Research underpinnings of the UK eUniversity

1. Overview of the aim and purpose of the Symposium (500 words)

The UK eUniversity, run by the organisation whose full name is UK eUniversities worldwide, will start taking students in autumn of this year from all around the world, studying almost completely by remote e-learning. Already there are three fast-track pilot consortia developing material and around a dozen more in negotiation with the eUniversity, generating a conceptual "footprint" on over 40 universities already. The impact of the eUniversity on UK HE thinking on e-learning is likely to be as influential in the longer term as the setting up of the Open University was on distance learning.

What is not yet well known is that behind the setting up of the eUniversity lies a comprehensive set of studies drawing on best practice in e-learning theory and practice, pedagogy and technology, at university level both in the UK and beyond. While some of this has become visible via the PriceWaterhouseCoopers study material made public by HEFCE, the annexes to these – and much more recent material – have not been released for reasons of commercial confidentiality until the key agreements were in place. Now much more information can be given and the theories (and proposed practice) exposed to dialogue with e-learning experts in the wider community. Apart from its intrinsic research interest, the eUniversity understands that pilots will have to internalise and adapt the information to their own situations, and to do this requires a deep understanding of the thinking, not just the surface recommendations.

This symposium takes the form of a "Master Class" comprising presentations from three individuals who have been closely involved with the development of the eUniversity concept. A discussant will engage the presenters in dialogue and the session will conclude with a general discussion inviting contributions from the audience.

Particular themes from the conference agenda that will be particularly exercised are:

- e-learning, e-tutoring, the e-university

- working across boundaries

- new technologies for supporting networked learning

- design and pedagogy of networked learning

- the move from distance learning to networked learning

- collaborative and cooperative learning

- the potential of networked learning in professional and lifelong education

- networked learning and the global university

- case studies of networked learning: models and approaches.

The first presentation by Professor John Slater will look at business and institutional models for a global e-university, drawing on the eUniversity business modelling papers from PWC and benchmarks from across the

world. The second, by Professor Paul Bacsich, will look at the conceptual architecture behind the e-learning system, including a discussion of content and standards issues. Finally, Professor Robin Mason will address pedagogic issues with particular relevance to the handling of collaborative learning. Since the three presenters have overlapping skills and experiences, yet come from somewhat different standpoints, there promises to be a lively debate at in the final discussion session of the symposium.

2. Names, institutional affiliations and email addresses of those contributing

These are in order of presentation:

1. Professor John Slater, UK eUniversities worldwide, jbs@UKeUniversitiesWorldwide.com

2. Professor Paul Bacsich, Sheffield Hallam University, p.bacsich@shu.ac.uk

3. Professor Robin Mason, The Open University, r.d.mason@open.ac.uk

3. Abstracts of each contribution

To be sent separately.

4. Chairperson (and discussant if you wish to have one)

This workshop will be run more as a Master Class. There will be three presentations.

Chairperson and Discussant: We suggest Professor David McConnell.

5. Length of the Symposium

2 hours. Each presenter will speak for approximately 20 minutes with 10 minutes for questions of clarification; with 30 minutes at the end for general discussion.