresponded to full implementation in the two academic semesters of year 2 of the project.

Phase 5 in May-July 2013 involved intensive evaluation work and preparation for continuation of InStePP into the future. Phase 6 was the finalisation of the project outputs: the final project report, this evaluation report and the web-based case studies at https://wiki.brookes.ac.uk/display/insteppcases/.

An interim evaluation report was produced in October 2012 at the end of Phase 2 of the project (Benfield 2012). The end-of-Phase 2 evaluation considered the suitability of the tools and procedures developed to support the ePioneer process, in order to prepare for full implementation of InStePP. It also considered project administration and coordination and made recommendations for some changes to these to progress into phase 3. This had become important due to the early departure of the project manager in September 2012.

This final evaluation is intended for the InStePP project team and steering group, the JISC as the external funding body, and the Oxford Brookes University Academic Enhancement and Standards Committee (AESC), which is responsible for oversight and resourcing of all academic interventions at the University such as InStePP. It aims to provide these stakeholders with:

- a record of the development of the InStePP project
- evidence and analysis around two key evaluation themes:
  a. InStePP’s institutional impact generally and on student and staff digital literacies in particular
  b. the sustainability of student-staff partnerships for digital literacies

METHOD

The Oxford Brookes University Research Ethics Committee granted approval to interview students and staff engaged in the InStePP project on 11 October 2012. Interviews with ePioneers and staff involved were conducted for the End-of-Phase 2 evaluation (see Benfield 2012). This final evaluation draws on data from 16 further interviews with students and staff involved as well as document analysis.

Data gathering for the final evaluation commenced in February 2013 with interviews of active ePioneers. Five ePioneers were interviewed then, three individually and two who were working in a pair were interviewed together. These interviews were audio- and video-recorded. The primary purpose at this stage was to pilot the data collection methods to be used subsequently and to identify a model for presenting the final set of InStePP case studies. A draft case study, the Google Tubes commission, was developed in the format of a web page of video clips woven together with a short textual narrative. This format was adopted for the final case studies. In line with the InStePP ethics approach, interviewees gave their approval for audio-visual recordings at the time they were conducted. Then, explicit approval was sought for publication of each edited video clip proposed for the Web case studies.

In May 2013 InStePP funding was allocated to enable a research assistant from the Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development (OCSLD), Metaxia Pavlakou, to work intensively gathering evaluation data and analysing it. In May and June seven ePioneer interviews were conducted, as well as interviews with five staff partners with ePioneers and the InStePP project director. All the interviews were transcribed. Transcripts were imported into NVivo and analysed.
The other data drawn on for this evaluation are documents: minutes and notes of InStePP steering group, cluster group and team meetings; ePioneer training registers, activity records, and their ePortfolios; project records and administrative documents, such as training registers, the commissions spreadsheet, and a variety of recruitment and dissemination documents.

The two evaluation themes above were formulated as four evaluation areas in the original evaluation plan (see Langton 2012):

1. How have students and staff engaged in partnerships for digital literacies through InStePP?
2. What has been the impact of InStePP on student and staff digital literacies?
3. What has been the institutional impact of InStePP?
4. How can student-staff partnerships for digital literacies be sustained?

The following sections of this report are structured to answer these questions. First we discuss findings on question one, relating how various people were involved with InStePP, what was done and how. Over its life the project developed differently than was originally specified in the project proposal. These transformations in conception and/or practice are woven through the narrative. So too are conclusions about the appropriateness and/or sustainability of some of the processes employed in InStePP. Where there is evidence of a practice or approach that should be continued for InStePP to be sustained into the future we attempt to make this explicit in this section.

Following the analysis of question one we address questions two and three above together, in a section titled ‘What have been the benefits of InStePP?’ InStePP employed a staff-student partnership methodology to developing digital literacies. It is not easy to separate means and ends in analysis of the project’s impact and so in this section we discuss our findings regarding institutional impact generally.

The final section, ‘Conclusions and recommendations’, summarises analysis and commentary on sustainability issues raised earlier and lists recommendations for how InStePP can be continued for the foreseeable future at Oxford Brookes University.

HOW HAVE STUDENTS AND STAFF ENGAGED IN PARTNERSHIPS FOR DIGITAL LITERACIES THROUGH INSTEPP?

Founding conceptions of InStePP stem in good measure from Oxford Brookes University’s participation in the JISC Learner Experiences of eLearning programme and the Supporting Learners in a Digital Age project (see JISC 2009; Sharpe, Beetham et al. 2009; Sharpe and Benfield 2012). InStePP was originally conceived as a way to experiment with methods of capitalising on a valuable resource within all universities: a significant proportion of students who are confident, agile users of digital technology. This description of digitally literate students that emerged from the learner experiences of eLearning work forms part of the Oxford Brookes University definition of digital literacy in its Strategy for Enhancing the Student Experience (SESE, see Oxford Brookes University 2010). The SESE also articulates an objective to more actively engage students in the life of the university. Bringing these two SESE objectives of student engagement and improving digital literacy together, InStePP aimed to:

Create and integrate active partnerships with students, in a variety of roles, that help to develop, implement and produce examples of:

i) institutional approaches to developing digital literacy partnerships with students as part of normal curriculum and employability policy and practice;

ii) digital literacies contextualized for the discipline and career development; and

iii) student roles and activities which support the development of digital literacy skills and capabilities. (OBU Developing Digital Literacies bid document June 2011)
The InStePP students recruited to partner with staff in developing digital literacies are called ePioneers. It was originally envisaged that ePioneers would partner with staff in small projects to develop digital literacies in five distinct ways, called ePioneer roles: trainer, mentor, resource creator, researcher, and entrepreneur. Role cards describing the core functions of each role were produced (Figure 1) but the project only implemented the first three of these roles fully.

No ePioneer has performed the researcher role so far, although the project team feels that the role is relevant and further work should be done to promote it in future. It seems likely that there would be students within Education, Geography, Sociology and perhaps other subjects as well who could gain from conducting small scale research projects into digital literacy within an educational context for their dissertations, or as part of an independent study module. We recommend that InStePP make contact with dissertation and independent study module leaders in the relevant faculties to promote the idea of ePioneer researchers. The InStePP team should elaborate the support mechanisms that it can provide for such students, including mentorship by experienced technology-enhanced learning researchers, a suite of investigation topics, and supporting researcher access to relevant investigation sites within the University.

It was envisaged that ePioneers would devote no more than ten hours per week to their tasks. At the beginning of the project it was thought that ePioneers may well carry out some work outside of semester time, but as the project progressed to full implementation it became clear that this would rarely happen. We found that ePioneers’ availability is very strongly determined by the academic calendar and timetable. The ePioneers we talked to all said that
managing their time within the constraints of their academic timetable was a significant challenge for them. Here are some typical examples:

*It was just the time constraint, I mean I was thinking if I had done the project in the second year or first year then it would be a lot easier than in the final year, ‘cause in my final year I just had so much to worry about like uni, coursework and since I’m doing all my honours modules. (ePioneer 8)*

*I was more free in the first six weeks of the semester than the last six weeks, I was probably less active with it, if I may say so, so yeah, come week 10 I gave up on the idea of working with, because it’s lack of time, because of the deadlines, but first, week 1-6 I was probably really active in engaging with it, but that’s probably because the workloads changed, second year, latter end of the semester. (ePioneer 10)*

*The commission was challenging because it’s so time-consuming and I’m working, I’m also with the studies. (ePioneer 5)*

*In terms of the partnerships, timing’s always a difficult one I think for the students; when do they have time to actually do this and how does it work with their exam periods? And then they’re off for the summer, and some of them are around and some aren’t, so that’s tricky. (Staff 6)*

These remarks highlight a need to support ePioneers in their roles by crafting projects (called ‘commissions’, see below) that are achievable within the tempo of student life, i.e. in a single semester, or at least specified with key, achievable milestones that fit within academic semesters.

**Recruitment and progress to sustained ePioneer activity**

The project was substantially delayed in its implementation by the departure after just one month of its first Project Manager and the extended period needed to replace him. As a result, recruitment of the first batch of ePioneers for the trial Phase 2 of the project did not begin until very late in Semester 2 of academic year 2011-12, i.e. May 2012. Recruitment in this phase was done by three faculty Principle Lecturers for the Student Experience (PLSEs), primarily through email invitations and sometimes through direct contact with students.

At this point the core members of the InStePP project team were actively involved in preparing for and supporting the University's transition from the BlackBoard VLE to Moodle in just a few months time at the beginning of the following semester. As the InStePP End-of-Phase 2 Evaluation Report (Benfield 2012) says:

*For this trial phase, rather than trying to implement several (or indeed all five) projected ePioneer roles, the team decided to recruit ePioneers into just the Trainer and Mentor roles, in the context of Moodle Supporters. This was to capitalise on the likelihood of staff interest in things e-learning around the planned September switch from BlackBoard to the Moodle Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). It was hoped that it would also give the new ePioneers frequent opportunities to work directly with staff in the faculty-based Moodle workshops organised by the faculty DMeLDs for June and July.*

It should be noted that focusing on ePioneers as Moodle supporters was a significant distortion of the original conception of the ePioneer, who was imagined to be a digitally literate person capable of supporting staff and other students in expanding their digital horizons. Supporting staff with the VLE only was a narrower focus than this conception and it also required the Moodle supporters to be trained in using the new Moodle platform. The project team was mindful of this distortion and subsequently the Moodle supporter idea was dropped in favour of a return to the more open original conception and the five ePioneer roles described above.

22 students volunteered to participate in the Phase 2 pilot. Of these, 13 attended the Institute for Leadership and Management (ILM) accredited Future Leaders training (subsequently renamed Future Consultants). Around 12 engaged to some degree or other, from attending training events to supporting staff in Moodle training workshops. There were 4 highly engaged ePioneers in this first batch.
At this point we need to introduce the concept of sustained ePioneer activity. In each of phases 2, 3 and 4 only a small proportion of the initial batch of recruits sustained ePioneer activity throughout the semester. A larger number who attended ILM Future Consultants training proved unable for various reasons to engage in productive ePioneer work subsequent to their initial training. We discuss this issue further below.

In Phase 3 (Semester 1, Sep-Dec 2012) 17 new ePioneers registered, of whom 13 attended the first day of Future Consultants training. Of these 17, five engaged in sustained ePioneer activity. In addition, one of the first batch of ePioneers who had graduated at the end of the previous semester gained an internship at Brookes and sought to remain actively engaged with InStePP. Since he was no longer a student he could not be an ePioneer. His involvement evolved to be an ePioneer mentor, in which he was a point of contact between the ePioneers and the project team, mostly helping to coordinate the commissions coming in from staff and disseminating them to ePioneers via the ePioneer Moodle Community site. Two other active ePioneers from Phase 2 expressed interest in continuing into Phase 3, but both eventually dropped off the radar.

In Phase 4 (Semester 2, Feb-May 2013) ten new ePioneers were recruited. Of these ten, three remained active. Five ePioneers from Phase 3 continued, making a total of eight active during Phase 4. Table 1 shows the pattern of recruitment and subsequent sustained activity during each phase.

Table 1 ePioneer recruitment and subsequent sustained activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Number of recruits</th>
<th>Sustained ePioneer activity</th>
<th>Total active ePioneers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are several important points to note about this pattern. First, recruitment has so far been much lower than anticipated in the original bid. At that time it was thought that up to 50 ePioneers might be recruited each semester. This raises the questions, ‘has recruitment activity been sufficiently vigorous?’ and ‘can methods be found to improve recruitment in future?’ Both questions are discussed further below. Suffice to say at this point that it is both possible and desirable to recruit more ePioneers than the modest levels that have been achieved so far. We recommend that ePioneer recruitment be increased, with an aim of about ten new ePioneers engaged in a sustained way each semester and preferably a minimum of five continuing on from the previous semester, i.e. aiming for at least 15 active ePioneers at any time.

