



D5.2 - Final Evaluation Report

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Lead Institution	Birkbeck College, University of London		
Project Director	Prof. Alex Poulouvassilis & Dr George Magoulas School of Computer Science and Information Systems, Birkbeck College, University of London, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HX, UK {ap,gmagoulas}@dcs.bbk.ac.uk		
Project Manager & contact details	Dr Nicolas Van Labeke, to end October 2008. Currently Prof. Alex Poulouvassilis Birkbeck College, University of London London Knowledge Lab 23-29 Emerald St London WC1N 3QS, UK ap@dcs.bbk.ac.uk		
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1 Introduction

The L4A// project that preceded the MyPlan project developed a prototype system, the L4A// system, which provided facilities for visualising, planning and reflecting on lifelong learning. It offered an online space providing information on learning opportunities in London, and a forum for learners to share information about each others' learning and career timelines.

The MyPlan project aimed to increase the value of the L4A// pilot by researching, developing, deploying and evaluating (i) user models for lifelong learners, (ii) personalised functionalities for the creation, search and recommendation of learning pathways, and (iii) a game-based application to support learners in exploring the range of educational and career possibilities.

This document reports on the second phase of evaluation of the new personalised functionalities of (ii) above. This evaluation phase started following the completion of Version 2 of the personalised system, which is described in Deliverable D4.3 of the MyPlan project.

This present document (which is Deliverable 5.2 of Workpackage 5) presents our findings from two evaluation sessions that took place at the London Knowledge Lab on 29th July 2008 and at the College of North East London on 11th November 2008.

2 Aims and Objectives

Deliverable D4.3 described the activities involved in the design and development of the new personalised functionalities that were delivered in Version 2 of the personalised L4A// system. These functionalities comprise the new "what next" facility, which leverages our earlier timeline formalism and similarity metrics developed for Version 1 (Deliverable 4.3 also summarises the functionalities that were developed for Version 1 of the personalised system, which were reported in detail in Deliverable 4.1).

This new "what next" facility of Version 2 is a specialisation of the "search for people like me" facility from Version 1, and it comprises three steps:

- Finding a possible alignment between the user's timeline and a target timeline extracted from the database of all users' timelines; such alignment is made possible by applying the Needleman-Wunsch similarity metrics that were discussed in Del 4.1.
- Identifying, within that alignment, the episodes from the target timeline that could be of interest to this user.
- Presenting such information (i.e. both the alignment and the potentially interesting episodes) to the user within the system's graphical interface.

The user interface for searching for relevant timelines is very similar to the "search for people like me" user interface. Deployed as a popup window, it offers the user the possibility to specify some parameters for the search. After parameter entry, a summary of all relevant timelines found by the system is presented to the user in the form of a list, ordered by their similarity to the user's own timeline with respect to the specified parameters. A "show" button allows the user to select one of these timelines and display it in the main window, below the user's own timeline. Two modes of visualisation of the target timeline are supported:

- The first one (called "highlighting") consists of the traditional linear representation of the timeline, episode by episode, with episodes being shown according to their start/end dates. The information arising from the alignment between the two timelines is used to indicate, using different colours, the status of each individual episode in the target timeline: blue for episodes matching episodes in the user's own timeline, grey for episodes judged to be irrelevant, and orange for episodes judged to be a potential source of future choices or goals for this user. As with all timelines, the user can further explore individual episodes by accessing their description (which is presented in a popup

balloon, activated by clicking on the episode in the timeline widget).

- The second mode of visualisation (called "recommendation") allows the user to explore the same target timeline but with the system showing the target episodes which are potential sources of future choices or goals in the "future" part of the target timeline. To build this representation, the same colour scheme as above is used for individual episodes, but the target timeline is this time synchronised with the user's own timeline. Matching episodes in the target timeline, as detected during the alignment procedure, are synchronised with their corresponding episode in the user's timeline (start and end dates are modified accordingly). Irrelevant episodes are reduced to instantaneous events and are approximately located in the appropriate portion of the target timeline. Episodes judged to be a potential source of future choices/goals for the user are shifted into the "future" part of the target timeline (i.e. beyond the current date). Since the duration of these episodes has no particular meaning in this context, they are arbitrarily redefined as year-long episodes (i.e. long enough to be visible); their relative position to each other is maintained.

