

# **Project Interim Report**

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**Submitted to the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC)**

**Glasgow, 8 December 2000**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

CITSCAPES is a project funded by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) in the context of its Awareness, Liaison and Training Programme, and implemented by the University of Glasgow (lead institution), the University of Stirling, Glasgow Caledonian University, and Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education.

CITSCAPES aims to survey the present situation in student C&IT training in the UK Higher Education sector. This will form the basis to develop both a framework for considering this field of development and a guide to good practice in C&IT induction & training. Since the Project commenced prior to the inclusion of Further Education Colleges under the remit of the Higher Education Funding Councils, the scope of the investigation has been focused on UK Higher Education Institutions directly funded at the commencement of the Project. However, it is hoped that the project's results will also be relevant to the FE sector and to other organisations beyond Higher Education.

This interim report has been compiled to inform all interested parties of the progress of the project to date. The main CITSCAPES *Activity Strands* were set out in the Project Plan, and the report will summarise the progress in each of these areas.

## **STRAND 1. Contacts at UK HEIs**

It was recognised that a successful return rate of the CITSCAPES survey questionnaire would depend on establishing suitable contacts at each Higher Education Institution in the study. It was hoped that these individuals would liaise with the project, and forward the survey questionnaire to the appropriate individuals within their institution, or complete the relevant parts by themselves. An official list of addresses for all universities and colleges which are directly funded by the Higher Education Funding Councils in the UK was provided by JISC.

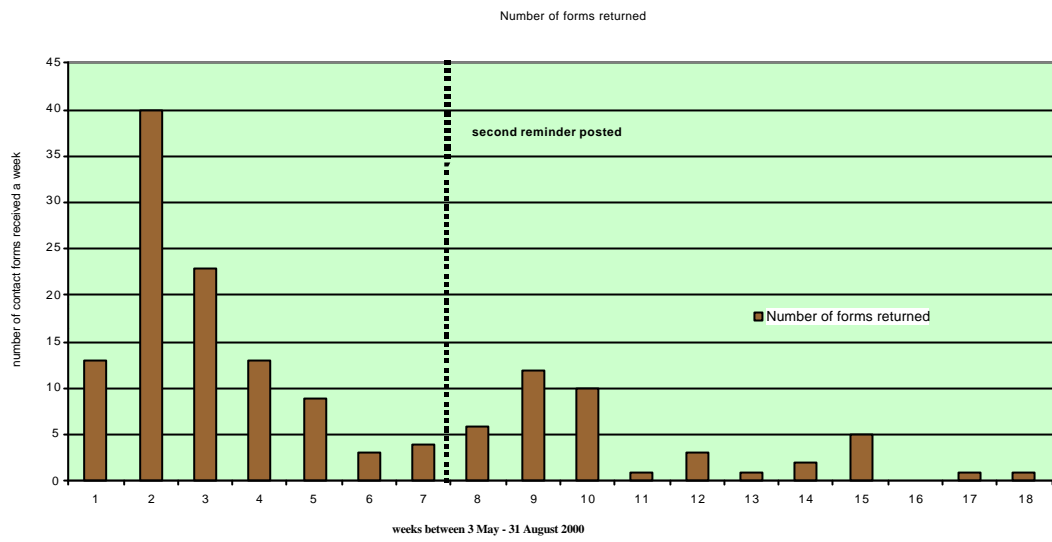
A letter was sent to all Principals/Vice Chancellors requesting their assistance in identifying the contact person(s) who would have best knowledge or overall responsibility for course provision, method of training and other issues surrounding the nature of activities in student C&IT induction at that institution. It was realised that there could be more than one person in charge of such matters, therefore the attached form allowed for up to three contacts with the first name on the form to be regarded as our primary contact at the institution. Initially, 176 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across the UK were contacted. A pack containing the covering letter, the contact form, a return envelope and a two-page information leaflet about the CITSCAPES project was sent out on 20 April 2000 requesting a reply by 12 May 2000. The deadline was set with the aim of obtaining an early and fairly high return rate of the contact questionnaire. This would allow swift progress to the next stage of our project, the piloting of the survey questionnaire. A short time after the specified return date those institutions that had not yet replied, were asked again to assist with our project in a reminder letter. Despite anticipating difficulties for some HEIs in identifying a suitable contact, it was expected nevertheless that the reminder would increase the return rate considerably. The first and final reminder letter including the contact form, a return envelope, and the project information leaflet was sent out to all institutions which had yet to respond on 14 June 2000 - eight weeks after our initial request. The return rate of replies is illustrated in *Graph 1*.

