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## Project Proposal Template

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### Basic project information

**Title of Project:** Interactive Distance eLearning (IDeL) @ USP

**Duration:** 3 – 6 months

**Project coordinator:** Acting Director CFDL, Dr Theresa Koroivulaono

#### *Project team*

#### CFDL

Mrs. Rokosiga Morrison

Mr. Dhiraj Bhartu

Mrs Koro O'Brien

Mr. Tui Bolalailai

#### Faculties

Selected lecturers and tutors from the 3 Faculties using REACT in semester 1, 2012

#### Regional campuses

**Key Implementing Unit:** Centre for Flexible & Distance Learning

### 1. Summary of Project

#### **Brief overview of the project**

Since semester 1, 2010, the Centre for Flexible and Distance Learning (CFDL) has adopted the REACT (Remote Education and Conferencing Tool) as the platform to deliver distance learning tutorials and materials for DFL students at USP. This tool replaced the 'Click to Meet' platform that had been used since 2007. Upgrading to REACT provided USP students and staff the opportunity, **for the first time**, to see each other (in real time) and to use the available tools, for example, 'chat', the 'electronic whiteboard' and the 'shared desktop' to maximise engagement and interactivity.

A team of five CFDL staff will be conducting research to explore the tools that are available in the USP campuses for the following reasons:

- To facilitate more expediently for lecturers, the pedagogical shift from Face to Face (F2F) to IDeL;
- Improve DFL support services; and
- Explore further opportunities in REACT to enhance DFL students' learning experiences.

Regional campus visits will be required to collect information by visiting CFDL staff conducting blended REACT training sessions for the USPNet operators. The training sessions will also provide data for the research as the REACT tools are trialled and USPNet connectivity and capacity are also tested. A questionnaire followed by interviews will also be administered.

The key stakeholders are: the USPNet Operators, the IT personnel and the Course Design and Development (CDD) teams. Improvements and enhancements to learning design are directed at USP students and teaching staff. The timeline for the project should end in the break between semesters 1 and 2, 2012. The results of the project will be analysed and made available to the stakeholders and the Research Office.

Visits to the campuses will provide crucial 'on site' experiential information.

**In 2011, CFDL staff returning from conducting Moodle and REACT training in the region brought back reports that pointed to major inconsistencies in our understanding of IT capacity in the region and the learning design models that we were using in course and programme design.**

*(Refer to the attached report from the Kiribati campus visit in October 2011).* Reports received from other CFDL teams returning from the other campuses, contain varying degrees of similarity to the Kiribati report.

## **2. & 2.1 Rationale and Background**

The REACT platform allows students to hear and see their course coordinator or tutor as well as their fellow students who are located in the various campuses in the USP region. This research is designed to enable USPNet Operators to be much more proactive in their roles as support staff in a higher education environment. This will also enable ITS to be more proactive in providing solutions to problems. Furthermore, the project will also **facilitate and enhance** collaborative discussion and interaction between students and lecturers during REACT tutorial sessions.

Some problems faced by students include the unavailability of the Net Operators in some campuses to attend to problems like hardware malfunction – e.g. microphones and camera not available so the campus cannot respond using a microphone, the slow turn-around time by ITS to attend to the Net Operators complaints and students having to operate REACT because the Net Operators are not available. Parts of this information were communicated by the students themselves to the CFDL Communication Assistants who facilitate tutorials in venue 1 (at Laucala) in both semesters. In a training session by CFDL staff, the regional Net operators also confirmed and added to the list of regional challenges and problems at the ITS workshop held from 12<sup>th</sup> 16<sup>th</sup> December 2011.

Further information provided by both the Communication Assistants at Laucala and the regional Net Operators are:

- Students are not given time to ask questions; students prefer to use the chat facility and not the microphone. An example of similar problems is at the Labasa campus where students use the small control room and not the audio conferencing studio due to faulty microphone problems, distracting audio feedback and intermittently ‘freezing’ video.

These problems lead to poor reception of the tutorial sessions which contributes to the loss of student motivation due to the poor quality of access to teachers and peers. Furthermore, the poor delivery of REACT tutorials, often results in DFL students disengaging from their courses, their fellow colleagues, and their lecturers and this may be contributing to the high dropout rates for DFL students. **REACT tutorials are an essential student support so it is vital that the system that transmits these sessions is working effectively to promote successful learning experiences for our DFL students.**

#### *Problems to be addressed*

‘Cultures of silence’ - do we read this as submission and obedience? Or are there other reasons?