Both these visualisation modes allow the user to explore the same target timeline, but with different emphasis: the highlighting mode for locating the different episodes in the target timeline, preserving their initial timescale, and the recommendation mode for locating potential future choices or goals. However, both modes only represent the *outcome* of the "what next" functionality, not the *process* itself.

Presentation of the process has also been implemented, aiming at providing the user with explanation of how the target timeline episodes have been deemed to be relevant or not. This explanation is given as a simple representation of the alignment, where episodes from both timelines are displayed in a list and their mapping is indicated by different types of arrows:

- Left arrow (dim blue) for episodes in the user's timeline without a matching in the target;
- Double arrow (dark blue) for matching episodes;
- Right arrow (grey) for episodes in the target timeline judged irrelevant;
- Right arrow (red) for episodes in the target timeline judged relevant.

We refer the reader to Deliverable 4.3 for more details of these functionalities. This second phase of the evaluation has aimed at exploring the impact of the above design decisions for the "what next" functionality, as well as the revisions made to the earlier "search for people like me" functionality provided by the Version 1 system.

3 The Birkbeck Evaluation

3.1 Planning and Execution

Following the recommendations arising from the first Evaluation Phase (see Deliverable 5.1), it was decided to recruit a small number of current students from Birkbeck's Foundation Degree in IT, to collect their learning and career information, and to create a timeline for each of them within the L4A// system. In parallel with this process, similar information on their learning and career to date was requested from a large pool of FdIT alumni (by email, sent by the programme Administrator), in order to build a repository of suitable timelines to support the "what next" functionality for the small number of current students recruited. Appendix A shows the questionnaire that was sent to current FdIT students and Appendix B the questionnaire that was sent to alumni.

In the event, we were able to recruit 2 current FdIT students, which we refer to as User1 and User2 below. We also received information from 9 FdIT alumni, from whom we ultimately selected 5 for encoding their timelines, which we refer to as Alumni1-5 below.

User1 and User2 were both women. User 1 was in her 30s, with an academic background in IT and Architecture and a professional background in IT and Sales. She was currently in the second year of the FdIT. User 2 was in her 20s and had worked in the food industry in a technical/administrative capacity. She was currently in the first year of the FdIT.

Alumni1-Alumni5 represented a variety of lifelong learners in terms of their experience and background:

- Gender: 1 Female and 4 Male;
- Age: 3 in 20's, 2 in 30's;
- Background: mean of 2.6 educational episodes and 4.8 occupational episodes.

We then held a one-to-one session with User1 and User2 (who were teamed with G.Magoulas and A.Poulovassilis, respectively), consisting of several parts:

- Activity 1: introduction to the L4A// system by the facilitator
- Activity 2: discussion with participant, while viewing their own timeline within the system. Three aspects would be explored with the participant:
 - Q1: How did you come to choose this course?
 - Q2: What is your current thinking about what you will do next following this course?
 - Q3: What factors are influencing your decision making regarding planning your future learning and career?

The discussion with participants was left as open as possible in order to avoid any coercion into particular ways of thinking. Subsidiary questions to the above were asked and followed up by the facilitator, for example:

- What is the participant's current learning goal? [Q1]
- How did they choose to do this degree? [Q1]
- What do they want to do next? [Q2]
- What are their short/long term objectives? [Q2]
- How do they plan their future pathway? [Q3]
- What source of information or inspiration are they using for planning? [Q3]
- What are the main factors they use to decide future planning? [Q3]
- What are the main factors they use to assess the outcome of their progression? [Q3]

- Activity 3: eliciting the participant's critical perception of the system's "what next" facility, with focus on the process rather than on the outcome.
 1. The participant logged into the system (again) and viewed their timeline.
 2. The participant was asked to explore each of the 5 alumni timelines with respect to her own, with the aim of discovering and exploring potential future pathways. This was done with the two different approaches supported by the system:
 - a. by using the "search for similar timelines" functionality in order to display each timeline in a "native" way (i.e. without explicitly showing the matches). Given the small number of timelines in the system, the search form was used in "default" mode without any other specific parameters being selected.
 - b. by using the "what next" functionality over the same timelines. Participants explored the two presentation modes (which are activated by a button on timeline widget):
 - i. firstly the "highlighting" mode (i.e. highlighting in the target timeline the three different types of episodes: matching, irrelevant and potential future target);
 - ii. secondly the "recommendation" mode (i.e. showing the alignment between the two timelines and moving relevant episodes as possible future choices/goals).

