July 1995

To: Heads of HE Institutions in the United Kingdom
Copies: Computer Centre Directors of those institutions

JISC Circular 8/95

The JISC Technology Applications Programme (JTAP)

An Invitation to Bid for Grants from the JISC

Summary

1. The JISC invites project proposals for a new three-year, £6.5M programme commencing in August 1996. This programme, which is subject to approval by the funding bodies, will identify and promote key information technologies, and make them open to students and researchers who might not otherwise have access to them.

2. The new programme is in many respects a successor to the JISC New Technology Initiative (NTI), which was launched in 1993, but will take into account developments in the strategy of the JISC itself. As with the NTI, and in line with the funding basis of the funding bodies themselves, awards will be given on an annual basis only.

3. The JISC intends to identify the proposals it would wish to fund before submitting the final case for support to the funding bodies in Spring 1996. Such a timetable will not only provide a stronger basis for the request, but will allow ample time for the selection and establishment of projects, including the recruitment of staff.

4. Funded projects will be organised on the basis of topic areas, and a suggested topic list is contained in this Circular. However, the JISC is currently engaged in a consultation exercise following the release of its Issues Paper[1], and intends to make use of the information it receives in shaping this programme. The topic list in this document will therefore be supplemented by additional information which will be supplied on 1 November 1995.

5. Depending on the responses received, the JISC may wish to organise and co-ordinate projects in some topic areas through a single national centrally funded centre; or by developing co-ordination between projects for which proposals have been submitted separately. Proposals may therefore be structured in a variety of ways, and more information is given herein.

6. All bids must arrive by 30 November 1995 at the latest.

Background and General Aims

7. It is important that students and researchers should have access to the most recent technical developments in order to ensure a well informed, trained and educated community, able to provide support for the continuous development and full functionality of Information Systems in the future. However, the range and diversity of potential developments is such that it is not possible for all institutions to provide access to these without very great cost and unnecessary duplication.

8. This programme aims to encourage lead group and prototype developments, so as to spearhead advances which can offer significant benefits and lead ultimately to managed transfer and wide use by HE institutions. The projects are to be balanced across current and future needs, and will contribute to a long term objective of ensuring that teaching

and research in information systems within Higher Education are focused on the current state of the art.

9. The programme will build upon the earlier New Technology Initiative[2] and identify and encourage work within key technologies which are the most critical to information systems development within HE. A list of proposed key topics under this programme are listed at para. 14. However, in order that these topic areas can more closely relate to current consultations, such as the JISC Issues Paper[3]; the Office of Science & Technology Foresight programme[4]; and relevant CEC programmes, supplementary information will be issued later in the year (see para 16).

Scope of the Initiative and Funding Arrangements

10. Categories of support to be considered include:

a Application Projects which identify the prospect of substantial benefit to the HE community and which extend over a period of up to three years. Awards for such projects can be up to a maximum level of £120,000 per annum but should generally aim to be less than £100,000 per annum.

b Small scale higher risk projects by individuals seen to show significant promise and relevance in their existing work programmes, and running for one or two years. Such projects would be funded at up to £25,000 per annum.

11. Initial approval by the JISC and by the Funding Councils will only extend to the first Academic Year (1996/7), and final approval for that year will not be given until Spring 1996; bids are invited now on that basis. Funding in subsequent years will be dependent on the availability of resources allocated to the Funding Councils and subsequently to JISC. However, subject to this, it is planned that projects under this initiative will continue to be funded for up to a further 2 years.

12. Funds will be provided for staff costs (including training), hardware and software, against invoices, where appropriate, and not in advance of need; and may not be used towards institutional overheads.

13. Where hardware purchase is proposed, it will be necessary to show that investment by the JISC will accrue to the benefit of the whole community rather than to the hosting institution.