1. Why are students comfortable with the use of the chat facility and not the microphone when responding to the lecturer?
2. Why are USPNet operators unavailable during scheduled tutorial sessions in some campuses?
3. Why are students operating REACT and not USPNet personnel?
4. Hardware problems i.e. microphones, camera etc are not reported; this is discovered when a campus is unable to respond using the microphone **at the beginning of a class.**
5. ITS helpdesk- a special helpdesk for REACT should be available as regional USPNet operators complain that their technical problems are only addressed after a few hours have passed and the scheduled class has been postponed or cancelled.
6. Lesson Plan – some students comment that “the lesson is boring,” with very little interaction and their problems are only addressed towards the end of the tutorial.
7. Students are not given enough time to ask questions.
8. For combined Laucala and regional lessons- Laucala students complain that more attention is given to regional students.
9. Alafua and Vanuatu Campuses- often experience ‘late log in’ so students are missing out on portions of their classes.
10. Labasa – experiences substantial audio feedback and video freezes (this should not be experienced by them as they are located locally).
11. Labasa- students are seated in the small control room and not in the audio conferencing studio due to microphone problems; causes overcrowding.

#### *2.1 Relationship the USP Strategic Plan 2010-2012*

This research project directly addresses the following areas:

- **Priority Area 1: Learning and Teaching; in particular,**
  - **Objective 1.2:** “Complete and make operational the Japan-Pacific ICT Centre to support existing commitments of the university in IT in strengthening delivery of learning and teaching across the university.”

- **Objective 3.6:** “Improve the physical teaching environment in all campuses.”
- **Priority Area 2: Student Support; in particular:**
  - Objective 5.11: “Improve support for students in using ICTs.”

## 2.2 *Target Group and Beneficiaries*

### **Target groups**

The target groups are:

- **USPNet Operators:** x 13; 3 ITS assistants in Santo, Vavau and Tokelau
- **IT personnel:** approx. 20;
- **Communication Assistants:** x 2;
- **All USP lecturers and teaching staff.**

### **Beneficiaries**

The primary beneficiaries are the DFL students who will benefit immeasurably from IT support services running at optimal capacity. Regional ITS staff in particular will benefit immensely from the paradigm shift that will accompany this focussed approach to identifying the problems and challenges and collaboratively working out effective and sustainable solutions and reporting protocols.

## **3. Project Description and Effectiveness**

### 3.1 *Goal*

This project aims to investigate the challenges related specifically to IDeL delivery and the capacity of the USPNet infrastructure to support selected interactive online tools in REACT.

### 3.2 *Overall Objectives*

1. To collect, collate and analyse data on the challenges when delivering REACT tutorials to USP’s regional campuses;
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of current learning design in the IDeL environment; and
3. To establish effective and sustainable protocols so that IT support services operate at optimal capacity.

**METHODOLOGY: FOR EACH OF THE THREE OBJECTIVES, WE WILL USE:**

- **(1) THE STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE & INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR STAFF;**
- **(2) THE STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE; and**
- **(3) THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR STAFF.**

NOTE: We will also be giving out *Participant Information* sheets and have prepared a consent form. Where it is possible we will also be running the *Student Questionnaire* as a survey in Google.

(All of the research documents are attached in the same email with this proposal).

### 3.3 *Result Areas*

The collaborative approach between Laucala-based and regional staff to problem-solving will contribute to much more effective and sustainable IDeL solutions and reporting protocols. Furthermore, the optimal performance of support services for DFL programmes will correlate with the enhancement of IDeL best practices and encourage innovation. Finally, sustained engagement and interactivity in the IDeL environment should contribute to improving DFL student retention and completion rates.

### 3.4 *Expected Outcomes*

1. Optimum performance of IDeL through the REACT platform;
2. Informed and innovative best practices in IDeL learning and teaching materials; and
3. Publication of the results.

## 4. **Sustainability of the Project**

### 4.1 *What happens at the end of this Project?*

The report produced at the end of this project will have two outcomes:

- Recommendations; and
- An Action Plan with timelines.

It is imperative that projects like this one offer specific forward directions because they provide both quantitative and qualitative data, both in the delivery capacity of USPNet and DFL learning designs, respectively.