Second, there is an apparently high rate of attrition from the pool of initial ePioneer recruits each semester, with less than a quarter remaining engaged in ePioneer activity beyond the initial training. This is wasteful of training resources expended on those who do not go on to work as ePioneers. The project team is proposing to modify ePioneer recruitment by tying it more closely to active partnership projects, or commissions. This is discussed later under the heading, ‘The ePioneer Commissions process’.

Third, Phase 4 for the first time saw ePioneers carrying through their activity into a subsequent semester of work. Therefore, for some ePioneers at least, the levels of engagement asked of them and incentives to engage are appropriate.

Finally, at Phase 2 a decision was taken to target recruitment mainly at undergraduate students and not to recruit first year students, who might need time to acclimatize to Brookes student life. However, in Phase 3 a first year student and a foundation year student were recruited mistakenly and both proved enthusiastic and reliable ePioneers who continued into Phase 4. In light of this it does not seem appropriate to maintain a course level restriction on who can be an ePioneer. In fact, given the need to expand recruitment, we recommend actively seeking recruits from all course levels: foundation, undergraduate and postgraduate.
In general there should be wider promotion of the project for better recruitment and for more information to staff. Epioneers’ accounts reveal a need for a greater awareness of the project so that staff and students both know what is expected from the ePioneers.

Supporting and developing ePioneers: evolution of the 3-way contract model

The original conception for developing and supporting ePioneers in their work to enhance digital literacies in the university used a 3-way apprenticeship model, called the 3-way contract (Figure 2).

Figure 2 3-way contract model

In this conception each ePioneer had a defined set of roles and responsibilities; they would obtain leadership and supervision from a senior academic in their faculty – a Principle Lecturer for the Student Experience (PLSE) – and a faculty Digital Media and eLearning Developer (DMeLD); and they would be supported and developed by a range of processes and institutional support services and personnel. These include formal training, opportunities for professional body recognition (ILM or ALT) or academic credit, and mentoring. Support from staff and institutional support units comes from the Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development (OCSLD), Media Workshop, Careers, faculty-based DMeLDs, Oxford Brookes Information Services (OBIS), the Library.

This development aspect of the 3-way contract was represented in the Development Wheel (Figure 3; an online, animated version is available at InStePP Student ePioneer Partnerships.

![InStePP Development and Support Wheel](https://example.com/instep-develop-support-wheel.png)

InStePP is a JISC-funded project (https://example.com/instep) to equip universities with the digital literacy skills they need to be future leaders in education. JISC inspires UK colleges and universities in the innovative use of digital technologies, helping to maintain the UK's position as a global leader in education.
It quickly became clear that this model needed revision. Faculty DMeLDs do not normally have any supervisory role and they did not want to obtain one in respect of ePioneers. They are willing to support and mentor ePioneers in their work and collaborate with them on a case by case basis where a digital literacy project warrants it. So DMeLDs have become an aspect of ePioneer development, not leadership.

Avoiding the risk of student amateurs undermining the professionals

Our data indicates a crucial point here that InStePP and similar projects need to be alert to when using student volunteers to do potentially challenging and interesting digital development work. There can be tensions around the relationships and responsibilities between professionals like the Brookes DMeLDs, a pool of skilled learning technology professionals, and the ePioneers who might be thought of as willing amateurs. There can easily be a perception among the professionals that the number of attractive projects available to them to work on might be reduced if they are available to or even actively farmed out to volunteers. Our data contains at least one example of this happening. And aside from the initial period in Phase 2 of ePioneers as ‘Moodle supporters’, when they helped DMeLDs run staff training workshops, there has been little coordination or even communication between the ePioneer commissions and DMeLDs. One DMeLD commented:

I think that taking [DMeLDs] out of the loop could be a source of frustration, so particularly if the ePioneer-type things are the fun, discrete projects rather than the slog…. [Usually there is] not a lot of time to consider discrete projects that might help them build their careers or build their knowledge a little bit. So they don’t get a lot of space for doing small things, which some of the [ePioneer] projects might be…. So something happens, something gets done; great for the person who wanted it done, great in essence for the person who gets the experience or whatever of doing it, not great for <chuckles> someone who might otherwise have been given the opportunity to do it. (Staff 4)

Furthermore, there is the risk of devaluing the professional’s work.

And also it, I think, devalues the work that people are being paid to do, it devalues the fact that it’s actually quite difficult; it’s taken me ten years to know how much I know about that sort of thing…. There’s a lot of background and experience that can get sidestepped if it’s seen as something, ‘oh these are little discrete things that we don’t need to know anything about, we can get people in, because they’re young, essentially they must know much more about it than we do.’ And that’s not necessarily the case.

There’s a tension there perhaps in some instances between, is it staff learning and development or is it student learning and development? And if there really isn’t the capacity to do these things within the staff of the institution then maybe there needs to be some more people <chuckles> who are getting paid to do it? I don’t know. (Staff 4)

But it does not need to be this way. Staff 4 contrasted the potential for anxiety by professionals about amateurs undermining their work and expertise, with the example of the commission in which he as DMeLD was in a position to support the ePioneers develop their digital skills.

I talked to those guys a little bit … we had a little bit of a discussion about what they were doing and talked about what technologies they might want to use and I felt a lot happier about that. Not that I probably gave them anything they didn’t know in that sense, but I talked to them about what technologies we have already got for doing things like that….

What they’ve [the ePioneers] done isn’t necessarily what I would’ve suggested, but I felt a lot better [about it]…. If they just get a commission, go off, use their own experience with no external extra input from anybody in the university then they’re not getting the most out of it. [They’re] learning about consultancy in the workplace, but they’re not necessarily developing the skills they’re being consultants on that much.
We recommend therefore that InStePP facilitate better communication about ePioneer projects to the DMeLDs through the mechanism of the existing Learning Technologists Forum. As a matter of course ePioneers doing a commission should be put in contact with the relevant faculty DMeLDs and see it as their responsibility to discuss their project plan with them. This is essential to a) ensuring that ePioneers have good access to development opportunities from skilled learning technologists and b) to ensuring that knowledge and learning from digital literacy development projects are disseminated effectively.

**Individual guidance and support of ePioneers**

Tensions and lack of clarity emerged about the Partnership lead role. At the time this was conceived the PLSE role was quite new in the University. Formally the PLSE role is a 0.2 academic appointment and the duties concern enhancing the student experience within a faculty. The responsibilities and time commitment for InStePP recruitment, attending initial training sessions, supervising ePioneers and so on had not been part of the original PLSE job description. Neither had the performance of pan-university development work such as InStePP. Moreover, since recruitment of ePioneers was uneven across the faculties – in Phase 2 the vast majority of recruits came from the Faculty of Technology, Environment and Design (FTDE), while in subsequent phases the Faculty of Business (FoB) had substantial representation too – meant that allocating ePioneers to their faculty PLSE would be inequitable. Also, one faculty, the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, did not have a PLSE to allocate to InStePP until the end of Phase 3. Thus, the first adjustment to this role was to distribute ePioneers to PLSEs evenly, allocating them to their faculty PLSE where possible, and then the remainder by convenience.

Through Phases 3 and 4 it was clear that the time commitment required of PLSEs was causing frustration for them when the work had to be fitted into an already heavy set of tasks and responsibilities. Moreover, the early round of interviews with ePioneers at the start of Phase 4 revealed a more pressing issue: they probably needed a different kind of support and monitoring to perform their roles than what their PLSEs could provide. They really needed more proactive coaching and support in managing the challenges of role reversal, i.e. moving from being a student to an equal partner with staff.

**The challenge of role reversal**

_They’re often your lecturers and teachers and the people that are above you, whereas to be on a bit more of a level playing field, it’s strange at first…. It was strange to be tutoring people who ordinarily would tutor me, you know, it was weird._ (ePioneer 4)

We are struck by how our data speaks to the radically different ‘cultures’ of students and employed within the same institution. Staff 3 commented:

_I think the gradual realisation has been this thing about employed culture is very different to student culture and some of the things that the students have had, or have gained awareness around, that idea of having meetings, of people who usually they do not come into contact with, taking responsibility for helping other people to access knowledge that they treat as routine amongst themselves. That’s a really valuable thing._

EPIoneers have to manage this role reversal quite quickly to make progress on their commission within a 12 week semester, the last weeks of which may well involve more intensive than usual study commitments. The transition is multi-faceted. It is disorienting for the student, who moves from being told their tasks and deadlines by their teacher to being more assertive with their staff partner and even taking charge of aspects of the progress of their task. EPioneers agree that their experience of work is one of the most valuable things they gain from their role. But it is a significant challenge for them. As one put it:

_At first, doing my first commissions I was rigid and nervous ’cause I felt like I was going to see academic staff and they were assessing me and that kind of thing. Then after a while your soft skills, your friendliness kind of enhances and you feel confident just meeting staff and working with them._ (ePioneer 1)

While another remarked:
I developed skills in assertiveness – but not aggression – like professional assertiveness. Because sometimes people have different ideas and you have to just kind of drive them into one way. Like for instance in the meetings with [staff member 1] and [staff member 2], [staff member 1] would have one idea and [staff member 2] would have another, and sometimes you find you have a back and forth session and you're just sat in the middle. So then you have to direct things and then suggest what you think might be better. (ePioneer 4)

Their staff partner may be disoriented and uncomfortable too. Staff 1 commented:

*Actually it was a bit of a role reversal really in many ways. Yes a bit of a role reversal; normally I'd be helping them to do their assignment better, in this case they were helping me to do my assignment better.*

Working in partnership with staff requires ePioneers to quickly adopt a set of professional behaviours, conventions and processes that are new to them. ePioneer 4 said:

*So, learning to sit with them in a professional meeting I guess and discuss an action plan and make sure you're not just going around in circles. Make sure you arrive at an outcome and know where you're going next. I think there's also the organisation of it all. I've got an issue with my diary at the moment, 'cause people are emailing you and saying 'can we meet then?' and 'can we meet then?' To manage, it's quite a lot of… well it's not what I'm used to. Because at uni normally you've got x amount of lectures where you can go to them, and there are things to do otherwise, whereas now I've got meetings all over the place, meeting with so-and-so to talk about that, then replying to the emails. So the organisation side of it and I guess 'managing the client' if that would be the right word, I definitely learned skills on how to do that.*

We come back to role reversal later in this report. For now the important thing to note is the challenge that role reversal presents to ePioneers and the need to support them to manage this. Our data consistently suggest that ePioneers need a bit more structure to help them and sometimes they reported lack of communication and feedback. We note that the most successful commissions to date have been those with the most actively involved staff partners. The ePioneers need someone they can report to on progress with their commission, who can help them clarify objectives, timescales, and issues in managing their relationship with their staff partner. This responsibility is outside the remit of the PLSEs’ role. The role would be roughly equivalent to an ePioneer line manager or coach. Discussions within the InStePP project team have identified an OCSLD staff developer as the best available source for this role. Processes they already use in supporting the University internship and apprenticeship schemes can be deployed to do this relatively efficiently. The head of OCSLD has agreed to resource this.

Therefore, we recommend that in future the role of the PLSEs be radically reduced, to promoting InStePP among staff and students in their faculties and helping with initial recruitment of ePioneers each semester. In place of this role there should be an ePioneer Coach, provided by an OCSLD staff developer. This ePioneer Coach will support ePioneers through regular, structured briefing and feedback meetings designed to facilitate ePioneers in evaluating progress with their commissions and helping them maintain adequate records of their work and their development. The coach should also ensure that ePioneers implement a commission closure event with their staff partner(s), to evaluate the project, obtain feedback on it and formally close it or hand it over.

**New roles**

At its inception InStePP had 7 core staff roles involving 10 staff as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2 InStePP staff roles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Job title, Department</th>
<th>Faculty/Directorate</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Richard Francis</td>
<td>Project Director</td>
<td>Head of Media Workshop</td>
<td>Learning Resources</td>
<td>Overall responsibility for the project,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This looks to be a large number of staff for what has turned out so far to be a very modest number of active ePioneers. However, much of the expenditure of staff resources has been in setting up the project and developing its processes and tools. It should now be possible to run InStePP at a significantly larger scale with very substantially reduced staff costs. This is discussed below.

