

Research Development Fund Strategic Awards 2008/9

Assessor's Name	Prof Willard McCarty, Centre for Computing in the Humanities, KCL
Principal Investigator's name:	William Beynon
Project title:	From computer games design in computing science to computing science in computer games design

Up to £500,000 has been allocated to a new-style Research Development Fund (RDF) in order to increase the University's capacity and capability to undertake world-class, innovative and exciting research. There will be two elements to the fund during the academic year 2008/9:

1. A total of £400,000 will be available for larger projects of strategic importance. The deadline for applications to fund larger projects was 28 May 2008.
2. A total of £100,000 will be available for smaller projects. There will be a rolling deadline from 1 August 2008 for smaller projects.

You are being asked to review a **Strategic Award** application. These awards are designed to provide pump-priming support for the development of new research initiatives which are creative and innovative and clearly of a strategic nature. Projects should ideally be of an inter- or multi-disciplinary nature and must show clearly that they will lead directly to future bids for external funding.

Selection Process and Criteria:

Applications were invited for a deadline of 28 May 2008. Each application consists of the application form plus Head of Department Declaration of Support, and the Case for Support. Some applications may also have supplementary documentation where it has been specifically requested.

Administrative staff in Research Support Services and the PVCs for Research will undertake a preliminary reading of all applications to ensure that they meet the eligibility requirements. Each eligible proposal will be assigned two reviewers from within the University. In addition to this, one external review will be sought.

There are four main criteria which should be used to evaluate Strategic Award proposals to RDF:

- a) Is the project of excellent quality and timely?
- b) Is the project part of a realistically ambitious research programme that, depending on the nature of the project, fits in well with the strategic research priorities of your group, Centre, Department, Faculty and/or the University?
- c) Will support from the RDF contribute to the generation of research income from external agencies and are those involved in the project capable of achieving this? It is essential that there is a clear indication that activities conducted under the RDF award will lead to an application for external research funding.
- d) Is there a fit between the project and the priorities of external funding agencies?

Assessing RDF Strategic Awards:

The process for assessing RDF bids is intended to be rigorous but not unduly time-consuming for already-overburdened assessors. Please indicate a value of 0-5 in each of the boxes below for this proposal, as well as your overall mark and recommendation. If you recommend funding, we would be grateful for a brief qualitative commentary in the space provided. If you recommend changes to the proposal, please indicate these clearly in the space provided. If you suggest that the proposal not be funded, please indicate why you have reached that conclusion. Constructive feedback to applicants is an important element of the RDF process. Forms should be returned electronically to: K.Klaassen@warwick.ac.uk

Marking scheme

- 0 Nugatory; little or no value, significance, impact or likelihood
- 1 very limited value, significance, impact or likelihood
- 2 limited value, significance, impact or likelihood
- 3 good degree of value, significance, impact or likelihood
- 4 very good value, significance, impact or likelihood
- 5 excellent value, significance, impact or likelihood

Score 0-5

5	Clarity of stated objectives and methodology
5	Quality of the proposed research
4	Fit with Department, Faculty and/or University research strategies
5	Likelihood that the proposed activities will lead to a bid for external funding
5	Value for money

Overall score for project (on the 0-5 scale).
This score should be an average of the scores listed above:

5

Recommendation:

Please tick

X	Fund, no changes recommended
	Fund, minor changes recommended (please specify)
	Not appropriate for funding or re-submission (please provide comments)

Comments on Application:

The importance of Empirical Modelling is to my mind undoubtedly great, which is why I have in the past collaborated with Drs Beynon and Russ and spent some time with them at Warwick discussing various points of contact between their work and my own. I cannot say much about the commercial side of this research in detail, though in principle it should be considerable, providing a way of those who are not computer scientists to do constructive explorations of real-life scenarios in ways that would otherwise not be feasible. From a more theoretical and academic perspective, what Beynon, Russ et al have done is to implement ideas of exploratory modelling that are widely attested in the experimental sciences and in the creative arts as well as in many aspects of daily life but which are poorly understood and so often ignored in scholarly work. EM offers us a means of studying this commonplace, crucial but obscure kind of modelling as well as a set of tools for doing useful work.

The growth of EM has been hampered in the past for the very lack of the interface tools that are proposed here. An online interface would allow many to come in contact with EM who at best have heard about it from conference papers and the like. It would provide the practical half of the story told to most only in words. For the amount of money requested, the undoubted result of this project is quite a remarkable bargain.

Everything about this application attests to the maturity of a vigorous and productive research programme. I recommend its funding without reservations of any kind. My score of "4" above is intended to draw your attention to the fact that EM research is so innovative that one cannot say it is a perfect *fit* within any department or university that I know of. Rather it is an outstanding example of creative difference.

Thank you for assessing this application - it is much appreciated. Please return your completed assessment to k.klaassen@warwick.ac.uk .