Explanations about the alignment of timelines and the colour encoding (i.e. blue for mapping episodes, grey for discarded episodes, red for potential future pathways) were given by facilitator.
 3. The participant was encouraged to think aloud, stating her expectation about the functionality, reaction to the process and perception of the outcome of the various approaches.

We then brought the two students and the three researchers (AP, GM and NVL) together for Activity 4, which was a final group discussion about the participants' overall perception of the evaluation session. The discussion also focussed on gathering information about changes in the participants' own vision of planning their learning, in particular:

- Q4: Has your usage of the L4A// system changed your thinking about your current and future learning? If the answer is "yes", how and what aspects of the system have brought about that change? If the answer is "no", can you see potential for the system to do so, and how?

3.2 Main Findings

User 1, Q1: User 1 wanted to resume her IT experience and career. She was living in Austria but there was no part-time education available there. She also wanted to change her personal life. She searched online and had also heard about the Open University. Some friends also told her about Edinburgh University. She found part-time courses in Scotland and in London. She was not sure she could live in a small town like Edinburgh, and BBK's FdIT offered a good mix: BBK is in the centre of the city, she could find a good job and achieve something within a good timeframe whilst working at the same time.

User 2, Q1: User 2 had come to the UK from another country, and she taken some years to explore the possibilities for FE/HE courses in IT, and her own interests in the subject. In the meantime, she had taught herself various IT skills and had taken some IT courses. She had found that she was picking up IT skills easily, at home and in IT-related tasks at work. But she was not certain that she wanted to enter at this time a career in IT. Her main reasons for

choosing BBK's FdIT were that it was a part-time course which meant that she could carry on working full-time while studying, and because it gave a good grounding in the mathematical background of the discipline. She had also discovered while on the FdIT an interest in the creative aspects of IT, such as graphic design, website design, database design.

User 1, Q2: She was pretty confident with her choices. She thought that part-time studying allows you to both work and study at the same time. She believed that a downside of the degree is that because of the part-time nature and maturity of students, the level sometimes is not that difficult. But the advantage is that you can get experience whilst doing your degree, which is important since for most jobs employers ask for experience. It is also a more flexible option so you can cope better with it than with a full-time degree. The start was difficult because it was difficult to focus, but she has enjoyed the second year of the degree. She found that it was more academic, more challenging. She wants to continue with her studies such as the BSc ISM or do something else somewhere full-time. There are of course financial issues. She believes that in industry employers value full-time degrees more than part-time. She finds that one positive thing with part-time studies is that you show your employer that you can cope with work and study at the same time. But in her opinion full time students appear to have better chances in the market. Her future objective is to progress with the career in IT, and learn SQL.

User 2, Q2: She was not very confident about her choice of course at this time, nor about where it could take her and what she wanted to achieve next in her career. She was still rather worried that she would not be "good enough in IT work". She was however getting a lot of support from her work environment and colleagues.

User 1, Q3: The main factor is what interests her, what she likes, what can help her grow. But she also needs to be practical in the sense that she looks for options that can pay her bills after graduation so that she can get a return from what she is doing. She believes that when she is not interested in something then she cannot cope with it. She found the PDP modules on the FdIT very interesting as they help you to learn about yourself. She believes that this is a very valuable experience even though it does not produce a practical outcome. But she thinks that if you are clear about yourself, know yourself both as a person and as a worker you can then specify goals and get more holistic experience. So it is not about the marks obtained, it is about getting more value from what you are doing.

User 2, Q3: The main influential factors were the need to be challenged and interested in her learning and work. Her interest in the subject would determine her future studies and work. She was very motivated to do further self-directed learning in subjects that she was interested in. For information and inspiration she used job websites and job descriptions. The PDP sessions in the FdIT course were also encouraging of personal development. People from her work environment were also informative and inspirational sometimes. To assess the outcomes of her learning/career progression, she was always challenging herself to do better, and she was quite a perfectionist in her approach, with an attention to detail.

User 1, Activity 3: User 1 found "what next" very interesting as a feature "It is the hard to have a sharp answer about what to do next". So she thought that "it is very interesting to see the patterns that led people to certain jobs". The whole process reminded her what she was doing, and gave some ideas about what to do next, what to try to learn next, what to experience next. Her next step would be "I go on an IT job board and look for job descriptions for something I think it is appealing to me. I look for their requirements and I gradually build an idea of what to do next." She suggested to extend the system so that similarities between user profiles and job descriptions can also be provided.