Suggested Topics

14. Examples of topics which institutions may wish to propose for support include:

Technologies to support management and infrastructure of HE
Heterogeneous and Cluster Computing
Technologies to support network-accessible information
Tools for Multi-Media
Tools for Collaborative and Distance working, including
server/client delivery of on-line teaching material
High Performance Computing Training & Education.
Visualisation and virtual environments
IKBS/AI in the HE environment
Integrated Audio-Visual and Computing Systems
Application studies in support of any of these topics

15. Proposals which do not fit into one or more of these headings will nonetheless be considered provided they support the general aims of the Programme (paras. 7-9 above).

16. This topic list and criteria will be updated in the light of consultations currently taking place. Supplementary information will be issued on 1 November by means of a mailing to the list jisc-news at Mailbase; this information will also be available on that date from URL: http://info.mcc.ac.uk/NTI/Bid.html It will be essential to take this update into account when submitting proposals to this Programme.

Criteria to be used in Evaluating Proposals

17. The project proposals will be evaluated against the following criteria.

a Relevance to the issues raised by the JISC issues paper and subsequent consultations: proposals should be placed in the context of such issues or present their own justification for support. Examples of issues listed in the JISC paper are:

> The need to expand the "reach" of the network to the home and workplace and to strengthen links with industry and other education sectors
>
> The need to engender the necessary culture change and training to support the preparation of multi-media teaching material and electronic text book and research material
>
> The need to promote and improve the exploitation of IT in the creation of virtual laboratories for teaching and research use
>
> The need to make greater use of information systems to achieve the effective management of higher education institutions. This includes security, environmental and access control, management and executive information systems, data security and authentication and specialist applications for timetabling and the management of accommodation and catering etc
>
> The need to provide the necessary training and awareness throughout the community and to receive feedback on requirements to help ensure technology led initiatives are in tune with the necessary cultural change.

b The JISC must be satisfied that the projects show vision; are demonstrably effective; and will involve key technologies for the future which would probably not be available to students, researchers and institutions without the support of this Programme.

c Proposals must demonstrate mechanisms for transferring results and benefits to other HE institutions.

d The projects should enable universities and colleges to produce graduates who have knowledge of, and access to, advanced architecture systems and other new technology. The aim should not be however the creation of undergraduate courses per se, but to enable new technologies to be incorporated into undergraduate courses, or into the institutional infrastructure, so as to generate maximum long term impact within HE within the resources provided.

e Proposals must indicate awareness of any other related developments within Higher Education, and indicate relevance to them.

f Proposals must identify benefits quantified either in terms of, for example, charges which can be avoided, or in terms of other potential (including technical) benefits. A basis for assessing these benefits, and details of arrangements for implementing them as deliverables, must also be included.

g Competence in management to fulfil aims, particularly in the evolution of partnerships and the creation of the wider influences necessary to derive benefits as widely as possible within HE, will need to be shown.

h Proposals must satisfy the JISC that any award can in fact be productively spent.

Partnership Arrangements

18. Many projects will require partnership arrangements in order to result in on-line, usable and developed systems, but the extent will depend upon the nature and scale of the proposals. These arrangements might involve consortia of HE institutions, and/or joint developments with Research Councils, the DTI or EC initiatives. Proposals may also be based upon co-operation with industry.

19. Shared funding and other agreements with external partners which can be seen to offer overall economies in the deployment of JISC funds are to be encouraged, but will need to be shown formally with the total project cost content, and with the JISC contribution not exceeding the funding limits in para.10. Such arrangements must not be at the expense of the main objectives of HE.

20. A single, specified HEFC or DENI funded institution must be responsible for management and delivery of any joint project, and for ensuring that the project responsibilities reflecting the interests of the JISC are met.

21. In order to concentrate resources, individual projects within given key areas may be grouped and managed as nationally co-ordinated activities or "focused clubs", and following the receipt and initial selection of successful bids, a series of workshops will be held to find the best way forward in each case.

22. Equally, a proposed partnership may aim from the outset to provide a complete, nationally co-ordinated set of projects within a given topic area. In appropriate cases, such a proposal might exceed the upper limit for three year projects (para. 10 above).

