**Centre for the Development of
Teaching and Learning**

**University of
Reading**

Digitally Ready for the Future
Application for small project funding

- Funding for small projects is available to staff and students under the following themes:
  Work placements; Employability; Enhancing T & L through the use of technology;
  Digital skills and literacies; Staff/student partnerships
- All successful applicants will be expected to
  - actively disseminate project outputs (e.g. by contributing to relevant T & L events and
    submissions to the Digitally Ready and/or Enhancing Teaching and Learning blogs)
  - participate in a celebration event in the Spring Term involving all successful applicants
  - complete a short project report and case study proforma by 31 May 2012
- Project funds will be available until 30 April and all project work should be completed by then.
- An electronic copy of the completed application form must be submitted to **Nadja Guggi**
  (**n.guggi@reading.ac.uk**) by **Monday 3 December 2012.**

Applicant details

Name Simon BURKE Member of staff
Department Economics
Email s.p.burke@rdg.ac.uk
Telephone ext 5046

Project team (Please give details of any other team members)

Name Andi NYGAARD (SDTL, SPEIR) Member of staff Up to two students to be appointed
Department Economics (though student might come from elsewhere)
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Telephone ext 7872

Project type
☐ Research placement
☐ Project placement
X Staff/student partnership (staff-led)
☐ Staff/student partnership (student-led)
X Teaching & Learning/Research project
☐ APP project

Project theme/s (Please tick all that apply)
☐ Work placements
X Employability
X Enhancing T & L through the use
  of technology
☐ Digital skills and literacies
X Staff/student partnerships

Project Title

Evaluating the use of digital technology to enhance student learning: a project for partnership staff/student research

Project Summary

Describe the proposed project (up to 500 words). Your summary should demonstrate how your project relates to the use of digital technologies and/or the development of digital literacies of staff and/or students, and should include the following:

- *Background*
- *Aims and objectives*
- *Scope*
- *Outcomes and deliverables*
- *Sustainability*
- *Project schedule*

Background
In 2011-12 the Department of Economics organised a debate with the assistance of colleagues from CDTOL (Nadja Guggi and Guy Pursey) using the Poll Everywhere facility. It was felt that this was a successful exercise because it clearly engaged the students, allowed participation across a wide range of individuals and across time, and resulted in a sense of drama that made the occasion memorable. The primary target audience was part 1 economics students, but the invitation to participate was to all students of economics (up to including research students) and staff. The event was quite well attended by third year and MSc students. However, we did not formally assess the project (its only vague aim was to engage students and expose them to economics beyond the curriculum) and a number of issues arose. It is these plus some rather more general matters we would like to explore using this project which has the secondary aim of providing a research opportunity for two UG students.
As well as being of pedagogical value, research in this area links with established research activities in the Department of Economics concerning behavioural issues.

Aims
a) To evaluate the effectiveness of the use of the Poll Everywhere application in a number of respects. Among these are:
    whether it enhances engagement in general terms;
    whether it helps in engagement with subject specific material;
    practical aspects of its application such as the monitoring of live text contributions and the nature of responses made in this way.
b) To determine other modules where this application would be useful.
c) To provide a research opportunity for two undergraduate students leading to the possibility of future UROP applications and dissertation topics.
d) To explore the feasibility of other applications that may be available in the light of the findings.
e) To provide research opportunities for two UG students, expected to be economics students, but not necessarily restricted to this sub-group. (Application would be open to

part 1 and part 2 students.)

Scope
a) The research would be focussed on two future debates to be held in the Department of Economics of the same (or similar) format to that held in 2011. The objectives of this event were vague and focussed on improving student engagement, introducing them to members of staff of the department, and taking the curriculum beyond that addressed in part 1 lectures. In developing the event, the Poll Everywhere application was mentioned and the group applied it. Having done this, it has become apparent that we need to think more about the effectiveness of the use of this (and any similar technology) for use, not so much in small group teaching, but with relatively large lecture groups.
b) In as far as this is related to larger groups it would focus on part 1, and especially on the re-running of the debates. In addition an apparently natural area for its use would be in part 1 quantitative modules. A number of subjects taught there would be amenable to the use of a voting tool.
c) We plan to concentrate on the application of Poll Everywhere, but we will explore the availability of other tools and consider them in the context of the same potential applications.
d) Students would be involved in the design and execution of the evaluation exercises. These are expected to generate both quantitative and qualitative data. Students would then be supervised in the analysis of the data.
e) We would like to contrast evaluation results collected on-line and in more conventional ways, and we will explore the feasibility of this. (See comment on work by Clare Furneaux below.)
f) The students would be employed on a task related basis, but nominally would be expected to take at least 20 hours of their time. We would hope to pay the students about £200 each. A small amount of additional funding is available from the SDA of one of the staff team members should it be required.

Outcomes and Deliverables
a) The primary outcome is a set of evaluations of the use of Poll Everywhere and an associated report.
b) Secondary outcomes are module developments to include the use of this (and possibly other) digital technology, though this depends to some extent on the findings.
c) The presentation of results would be as required by the conditions of the project, but would be expected to include CDOTL sessions and the School of Politics, Economics and International Relations with a view to colleagues considering take-up of the technologies.
d) Students would be required to write their own reports on their part of the exercise and to contribute to the presentation as part of their personal development.
e) The students involved would find their presentation, writing, and research skills enhanced by the project.

Sustainability
The main possible source of sustainability is the adoption of the use of the application in modules where it could be applicable (to a limited extent to avoid student scepticism). This can only happen if the application is seen to be useful, though a priori it seems that it ought to be.
The larger picture is to increase awareness of digital technology and its rapid pace of change and to develop a positive attitude towards it in the Department of Economics (and other

schools and departments).

Timetable
The second of the debates will not take place until the latter part of the Spring term. Therefore evaluation and analysis will take the project can be expected to extend to the end of the summer term. Given that this also coincides with the examination period for students, it would be sensible to allow for project completion (reports and analysis) by the end of September 2013. Interim presentations may be practicable in the later stages of the summer term 2013.
However, there will be significant progress it is intended to produce some outcomes by the end of May as follows:
i) the debates will have been concluded;
ii) feedback will have been designed and obtained;
iii) preliminary findings will be presentable and a report written on the basis of these;
iv) it is intended to involve student RAs in the presentations.
The feedback will deal with the effectiveness of the technology in terms of its tendency to increase the appeal of the event and what contribution it made to learning (especially whether any enhanced interest due to the technology lead to greater engagement and hence to learning).

Some additional contextual notes
We are aware of two other pieces of work currently going on that may relate to this application. One is research being undertaken by Clare Furneaux concerned with how students use technology in their work and life generally. It also fits with other on-going work on a well-being survey being run by colleagues in the Department of Economics (including Simon Burke).