



Through the Digital Futures - Collaborative Research Network (CRN) program of work funding has been awarded for the following research project: **Project 1: Developing an evaluation framework for mobile learning**

What is the project about?

This project aims to build a framework for evaluating mobile learning technologies. A global trend towards widespread and highly functional mobile computing offers many new opportunities for devices such as smartphones and tablet computers to be used in a range of educational settings. Nevertheless, a crucial issue is how most effectively to use current and likely future mobile computing technologies for maximum educational benefits.

Why is it important?

The National Broadband Network (NBN) will permit leverage of the emergent mobile paradigm for the delivery and access of learning resources. Mobility and the use of non-tethered devices is allowing innovative educational experiences where learning can occur just in time, in authentic and contextualised places (i.e. in mines; on building sites; in high performance laboratories; in kitchens; in schools etc.) (Horizon Report, 2011). The same report articulates that learners' have high expectations surrounding ubiquitous accessibility to 'just in time' learning which is mobile and a convenient lifestyle fit. As people increasingly use multiple devices for connecting to the internet, this project will ensure that our digital media is of a high quality and ready for the wave of access.

The necessity of providing mobile learning opportunities has been acknowledged by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) who in both 2009 and 2011 provided funding to support the development and implementation of digital instructional resources to promote mobile learning. The 'Learning and teaching online' project undertaken by the University of New South Wales in 2011, demonstrated the desirability of using iTunes U and YouTube for the dissemination of content. Teachers in some 117 countries have accessed the resources over 60,000 times in eight months and use continues to increase. In 2009, The University of Wollongong received funding for a 'New technologies, new pedagogies' project, which investigated the affordances of iPods and smartphones for education. The project successfully demonstrated that advances in the philosophical and practical aspects of education have created justifiable conditions for the sound pedagogical use of mobile technologies to promote authentic learning. Further, these ALTC-funded projects highlight the potential of multiple channels of dissemination and mobile devices for widening access to high-quality educational resources. In this way, learning becomes untethered to place or time with access to relevant resources anywhere, anytime.

Who is involved?

The University of Southern Queensland, The Australian National University and the University of South Australia.

How will the research be conducted?

The project will use a design-based action research methodology, beginning with the interrogation of focus groups to identify usage trends, barriers to access and the innovative use of mobile technologies for learning. This data will be used to develop a preliminary evaluation framework that will be developed and tested with a small, representative group of participants. After refinement of the framework, the structure will be reassessed using a larger sample of local and international students. A norm database will be created against which the evaluation criteria can be assessed for future application. Satellite projects will involve the application of the framework to differing educational, cultural and social contexts.

What will be delivered?

A mobile learning framework will be developed with wide applicability leading to publications, conference presentations and research grants across a number of disciplines.

What is the timeframe?

This project will be conducted over a three year period – 2012 to 2015

Project Leader

Dr Helen Farley, Senior Lecturer (Digital Futures)