User 2, Activity 3: User 2 found that the visualisations of the "what next" functionality were very clear. She found it "very interesting" to see that some FdIT alumni were moving on to jobs in the IT sector after their degrees. Knowing how these peoples' careers were evolving was giving her more self-confidence in her own learning/career development. "I will start

believing in myself". "I am feeling more confident now that it is definitely possible to find the job I want". About the system itself: "I would love to see it live, to see lots of people and see that you can really match different things ... so can see what they did after the same course ... or maybe with similar backgrounds... It is really helpful".

Users 1 and 2, Activity 4:

User 1 felt that new users need to have more explanation about the affordances of the system e.g. small help snippets appearing at the bottom of the screen. Guidelines about how to describe episodes would also be useful (e.g. "describe job roles and skills, but don't give specific company names").

Her impressions of the system were that:

- "It was interesting to see other peoples' experience because this is what you are normally doing in your life: you try to look at if people have achieved something that you are interested in and you think how did they get there?"
- "It is offering you ideas and offering you information, where to go, what to learn, what experiences helped, so taking from other peoples' experiences".
- "I think also for some students they are not so confident about possibilities or their capabilities. I think it's a very good thing to see other people, what they achieved."
- "People need a wide variety of sources ... one single source won't make a difference ... they will feel their own future and will try to match what I want to do, is it matching with my expectations? I think this is one of the possible tools". "The most important thing is to have a wide basis, as large as possible a number of profiles, because people ... tend to stick with things that are quite a rich source of information... The challenge of any community information system is to keep the user, to not let the user disappear from that system".

For future development of the system, User 1 felt it would be interesting to see the reasons why people felt they had gained specific job offers (e.g. how their personality, soft skills or hard skills were factors in this process), in order to understand the background and the process involved in this person being successful.

Access to more general information about job roles and standardised job descriptions would also be useful, to have better knowledge of where you want to go in the future. The details input by people into their own episodes may not be particularly meaningful or sufficiently detailed. Both types of information would be helpful to improving your own decision-making process i.e. both standard job descriptions, and peoples' personal ones.

User 2 found it useful to have seen from her usage of the L4All system that it was possible to move into a career in IT following on from Birkbeck's FdIT course. She had not known this before and had thought that companies needed much more IT work experience when they hired to IT-related posts. It was useful to find out that they also recruited new IT graduates with new ideas: "I will probably start believing in myself that I can really do it without having a really long experience in IT before". "Now I won't be scared that I won't have a job".

It was "really helpful" to see the progressions of different alumni and the matchings of different aspects of their timelines with her own – past and future episodes; same and different episodes. "Also if you are looking for a change in career, you can look for the options available, and how did other people get there. How did people with similar backgrounds change their careers".

User 2 thought it would be a good idea to give access to the L4All system to new FdIT students so that they can share their experiences with each other. This would be motivational to help sustain their study in the early years. Also, it would enable students to

see what might be possible in the future, what they could achieve, and could inspire also further future learning.

In terms of future development of the system, she thought that “It would be really nice to have online chat where you can exchange you experiences ... to find out what people are really doing in these positions, how they are developing, what kind of choice they have to develop even more.”

4 College of North East London Evaluation

4.1 Planning and Execution

The evaluation with this group of learners was facilitated by the Linking London Lifelong Learning Network (L4N) partner of the MyPlan project. It was of necessity a smaller scale evaluation than the earlier one held with Birkbeck FdIT students, due to the limitations of the staff time from the L4N and CONEL personnel that could be allocated to planning the session, and of the students' availability.

Four learners were recruited from CONEL's Foundation Degree in Counselling, year 2. They were all mature students, and they undertook 3 activities during a one-hour lunchtime session that was facilitated by AP and GM:

- Activity 1: creating your profile and timeline in the L4All system
- Activity 2: demonstration from the facilitators of the "searching for people like me" and "what next" facilities of the system
- Activity 3: feedback questionnaire and discussion session with the facilitators

Appendix C includes the handout given to the participants to support this session.