At the time of our deadline, 12 May 2000, allowing one week's leeway, over 40 percent of all HEIs had responded positively to our request, providing us with at least one contact name and details. By the time the second reminder was posted on 14 June, almost 60% had returned the contact form. By mid-July an incoming response rate of 77% was achieved. We ended the first milestone of our project at the end of August with a total of 147 positive replies out of 176 universities and colleges, bringing the final response rate to 84%.

Only one university declined our invitation to collaborate with our project, citing 'other administrative commitments'. The number of non-responders remains at 29 and is mostly confined to smaller institutions.

The first stage of the project was beneficial in several ways. The initial findings show some emerging patterns about the main functional areas within UK HEIs involved in Student C&IT training. A broad overview of the management level with responsibility for this area was also obtained. Further detailed study of this picture will emerge with the later stages of the project. Additional benefits were obtained through the establishment of the liaison person(s). Firstly by raising awareness of the project in its early stages within all UK HEIs, we hope to improve the return rate of the survey questionnaires. It is also anticipated that the identification of a liaison person at each institution will be useful in establishing and conducting the case studies and will also be beneficial in the dissemination of the project's results.

Graph 1 – Return Rate of the Liaison Contact Form



## **STRAND 2. Resource Database**

The development of a Resource Database for the CITSCAPES Project commenced in July 2000 with a continuing literature and web resource search. A first draft of the structure was submitted to the Advisory Committee Meeting on 5 October 2000. The Advisory Committee acknowledged the difficulty in drawing conceptual boundaries in a new and dynamic field of research and academic practice. It was generally agreed that the Resource Database should be constructed primarily from the references and resources drawn on by the project and will be developed into a searchable, on-line database. Technical requirements for a world-wide, accessible on-line database have proven to be difficult to resolve and are time consuming. However, technical obstacles are currently being addressed and an initial text version of the database is in the process of being populated. All members of the Advisory Committee have agreed to support the Project Team in supplying feedback concerning the structure and content of the CITSCAPES Resource Database. The draft structure of the database is shown in *Figure 1*. It is hoped that the database will continue to be maintained after the project has ended.

*Figure 1: Draft Database Outline*

<p><b>1. C&amp;IT in Higher Education</b></p> <p><b>1.1. Official Reports</b>  <i>1.1.1. United Kingdom</i>  <i>1.1.2. Europe</i>  <i>1.1.3. USA</i>  <i>1.1.4. Other Countries</i></p> <p><b>1.2. Background</b>  <b>1.3. Perspectives &amp; Overviews</b>  <b>1.4. Institutional Implications</b>  <b>1.5. Staff Development</b></p>	<p><b>2. Student C&amp;IT Literacy</b></p> <p><b>2.1. Concepts &amp; Theories</b>  <b>2.2. The Student Experience</b>  <b>2.3. Strategic Issues</b>  <b>2.4. Structures</b>  <b>2.5. Teaching &amp; Learning Methods</b>  <b>2.6. Materials</b>  <b>2.7. Assessment &amp; Certification</b></p>
<p><b>3. Case Studies</b></p> <p><b>3.1. United Kingdom</b>  <b>3.2. Europe</b>  <b>3.3. USA</b>  <b>3.4. Other Countries</b></p>	<p><b>4. Context &amp; Interfaces</b></p> <p><b>4.1. Core Skills</b>  <b>4.2. Lifelong Learning</b>  <b>4.3. Assessment &amp; Certification</b>  <b>4.4. Accountability</b>  <b>4.5. Ethical, Social &amp; Legal Issues</b>  <b>4.6. Technological Developments</b></p>
<p><b>5. Current Activity</b></p> <p><b>5.1. Programmes</b>  <b>5.2. Projects</b>  <b>5.3. Organisations</b>  <b>5.4. Events</b></p>	