InStePP has incorporated two new roles that were not originally envisaged in the project plan. One of these, the InStePP ePioneer mentor role mentioned above, emerged serendipitously. One of the first ePioneers in Phase 2, Rauri Pountain, was a final year Computer Science student who secured a Brookes Internship on graduation. Rauri was an initial success story for InStePP, attributing his InStePP experience as a strong influence in securing his first graduate job as an intern for the Oxford Brookes University Faculty of Health and Life Sciences (he is now a full time member of staff in the Directorate of Academic & Student Affairs). Wanting to maintain involvement in InStePP even though he was no longer a student,
Rauri assumed responsibilities for communicating with the new batch of the pioneers in phases three and four, centrally by disseminating news and information about new commissions to the ePioneers in the Moodle ePioneer Community and acting as a conduit between staff commissioners and the ePioneers in clarifying commission tasks. As a past ePioneer, Rauri also plays an important role in helping to recruit and induct ePioneers. We recommend that the role of a formal ePioneer mentor be maintained, since it fulfills both an important administrative function within the commissioning process and also a necessary mentoring and induction one for new ePioneers. If Rauri is unable at some point to continue in the role, it does not need to be carried out by a staff member as at present; it could be fulfilled by one or more existing ePioneers willing to take on additional leadership responsibilities. In this case there should be a minimal selection and recruitment process that ensures transparency and fairness in the selection of the student ePioneer mentor.

The second new role to emerge was that of ePioneer Communications. With the early departure, two months early, of the project manager, there was a need for somebody to take on the task of communicating with and coordinating the ePioneers that the project manager had previously done. An opportunity arose due to the recruitment of a recent Brookes graduate as an intern in the Directorate of Learning Resources, the directorate within which the Media Workshop and the InStePP project director sits. The project director was able to secure a commitment of two days a week from Learning Resources for the new, young, intern, Elizabeth (Lizzie) Fraser, to work ePioneer Comms. Her enthusiasm and commitment to this role was crucial in organising and implementing recruitment and training and development activities and maintaining records of them, as well as maintaining regular contact between the project team and ePioneers.

Learning Resources has agreed to continue its commitment to InStePP through its annual intern in the coming year. A new appointment has been made and will take up the ePioneer Coordinator role in Semester one 2013. We recommend that this role be continued into the foreseeable future if InStePP is to be able successfully step up its intensity by effectively doubling its number of regular active Pioneers. If the LR intern cannot do it then the role would need to be filled by someone else, or InStePP would fail through lack of administrative resource.

While these new roles have been added, several are no longer required. The project manager role was only ever intended to be a one year role and it has been subsumed into the activities of the project director and the ePioneer mentor and comms roles. There is no further need for a project evaluator. And as discussed below, the roles of Careers consultants and the Faculty PLSEs can be radically curtailed to gain a more efficient InStePP operation.

**ePioneer tools**

A variety of digital tools were developed early in the project for recording and monitoring, reflection and dissemination of ePioneer activity. As a Google institution the project team took an early decision to use Google applications for these requirements, because Google apps were available to all Brookes users and are easily shareable and customisable by students and staff alike. These tools were:

1. **ePioneer activity record**, a Google form/spreadsheet for ePioneers to self-record details of any work they carried out with a staff partner (Figure 4).

Five ePioneers used this form, but in all cases except one they made only one or two entries before abandoning it. There was no external incentive for them to use it, say from a PLSE asking them about it, and if they did not plan to submit a portfolio of evidence for Future Consultants recognition then it was unlikely they would ever use it.
Moodle supporter activity record

Please use this form to record the details of each activity you perform as a Moodle supporter. This may include anything from helping a member of staff set up a Moodle course to taking a phone call from a staff member about a Moodle assignment or creating a learning resource. Over time you will build up a record of all your activities that you can reflect on for your portfolio. The InStePP project team will also have a record of the range of activities its student partners have been involved in and the types of things that have contributed to improving digital literacies in the University.

Your username (p0073150@brookes.ac.uk) will be recorded when you submit this form. Not p0073150? Sign out.

*Required

Date and time of session
Please record date in dd/mm/yyyy format and time in 24 hour xx:yy format

How long was this session?
- Less than half an hour
- Between half an hour and 1 hour
- Between 1 and 2 hours
- Between 2 and 3 hours
- More than 3 hours
- Other:

Number of people I supported in this session was
- 1 person
- 2 people
- 3 people
- 4 people
- 5 people
- Other:

Who did you support in this session?
Did this session provide support to staff, students or both? What were their names if relevant?

Briefly describe the purpose of this Moodle support activity
Describe (in a few sentences only) the kind of support you provided

What went well in this session?
Briefly explain your successes in this session. Did you successfully help the person/people meet their objectives? How do you know? (Refer to the participant feedback form if relevant.) What techniques did you employ that seemed to work well?

What might you do differently next time?
Comment here on anything, in hindsight, that might have been better done differently.

Send me a copy of my responses.

Report Abuse - Terms of Service - Additional Terms
2. **ePioneer eportfolio**, a Google site (Figure 5, https://sites.google.com/a/brookes.ac.uk/instepp-combi-portfolio/) adapted with permission from the open Google sites ALT CMALT eportfolio template, intended for ePioneers to present evidence for either/both ILM Future Leaders or ALT recognition or for personal use. So far none have submitted a portfolio as evidence of ILM recognition for Future Consultants.

**Figure 5 ePioneer eportfolio**

3. **ePioneer feedback form**, a Google form/spreadsheet (Figure 6) for staff partners to give feedback on their work to ePioneers (read-only by ePioneers). Only three ePioneers used this tool to obtain feedback on their work from staff. Better use should be made of this tool. It is not clear to ePioneers how this evidence could be important and useful to them in future.

**Figure 6 ePioneer feedback form**
4. **Find an ePioneer**, a Google Site (Figure 7, https://sites.google.com/a/brookes.ac.uk/instepp-epioneers/) publicising the ePioneers within Brookes and enabling staff to submit details of commissions (see below) they have for ePioneers.

**Figure 7 Find an ePioneer Google Site**

![Find an ePioneer Google Site](image)

5. **Moodle ePioneer Community**, a Moodle site (Figure 8) that is the primary communications hub for all the ePioneers. Training schedules and commissions are posted and discussed here and the site contains links to ePioneer activity records and portfolios so that everything they need is in the one place.

**Figure 8 ePioneer Community Moodle site**

![ePioneer Community Moodle site](image)
6. **ePioneer Commissions form**, a Google form/spreadsheet (Figure 9) that staff can use to commission ePioneers for a partnership on a digital literacy project or task. The Commissions form is accessible via a link on the *Find an ePioneer* site and both the form and the spreadsheet it feeds data to are available to ePioneers on the Moodle *ePioneer Community* site. There is also a Moodle Commissions Forum on the *ePioneer Community* site where commissions are discussed, clarified and shared around the ePioneers.

![Figure 9 ePioneer commission form](image)

There is a considerable administrative effort involved in copying and customizing these tools for each new cohort of ePioneers. Even when incoming cohort numbers are low, there are
many hours of work involved: adding the new ePioneers to the Moodle Community space, copying and sharing Feedback forms, activity records and eportfolios for each new member. Much of this time has been wasted hitherto because several tools are not much used. In particular, the feedback form, activity record and eportfolio are rarely used and we suggest providing them to ePioneers only on request. The Moodle Community site is by far the most important and widely used site by ePioneers and in future record keeping and monitoring would be most efficient if performed within that environment. The commissions form is the most important tool for establishing partnerships and should be enhanced in its functionality.

**ePioneer training**

The *InStePP end-of-Phase 2 Evaluation Report* (Benfield 2012) describes the evolution of a package of formal training for ePioneers. The primary element of this package is the ILM-recognised Future Consultants course, which was developed and steered through ILM recognition specifically for ePioneers by OCSLD and Careers. The other elements of the package are training in the tools that ePioneers are likely to use in their work (Moodle, Google apps, the institutional research and learning object repository, RADAR) and the relevant compulsory training provided to all Brookes staff working with digital technologies (Display Screen, Data Protection). The programme of training offered to all ePioneers is in Table 2.

### Table 3 ePioneer training programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Working as an ePioneer</strong></th>
<th><strong>Getting set up as an ePioneer</strong> (ePioneer Moodle &amp; Google tools and resources)</th>
<th><strong>General</strong></th>
<th><strong>IT</strong></th>
<th><strong>Publishing your resources</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Future Consultants</td>
<td>2 days (½ + 1 + ½ over the semester)</td>
<td>Health and Safety, Display Screen</td>
<td>1 hr</td>
<td>Digital Copyright</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Data Protection</td>
<td>tentative 09/11/12</td>
<td>1 hr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction to Moodle@Brookes</td>
<td>1.5 hrs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Using Google@Brookes</td>
<td>1 hr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Publishing your resources</td>
<td>Digital Copyright</td>
<td>1 hr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Resource management with RADAR</td>
<td>Resource management with RADAR</td>
<td>1 hr</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Future Consultants training is a very highly valued part of being an ePioneer. All the ePioneers have done it and all of them speak of it in glowing terms. **Staff 3 comments:**

*Developmentally, using the consultancy model and understanding that actually in the world of work the sort of conversations that consultants and commissioners have together are pretty much the substance of all sorts of business relationships, that’s a nice insight for them to have.*

One of the ePioneers said:

*There is something that I really, really liked about ePioneers and just for that, even just for that I would recommend it to anyone. So basically the first day that I came to*
the introductory [Future Consultants] session, they told me to complete a questionnaire about myself ... It's like a personality test....

I guess what this did is show you the importance of self-reflection on how much you can actually learn about yourself if you start thinking about why you acted this way or why you did things this other way. And then you can apply that to everything that you’re doing as an ePioneer. So for example when you do something and you get feedback, how to analyse that feedback, how to apply it to yourself, and how to act upon it for future commissions or future things that you’re going to be doing in life. So that’s what I think I learned from it. [ePioneer 5]

Since the modifications made in Phase 2 in preparation for full implementation there have been further modifications proposed to Future Consultants. The 16 May 2013 InStePP steering group heard that many students interested in being ePioneers cannot attend scheduled Future Consultants sessions. This lack of flexibility substantially reduced the available pool of ePioneer recruits. Two conclusions followed from this. First, the notion of Future Consultants as a ‘license to practice as an ePioneer’ had proved to be unnecessarily restrictive. Several ePioneers successfully began their work before engaging with Future Consultants. Second, Future Consultants needed to be offered either more often or more flexibly. OCSLD and Careers opted for the second alternative and have developed a more flexibly delivered programme using video screen-casts and Moodle-based activities that will allow ePioneers to undertake much of the programme at their own convenience. OCSLD staff developer Kay Tillyer said of this plan:

We’ll have a go at coaching people rather than teaching people, thus taking less of their time. We’ll try to do things more at a distance, although one of the big and important aspects for the Careers department and OCSLD was to involve people in group work and face-to-face work as part of this, so it’s kind of hard to let that go, but we’ll experiment a bit with that.

This new ‘flexible Future Consultants’ will be available for Semester 1 of 2013.

A further modification is proposed to Future Consultants to address the rate of attrition from initial attendance to sustained engagement as ePioneers. This is to make choosing a commission to work on in partnership with a staff member an integral part of the initial ePioneer signup process at the very first Future Consultants session. This will enable new ePioneers to move straight into working as an ePioneer, avoiding the present hiatus between recruitment and initial training and finding a digital literacy partnership to work on and giving them more time within a semester to finish their project. The ePioneer Commission process is discussed in detail below, including changes that will need to be made to it to implement this recommendation fully.