4.2 Responses to the Questionnaire

The responses to the questions contained in the handout were as follows:

	Very easy	Easy	Mixed feelings	Difficult	Very difficult
Accessing the different parts of my profile is	1	3			
Using the menu is	1	2	1		
Using the profile editor is	1	1			
Understanding the information required in the profile editor is	1	1			

Any other comments you wish to make:

"My interests section – should be able to choose more than one as few people have only one interest"

	Very easy	Easy	Mixed feelings	Difficult	Very difficult
Understanding the difference between my Profile and my Timeline is	2	1			
Finding out how to create a new episode for my timeline is	1	2			
Understanding the different categories of episode is	1	1	1		
Using the episode editor is	1	1	1		
Understanding and manipulating the timeline is	1		1	1	

Any other comments you wish to make:

<p>“Once explained easy to follow”</p> <p>“Easy to alter and add your information. However, a bit sensitive to making amendments. However very useful in viewing people similar to yourself”</p> <p>“Very useful but maybe could include a key to indicate what orange/blue/grey areas mean for the user.”</p> <p>“Easy to use once it was explained”</p> <p>“Could there be a colour-coded section that explains blue is the same, red are the differences, green could be what you could do.”</p>

About the L4All System

Understanding the layout of the main page is

very easy	1
easy	3
mixed feelings	
difficult	
very difficult	

Identifying the various elements of the main page is

very easy	1
easy	3
mixed feelings	
difficult	
very difficult	

Navigating through the system is

very easy	1
easy	2
mixed feelings	1
difficult	
very difficult	

Accuracy of descriptions on screen is

very good	1
mostly good	2
mixed quality	1
mostly poor	
very poor	

Knowing what to do next is

very difficult	
difficult	
mixed feelings	1
easy	3
very easy	1

Navigating the Profile and Timeline information is

very easy	1
easy	1
mixed feelings	1
difficult	
very difficult	

The response time of the system is

very good	3
mostly good	1
mixed feelings	
mostly poor	
very poor	

The reliability of the system is

very good	
mostly good	2
mixed feelings	
mostly poor	
very poor	

About the Profile

Editing the profile is

very difficult	
difficult	
mixed feelings	1
easy	2
very easy	1

About the Timeline / Episodes

Understanding the timeline is

very easy	
easy	3

mixed feelings	1
difficult	
very difficult	

Manipulating the timeline is

very easy	
easy	4
mixed feelings	
difficult	
very difficult	

Adding episodes to the timeline is

very easy	1
easy	3
mixed feelings	
difficult	
very difficult	

Which functionalities of the system do you think you would use more often, and why?

“My own profile – to update. Courses – to see if there is anything I could do. What next – to give me ideas on what I want to do”

“My timeline. Add episode. Courses”

“To see what stage I am at and what possibilities there are for me to use my qualifications. As the system gives you insight to what other people have done, and what is possible which I think is useful.”

“The timelines were very useful. If you wanted to get some information to help you decide what you want to do next”

Which functionalities of the system do you think you would use less often, and why?

“Details and background. As once info is coded, no need to go back to it unless there are changes.”

What value could the system add to the way in which you plan your future career?

“Looking at what careers are an option at a glance”

“Help with relevant courses. Help to plot your course”

“When the system identifies what I could possibly do with my Foundation degree in relation to others. It should allow you to click in the possibility and give you a brief indication of how that could be achieved”

“I found this system useful and could help people look at other careers that they have never thought of”

How would you describe L4All to a colleague?

“Not sure. Understand the idea but don’t know if the concept is workable. I would not be using others to help me plot my future.”

“Different timelines of people who have been in education and registered what they have done and it allows you to look at future options. You can add your own personal events on the timeline. You can compare yours to others”.

“I feel that the system is very useful in putting your information which others and also reflecting on what others are doing to help give you an idea of possible choices.”

“A useful tool to help you see what your future could hold.”

4.3 Further discussion

In the ensuing discussion sessions with the facilitators (GM and AP), one more interesting item of feedback arose regarding obtaining advice from the system:

Participant: “I think it could also say when you do find what someone else is doing, to give you an indication of how to go about it. Not, just to leave you. Ok, I’ve got to this process of saying this person has gone on with this Foundation Degree, they’ve gone on to do math. How have they gone to do math? So it can give a little brief, these are possible options of how to go and do that within the university, college. So you’re not just left in the air once you’ve got the information.”