23. In the wider context of partnerships with external bodies, representatives from the Research Councils, learned Institutions and Industry will be invited to a one-day meeting to describe the achievements of the NTI and to outline the shape of the forthcoming JTAP activity (see para. 32).

Project Reporting

24. The JISC will determine project reporting and review procedures, which will be notified to successful projects.

Format and Submission of Proposals and Selection Method

25. Proposals must be limited to six A4 sides plus a proforma front cover (see Annex to this Circular), and contain the following information:

(on the cover sheet)

- a Title
- b Name, postal address, email address and telephone and fax numbers of the contact individual
- c Brief Description of activity
- d Topic area(s) to which the activity relates.
- e Approximate duration of the activity.
- f Total budgetary costs in the first year and for the whole project

(in the body of the proposal)

- g Statement of how the activity will meet the objectives of the JTAP; this statement should relate to the evaluation criteria above, and provide an overall justification of the importance of the technology proposed.
- h Management model proposed; i.e., whether the proposers intend to participate in a "focused club" which will include other proposals submitted in the same topic area, or whether it is intended to provide a self-standing centrally managed collaboration (see paragraphs 5 and 21/2).
- i Summary of intended outputs/deliverables from the activity.
- j Budgetary cost to the JISC of the activity, including a rough estimate of the composition of this cost (detailed figures would be required at a later stage).
- k Statement, signed by a competent representative of the institution, that the bidding institution supports the activity.

26. A paper template for the cover sheet is attached to this Circular; an electronic version may be obtained from URL: http://info.mcc.ac.uk/NTI/Bid.html

27. Two copies of each bid, one of which must be single sided and not bound or stapled, must be submitted by postal mail to the following address, so as to arrive by 1700 hrs on 30 November 1995. Faxed and emailed bids are not acceptable.
Mr Tom Franklin
JTAP National Co-ordinator
Computer Building
University of Manchester
Oxford Road
Manchester M13 9PL

28. Each proposal will be reviewed by a number of independent experts. The outcome will provide a basis for:
a Nominating successful bids.
b Grouping the successful proposals into “focused clubs” and “independent” projects.
c Holding a workshop for each nominated club.
d Finalising bids and negotiating the funding arrangements.

29. The results from initial bids will be announced by 31st January 1996 together with dates for Workshops. Independent Projects not included within a specific “focused club” will not be confirmed until the final selections are made.

30. The results of the final selection process will be made by 15th March 1996. Funding of the selected projects will be subject to confirmation by JISC and the Funding Bodies by the end of March 1996.

31. Funding under this programme will, if approved, commence as from 1 August 1996, and successful projects will be expected to start work at that date or at the first convenient date thereafter.

32. An introductory workshop will be held towards the end of September to provide a background to this Programme; details will be provided via the jisc-news mailing list at Mailbase.

33. Further information may be obtained from to Co-ordinator at the above address (telephone 0161 275 6106, email `T.Franklin@manchester.ac.uk`)

Ron Rogerson

---

[1] Joint Information Systems Committee, Exploiting Information Systems in Higher Education, April 1995, URL gopher://gopher.niss.ac.uk:70/00/Education_and_Research/JISC/ISSUES.TXT

[2] Joint Information Systems Committee, Interim Report on the New Technology Initiative, July 1995, URL gopher://gopher.niss.ac.uk:70/00/Education_and_Research/JISC/0795R_New_Technology_Initiative

[3] Joint Information Systems Committee, Exploiting Information Systems in Higher Education.

[4] Forward Look of Government-Funded Science, Engineering and Technology, Chapter 3, HMSO 1995, URL http://www.open.gov.uk/ost/forward.htm

Annex A
Joint Information Systems Committee

JISC Technology Applications Programme

Cover sheet for bid

Project Title	
Principal Institution	
Contact name and dept. address email telephone fax	
Brief Description of Activity	
Topic Area(s)	
Approximate Duration	
Budgetary cost to the JISC: in the year commencing 1.8.96 for the entire project	