*Approach to Training*'. Other dimensions are also relevant, and require to be defined more clearly before being added to the draft model. The initial construction of this framework is set out in *Appendix A*. However, it is apparent that the model will pass through several iterations, and a significant amount of time and intellectual resource are required before the final draft of the conceptual framework can be released to a wider audience.

One of the essential and recurring issues noted by the Project Team has been the identification of a set of *Key Questions*, which is seen as being central to the Project as a whole and to the conceptual framework in particular. Through a combination of brainstorming, individual proposition and group discussion, four *Key Questions* have emerged which appear to encompass all other aspects of the Project's work. These are:

1. **Nature:** What is being taught?
2. **Pedagogy:** How is it delivered?
3. **Implementation:** What resources are in place to support C&IT induction and training and what factors have led to this situation being in place?

**4. Strategy:** How do evolving trends, the managerial decision making processes and strategic forecasting affect institutional approaches to student C&IT induction and training?

It is possible that these areas will eventually be mapped onto the conceptual framework to form the main dimensions of the model. Although further detailed discussion and research is required in this area, it is regarded as an important and stimulating strand of the project, and further measures will be taken to enable its progress. It is anticipated that the conceptual framework will continue to evolve and influence thinking in this field after the completion of the project.

## STRAND 4. Project Website

Work on the structure and organisation of the website, which would eventually become an interactive platform for exchanging resources and experiences in student C&IT training commenced in mid July. Various designs have been drawn up and discussed.

It was initially hoped that the site would be part of the 'edu' domain, but this has not been possible. However, in October, the site was registered in the 'ac.uk' domain. The first version of the CITSCAPES web site is now available at <http://www.citscapes.ac.uk> (see *Figure 2*).

All CITSCAPES liaison persons at each UK HEI were informed about the launch of the first version of this site towards the end of November and were invited to email their comments and suggestions to us. It is hoped that we can inform all interested parties on a regular basis about the progress and findings of the project through the project web site.

The CITSCAPES Management Board recognises that the maintenance and improvement of the web site is a time consuming task and would only bear fruit well after the project has been completed. Therefore, it is hoped that the web site will be fully operational by January 2001, and that its upkeep can be continued beyond the duration of the project.

Figure 2: The CITSCAPES Web Site



## **STRAND 5. General Survey of HEIs**

While the collation of the Strand 1 Contact Forms was in progress, work started in early June on designing the General Survey Questionnaire. A number of questions were developed addressing strategic issues as well as practical considerations of C&IT training. It was apparent that these questions were wide ranging, and could not be answered by one individual within an institution. It was therefore agreed that a three-part survey questionnaire should be developed addressing three separate issues relating to student C&IT training: strategic issues, general approach to delivery and details of provision. Specific questions and the design of the Survey Questionnaire were discussed and improved on a weekly basis.

At the beginning of August a three-part questionnaire was piloted at four HEIs and was sent for comment to the CITSCAPES Advisory Committee. Within two weeks the Project Team had received useful feedback which was incorporated into the final draft. The process of developing the General Survey Questionnaire highlighted some difficulties.

First, the Project Team faced the problem of selecting key questions in the field of student C&IT induction and training, which took into account strategic as well as practical issues of provision and mode of delivery. Secondly, it was recognised that the effective administration of the questionnaire would be crucial. It was decided that the three-part questionnaire should be sent to the CITSCAPES Liaison Person requesting them to forward two parts (questionnaires A and C) to the relevant individuals within their institution and to complete questionnaire B personally (see attached letters and the Survey Questionnaires in *Appendix B*). The questionnaires were also available in electronic form on a temporary project web site. The survey pack was posted to 173 institutions on 8 September 2000. Three institutions from the original list of 176 were not sent the survey for the following reasons: one institution had merged with another HEI; one institution had declined to co-operate with the project during Strand 1; and one institution was identified as being part of another HEI.