The Action Plan with timelines will require collaborative partnerships and projects within USP, for example, between ITS, CFDL and the Faculties, to ensure that the 'cause and effect' cycle between the non-delivery of learning materials to our DFL students, and its impact on successful learning is clearly understood by support services staff.

### 4.2 *Likely Follow on events*

A second CFDL-initiated research proposal has been submitted to the Leader of Research Cluster 6 entitled, "How does a DFL student succeed?" That research project will focus on the challenges in the USPNet infrastructure to support learning and teaching in the regional campuses largely focussing on Moodle.

This present research project will provide the critical information on IDeL to complete the institutional profile on the current capacity of the USPNet infrastructure to support learning and teaching.

## 5. **Project Management**

### 5.1 *Describe how the project will be managed?*

This research project will have a Moodle page in the Moodle Research portal. All project documents will be posted on the Moodle page which will also have a discussion forum to capture the dialogue between the project team members across the region. Access to the page during the duration of the research will be limited to the project team, Moodle administrators and nominated Research Office personnel.

## 6. **Implementation Plan/Timeline**

6.1 *Time lines for implementation*

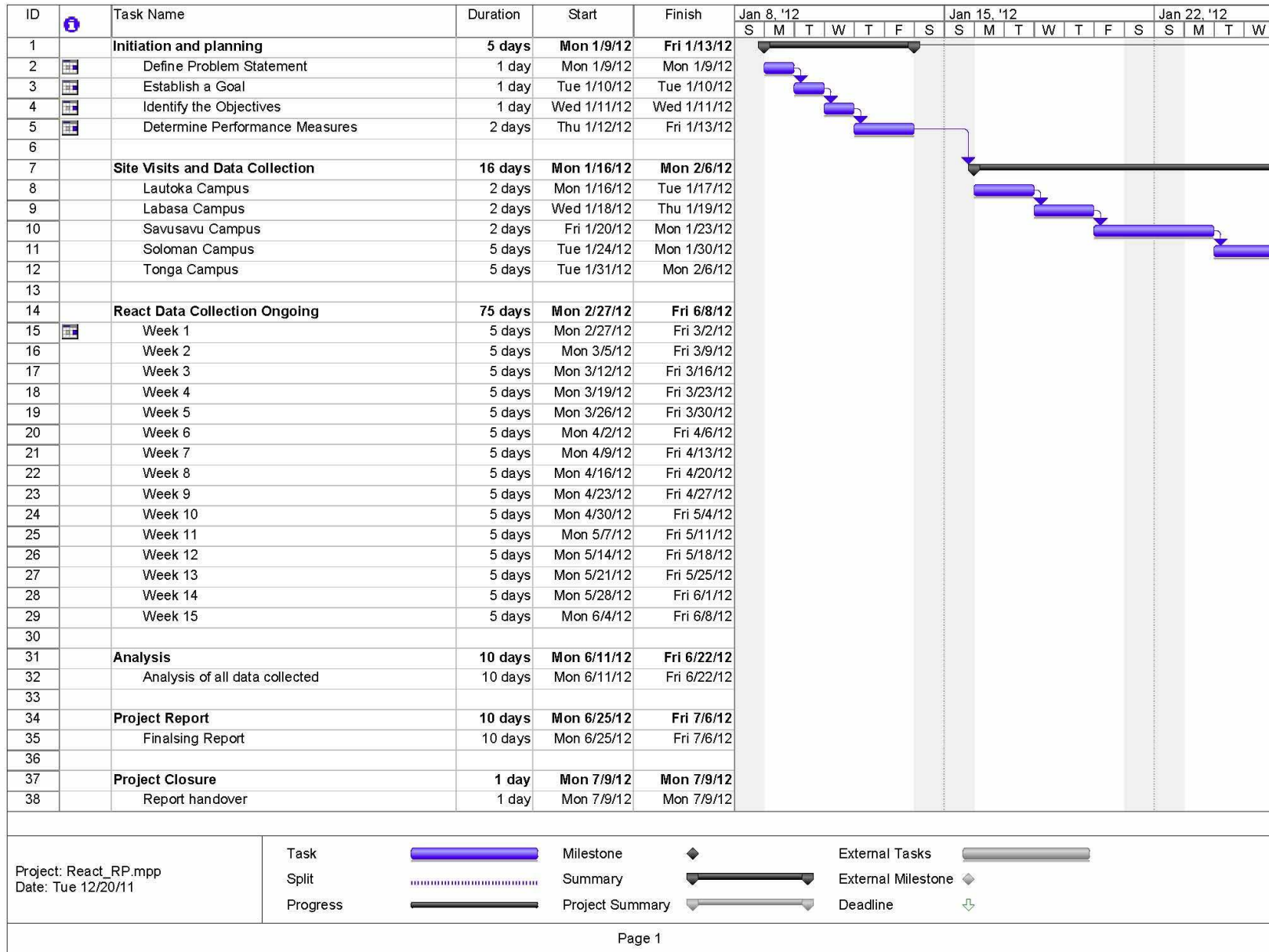
**Refer to pages 6-10.**

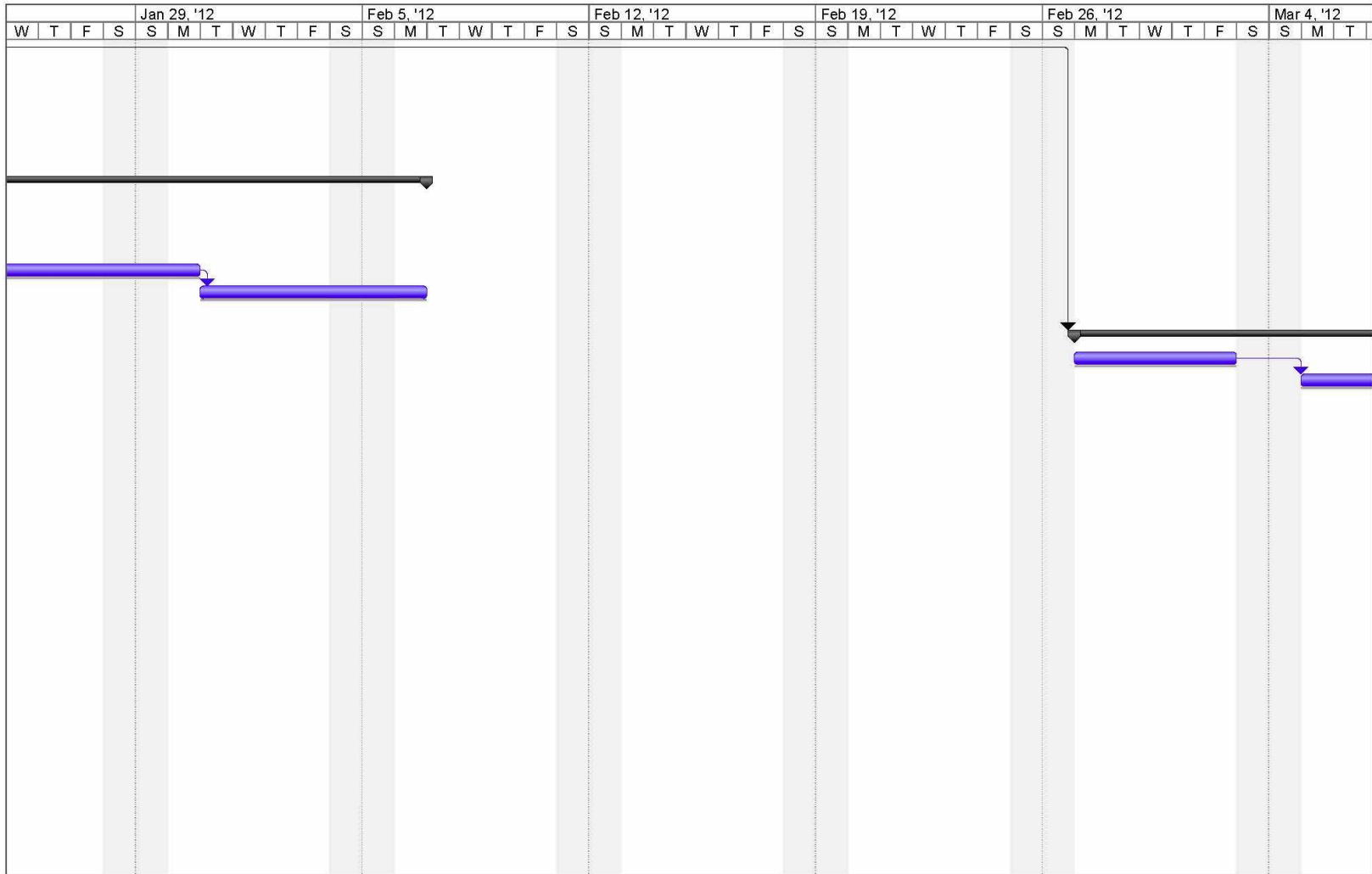
**7. Project Evaluation and Reporting**

1. The Project Coordinator will monitor the timeline and ensure that the project operates within the scheduled milestones.
2. Reports from the regional teams will be discussed at debriefing sessions that occur within 3 days of the team returning to the Laucala campus.
3. Any revisions to the project plan will be posted in Moodle to keep all of the project members and the Research Office informed.