It is important to note that most ePioneers have not felt a need to gain official ILM endorsement through submitting an ePortfolio. At the time of writing no ePioneer has yet submitted a portfolio of evidence to gain formal ILM Future Consultants recognition. They appear entirely satisfied with doing the training and applying their knowledge to working as an ePioneer without certification. Thus, while the possibility to gain ILM endorsement for completing Future Consultants might be a useful initial incentive, it does not seem essential. If in future it is difficult to find the funding for conducting the final ILM Future Consultants assessment and recognition process, this aspect might be dropped without major repercussions on recruitment. We recommend that InStePP consider providing Future Consultants as an ILM recognised but non-certificated course in future to eliminate the cost of providing this service.

**ePioneer incentives and rewards**

A core element of the InStePP experiment in developing digital literacy staff-student partnerships was to explore sustainable incentives and rewards for the ePioneers. It was expected that to be sustainable beyond the funding period of the project in a time of financial uncertainty, non-remunerative incentives and rewards would be a key feature. At its inception InStePP ePioneer incentives focused on enhancing academic progress and graduate employability and the rewards were around possibilities to gain academic credit and professional recognition from InStePP partners the Institute for Leadership and Management (ILM) and the Association for learning Technologies (ALT). Figure 10 illustrates the idea.
The original reward and recognition model has survived largely intact, although the voluntary (i.e. unpaid) nature of the ePioneer role has been challenged at several points. As discussed below, the two main challenges to keeping ePioneer work voluntary come from:

- Frustration among faculty and within the project team with a high attrition rate between initial recruitment as ePioneers and subsequent active completion of training and commissions. Typically each semester so far has found up to 20 students registering their intention to be ePioneers, yet only five or six at most manage to carry out regular, productive work. This is apparently wasteful of training and administrative resources that are expended on students who subsequently don’t work as ePioneers. This could be avoided by having paid ePioneers who would be more committed and accountable than volunteers.

- An internal contradiction between performing voluntary work and the fifth, ‘entrepreneur’ ePioneer role, which could enable some ePioneers to gain financial remuneration from their work when other ePioneers do not.

The 16 May 2013 InStePP steering group had a vigorous discussion about the issue, in response to proposal from a university department to ask ePioneers to carry out paid work for them. The issue was also debated in the University AESC meeting of 26 June 2013 at a seminar on InStePP. This discussion centred on whether offering payment would improve ePioneer commitment and accountability.

The May 2013 InStePP steering group decided that ePioneer work should remain voluntary, on the basis that the university already has mechanisms to recruit students to do paid work. Consequently there is no need for departments to ask ePioneers to do so. Further, it was thought that having a voluntary scheme for student work offers breadth to the range of work experience opportunities the University provides.

As we shall see later, for the active ePioneers so far the non-remunerative incentives are more than adequate. However that does not address whether more students would be interested in becoming ePioneers, or whether ePioneer recruits would be more reliable and productive, if the role was a paid one.

Returning to the issue of an internal contradiction between voluntary ePioneers and entrepreneurship, there were two proposals for ePioneer work in an entrepreneurial role and they illustrate some of the difficulties this role posed to the project. At an early stage, during Phase 2, another university contacted a member of the InStePP project team to ask if one or
more ePioneers might help them produce some discipline-specific eBooks as paid work. At this point the project had only recruited four ePioneers and it was ill equipped to establish the support and administrative systems needed for the ePioneers to operate on a professional, commercial basis. Rather than undertake such work at that point, the request was passed on to the ePioneers to undertake as private individuals if they wished. One of them made contact with the institution concerned but did not hear back from them.

The second proposal for an entrepreneurial commission came from a Brookes member of staff and concerned helping them establish digital resources for their personal music-making. Although an ePioneer was interested in doing this work, the project team did not give it their active support, because it concerned the private, personal interests of Brookes staff, rather than developing digital literacies within the institution.

We see in these two examples that implementing the entrepreneur role involves additional administrative complexity in establishing and supporting commercial processes, may require the development of an ‘internal market’ for digital resource services in order for ePioneer work to be directly relevant to Oxford Brookes University digital literacy, and might present an equity issue for ePioneers if some were paid for their work while others were not.

For these reasons and to keep the ePioneer role as a voluntary one, it is not appropriate to implement the entrepreneurial role at this stage. We recommend that this role be withdrawn.

We recommend that this role be withdrawn.

This does not preclude paid digital literacy opportunities being publicised to ePioneers, who could elect to undertake them on a private entrepreneurial basis if they wish. In the longer term, if the ePioneer role takes root in the institution and as the University develops more opportunities for students to gain work experience, this may need to be reconsidered.

Although we discuss institutional impact of InStePP in the next section, we should highlight here that one institutional impact has been influencing the University’s policy on payment for student work. One of the University’s suite of Projects to Enhance the Student Experience (PESE), project 07 Student Engagement with the Institution, has produced a discussion paper on the topic titled Student work: to pay or not to pay? InStePP ePioneer work is one of the cases in this paper that exemplifies occasions when student work need not be paid, since the other available rewards make it unnecessary.

The ePioneer Commissions process

Commissioning ePioneers to undertake specific tasks was a late development in InStePP, originating part-way through Phase 3, the first full implementation phase. It is now the main mechanism by which ePioneers form partnerships with staff on digital literacy tasks or projects. The process is still undergoing refinement.

The basic idea is that staff post ideas for tasks or projects to develop digital literacy in partnership with an ePioneer to a central location – in this case a shared Google spreadsheet via an online Google form. A member of the project team – hitherto either the InStePP director or one of the PLSEs – reviews the incoming commissions. Sometimes they ask the staff member for clarifications or refinements, and if the task is seen as feasible and within the InStePP remit they approve it by signing off in the spreadsheet. The ePioneer mentor notifies the ePioneers of new commissions via the Commissions forum in the Moodle ePioneer community site and they can review the spreadsheet for details. If a commission interests them they respond in the Moodle forum, volunteering to pick it up, or in some cases asking for another ePioneer to help them. Three commissions so far have been done by pairs of ePioneers. Figure 11 illustrates the process:

![Figure 11 The commissions process](image-url)
By the end of Phase 4 (i.e. after two semesters of InStePP implementation) there were 19 commissions recorded in the Commissions spreadsheet. Of these 12 were completed and seven are ongoing. Figure 12, an extract of the commission spreadsheet, gives a sense of the breadth and scope of the tasks envisaged for ePioneers.

**Figure 12 Extract of commissions spreadsheet**

A summary list of commissions with titles and short descriptions is provided as an appendix. The range of ePioneer tasks and level of engagement required of them to complete commissions is large. At the lower end of the spectrum of engagement, several were consultancies advising tutors about using digital technology, with time invested by ePioneers ranging from a one hour meeting to several days of work.

At the other end of the spectrum are commissions like the staff Google Apps training, which involved two ePioneers conducting user needs analysis, multiple meetings with staff partners, building a web site, learning how to use video editing and screencast software, and creating video screencasts. Other substantial pieces of work, still ongoing, are: development of Open Educational Resources to support staff and students to create podcasts. This commission is examining multiple platforms and devices and attempting to offer a range of resources that can help most potential users and available technologies; analysing mobile Moodle functionality, which is gathering data about mobile Moodle functionality on various devices and platforms and investigating student needs and preferences for mobile applications.

**Motivation**

Unsurprisingly for volunteer work, we have found in talking to ePioneers that intrinsic motivation – interest in doing the work – is a crucial factor in the ePioneer partnerships. Staff 1 commented of the ePioneers he has worked with:

> They seemed to be interested in the outcome and that had a positive effect on my motivation, possibly on theirs.

Intrinsic interest in the project seems to be an important ingredient in the successful completion of commissions. One ePioneer said:

> It’s fun, I enjoy it. This is the thing; you choose a project you enjoy and I thoroughly enjoyed this project.

But,

> if there is the right commission to do, then to people I think I would recommend [InStePP]. But I don’t think I would recommend this thing solely on the purpose of getting a certificate, because you won’t last 12 weeks if you just aim for that certificate. There has to be something here that you want to do to get that. (ePioneer 10)
So far the range of commissions has been broad. For example, some commissions amounted to little more than a one or two-hour meeting with staff and email follow-ups.

I met up with [the staff members] and we sort of went through the website and that was all they needed really: just one meeting and then a few follow up emails over the course of the next month or so making sure these changes were made for their website, and that was it. That was their commission really....

And then I moved onto another one which was with a member of our academic staff who wanted help with her Moodle space, putting all her resources and artefacts on Moodle. So that was just me arranging to meet her in her office for half-an-hour or whatever and going through all of Moodle and what she can do. And then a few more follow-up emails to make sure it was going and that was the commission pretty much. (ePioneer 1)

Other commissions have been very much more challenging and time-consuming. Commenting on learning how to edit video screencasts ePioneer 5 exclaimed, ‘it took me a whole day to know how to do that!’ And that’s just learning the skills to accomplish part of the commission.

This suggests an aspect of the commissioning process that needs attention. The range of commissions needs to be sufficiently broad to offer interesting partnerships to all the ePioneers. Simple or relatively routine tasks will get done, so long as ePioneers have genuinely interesting and challenging projects to work on as well as the routine ones.

We found cases where things went slightly awry when this condition was not met. In this case, although the ePioneer considered he had completed his commission satisfactorily, the task was not especially stimulating for him. He said, ‘my task was quite brief in a way. But I’m looking forward to doing more in the future ‘cause that was quite a quick one’ (ePioneer 9).

His staff partner, however, had expectations of ‘ongoing mentoring’ on a social media task, and felt that she was ‘left alone’ without ‘sufficient guidance on what to do’. What she really wanted was to have an ePioneer as a mentor so that she and her staff team ‘would be doing the social media themselves, but in consultation, rather than packaging up a piece of work to give to someone else to do’ (Staff 5). The student and staff partners had different expectations of the process and outcomes that went unresolved. Staff 5 admitted that ‘maybe they didn't give ePioneer 9 enough feedback'.

This example raises a second issue related to — and in a project like this one probably inseparable from — that of intrinsic interest in the work. That issue is the nature of the staff-student relationship that is established for working on the commission. The ePioneer and their staff partner will likely be much more highly motivated to work on their project if they establish a good working relationship. In the example above there wasn’t really a partnership going on, yet. There was not sufficient time devoted to clarifying how the partnership should work, to identifying specific goals and intended outcomes. This no doubt made the task more difficult to undertake and its outcomes less satisfactory than they might otherwise have been.

As we noted earlier, role reversal is a challenge for both ePioneers and their staff partners. In another case the commission never got off the ground, so far as we can see mostly because the staff partner was not proactive, no doubt expecting the ePioneer to use their own initiative to schedule meetings and manage the project timeline. In this case, without a proactive staff partner or other staff mentor/coach to support them with establishing goals, timelines and intended outcomes, or in the words of ePioneer 4 to help them ‘manage their client’, the ePioneer concerned was unable to overcome the challenge of role reversal. The clamour of the everyday academic demands on their time repeatedly took precedence over their commission, until it was too late to do anything about it.

We discussed above that a way of improving support for the challenge of role reversal is to introduce more structured, ongoing support for ePioneers in the ePioneer Coach role. Another important lever in helping ePioneers to integrate student and employed cultures might well be in the form of work-based learning in Independent Study Modules. ePioneer 8 said:

I think if this project was an academic module like a sort of professional study module and students could do it as one of their timetabled modules, part of their academic
credit, then that would mean that they have to do commissions and they have to go to the sessions and things as part of their course.

We are inclined to agree. ePioneer 4 was the one case of a student who incorporated their ePioneer work into an independent study module, apparently very successfully. The benefits are multiple. There is the added incentive (motivation) of academic credit for completing a commission. Additionally the framework of the academic structure of a module may well add a level of external discipline as ePioneer 8 alluded to above; failure to see the commission through to its conclusion could threaten academic performance in the module. Furthermore, the academic structure gives the ePioneer a timetable and set of objectives they need to translate into outcomes for their commission, as well as an academic advisor in their module leader who can provide some additional support. For these reasons we strongly recommend promoting among prospective staff and students the option of doing InStePP commissions within the structure of Independent Study Modules.

