



Project Name	eCert University of Southampton
Project Website	http://ecert.ecs.soton.ac.uk
Report compiled by	Lisha Chen-Wilson, project manager
Reporting period	Jan-Jun 2010
Section One: Summary	
<p>The targets set for this reporting period were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • requirements analysis and specifications • system design • code library <p>In this period, the project has developed as expected. There have been no changes to the original aims and objects outlined in the project plan.</p>	
Section Two: Activities and Progress	
<p>During the past six months, extensive work has been conducted as indicated in our project plan in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem analysis, use case scenarios, requirements analysis and specifications; • Demonstrator design and test plan; • Design review – project first workshop: stakeholders and commercial bodies at national level and international level have been invited to sound out their views and ideas regarding to the design; • Code library and user interface <p>A subproject, eCert with Mobile IDs, has been launched to explore the potential of the use of the eCert concept in a Mobile identity situation. Because of staffing changes that have occurred during the project, it has been possible to plan this subproject whilst keeping within the original planned budget.</p>	
Section Three: Institutional & Project Partner Issues	
<p>There is a significant change planned for the coming academic year in terms of institutional structure at the University of Southampton, with the current three faculty structure being changed to an eight faculty structure. However, the university is well aware of the need to maintain efficient workflow structures within the institution, and also to protect the reputation and value of current operations and brands. It is already apparent that changes are being introduced sensibly and sensitively, and no issues have arisen that could impact negatively on the eCert project.</p>	

Section Four: Outputs and Deliverables

The proposed projects outputs for this reporting period (January to the end of June) were:

- WORKPACKAGE 1: Demonstrator Requirements and Specifications
- WORKPACKAGE 2: Demonstrator design and test plan
- WORKPACKAGE 3: Code library and user interface

All three workpackages have been completed:

Workpackages 1 and 2 include adjustments made after the first workshop. They are available on the project website: <http://ecert.ecs.soton.ac.uk/publication>

For workpackage 3, the code library and its user interface are available on the project website: <http://ecert.ecs.soton.ac.uk/codelibrary/>

Section Five: Outcomes and Lessons Learned

The project is developing as planned.

The Code Developer will leave the project early at the end of this reporting period. The way the project is structured means that it will be possible to hand over the remaining work to a different developer without introducing insurmountable difficulties. However, the person identified can only work part-time. This will require some rescheduling of deadlines within the original plan, but it will still allow the project to complete comfortably by the project end date.

At the outset of the project, it was perhaps naively assumed that the rationale behind the project was obvious, and that all that was required to do was to demonstrate that the concept would work in practice. It became clear during the first workshop that, if eCert is to have a chance of being accepted by the community, there are two key areas that will have to be addressed. The first is one of education; it was a surprise to realise that some practitioners at least would rather stick with technology that is decades out of date than “take risks” with new approaches. The second is one of politics. There is a commercial product already in the market place, and whilst as an academic, one would be happy to see alternative approaches on offer, there is a premium for the commercial product to make sure it remains as the only available solution. In this instance, the directors of the company are being very helpful and co-operative, but the issues cannot be avoided.

Section Six: Evaluation

During this period two main factors were to be evaluated:

- Stakeholder requirements
- System Infrastructure design

The eCert first workshop took place in April at the University of Nottingham to review the requirements and system design. Stakeholders and commercial bodies at national level were invited to sound out their views and ideas. While the use cases and system design were accepted without much discussion, there was a wide ranging and interesting discussion of the higher level issues of rationale regarding the usage of eCert within ePortfolios. (Please refer to the workshop report for more details.) As a result, the project has continued to the next stage of implementation of the code library whilst also re-addressing the ePortfolio issues.

A roundtable discussion has been carried out in June at the EdMedia 2010 conference in Toronto, Canada, to review the requirements and system design in international level. The requirements and use cases were agreed by the attendants. As we have answered all their questions regarding to the system design, they are very interested in our solution demo, which should be delivered in the next workpackage.

The code library has been completed in this report period, and it has passed its unit testing, it will be evaluated through the demonstrator in the next workpackage.

Section Seven: Dissemination

Online information:

Within the first month of the project there was a Web site created, <http://ecert.ecs.soton.ac.uk/> , informing people about the project.

A project blog, <http://blogs.ecs.soton.ac.uk/ecert/>, and wiki, http://wiki.ecert.ecs.soton.ac.uk/index.php/Main_Page, have also been created to record our thoughts, project meeting minutes, and development documents.

Presentations:

Project outline

JISC start up meeting, 3rd March 2010, Greenwich, UK

<http://ecert.ecs.soton.ac.uk/publications/>

eCert requirements and the proposed system design

Project first workshop, 15th April 2010, Nottingham, UK

<http://ecert.ecs.soton.ac.uk/publications/>

Conferences and publications:

Towards a framework of a secure e-Qualification certificate system

Chen-Wilson, L. and Argles, D. Towards a framework of a secure e-Qualification certificate system. In: The 2nd International Conference on Computer modeling and simulation (ICCMS 2010), 22-24 January 2010, SanYa, China.