**8. Budget**

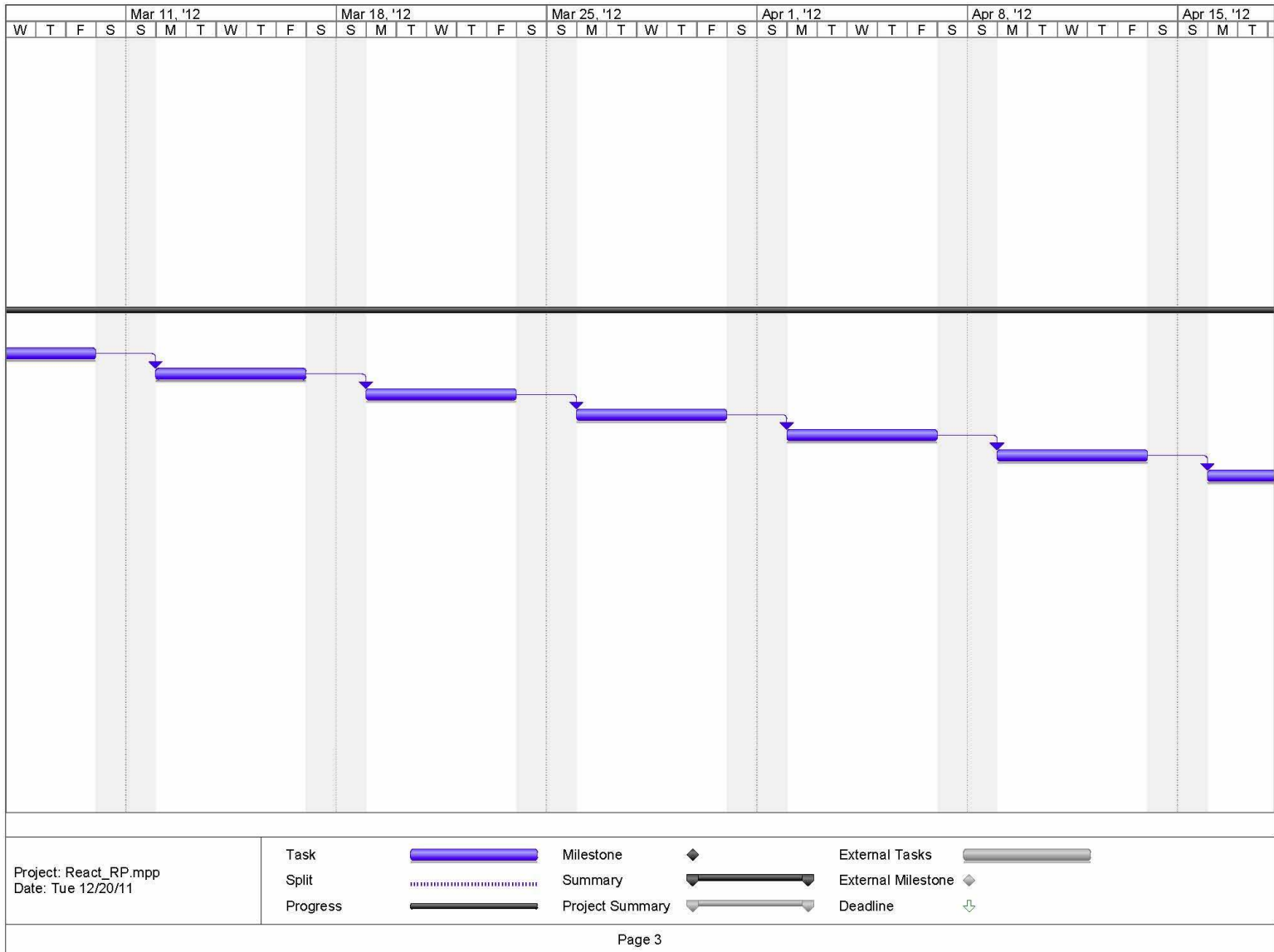
**Refer to page 11**

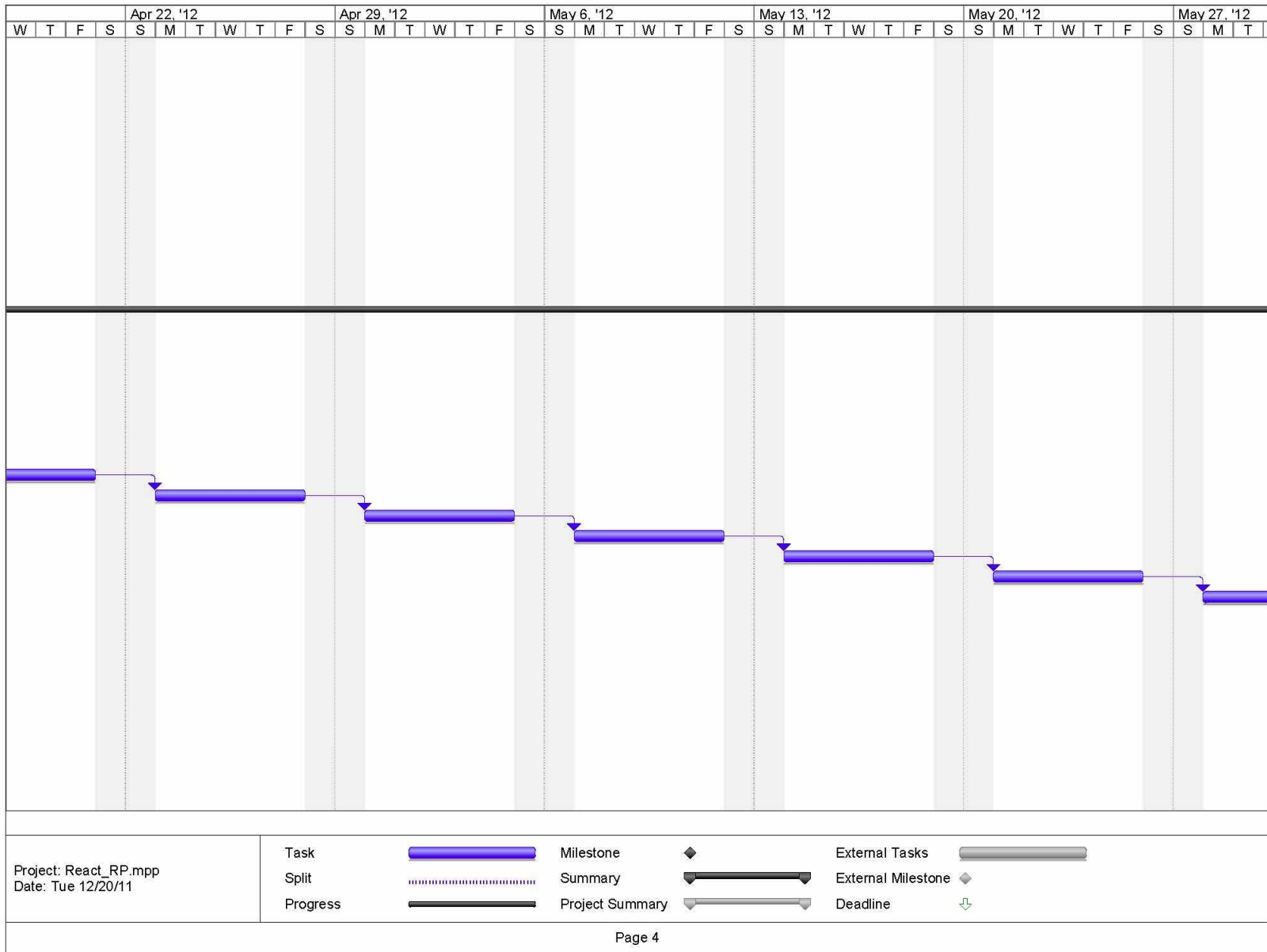


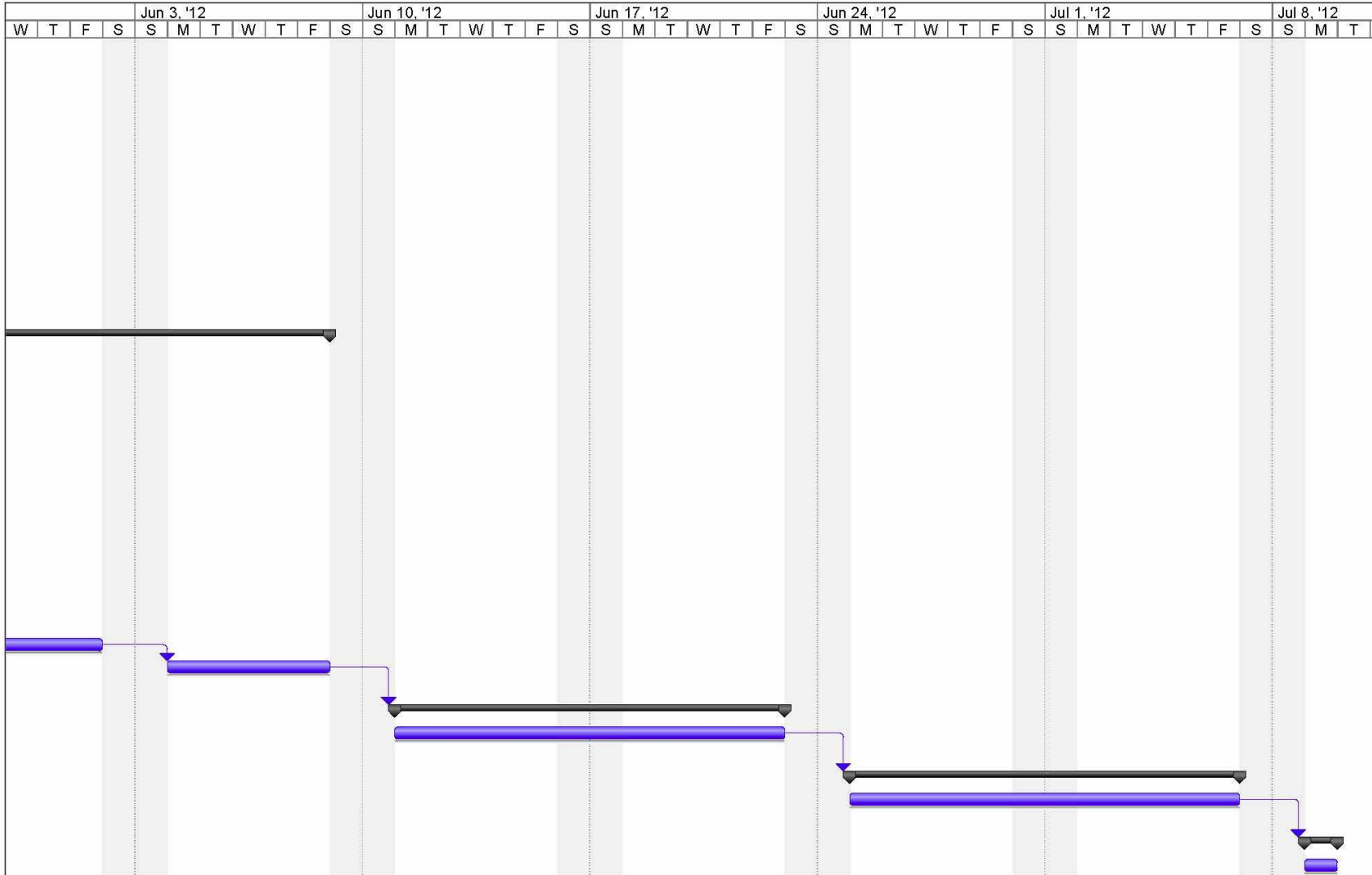


Project: React_RP.mpp Date: Tue 12/20/11	Task		Milestone		External Tasks	
	Split		Summary		External Milestone	
	Progress		Project Summary		Deadline	


















Project: React\_RP.mpp  
 Date: Tue 12/20/11

Task		Milestone		External Tasks	
Split		Summary		External Milestone	
Progress		Project Summary		Deadline	