Facilitator: “You could get some kind of advice - ok I’ve seen that, I can do this kind of course but what now? What else can I do?”

Participant: “This is where the bit with LearnDirect that comes up - I think that would be interesting and the fact that it led directly into LearnDirect, not just a list of courses, and LearnDirect are actually very good for giving that kind of advice.”

Facilitator: “So for you, search for courses is a good functionality”

Participant: “Wonderful”

5 Conclusions

This document has reported on the second phase of evaluation of the functionalities of Version 2 of the personalised L4All system, which are described in Deliverable D4.3. This second phase of evaluation aimed at exploring the impact of our design decisions for the new “what next” functionality, as well as the revisions made to the earlier “search for people like me” functionality that was provided by the Version 1 system.

In this document we have presented the set-up and undertaking of two evaluation sessions, and the results from these sessions. The first session took place with two Foundation Degree in IT students from Birkbeck at the London Knowledge Lab on 29th July 2008. The second session took place with four Foundation Degree in Counselling students at the College of North East London on 11th November 2008.

From the six students’ responses, we found that there was overall satisfaction with the main functionalities provided by the system. They could see its value in helping learners reflect on their current learning, gaining self-confidence, and identifying possibilities for their future work and learning episodes. Some more explanation was sometimes felt to be needed in relation to the timeline and the different colour-encodings of matches. Some guidelines about how to enter information about individual episodes would also be helpful.

There is clearly an appreciation by users that the system aims to offer possibilities for future learning/work choices, rather than making specific recommendations. One CONEL user however expresses scepticism in “using others to help me plot my future”.

One CONEL user noticed the small amount of duplication between information entered in the profile and within episodes in the timeline – this is something that we are aware of, and we would plan to change in a future version of the system.

One CONEL user highlighted the usefulness of being able to access external, quality-assured information about courses e.g. from the LearnDirect database.

One BBK user suggested that the system could be extended so that standardised job descriptions were provided in addition to the information input by people about their own work episodes, and that drawing similarities between users’ profiles and standard job descriptions would also be useful. It would also be interesting to see peoples’ assessments of why they believed they had been successful in obtaining a particular job,

Finally, one BBK user thought it would be a good idea to give access to the L4All system to new FdIT students so that they can share their experiences with each other. She also thought that it would be helpful to provide an online chat facility where students can exchange experiences. We are currently pursuing the possibility of following up these two recommendations.

Appendix A – Questionnaire for FdIT students

Information Sheet

The MyPlan research project being run at Birkbeck and the Institute of Education aims to develop techniques and tools that support the personalised planning of lifelong learning. In particular, we are aiming to develop and evaluate functionalities for the creation, searching and recommendation of possible future learning “pathways”.

We are contacting you, as a current FD IT student at Birkbeck, in order to obtain information about what you have done before and during your current studies. The information obtained from you through this questionnaire will be used to inform the research work of the project. Specifically, it will be used to generate learning and career “pathways” that will be stored within our prototype system. A similar request for information has been sent to former students on the FD IT in order to collect data about their career and learning paths since they left Birkbeck.

After we have received your completed questionnaire, we may contact you again to ask you if you would agree to participate in a face-to-face evaluation session using our prototype system. During this evaluation session, we will try to match the pathways followed by earlier FD IT students with your own expectations and wishes about your future learning and career development.

Please note that we are very interested in obtaining data about your own learning and work experience, even if you do not want to participate to the next face-to-face evaluation.

Your personal data collected from this study – including your name, contact details and background information – will be kept confidential and will only be made available to the project research team (see below). The other data that you give us will be stored securely in the system for the duration of the evaluation only and will be erased immediately after. No reference will be made in oral or written form that could identify any participant of the study.

The MyPlan research team is:

- Dr Nicolas Van Labeke, Birkbeck (nicolas@dcs.bbk.ac.uk)
- Pr Alexandra Poulouvasilis, Birkbeck (ap@dcs.bbk.ac.uk)
- Dr George Magoulas, Birkbeck (gmagoulas@dcs.bbk.ac.uk)
- Dr Ian Harrison, Birkbeck (ian@dcs.bbk.ac.uk)
- Pr Diana Laurillard, Institute of Education (D.Laurillard@ioe.ac.uk)
- Dr Martin Oliver, Institute of Education (M.Oliver@ioe.ac.uk)

More information about the project can be found at <http://www.lkl.ac.uk/research/myplan/>

A demo version of the system can be found at <http://l4all.dcs.bbk.ac.uk:8080/l4all-v4/>

Please fill in the Questionnaire and Informed Consent forms below and email them back to Tara (tara@dcs.bbk.a.uk).