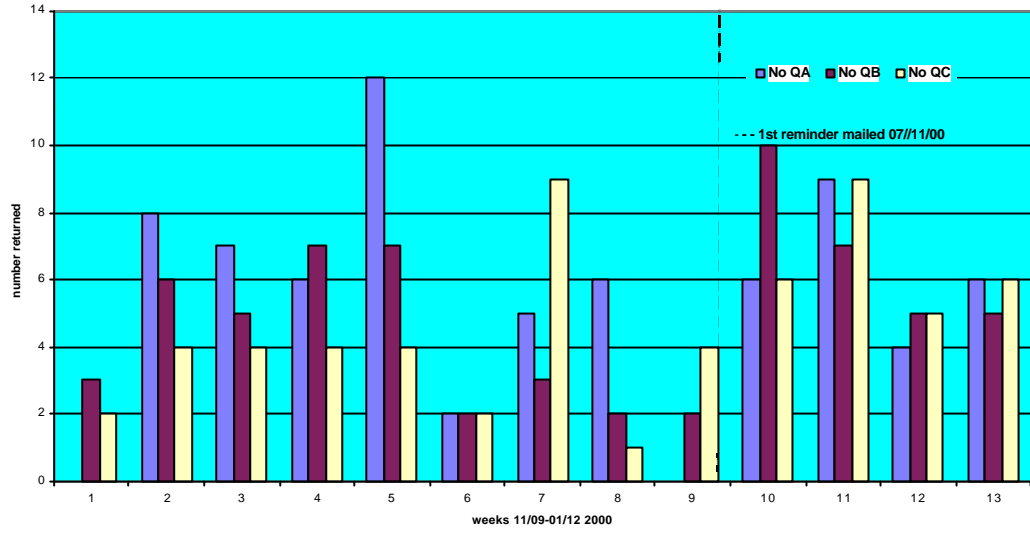
We were aware that, potentially, some of our established contacts may have changed their job since the initial contact was made, and that some institutions may have undergone substantial changes in their approach to C&IT training. However, it was recognised that capturing dynamic changes in a new field of research is always difficult, and it was hoped that some more specific aspects of such changes would be described in the complementary case studies.

In order to create a list of possible case study candidates, the analysis of the General

Survey Questionnaire began as soon as 20 percent of all institutions replied, and eventually aided in the selection of candidates. A template for the data analysis for all three parts of the questionnaire was developed and tested before being approved at the Management Board Meeting of 2 November 2000. On this occasion, a list of possible case study candidates was discussed. This list had been partly drawn up with the assistance of analysed data received from the initial returns of the General Survey Questionnaire.

As in Strand 1, it was deemed essential to send out a reminder letter to all HEIs which had not returned any parts of the three-part questionnaire. By the time this reminder letter was mailed, 50 institutions (29 %), out of 173 had returned at least one part of the questionnaire. Currently (8 December 2000) we have received questionnaires from 85 institutions (49%) (*see Graph 2*). The number of institutions who have returned one or more Questionnaire C is 60, significantly lower than Questionnaire B (64) and Questionnaire A (71). One possible reason for this could be that Questionnaire C is aimed at providers of C&IT training, most probably at departmental/unit level, and might therefore be delayed in return. Secondly, it is a more substantial questionnaire than the others, and a lower return rate can therefore be expected. An email reminder was sent to all non-responding HEIs on 29 November 2000. The second and final reminder was mailed to the CITSCAPES liaison persons on 8 December with a deadline for return set at Friday, 22 December 2000. It is hoped that by the time the data set is closed an overall return rate of 50-60 % can be achieved.