Making InStePP more efficient

The range and scope of possible commissions needs to be substantially increased to provide ePioneers sufficient choice of varied and interesting projects partnering with staff on digital literacy development. A possible drawback of having a large pool of commissions is that InStePP might end up with unfulfilled demand, i.e. some commissions that are not taken up. If that happened, consequences could be loss of enthusiasm by staff for posting commissions, staff frustration and negativity about the commissioning process, and fewer new commissions over time. This possibility might be mitigated if there is a sufficiently proactive filtering and approval process between InStePP and staff commissioners, so that staff whose commissions are not taken up quickly are notified quickly and offered advice about other means to address their goal or possible refinements to make it more attractive or suitable for an ePioneer partner to work on.

As flagged above, InStePP needs to be more efficient in its use of staff resources if it is to be sustainable into the future. Discussions within the project team have led to a proposal for a more streamlined InStePP operation as outlined in Table 4. The day-to-day management of InStePP will be the joint responsibility of Media Workshop and OCSLD. In this structure the role of Careers, whose capacity to provide the input they have done until now was already stretched, is radically reduced. With a new, flexibly delivered Future Consultants training programme available, Careers needs only to manage ILM assessment and accreditation processes as required by those ePioneers who elect to take up this option. This much-reduced role has been agreed by the head of Careers.

The second radical reduction of staff time is that of the PLSEs, who are now envisaged as merely facilitating recruitment to InStePP by promoting the ePioneer role among staff and students in their faculties.

The much-needed ePioneer support and supervision role will be taken on in future by the OCSLD staff developer Kay Tillyer, who has been a key player in developing Future Consultants and who can employ processes she already uses in her support of the Brookes apprenticeship and internship programmes to provide regular support and coaching for the ePioneers as they undergo the challenges of role reversal in partnering with staff. This has been agreed by the head of OCSLD.

The Head of media Workshop will continue to oversee InStePP and coordinate the work of the ePioneer coordinator and mentor. The training and development programme will proceed as already outlined above.
Table 4 Revised InStePP roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Job title, Department</th>
<th>Faculty/Directorate</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>InStePP Director</td>
<td>Head of Media Workshop</td>
<td>Learning Resources</td>
<td>Overall responsibility for InStePP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ePioneer Coach</td>
<td>Staff developer, Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development (OCSLD)</td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>Supervising ePioneer training and development, supporting them in their partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ePioneer coordinator</td>
<td>LR Intern</td>
<td>Learning Resources</td>
<td>Organising recruitment and training activities, regular communication with ePioneers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ePioneer mentor</td>
<td>Past ePioneer or current experienced</td>
<td>Intern or student</td>
<td>Communications conduit for ePioneer commissions, recruitment and induction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ePioneer Training and accreditation</td>
<td>Careers advisor, Careers</td>
<td>Academic and Student Affairs</td>
<td>Administering Future Consultants assessment and ILM certification as required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ePioneer promotion (staff and students in faculties)</td>
<td>Principle Lecturer Student Experience (x 4)</td>
<td>1 each from Faculties of Business, Health and Life Sciences (HLS), Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS), and Technology, Environment and Design (TDE)</td>
<td>Promotion of InStePP within faculties</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The steps outlined above should drastically reduce the staff resource required to run an InStePP scheme. We need to point out however that there are still administrative burdens to be shouldered if the scheme is to be a success. So far InStePP has not fully engaged with developing the tasks and processes that should follow the completion of most commissions. The most obvious of these is that several ePioneer commissions really need to set in train a set of promotional and ‘marketing’ activities to fully realise their objectives. For example, the Google training web site must be promoted to staff and students and new ‘how to’ screencasts produced to make this resource worthwhile. Similar remarks can be made about many other commissions completed or underway. They should not end up as worthy student endeavors that are left ‘gathering dust on a shelf’ as has so often happened with technology enhanced learning development projects in the past (Ehrmann 2001). We recommend therefore that InStePP in the next period look to develop publicity and promotional activities to follow up on successfully completed commissions.
WHAT HAVE BEEN THE BENEFITS OF INSTEPP?

We now turn to the broader question, are the benefits of InStePP sufficient to make it worthwhile to continue? In this section we discuss how the InStePP project, through the partnership approach, generated mutual benefits for the students and staff involved, and the University more broadly. We elaborate both the benefits that have been gained for enhancing digital literacy and the wider benefits that have emerged from the student-staff partnership approach.

Employability skills

Our findings show that participation in the project provided e-Pioneers with relevant employment skills and awareness of employer culture and made an invaluable contribution to their personal and professional development.

As the analysis of the interviews revealed, students’ initial incentive to take part in the project was the opportunity for a “professional accreditation” and the chance to “boost their CVs up”. Although e-Pioneers have not yet completed their e-portfolios to gain professional endorsement, it appears that the employability skills they gained were important for their career development and that the overall experience is something that they can discuss in the future with potential employers. “I’m glad I did it”, said ePioneer 4, a third-year student. “It’s on my CV and it’s something that I’ll talk about, it could be in interviews and stuff like that”.

Respondents appeared to be very enthusiastic about the project and repeatedly mentioned how pleased they were to have this work experience. As ePioneer 6, a computer science student, put it: “It was an interesting opportunity to get a bit of hands-on experience on the job”. Similarly, ePioneer 4 reported that the project gave him the chance to become “immersed into a professional environment” and “learn how to be an employee” before graduating and looking for future employment. Similar views were expressed by the majority of the e-Pioneers. Said ePioneer 1 for example:

> From doing the e-Pioneer thing, from doing a few commissions, I’ve learnt how to do things at work, I can find a problem and find a solution, that’s kind of what doing commissions is about. Just from doing a few commissions I’ve learnt an etiquette with working with staff at university. You know, when you’re a student you know nothing about the way things work, but then being an e-Pioneer put me into the university community more.

Students’ sentiments about the importance of work experience opportunities for undergraduate students were echoed in interviews from the staff members involved in the project. One commented: “Those are really valuable learning experiences for students because they are about professional life, not about academic study” (Staff 5).

The following comment clearly demonstrates the impact of InStePP in enhancing students’ employability:

> I think certainly from what they say, they’ve got lots of insights into what it would be like to be a worker in this institution and how it was very different from being a student…. Yeah, it just enables two different worlds really to come into contact with each other. And it sounds silly, it sounds as if everybody knows what it’s like to be in a workplace and that there are etiquettes and routines that are known to all, but actually it’s not true. I think until you’ve been in one, and they hadn’t, you have no understanding of that culture. It is a separate thing. Things like agreeing to turn up at a particular time and keeping to it (laughs) actually are quite mysterious items to people who haven’t ever had to do that before. (Staff 3)

We discussed above in some detail the challenge of role reversal and the intense learning that may take place through this. In their interviews, the student participants described in the particular skills they felt they had acquired through their participation in the project. They reported that through collaboration with staff while working on their respective commissions and from the initial training they received, they learnt how to be more “organised” and improve their “time management” and problem solving skills. They had the chance to send “formal emails” and to give formal presentations and they learnt the importance of planning and
thinking ahead for their meetings with the staff. “Because when you’re actually trying to teach someone else, I feel like you have to be prepared for it”, said ePioneer 5, a first year student.

Improvement in work-related skills was mentioned by most ePioneers as a major benefit of their participation in the project. As ePioneer 1 noted, “the partnership, it’s really good for the hard skills, the working skills, transferable kind of skills, but really good for the soft skills as well”. Consulting people and “dealing with different clients”, as ePioneer 8 put it, was generally not something that ePioneers had done before. InStePP gave them the opportunity to learn how to “listen” to people more, “explain things properly”, be “more flexible” when managing prospective clients and also develop their “leadership skills”, as ePioneer 9 reported.

These consultancy skills that ePioneers developed through their involvement in the project were also acknowledged by the staff members who worked closely with them. As Staff 3 very eloquently put it:

> It happened in dialogue, it’s a really creative process. It’s a lot of, ‘What if, what if?’ and, ‘Wouldn’t it be good if?’ and ‘Yeah I can do that,’ and off it goes.

> And pretty much that is the consultancy model that we want people to use. Initially it’s hard in that you have to set up little meetings and that’s where as younger people not into the world of work, they had some anxiety. But they did it, they cut their teeth on that, they had a few meetings and in the end, they were calling us to meetings and setting up conversations off their own bats without any prompting whatsoever.

### Learning experience: independent and active learning

InStePP enabled a kind of student engagement that combined active and collaborative learning, participation in challenging academic activities, formative communication with academic staff and involvement in enriching educational experiences.

The initial training sessions, in particular, appeared to be an indispensable part of the whole experience. “I found all of them so useful”, said ePioneer 5, for instance. “In a way, there is a link to my studies. So, yeah, that way it’s been helpful,” said ePioneer 9 of them.

Indeed, in their interviews the student participants reported that they found the training provided intense, profound, and “engaging”:

> I mean, the initial training was very short and sharp … so it was quite a lot to take in, but it helped me for the consultancy side of things….. I was quite unused to the term and didn’t really know what it was about so that helped me just to get an idea of what I should be doing and things like questions to ask and how to go about the meetings.

(ePioneer 4)

EPioneers’ commission work with the staff gave them the opportunity to “challenge” themselves, to get to work on a project relevant to their own personal interests, and to “learn something new”: “I think that would be it for me”, said ePioneer 8, a third-year computer science student, “the thrill to learn stuff I didn’t know”. For others, the important benefit was to further develop their existing skills, “expand” themselves and feel more “competent” and creative with the new technology. “I’ve taken what I have known and just kind of using what I do know, into making something out of it”, said ePioneer 10.

What all e-Pioneers seemed to have in common was a passion for knowledge and a shared attitude toward independent and active learning. They all appeared to be independent learners, keen to share information and ideas, “self-motivated”, as staff members commented, focused and committed to the project. Despite the many challenges they encountered and sometimes feelings of not having a clear “structure” and guidance from the staff and “being left at their own devices” (ePioneer 4), e-Pioneers found the motivation and determination to work extra hours on top of their normal student duties without needing external pressure to complete the job. In their interviews they reported that they enjoyed “doing something different”, “get[ting] things going” and “being different from a normal student” in the university (ePioneer 1).

We should mention the case of an e-Pioneer who took the initiative to approach a lecturer, without prompting by anyone, to suggest a possible commission. Staff 1, the lecturer who eventually raised this commission, describes this incident as follows:
Well, one of the InStePP pioneers approached me at one stage and she told me that she was an InStePP pioneer and she expressed an interest in making some of the materials of the courses I'm responsible for available to other students across the university. And our conversation led to an idea and that was how I became involved in the partnership with two ePioneers.

So, participation in the project gave students the opportunity to become more active co-creators of their learning experiences through discovering, constructing and creating something new. EPioneers, committed in a dynamic partnership with the members of staff, had choice in the commissions they wanted to work on and how they were going to apply their newfound knowledge. Being active partners in their learning rather than passive recipients of knowledge gave them the chance to have greater engagement, responsibility and impact in shaping their own education. As we have noted above, one ePioneer has used their commission work in the project to gain academic credit and many more could and should take this opportunity.

It appears that InStePP put students at the center of the learning process, gave them a greater sense of ownership over their education and became a platform that afforded them opportunities to develop all sorts of skills by allowing them to take initiative, be engaged with the University and expand the notion of what means to be a student. EPioneer 1 clearly articulates these ideas:

For me it was [...] being someone with ideas and incentive to kind of do commissions and better myself. That’s what it was about for me, that’s what being an e-Pioneer was for me.

But I think being an e-Pioneer is something that could be something around the university, you know? An ePioneer, the ‘go-getter’ kind of thing. That’s kind of what it was for me.

Critical self awareness

Participation in InStePP provided opportunities for e-Pioneers to be engaged in reflective practice and in a process of continuous and transformative learning that emerged from experience. It gave them the chance to integrate these different learning experiences into preparation for life. In this sense these students had an experience that contributed to the Brookes graduate attribute of critical self-awareness and personal literacy.