Questionnaire

(i) Educational Background

Please describe your periods in Further and Higher education, including your experience at Birkbeck. For each period, please state the qualification obtained or currently being studied

for (e.g. Certificate in Information Technology; BSc in Statistics and Economics; ...), the institution, and the start & end dates (month and year will be sufficient). Please use the description field to give us any more information you can e.g. nature of course/degree attended, part-time or full-time study, etc. Feel free to add more items if the provided templates are not enough.

Qualification

Institution

From (month/year)

To (month/year)

Description

Qualification

Institution

From (month/year)

To (month/year)

Description

Qualification

Institution

From (month/year)

To (month/year)

Description

Qualification

Institution

From (month/year)

To (month/year)

Description

Qualification

Institution

From (month/year)

To (month/year)

Description

(ii) Work Background

Please describe your work experience to date. We are particularly interested in what you may have done before coming to Birkbeck but please tell us also what you are doing during your current studies, if applicable. For each period of work, please give a job title, the place, and the start & end dates (a month and year will be sufficient). Please use the description field to give us more information about the nature of the work. Feel free to add more items if the provided templates are not enough.

Job Title

Where

From (month/year)

To (month/year)

Job Description

Job Title

Where

From (month/year)

To (month/year)

Job Description

Job Title

Where

From (month/year)

To (month/year)

Job Description

Job Title

Where

From (month/year)

To (month/year)

Appendix B - Questionnaire for FdIT alumni

Information Sheet

The MyPlan research project being run at Birkbeck and the Institute of Education aims to develop techniques and tools that support the personalised planning of lifelong learning. In particular, we are aiming to develop and evaluate functionalities for the creation, searching and recommendation of possible future learning “pathways”.

We are contacting you, as a former FD IT student at Birkbeck, in order to find out about what students have done before and after studying on the FD IT. The information you will provide us with will be used to generate learning/career pathways that will be stored within our prototype system, and that will be used to support an evaluation session with current FD IT students to be held this summer. During this evaluation session, we will try to match your pathways with their expectations and wishes for their future learning and career development.

The information obtained from you through this questionnaire will be used to inform the research work of the project. It may be used as anonymous “model” pathways so that other FD IT students can follow your career and learning choices and use these to inform their learning and career development.

Your personal data collected from this study – including your name, contact details and background information – will be kept confidential and will only be made available to the project research team (see below). The other data that you give us will be stored securely in the system for the duration of the evaluation only and will be erased immediately after. No reference will be made in oral or written form that could identify you or any other participant of the study.

The MyPlan research team is:

- Dr Nicolas Van Labeke, Birkbeck (nicolas@dcs.bbk.ac.uk)
- Pr Alexandra Poulouvassilis, Birkbeck (ap@dcs.bbk.ac.uk)
- Dr George Magoulas, Birkbeck (gmagoulas@dcs.bbk.ac.uk)
- Dr Ian Harrison, Birkbeck (ian@dcs.bbk.ac.uk)
- Pr Diana Laurillard, Institute of Education (D.Laurillard@ioe.ac.uk)
- Dr Martin Oliver, Institute of Education (M.Oliver@ioe.ac.uk)

More information about the project can be found at <http://www.lkl.ac.uk/research/myplan/>

A demo version of the system can be found at <http://l4all.dcs.bbk.ac.uk:8080/l4all-v4/>

Please fill in the Questionnaire and Informed Consent forms below and email them back to Tara (tara@dcs.bbk.a.uk).

Questionnaire

(i) Educational Background

Please describe your periods in Further and Higher education, including your experience at Birkbeck. For each period, please state the qualification obtained or currently being studied for (e.g. Certificate in Information Technology; BSc in Statistics and Economics; ...), the

institution, and the start & end dates (month and year will be sufficient). Please use the description field to give us any more information you can e.g. nature of course/degree attended, part-time or full-time study, etc. Feel free to add more items if the provided templates are not enough.