Graph 2 – General Survey Questionnaire Return Rate



## **STRAND 6. Case Studies**

The Case Study Investigations form a central strand of the project and involve the detailed study of student C&IT training provision in a number of UK HEIs. Based on the initial responses received from the Survey Questionnaire, a set of case studies is in the process of being established, drawn from a cross-section of types of HEI and of cross-institutional activities in the UK. Initially two sites were selected for case study investigation. These were the University of Stirling and the Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education. Two Research Assistants (RAs) have been appointed to carry out this research: one RA is based at Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education and the other at Glasgow Caledonian University. The case study investigation at Cheltenham and Gloucester is nearing completion, however due to difficulties which arose in filling the second research assistant post, the Stirling study has only just commenced. Further institutions are in the process of being identified and invited to participate in this essential aspect of the project. Further decisions about possible candidates are expected to be made at the Management Board Meeting on 16 January.

The procedure for conducting the Case Study Investigations has been established as follows. The CITSCAPES liaison person at each institution identified as a possible case study candidate is sent an invitation letter from one of the Project's Principal Investigators (PIs) (see *Appendix C1*). The liaison person is also supplied with a set of guidelines outlining the extent of their involvement with the Project, and the specific areas where assistance is required (*Appendix C2*). On accepting the invitation to participate, one of the RAs is assigned to the institution to carry out the case study, with one of the PIs acting as the main contact for the Project. Initial interviews with senior management at the institution take place with both the RA and PI in attendance.

A comprehensive set of guidelines has been drawn up for the Research Assistants to enable them to carry out the case study investigations effectively (see *Appendix C3*). A range of methods is employed to obtain a rich picture from each case study, and where possible, these are applied in a consistent manner in each study so that effective comparisons can be made. The guidelines include the outline structure for the final Case Study Report. It is anticipated that the individual reports for each case study will represent a significant Project output in their own right, and will be widely disseminated. They will also provide a major contribution to the final report.

Initial results from the first case study investigation are in the process of being

analysed and written up. As with all case study investigations, a vast quantity of data is expected to be collated, and the qualitative analysis associated with this type of work is a complicated task. It is expected, however, that detailed exemplars of approaches to student C&IT induction and training will be produced which will not only provoke debate and interest, but will also provide valuable benefits to the whole of the UK HEI community.

Currently under discussion is the question of whether the Project has sufficient resources to carry out, in addition to the main case study investigations, auxiliary case studies from documentary or other evidence, and whether these should include non-UK examples. Due to the late appointment of the second RA, we currently expect this strand of the project to continue until the end of March.

## **STRAND 7. Dissemination**

A summary of findings will be presented to all contributors to the project. A series of UK-wide workshops will be held. Presentations will be made to main stakeholder bodies, and on the project web site. Publications will also be available on particular areas of the project's work. A more detailed schedule for the dissemination will be put to the Advisory Committee Meeting on 16 January 2001.

## **STRAND 8. Publication of Reports**

The submission of the Interim Report was discussed at the Management Board Meeting on 1 December and will be sent to JISC for information. Due to delays which have resulted in a number of strands of the project being extended beyond their original timescale, the publication of the final report is expected at the end of April 2001.

## **FINANCIAL STATEMENT**

The financial spending is in line with the project proposal.

## **SUMMARY**

In general, both the number and quality of responses from many HEIs to our requests for assistance, as well as the wide interest the project has attracted from other areas have been most encouraging. The project aims are highly ambitious and, although significant progress has been made in several areas, other aspects are proving, not surprisingly, to be quite complicated and time-consuming. However, some of the early results which are emerging are very interesting and progress has been achieved on all project strands. It is expected that the more intellectually demanding aspects of the project will now take on a more significant role in the research activities, which are scheduled to take place over the next few months. The analysis of the survey questionnaire, completion of the case study investigations, and establishment of the conceptual framework will provide a basis for the future investigation of this important aspect of Higher Education.

The Project Team is very hopeful that the project's outputs will assist the Higher Education Sector in the UK to reflect on their own situation with respect to student and C&IT induction, and assist them in focusing on strategic decisions and implementation

issues. They will also help JISC and the funding bodies gauge the best strategic deployment of funding in this area.