Interview transcripts revealed that, through their involvement in the project, e-Pioneers got insights into their own skills, abilities and potential, and increased their understanding of themselves and their needs. EPioneer 5 describes this in the following extract:

I guess what this did is show you the importance of self-reflection on how much you can actually learn about yourself if you start thinking about why you acted this way or why you did things this other way. And then you can apply that to everything that you’re doing as an ePioneer. So for example, when you do something and you get feedback, how to analyse that feedback, how to apply it to yourself, and how to act upon it for future commissions or future things that you’re going to be doing in life.

Other student participants shared the same feelings. “It just opened my eyes to ‘this is what you can do’, I think that’s what’s been more interesting about it”, said ePioneer 10, for example. EPioneers were also able to identify some of their weaknesses and to reflect on the qualities they would like to have as students and more generally as individuals. “I should push myself more often”, said ePioneer 9 for instance, a business and marketing student. And later on: “(I would like) to have a stronger voice and (to be) more enthusiastic about doing things and more open minded”.

InStePP also gave participants a mechanism for thinking about their future careers and reflecting on the kind of work they would like to do after graduating from university. EPioneer 4, for instance, who was graduating with a degree in education studies, admitted that teaching was no longer his first employment option and that InStePP had “influenced” and “reinforced” his decision to follow an alternative career:
And then, around the time of the project I guess, I was kind of enjoying a bit more the business side of things, so the meetings and putting in action plans for that, as opposed to the actual doing it, the actual teaching of things.

Other e-Pioneers expressed similar views:

I thought about consulting as a future profession, I liked helping, I think I learnt quite a lot. (ePioneer 5)

And I think, well if anything, doing the project at least has made me sort of start working towards that. If I do eventually become a CMALT [Certified Member of the Association for Learning Technology] that will be a great thing for me, for my career, for my life and, yeah, at least doing the project has kind of kick started me along the way. (ePioneer 1)

Empowerment, being valued

Participation in the project resulted in students feeling more empowered and valued by other university members, by having their ‘voice’ heard, gaining a sense of being part of the wider academic community and contributing to the improvement of the digital literacies for the whole university. The partnership approach provided them with a vehicle to develop self-confidence as well as expanding and sharing their skills and technical know-how within the institution.

An important element of the partnership in this initiative was the reversal of the traditional student-teacher role. This was also one of the incentives for some students to take part in the project. It appeared that this role reversal “increased their feelings of self-worth”, as ePioneer 1 reported. “For me, the biggest benefit was the feeling of confidence and professional development I was getting from it” he explained. ePioneer 1, a student with a hearing loss problem, admitted that he sometimes felt “useless”, “worthless” and, thus, powerless due to the psychological effects of his disability. However, by taking part in the project and by assuming a more responsible role, he felt valued and esteemed by his academic community:

Being an e-Pioneer I was suddenly this person people were emailing for my advice and they wanted me to do work for them, so that’s what it really was for me…. becoming a more valuable person.

Staff members commented how these partnerships provided an opportunity to shift the balance of power between academics and students, giving students more responsibility and control over their learning and professional development. “I think it’s a really useful model”, said Staff 3.

I really like the idea of that kind of role reversal, putting the young person in the riding seat around a piece of knowledge that they have and that we want and giving them the opportunity to teach it or mentor us around it, or have their ideas about how to transfer what they know to us.

We have already described the initial difficulty ePioneers can have in assuming their new role and how “weird” it felt at the beginning to be tutoring people who would ordinarily tutor them. EPioneer 1 commented:

So, I started meeting up with staff to do commissions and I felt small, you know, in their shadow at first ‘cause I was just this messy student and they were busy, important people. And then, when I started meeting staff, talking to them about the work they’re doing and things, I felt on a level with them, so I felt like I was bettering myself and it felt not as scary as I thought it would be.

Staff members were very sympathetic and understanding of students’ initial nervousness, anxieties and fears and were prepared to help them adjust and join the professional environment. “It was important to let them see that we were a friendly bunch and they had information and knowledge that we could well do with”, reported Staff 3. Later on she added:

I didn’t have major expectations of them being able to run with the consultancy idea straightaway, of course not, you have to have been about for a few years I suppose (laughs) to have that sort of confidence.
E-Pioneers’ accounts suggested that they felt that staff members were responsive to their needs, and that they felt safe enough to gradually take on a leadership role. “He was very helpful”, stated ePioneer 6, referring to the lecturer he was working with. “They were always there to support you”, noted ePioneer 5. On the other hand, when asked how they were negotiating their role in the partnership, staff admitted that they often struggled to find the right balance in their working relationship with the students. Staff 6, for instance, mentioned that for him it felt “different” and “challenging” to “step back” and allow students to take the lead while, at the same time, trying to guide them and share with them his own professional experience. The following quote exemplifies his feelings:

“I have been asking myself how far should I be telling him what to do and how far (laughs), you know, how far should I be letting him lead it? And how far should I be reigning it back if I feel it’s going too much in one direction …? So I suppose it’s been interesting to observe myself doing that.”

Through this dynamic relationship, students gradually began to see themselves as partners in learning with academic staff and reported a more reciprocal relationship with them. They described their relationship with the staff as “informal” and “flexible” and one of “equals”. Their insights indicated that, through these partnerships, they felt legitimised and supported by the university learning communities, acknowledged and appreciated for their skills and abilities and respected by the members of staff. “I felt there was a lot of mutual respect”, reported ePioneer 4. It appeared that staff recognised students’ input and welcomed their ideas and suggested solutions. “They were really kind and they really appreciated my help”, said ePioneer 9.

The analysis of the staff interviews confirmed these e-Pioneer perceptions. Staff members did indeed recognise e-Pioneers’ expertise and they appreciated that they had much to offer to them and to the university. “[I found] the availability of that sort of help from an e-Pioneer, all that support from somebody who can help you to do stuff (laughs) with devices and applications, very reassuring”, said Staff 3. In fact, e-Pioneers’ expert advice was regarded by the staff as an additional resource to limited university IT support, an “extra option” and a “safety net” for people, as she commented. “And so, that’s opened up doors, that’s opened up different ways of getting the information that you need”, she explained.

Interestingly, in their interviews, staff often favorably compared e-Pioneers to ‘specialists’ or professionals in learning technology. We discussed above that this has implications for the paid professionals working in the area and that it needs to be treated sensitively and collaboratively so that both professionals and amateurs can benefit from the exercise. The members of staff we talked to did not see e-Pioneers as ‘amateurs’, lacking the professional skills and knowledge of a specialist. On the contrary, staff never seemed to question e-Pioneers’ skillfulness and expertise. “Well, I never really considered them not to be professional really”, said Staff 1, a member of staff closely working with two e-Pioneers on the production of an interactive reading list for his module. Describing his collaborative work with them, he went on to say:

“It’s quite a rare event in a teacher’s career that they’re working with a student on the production of materials. It doesn’t happen very often because you, in essence, are supposed to be the expert in the materials and in the design of those materials. But now that we have new technology there’s a certain, if not requirement, certain possibilities that can be explored and to explore them you need somebody who’s technically more proficient or knowledgeable than you are. So there probably aren’t many other areas of student involvement which are like that where you are developing materials or some teaching learning resource on an equal footing with a student – equal not in terms of power but in terms of proficiency or competence of skill.

Moreover, working in partnership and reversing the traditional student-teacher role proved to be not only an empowering strategy for students but also a driving force for staff members. As Staff 1 put it: “Because really in this job it’s students that motivate you”. Working in an equal relationship with a student was an exciting and motivating experience for staff, “a kick-start”, (Staff 1). “I am motivated to try a bit harder with resources in the future as a result of going through that process”, stated Staff 1.
Finally, the findings suggest that InStePP, through the partnership approach, introduced a mechanism to promote, encourage and support student engagement within the institution. EPioneers acknowledged the need for this kind of institutional initiative in improving their overall university experience and that they had to be proactive in making that happen. “It was in my final year and I didn’t have a very great student experience and I thought doing something extracurricular would give me some more to do with myself, something to apply myself to”, said ePioneer 1. “I think it’s part of the Oxford Brookes kind of road map”, pointed out ePioneer 9. “If you want to benefit from 100% your student experience, you need to take part in various projects”.

During their studies, quite often students don’t feel that their voice is listened to and their whole experience can feel ‘de-personalised’ because of this. However, the partnership-working model allowed ways of meaningfully engaging the university staff with the student voice for the benefit of educational enhancement. InStePP provided e-Pioneers with opportunities to “be involved in what’s going on at the university”, as ePioneer 1 commented, and allowed them to devote themselves to something meaningful and interesting, as these quotes illustrate:

*To me being an e-Pioneer was standing out of the flock of students and doing something big …. It made me feel like I was a more important part of the university than simply just being another student.* (ePioneer 1)

*I’m extremely happy with the work I’ve done, partly because I’ve been able to explore the systems a bit more, but also because by doing this I know that I will be helping the academic community, and helping the university by providing a more enriching environment, and because since the technology is becoming more and more engrained in our livelihoods, that by allowing these resources to be developed I’m actually helping students, teachers get a better learning experience out of Brookes, so I’m actually helping Brookes further*. (ePioneer 10)

**Building bridges**

Another major theme that emerged from the analysis was the role of partnership working in creating bridges between the different worlds of the university. Both staff and student interviews indicated that involvement in the project prompted increased communication and understanding between different members of the institution and clarification of their roles and perspectives.

The close interaction of students and staff resulted in breaking down perceived boundaries between student and teacher; students were able to create more personal connections with their teachers and to realise that staff really cared about them and their perspective. Involvement in the project also gave students the chance to gain an insight into aspects of teaching and learning “from the teacher’s point of view”, as ePioneer 8 commented, and allowed them opportunities to view the university environment and the duties of the members of staff from a different angle. “It also makes you understand what they’re doing as well”, explained ePioneer 1.

Staff accounts expressed similar views, commenting on the importance of InStePP in assisting students to better understand members of staff and to comprehend their needs and the wider role they play in the university. “I think … seeing the university from a different perspective is always helpful”, said Staff 5, “cause the university is a place of work as well as a place of learning”. She regarded the project as an “eye-opening” experience for students, bringing them closer to their tutors and supervisors and helping them realise that lecturers did not come “ready-formed” as far as their teaching skills are concerned, but that they too needed to consider their professional development.

Moreover, since the project involved a diverse group including not only academics but also managers and support staff with a wide variety of experience and perspectives, InStePP is an excellent opportunity for students to come into contact with a wide range of people in the university, to take part in the cooperative effort of a team sharing a common goal and to understand the internal workings of the institution, as the following quotes indicate:

*In our department we have some experts on pedagogy, some experts on graphics, technical people, administrative background people, so I think it’s a good opportunity...*
for e-Pioneers to see how all that fits together, and how people work in a team and how best to keep a project moving really. (Staff 6)

It's been a true piece of team work in a lot of respects and I think that the students (laughs) would say the same thing; they've been part of a much wider team than they're usually part of and they've got some sort of insight into what goes on behind the scenes at the university. (Staff 3)

As well as this the project provided a unique opportunity to some non-academic employees of the university to collaborate with academic staff, to understand their role and perspectives and to feel part of the greater academic community of the institution. Staff 3's comment clearly articulates such feelings:

There's been a real interest in a cross-section of staff working together, and the sort of relationships that have been built during that process, has been great. It gives me much more of an understanding of the academic aspects of the university. I've been very much involved in support staff development, so to understand that different world has been good. So yeah, I think I keep saying about different worlds, you sort of realise how many different worlds there are within the university, and lots of bridges have been built between lots of those different little sections of the university population. That's what I've got out of it personally.

Additionally, for some non-academic staff InStePP was an unanticipated occasion to get directly involved with the student body and enjoy having "face-to-face contact with ePioneers". “I don't have much experience of working with students”, Staff 3 said, “and it certainly made me think that I would like to do more work with students now, it raised my confidence on that and it was just a very nice experience”.