Qualification

Institution

From (month/year)

To (month/year)

Description

Qualification

Institution

From (month/year)

To (month/year)

Description

Qualification

Institution

From (month/year)

To (month/year)

Description

Qualification

Institution

From (month/year)

To (month/year)

Description

Qualification

Institution

From (month/year)

To (month/year)

Description

(ii) Work Background

Please describe your periods of work experience to date. We are particularly interested in what you have done since you left Birkbeck but please tell us also what you did before and during your studies. For each period of work, please give a job title, the place, and the start & end dates (a month and year will be sufficient). Please use the description field to give us more information about the nature of the work. Feel free to add more items if the provided templates are not enough.

Job Title

Where

From (month/year)

To (month/year)

Job Description

Job Title

Where

From (month/year)

To (month/year)

Job Description

Job Title

Where

From (month/year)

To (month/year)

Job Description

Job Title

Where

From (month/year)

To (month/year)

Job Description

Appendix C - Activity Sheet for CONEL participants

Activity 1 – Create your own timeline

(20 minutes)

Task 1. Log on to L4All

Start your web browser and connect to the *L4All* system by going to the following URL:
<http://l4all.dcs.bbk.ac.uk:8080/l4all-v4/>

Task 2. Use the user id and password given to you to log onto the L4All system. Complete the information in your Profile

We have entered some “dummy” information into your Profile. Please now edit and complete your Profile by detailing your personal information, background and learning preferences.

The information stored in the system will be kept confidential. However, if you are not happy to give personal information such as your year of birth or postcode, just leave in the dummy information.

	Very easy	Easy	Mixed feelings	Difficult	Very difficult
Accessing the different parts of my profile is					
Using the menu is					
Using the profile editor is					
Understanding the information required in the profile editor is					

Any other comments you wish to make:

Task 3. Specify the 2 most important events in your educational experience

Your Timeline contains information about the sequence of important events in your life.

Start building up your Timeline by defining your two most important Learning Episodes (e.g. your current course, and the previous school/college you attended).

Note how these episodes are added to your timeline displayed in the main page.

Check how these episodes can be edited, if necessary.

	Very easy	Easy	Mixed feelings	Difficult	Very difficult
Understanding the difference between my Profile and my Timeline is					
Finding out how to create a new episode for my timeline is					
Understanding the different categories of episode is					
Using the episode editor is					
Understanding and manipulating the timeline is					

Any other comments you wish to make:

Task 4. If time, add more Episodes to your Timeline

Continue building up your own timeline by adding more learning episodes, work episodes or personal episodes.

Task 5. If time, search for other peoples' Timelines

Click on Search for Timelines, and then on Search (don't worry about ticking any of the boxes). Choose one of the timelines returned. See how the system displays it underneath your own timeline. Experiment with synchronised and unsynchronised views. Try choosing a different timeline.

Activity 2 – Demo by Researchers

The researchers will demonstrate some further aspects of the system (15 minutes)

Activity 3 – Feedback Questionnaire

About the L4All System

Understanding the layout of the main page is

very easy	
easy	
mixed feelings	
difficult	
very difficult	

Identifying the various elements of the main page is

very easy	
easy	
mixed feelings	
difficult	
very difficult	

Navigating through the system is

very easy	
easy	
mixed feelings	
difficult	
very difficult	

Accuracy of descriptions on screen is

very good	
mostly good	
mixed quality	
mostly poor	
very poor	

Knowing what to do next is

very difficult	
difficult	
mixed feelings	
easy	
very easy	

Navigating the Profile and Timeline information is

very easy	
easy	
mixed feelings	
difficult	
very difficult	

The response time of the system is

very good	
mostly good	
mixed feelings	
mostly poor	
very poor	

The reliability of the system is

very good	
mostly good	
mixed feelings	
mostly poor	
very poor	

About the Profile

Editing the profile is

very difficult	
difficult	
mixed feelings	
easy	
very easy	

About the Timeline / Episodes

Understanding the timeline is

very easy	
easy	
mixed feelings	
difficult	
very difficult	

Manipulating the timeline is

very easy	
easy	

mixed feelings	
difficult	
very difficult	

Adding episodes to the timeline is

very easy	
easy	
mixed feelings	
difficult	
very difficult	

Which functionalities of the system do you think you would use more often, and why?

Which functionalities of the system do you think you would use less often, and why?

What value could the system add to the way in which you plan your future career?

How would you describe L4All to a colleague?