<http://ecert.ecs.soton.ac.uk/publications/e-certificateV5.pdf>

Solving the e-Portfolio Certificate Problem

Argles, D., Chen-Wilson, L. and Guan, T Solving the e-Portfolio Certificate Problem. In: World Conference on Educational Multimedia, Hypermedia & Telecommunications (ED-MEDIA 2010), June 29th - July 2nd 2010, Toronto, Canada.

http://ecert.ecs.soton.ac.uk/publications/Solving_the_ePortfolio_certificate_problem.pdf

Conference attended:

London learning forum, 5-7 June 2010, at the Savoy Place, London

Section Eight: Risks, Issues and Challenges

Some risks as described in our project plan have been reassessed as follows, with the original assessment in brackets:

Risk	Prob (1-5)	Sev (1-5)	Score (P x S)	Action to Prevent/Manage Risk
Lack of time to complete project	1 (2)	2 (4)	2 (8)	Good planning and time management is currently ensuring on-track completion.
Loss or unavailability of project staff	1 (2)	3 (5)	3 (10)	Project staff will change for the second half of the project, following the departure of the Code Developer. However, a replacement has been identified and the team re-established. The project is embedded in the Learning Societies Lab, enabling other suitable staff to be called on as required should other problems arise.
Lack of understanding of issues arising	1 (2)	4 (4)	4 (8)	The skill set and experience of the project team minimises this risk. Key stakeholders from the representative bodies will be used to help explore any particularly problematic areas.
Lack of participation of relevant participants in survey/workshops	1 (2)	4 (4)	4 (8)	The project team's extensive contacts, and having workshops running at both national and international level have minimised this risk.
Facing difficulty of solving the technical problems.	1 (2)	4 (4)	4 (8)	LSL has many computer scientists working on other projects and research areas. The team can seek help from colleagues from the lab.

Section Nine: Collaboration and Support

The eCertification methods and processes would be the most interesting area to discuss with other projects.

The eCert project will make use of other projects' outcomes, e.g. single sign in system and UK unique learner number, but there is no need of support or training at this stage yet.

Section Ten: Financial Statement

The project grant consists of two parts as far as the operation of the project is concerned. From the original bid documents, it can be seen that the total contribution from JISC is £79,426, of which £48,226 is within the remit of the project team to manage. The remaining £31,200 consists of directly allocated and general overheads which are fixed, and outside the control of the project staff.

The budget has changed during the first six months of the project, and it is shown in the table below.

The two main changes within the project that have significantly affected the budget are staffing changes. The project's Research Assistant left the project halfway through. This was managed smoothly by ensuring that the coding was tackled in two parts; firstly delivery of the coding library which has been completed, and secondly, the delivery of the demonstrator which is based on this library – this has been begun by the RA's replacement and is on target to complete in time. However, this has required a significant shift of funding from the "Staff" heading to the "Commissioned Work" heading.

The second change involved capitalising on an opportunity to launch a "Mobile Identity" project, using eCert technology. This has been achieved at a small additional cost under the "Commissioned Work" heading, and funded primarily by the decrease in the staff budget.

The opportunity has presented itself to increase our evaluation and dissemination activities. This has led to an increase in the expected expenditure on travel and subsistence, which has been covered by corresponding adjustments under other headings. In particular, it has been possible to make some significant savings in the expected expenditure on hardware.

The "Other" heading has been used so far for purchase of consumables, but is effectively being used as a small contingency fund – hence the expected final expenditure exactly equals the budget allocated.

Section Eleven: Next Steps

The next phase of the project is to produce the demonstrator based on the code library, then test the concept and evaluate the system. We are working towards the following targets:

- Developing the eCertificate demonstrator
- Initial testing of the demonstrator
- Documenting the software design and development

Total Grant	£79,426.00, consisting of: (a) directly incurred: £48,226, and (b) directly allocated general overhead: £31,200	Duration of project	4 th January - 17 th December 2010	
Reporting Period	4 th January - 30 th June 2010			
Budget Headings	Total budget allocated	Total expenditure to date	Expected final expenditure	Remaining Available
Staff	£30,831.00	£14,492.00	£22,991.00	£8,499.00
Commissioned work	£4,522.00	£2,505.00	£12,027.00	£9,522.00
Travel & Subsistence	£4,973.00	£1,020.00	£6,984.00	£5,964.00
Equipment	£2,500.00	£1,149.00	£1,149.00	£0.00
Dissemination activities	£2,000.00	£0.00	£2,000.00	£2,000.00
Evaluation activities	£1,000.00	£0.00	£1,000.00	£1,000.00
Other (please specify)	£2,400.00	£635.00	£2,075.00	£1,440.00
<i>Grand Totals:</i>	<i>£48,226.00</i>	<i>£19,801.00</i>	<i>£48,226.00</i>	<i>£28,425.00</i>