The interaction with the students also allowed the non-academic staff members to better understand the students, their capabilities and also their needs. Staff 2 commented:

We are a staff support unit and so I hardly see students, I occasionally do the odd induction or training course with students, but very, very infrequently, and this has helped me to understand a bit more about not only what we need to do to help them more efficiently, but also what they can do with us, you know, the things that they can offer in return, because there are great skills that some of them do definitely bring to the process.

More importantly, staff members were able to really get into the student world, to gain insights into their needs, especially recognising their need to be equipped for a highly competitive job market. “It's something that has helped me, it's given me insight and led to me to appreciate the situation they're in really”, said Staff 2. The project gave staff a chance to feel directly involved in the development of students’ employability skills and to actively support them in their professional career development. Close interaction with e-Pioneers enabled staff to be much more conscious, sensitive and prepared to help induct students into the professional world. Said Staff 3:

Staff … can totally misunderstand that difference between the two cultures, they can often have very high expectations of young people joining workplaces and expect them to hit the ground running …. And so they are now more open I think, they've learned a lot about how to support and assist people when they make that move from student-hood to employment status. So it's bridging that divide I think, we learn a lot about how the two zones are very different, and how we can help bridge the differences.

Taken together, our findings suggest that InStePP became a small, nascent institutional movement to change the 'us and them' attitude and defragment the university by allowing bridges to be built between the different university worlds. Respondents’ insights highlighted the catalytic role of the student-staff partnership in enabling stronger ties to be drawn between the diverse members of the institution. This approach led to the development of new relationships and a greater sense of a learning community among those involved, enabling students and staff alike to feel that they are partners with complementary roles and responsibilities in the learning process.
Impact on Digital Literacies

Technical skills and the commissions

One of the main questions for InStePP has been whether it could make a difference to digital literacy at an institutional level. At the level of digital skills this is an easy question to answer. For those directly involved as partners on commissions, whether staff or students, the project has been about sharing knowledge about and improving digital skills. We discuss this aspect first. But bear in mind that digital literacy at Brookes and commonly across the sector is a much broader concept than IT skills. At Brookes we refer to ‘confident agile adopters’ of digital technologies. As well as functional access and skills in using technology we understand digital literacy to encompass practices, contextualised to the discipline, wherein people use technology expertly and creatively to achieve personal, academic and professional goals. We turn to this broader conception after looking at skills.

In every single case we have examined both staff and student partners described new IT skills they acquired through working on a commission. These run the gamut. “[I found out] that I had to learn a few more things about the Moodle system”, said ePioneer 6. “I found [out about] new applications”, said ePioneer 10. For ePioneer 8 the benefits included “practicing day-to-day IT skills and … learning new technologies like PenCast”. For others the project was an opportunity to embark on something completely new. “I’ve never done a Google site before”, mentioned ePioneer 4; “I had never in my life created any sort of tutorials”, reported ePioneer 5. Learning how to use new tools was a difficult and time consuming endeavor, but one that students appreciated. Said ePioneer 5:

And then also to use Camtasia…. It was a bit hard … I remember it took me a whole day to master the program. I had to watch the videos on how to use it, how to use the effects and everything … but then once [I learned how to use the programme] … I would just cut and keep cutting and … in the end I knew how to edit the videos and then if there was a problem I would correct it.

As well as this acquisition of IT skills an additional advantage for students was to learn “how to use the computer more as a working tool rather than a social machine” (ePioneer 5).

Staff reported that they too acquired new digital knowledge from their commissioning relationship with the ePioneers. For Staff 5, for example, the commission work was “ongoing learning” and a chance to get “some more understanding about social media”. Another member of staff involved in this was able to learn how to create a Facebook page. Others expressed similar views:

One of the students pointed out to me … [that we] could be using … Google Hangouts for tutorials. Just the actual mention of that means that I now use [this].
(Staff 1)

So the first thing I discovered is [that] you could use QuickTime to do screen recordings …. I didn’t realize QuickTime could do that, so that was the first thing … I learnt from him. (Staff 6)

As far as the institution is concerned, however, the cumulative impact of this type of improvement is relatively small and would remain so even if the numbers of partnerships doubled or trebled in coming years.

To this local impact of InStePP on the IT skills of the individuals directly involved we should also add the impact of the outputs of the commissions themselves. Things like the Google apps training commission, ePioneer support with social media at the Brookes Learning and Teaching conference, the development of resources to support staff and students making podcasts, for example, help much larger numbers of people within the institution to use digital technology effectively than just those involved in their creation. In this sense, for so long as students and staff continue to be motivated to partner with each other to produce digital technology enhancements and support resources, the artifacts they produce can make a significant contribution to improving digital literacy among substantial numbers of members of the institution.

At this level the impact on institutional digital literacy is centred on making better use of existing digital resources. A key idea that emerged from our data is that e-Pioneers worked
on their commissions by building on “what was already there”. One of the bigger benefits for Brookes is that e-Pioneers in every commission found a way to expand existing knowledge and to make staff aware of what was available and its potential. The following quotes exemplify this idea:

*Before making things, you really need to start thinking what is already there.*

(ePioneer 9)

*What kind of stuck out at me [is] that we actually have all these tools and no one uses them. So that’s what I’ve seen, what I’ve learned and for me it’s not also the actual technological skills that I’ve learned, it’s more so what we have got to offer and what we can use with that and develop something better.* (ePioneer 10)

**Fresh ideas, different perspectives**

However the real prize in terms of digital literacy improvement is something else. The real prize is the creativity, fresh perspectives and new practices that are brought to bear on educational problems or issues when students and staff work jointly on them. Our data highlights this as an as yet largely untapped potential of staff-student partnerships for enriching learning and teaching and supporting digital literacies within the disciplines and across the university.

Engaging with students as change agents in the context of technology is powerful, since many of our students understand the potential of the technologies they use and are creative in the ways that they work. Working in partnership with students provides exciting opportunities for educational innovation, and keeps the student experience at the heart of pedagogic activity. Staff 6 said of working with students:

*They come from a different starting place, which is always interesting and it changes your mindset in terms of what your expectations are for a piece of work. So that’s good, that’s a real benefit. Because people get stuck in a kind of trap, you know this is how we do things. But actually to talk through with a student what it is you’re trying to do and to see how they understand what you’re saying is helpful.*

For many staff digital technology changes so quickly that it is hard to keep up. As Staff 3 put it:

*The pace of change in the digital world has been such that I can’t keep up with it at all. I have no idea really what all the options are for me to do the things that I need to do as a worker, so it’s really fantastic to be able to say to somebody, ‘this is the task (laughs), what do you think I should do to get from a to b to get this task done?’ And you hear some interesting answers, things that you definitively would not have thought of yourself. So what could be better than that?’*

InStePP has drawn together students and staff in a creative and committed partnership through using technology in a way that is both vital and relevant in today’s digital society. Repeatedly our respondents testified to this in many ways. Staff 5 pointed out, for example, the benefits of bringing enthusiastic amateurs and skilled professionals together:

*I’ve been at Brookes so long I think it is useful for him [the ePioneer] to sort of jump in and say, ‘Why don’t we just do that?’ And I can, slightly more jaded, I can say, ‘there might be a bit of a problem with that,’ and he can hopefully say, well let’s just do that’ <laughs>. That’s the advantage of having different perspectives, he’s coming in at a completely different angle from me on these sorts of things.*

These different angles on problems involve digital technology practices that can be unfamiliar to even experienced IT professionals.

*I think the thing that really strikes me is the ePioneers I’ve met are working differently from students of a few years ago. So in terms of speed, speed of doing things, social media, you know, I’m putting this on Twitter and I’ve got a link on my blog, which points to this and it goes off to there; that’s quite different from how things were even five years ago. So I think that’s what I’ve noticed, it’s quite challenging for people that have worked in different ways, but it opens eyes I think to how a certain number of students are working in the digital world now. And hopefully the other side of that is*
Let’s take one example of this, the Google training commission that was called ‘Google Tubes’ by its partners (see https://wiki.brookes.ac.uk/display/insteppcases/Google+Tubes). The two ePioneers who worked on this commission were asked to help staff in the Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development develop their skills with Google applications. Initially conceived by the staff commissioners as a series of face-to-face workshops, the ePioneers engaged with a process of user needs analysis involving discussions, sending out a survey to staff of their requirements and some workshop trial runs with just one or two staff. They found that individual training needs were diverse and likely to change over time; that face-to-face workshops would be resource-intensive to deliver; and they were conscious that in the space of a single semester they couldn’t hope to meet all the requirements specified for them. What they finally settled on was a Google web site containing screen casts built to order showing staff how to manage various Google applications.

One of the outcomes of this commission was a set of training and development design principles. They were:

- Build confidence in using technology through immersion in the technology
  - in this case use Google apps to train people to use Google apps
- Multimedia by preference
  - Reusable multimedia resources can reach more people when they need to use them than face-to-face training session ever will
- Understand user requirements
  - Spend time figuring out what people actually need before building anything
- Build scaleable and sustainable training resources
  - The multimedia ‘how-to’ guides are scaleable, because they can be used by anyone in the university, not just the department that originally commissioned the training
  - The Google apps training resource is sustainable because it has adopted a crowdsourcing approach to development. As a result, a) it is not dependent on any individual ePioneer; any number of ePioneers can add to the collection; and b) users of the web site can request new ‘how-to’ resources be included, so that the overall resource can develop over time.

This approach to designing and delivering staff training is a direct product of the creative interaction in this commission of skilled, experienced trainers with young people with fresh ideas and different practices and approaches to using new media. It is an infectious approach, in the sense that already people with training and development needs who have seen this case walk away saying ‘we should do it like that too’.

We note however that it is not enough just to build these resources. They need to be used; that means potential users need to know of their existence. In other words, there is a promotional or marketing piece of work needs to be done for many commissions after their outputs have been completed. Indeed, for some commissions, notably the Google Tubes one which uses a crowdsourcing approach to developing the resource, the commission cannot work unless it is widely known. Therefore, we recommend that in the next period InStePP develop promotional activities to follow up on successfully completed commissions, ensuring that they are known about and used and the crowd sourced resources continue to be developed.

Apart from fresh perspectives about the use of new technology, e-Pioneers can help lecturers with insight into the needs of a learner and students’ meta-cognitive processing. “One of the things that they’re contributing is an insight into learning processes”, explained Staff 1. EPIoneers were conscious that they bring this perspective into the creative mix. “Because we’re students, so we kind of know what’s more attractive to a student than what’s not”,
explained ePioneer 8. “What I did was to give fresh ideas, like in a way students’ ideas, what students think”, added ePioneer 9. “I think I was more like a student voice”.

Finally we need to stress that another outcome of InStePP is a sense of achievement; the actors in the completed commissions were proud of their work. In part this is because they met their challenges and solved problems; but much of this pride stems from being able to contribute to a larger project in the University, of improving digital literacy and the student experience. As ePioneer 4 put it about his commission:

I think in what we’ve created, I’m happy with that. And it also generated a lot of interest from other people in the university as well, other members of staff. And I believe it’s shown to another university as well in some kind of meeting. So, if nothing else, it’s been a model for improvement hasn’t it, so I guess that’s something to be proud of. (ePioneer 4)
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section we summarise the key findings and conclusions and list the recommendations we made throughout this report.

The JISC Developing Digital Literacies programme that funded InStePP offered a rare opportunity to experiment with mechanisms to foster student-staff partnerships to enhance digital literacy. Over two years InStePP made a substantial investment – primarily staff time – in developing and testing systems and processes for recruiting, rewarding through work experience and professional accreditation, developing and supporting digitally literate students to work with staff on mutually beneficial enhancements to the digital learning environment at Brookes.

InStePP operated at a much more modest scale than was originally projected, with a total of 12 active ePioneers over three semesters, 12 commissions completed and a further 7 ongoing. The scale of these commissions varies; some of them impact on small numbers of people, while others have the potential to affect quite substantial numbers. Despite modest achievements so far, overall we cannot escape the conclusion that the investment has been worth it. InStePP up to now can be looked at as a prototype that has not yet realised its full potential benefits. The foundation has been laid to run a scheme of staff-student partnerships that can make a significant impact on educational practice, especially in developing digital literacy.