## 9. Budget

<b>Destination</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Air/Road fare</b>	<b>Per diem</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Suva/Tonga/Vava'u/ Tonga/Suva</b>	23-30/1/12	\$1,204.00 + \$267.14	\$2,096.68 (\$259x7/0.8647-ER 20/12/11)	\$3,300.68
<b>Suva/Nadi/Honiara/ Nadi/Suva</b>	14-21/1/12	\$2,908.00	\$2,778.19 (SBD\$1,208x7/3.0437- ER 20/12/11)	\$5,686.19
<b>Suva/Nadi/Lautoka</b>	22-25/1/12	\$229.60	\$681.00 (\$227*3)	\$910.60
<b>Lautoka/Nadi/Labasa</b>	25-28/1/12	\$290.50	\$414 (\$138*3)	\$704
<b>Labasa/Savusavu/Suva</b>	28-31/1/12	\$298.00	\$414 (\$138*3)	\$712
<b>Contingency</b>			\$2,000.00	
<b>Incidentals</b>			\$1,500.00	
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$4,930.10</b>	<b>\$9,884.00</b>	<b>\$11,314.00</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>		<b>\$26,128.00</b>		

### Notes

CFDL is applying for the travel and associated costs only. Other funding required for the project will be made available as part of the funds for workshops in the CFDL budget.

## Logframe Matrix

<i>Narrative Summary and Intervention Logic</i>	<i>Performance Indicators</i>	<i>Means of Verification</i>	<i>Assumptions</i>
<p><b>Goal</b> This project aims to investigate the challenges related specifically to IDeL delivery and the capacity of the USPNet infrastructure to support selected interactive online tools in REACT.</p>	General indicators that are relevant to IDeL in the USP region	Final Research project report; Moodle page	Support for the project from key stakeholders is essential
<p><b>Objective 1</b> To collect, collate and analyse data on the challenges when delivering REACT tutorials to USP's regional campuses</p>	<p>(1) All research project team members will submit collected data for collation and analyses within the stated timelines.</p> <p>(2) The final written Research project report is submitted within one month of the last regional campus visit.</p>	Regional campus research project reports; Moodle page	<p>(1) The Project team will be supported by key stakeholders;</p> <p>(2) IDeL @ USP will continue to provide crucial interaction between student-lecturer and student-student.</p>
<p><b>Outcome/Result 1.1</b> Collected data based on REACT tutorials at USP's regional campuses identifies the challenges of delivery.</p>	Direct and positive intervention will be taken to mitigate the identified challenges where ever possible at the end of each regional campus visit; where direct action is not possible then escalation to the next levels for resolution will occur.	As above	As above
<p><b>Objective 2</b> To evaluate the effectiveness of current learning design in the IDeL environment</p>	Research project reports from each regional campus visit including the analysis of data at the end of each visit as indicated on the timeline.	Document/Moodle page: 'IDeL pedagogy and practices @ USP'	Support for this project from the key stakeholders is confirmed and that sufficient resources are available for further research to be

			undertaken in a timely manner and to achieve its objectives as indicated in the timelines.
<b>Outcome/Result 2.1</b> Factors that reduce the effectiveness of IDeL learning design @ USP are identified	Current IDeL L & T @ USP practices are re-designed to minimise/remove the challenges in 2013.	As above	As above
<b>Objective 3</b> To establish effective and sustainable protocols so that IT support services operate at optimal capacity.	(1) IT support and other DFL support staff in the region are trained to implement the relevant protocol(s) in response to problems that occur during IDeL delivery; (2) Protocols are updated regularly for each regional campus based on the problems that occur during the day-to-day delivery.	Documents; Moodle page	The project is successful and the key stakeholders agree that the research project will inspire similar projects as more learning technologies are incorporated in USP's L & T environment. Moreover, resources are available for further research to be undertaken in a timely manner and to achieve its objectives as indicated in the timelines.
<b>Outcome/Result 3.1</b> IT support services at the regional campuses operating at optimal capacity	Minimised disruptions to IDeL @ USP delivery of tutorial sessions; Corresponding reductions in the number of logged REACT complaints.	As above	As above
<b>Outcome/Result 3.2</b> Publication of results	Conference presentations in 2013 and beyond; A paper in a recognised international DFL/ODL/eLearning journal on "IDeL @ USP."	Documents; Moodle page	As above