

THE LAB GROUP (TLG)

Foundation Paper

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Purpose of the Group

The Lab Group is being set up as a Special Interest Group for the Association for Learning Technology and as a project for the London Knowledge Lab to facilitate and foster collaboration between the various Labs and Research Centres that are concerned with research and development in the area of ICT and education¹. The Joint Information Systems Committee is sponsoring the Group's Founders' Meeting.

The Group

The Group will consist of the Directors and Directors of Research (or a designated representative) from a range of Labs and Research Centres across the UK and abroad. These Labs and Research Centres will become the stakeholders of the Group providing representatives that will, with a small permanent steering group, facilitate meetings and organise Group initiatives. The Group meetings will be held annually and will have rotating chairs. The first years' meeting, to be held in September at Birkbeck University of London, will be co-chaired by the Knowledge Lab's Dr Sara de Freitas and Ultralab's Professor Stephen Heppell.

Background

The Lab Group project emerged from a series of visits to a range of cross-sectoral Labs and Research Centres that were exploring the use of ICT and education. In addition, whilst being involved with the London Knowledge Lab project, it became clear that Labs were growing in number and that a body might be needed to provide shared resources for the Labs and to facilitate collaboration between research and development areas.

Aims and objectives for the Group

The aims and objectives of the Group include the following:

- To provide a forum for cross-sectoral Labs and Research Centres to discuss and debate about new research and development that has relevance for learning
- To provide a resource for the research and development community
- To foster collaboration between the Labs in the UK and abroad
- To provide high quality information for the stakeholders, public policy groups, funding bodies and Government

¹ The Labs Group may be broadened to include other subject areas according to need.

- To provide a focus for the research on ICT and education in the UK
- To provide a 'think tank' for new strategy and policy in the area
- To create linkages between public and private research communities

Funding strategy

The funding requirements for the Group 2003/2004 will include:

- Costs for annual meetings,
- Support administrative costs,
- Administrative and technical support for any outputs of the Group, including web site development and maintenance and database development and maintenance.

To meet these costs we could explore a range of possible funding strategies including:

- Contributions from the stakeholder Labs to meet the operating costs
- Funding from a single funding body (i.e.: JISC)
- Funding from a combination of funding bodies (i.e.: JISC, EU)
- Combining contributions from stakeholders and funding bodies

Initiatives for Group consideration

In the first meeting a number of initiatives will be proposed and discussed, these include a consideration of the following:

- 1) 'Networks of interest' may be established between groups of Labs and research centres working in similar areas. These 'networks of interest' may include cross-sectoral groupings that may provide the basis of future collaborative funding applications. These 'networks of interest' may also facilitate the sharing of research resources
- 2) The development of a web site for the Group that might provide open source resources (MIT model), provide a forum for technical discussion and debate and provide a database of current projects
- 3) The Group may also want to promote new research and development that is not being conducted at present (each Lab and Research Centre may want to contribute some resources/funding for these projects)
- 4) Briefing papers for government and other bodies – perhaps in the form of annual updates on technical innovations may be produced by the Group in consultation with the stakeholders
- 5) Consideration of membership of the Group extending membership to International Labs, possible use of the Group to produce an International think tank for ICT and education – and possibly other related subject areas

- 6) Consideration of the contribution of the Group to a dedicated strand about learning labs in the next ALT-C 2004 conference