The project has shown that some digitally literate students within the university can derive great personal benefit from partnering with staff to develop the institutional digital learning environment. Monetary rewards are not necessary to sustain this; the possibility of professional recognition, the work experience opportunity and consequent enhancements to employability, and the chance to work closely with staff as equal partners in a ‘grand endeavour’ to improve the digital landscape, are valuable rewards.

The project provided material evidence of the validity of the ‘mutual benefit’ concept in staff-student partnerships. Students and staff partners alike testify to the rewards they gained from their partnerships. The main rewards on both sides are the joy of creative mutual endeavour, a sense of achievement in what they built together, and pride in the value of their work to the wider institution.

The processes and tools that InStePP has produced should transfer with minimal adjustment to other institutions in the post-16 educational sector. They include:

- four ePioneer roles and role cards (page 8)
- the 3-way partnership model (page 11)
- ePioneer reflection tools, including a Google sites eportfolio and Google forms for recording activity and feedback (page 16)
- the commissioning process (page 24), including Google forms and sites for registering, monitoring and closing commissions (page 16)
- a package of ePioneer training and development, particularly the ILM-recognised Future Consultants programme (page 21)
- the ePioneer reward and recognition model (page 22)
- staff roles for administration and support of the scheme (page 28)

In general InStePP rests on the premise that students can be key change agents for enhancing digital literacy in higher and further education. It aimed to tap into a layer of expertise with digital technology that we know exists within our institutions: our tech-savvy students. It sought to use student-staff partnerships as the mechanism to help transfer some of that expertise to the wider student and staff population. Our data shows that students in partnership with staff can motivate staff to adopt new digital practices. InStePP partnerships showed creativity, fresh perspectives and new practices being brought to bear on educational problems or issues through students and staff working jointly on them. This is perhaps the key benefit of the InStePP approach.
Our data also indicates that the impact on practice is potentially broader than just the use of technology. Student partners have helped staff hear the student voice, gain insights into learners’ perspectives, and stimulated them to think differently about learner needs than they did before.

This leads us to think that student-staff partnerships could be a viable mechanism for enhancing other graduate attributes than digital literacies. Given that a level of student expertise in the area is a precondition for student-staff partnerships to be effective at improving digital literacies, we do not mean to imply that a similar process would work with all graduate attributes. But in some areas harnessing the student voice through active partnership with students could make a real difference to institutional practice. The Brookes graduate attribute of global citizenship, for example, might be one such area. For example, it seems possible to enrich the curriculum through partnerships of students and staff working on commissions to develop cross-cultural perspectives and/or learning activities.

Having said that, our concluding remark is that, to be successful, InStePP and schemes like it need to get substantially bigger. Probably at least twice as many active ePioneers at any one time as it has had up to now. A bigger scheme with much-enhanced visibility will bring other pressures and resource requirements. But universities have much to gain from students actively engaged in helping transform the digital learning landscape.

**Recommendations**

To get the most out of continuing InStePP as a regular scheme in the University we recommend that:

1. the entrepreneur role be withdrawn as inappropriate for a voluntary scheme whose incentives and rewards are intended to be academic and employability-related.
2. the ePioneer researcher role be actively promoted. InStePP should make contact with dissertation and independent study module leaders in the relevant faculties to promote the idea of ePioneer researchers. The InStePP team should elaborate the support that it can provide for such students, including mentorship by experienced technology-enhanced learning researchers, a suite of possible investigation topics, and supporting access to relevant investigation sites.
3. ePioneer recruitment should be increased, with an aim of about ten new ePioneers engaged in a sustained way each semester and preferably a minimum of five continuing on from the previous semester, i.e. aiming for at least 15 active ePioneers at any time.
4. InStePP actively seek ePioneer recruits from all course levels: foundation, undergraduate and postgraduate. In general there should be wider promotion of the project for better recruitment and for more information to staff. Epioneers’ accounts reveal a need for a greater awareness of the project so that staff and students both know what is expected from the ePioneers.
5. InStePP consider providing Future Consultants as an ILM recognised but non-certificated course in future to eliminate the cost of providing this service.
6. when ePioneers are recruited and sign up at their very first Future Consultants session they choose a commission to work on in partnership with a staff member. This will enable them to move straight into working as an ePioneer, avoiding the present hiatus between recruitment and initial training and finding a digital literacy partnership to work on.
7. the range and scope of possible commissions be substantially increased to provide ePioneers sufficient choice of varied and interesting projects partnering with staff on digital literacy development. A possible drawback of having a large pool of commissions is that InStePP might end up with unfulfilled demand, i.e. commissions not taken up. If that happened, consequences could be loss of enthusiasm by staff for posting commissions, staff frustration and negativity about the commissioning process, and fewer new commissions over time. This possibility might be mitigated if there is a sufficiently proactive filtering and approval process between InStePP and staff commissioners, so that staff whose commissions are not taken up quickly are
notified promptly and offered advice about other means to address their goal or possible refinements to make it more attractive or suitable for an ePioneer partner to work on.

8. commissions be carefully crafted so that they can be completed within the tempo of normal student life. They should have explicit objectives that are achievable within a single semester, or if they must be longer than one semester they must be specified with key, achievable milestones that fit within the academic calendar.

9. the option of doing InStePP commissions within the structure of Independent Study Modules should be widely promoted among prospective staff and students. The benefits are multiple. There is the added incentive of academic credit for completing a commission. Additionally the framework of the academic structure of a module may well add a level of external discipline; failure to see the commission through to its conclusion could threaten academic achievement on the module. Furthermore, the academic structure means that the ePioneer has a rigid timetable and set of objectives they need to translate into outcomes for their commission, as well as an academic advisor in their module leader who can provide some additional support.

10. InStePP facilitate better communication about ePioneer projects to the DMeLDs through the mechanism of the existing Learning Technologists Forum. As a matter of course ePioneers doing a commission should be put in contact with the relevant faculty DMeLDs and see it as their responsibility to discuss their project plan with them. This is essential to a) ensuring that ePioneers have good access to development opportunities from skilled learning technologists and b) to ensuring that knowledge and learning from digital literacy development projects are disseminated effectively.

11. provide the feedback form, activity record and eportfolio only on request to ePioneers to avoid wasting administrative resources, as they are rarely used. The Moodle Community site is by far the most important and widely used site by ePioneers and in future record keeping and monitoring would be most efficient if performed within that environment. The commissions form is the most important tool for establishing partnerships and should be enhanced in its functionality.

12. the role of a formal ePioneer mentor be maintained, since it fulfills both an important administrative function within the commissioning process and also a necessary mentoring and induction one for new ePioneers. The role does not need to be carried out by a staff member as at present: it can probably be fulfilled by one or more existing ePioneers wishing to maintain involvement more than one semester. In this case there should be a minimal selection and recruitment process that ensures transparency and fairness in the selection of the student ePioneer mentor.

13. The ePioneer Coordinator role be continued into the foreseeable future if InStePP is to be able to successfully step up its intensity by effectively doubling its number of regular active Pioneers. Learning Resources has agreed to continue its commitment to InStePP by its annual intern in the coming year. A new appointment has been made and will take up the ePioneer Coordinator role in Semester one 2013. If the LR intern cannot do it then the role would need to be filled by someone else or InStePP would fail through lack of administrative resource.

14. the old ‘development lead role’ intended for PLSEs be scrapped. In future the role of the PLSEs be radically reduced to promoting InStePP among staff and students in their faculties and helping initial recruitment of ePioneers each semester.

15. the role of ePioneer Coach be established, provided by an OCSLD staff developer, in place of the ‘development lead role’. The ePioneer Coach will support ePioneers through regular, structured briefing and feedback meetings designed to facilitate ePioneers in evaluating progress with their commissions and helping them maintain adequate records of their work and their own development.

16. to maximise learning on all sides of the partnership the ePioneer coach ensure that ePioneers implement a commission closure event with their staff partner(s). This would evaluate the project, provide the parties opportunities to offer feedback, and formally close it or hand it over.
17. In the next period InStePP should develop promotional activities to follow up on successfully completed commissions, ensuring that they are known about and used and the crowd sourced resources continue to be developed.
REFERENCES


## APPENDIX: SUMMARY LIST OF COMPLETED OR ONGOING COMMISSIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of the commission</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Training on technology as a learning aid</td>
<td>Basic training of a Module leader on Moodle; advice on appropriate tools for reflection for students; training on using the Twitter and other social media for students.</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Usability analysis of Study Skills Website</td>
<td>Mentor staff in the restructuring/redesign of the support service website to enhance navigation, accessibility and relevance to students.</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Moodle guide for students</td>
<td>Creation of a student guide to Moodle (including screen dumps and short video tutorials).</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. ‘Forgotten maths’ PenCasts</td>
<td>Produce a set of ‘pencasts’ for Math students using a Livescribe pen, accessible via Moodle. The pencasts will show small math units providing helpful reminders for students.</td>
<td>In progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Re-useable Learning Object design (interactive reading list)</td>
<td>To mentor the lecturer, survey students’ needs and create a re-useable learning object (i.e. interactive reading list) for students on the module.</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. App for BeJLT</td>
<td>To create a mobile app for the Brookes eJournal of Learning and Teaching that presents the journal content, allows searching for articles, adding media (e.g. video interviews with authors) and commenting on articles.</td>
<td>Prototype completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Strategies of communication with social media</td>
<td>Run a workshop series for the staff of the Learning Resources Directorate to demonstrate effective uses of social media for timely and dynamically updated communication of LR services to users.</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Google training for staff (Google Tubes)</td>
<td>To train staff to confidently use Google technologies and to create a re-useable Google-training system (e.g. a basic help-guide to Google) that could be reused in other departments.</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Skype training</td>
<td>To train staff within the disability/dyslexia department to use Skype/Google hangouts for</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Project Description and Status</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>their student support meetings, with a strong emphasis on how to ensure confidentiality while using the software.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 10. | Library Moodle sticky block evaluation  
To review/evaluate the Library sticky block, which was created last summer to sit in every Moodle user's "My home" space, from a student perspective.  
Completed |
| 11. | Information Literacy resources for Education students  
To create a series of short, 'student-friendly' videos or other training resources to help Education students with searching for information.  
In progress |
| 12. | Realising potential of podcasting for academic purposes  
To develop OER podcasting resources for staff and students and case studies of staff implementation to be placed in the university digital repository.  
In progress |
| 13. | Discipline-specific, online, self-study vocabulary activities  
To help staff set up glossaries and quizzes on Moodle for first-year Business students, for whom English is not their first language.  
In progress |
| 14. | E-space for cross-university discussion on using GradeMark  
To advise staff on using a Google group to enable cross-university discussion by staff on using GradeMark.  
Completed |
| 15. | Social media enhancement of the Brookes Learning and Teaching Conference  
To help the conference organising committee use social media to raise awareness within the organization of the annual the Brookes Learning and Teaching conference; and make better use of those technologies to support the conference.  
Completed |
| 16. | Evaluation of mobile Moodle  
To test multiple aspects of Moodle functionality on 4 mobile platforms, analyse the results and determine a ranking of the most important functions for mobile devices from the student perspective.  
Completed |
| 17. | Setting up a wiki in the HLS Faculty  
To assist staff setting up a wiki supporting new Module Assistants and Peer Assisted Learning Leaders schemes with the application process, including uploading photos and offering links to attachments.  
In progress |
| 18. | Sustainability mobile app  
To develop a mobile app to run on various OS that provides customers easy, on-the-go access to the University’s sustainability programme, activities, events and engagement projects and to communicate key messages and service to customers.  
In progress |
| 19. | Psychology research ethics  
To create an online system for staff and student review of psychology undergraduate applications  
In progress |
| review using Moodle | for research ethics approval that: records applications, date of submission, supervisor, review dates, conditions set and responses to those conditions; and enables both confidential review and open student review. |