

# Learnosity takes long-distance learning products into Australasia

**L**Irish company Learnosity has helped the New South Wales Board of Studies win two awards in the 2008 Excellence in e-Government Awards. The company is now also looking at the Indian market, as well as customers closer to home, with mobile phone trials for Irish aural exams.

Based in Co. Louth, the communications company designed and implemented a testing system for the NSW Board of Studies that enabled students from around Australia to take exams at home and be properly assessed. The pilot scheme was run in 600 schools in Australia.

Managing Director of Learnosity, Gavin Cooney said the programme was designed to be interactive and capable of tailoring to students' needs. "If a student has some sort of visual impairment, he or she can increase the font size or even change the colour settings so that they can view the exam properly," he explained. The programme also allows students to take practice tests right up until the day of the exams. "We can monitor the amount of sample tests taken on the Board of Studies web site and we saw that in the five weeks leading up to the exam date over 1,000,000 tests were taken," Cooney said.

The system is also designed to accommodate students of all abilities. "Inclusion is a massive focus for our programme. Anyone can reach the 95 per cent of students and ignore the other five per cent that need help. We try

and do it the other way. In our tests, we try to reach the most disadvantaged child with the view that if we can reach them, we can reach anyone."

Learnosity is also currently looking to branch into the Indian market with a product that will enable call centres to assess the language skills of potential employees.

"We hope to be able to provide a programme that will allow employers to test the English skills of future employees in call centres before they even start work. This will help them assess what level of English they can speak and what training they will require."

Closer to home, Learnosity is currently in trials with the NCCA Ireland to provide a testing method for the Irish aural exams through mobile phones. The programme allows students to converse with each other in Irish and sets up role-playing games that encourages students to improve their Irish vocabulary. All of the conversations are recorded for the teachers and examiners to correct at a later date, and this direction could provide a more cost-effective way forward for examiners, Cooney argues.

"Although the computer-based aspect of Learnosity has been a huge success, we are hoping to focus on mobile phones," he says. "It's much easier to get a phone into the hands of all of the children in a school or area."  
[Aidan Fortune]



## PM Group wins US\$400 million projects in Asia

Irish PM Group and partner M+W Zander have won two prestigious nutritional projects for Wyeth Nutritionals in China and Singapore, totalling US\$400m.

The PM and MWZ alliance was formed in early 2007 to deliver a full range of project management, architectural and engineering services in the biopharmaceutical and nutritional industry sectors across Asia.

Wyeth has appointed the partnership to provide full design, project and construction management services for the development of a new world-scale greenfield infant nutritional facility in Suzhou, a major city north of Shanghai, China.

With an anticipated handover date in late 2010, this would be Wyeth's largest greenfield undertaking to date in Asia with a gross floor area approximating 50,000m<sup>2</sup>. The Singapore project is a 12,000m<sup>2</sup> expansion of an existing facility, which will be completed by late 2009.

The new US\$280m facility in Suzhou, China will primarily produce infant formula milk powder and other nutritional products and will become part of Wyeth's global nutritional manufacturing and supply network. At full operation, the plant is expected to employ about 500 employees. Products made at this facility will primarily supply the local market.

## Enzolve to target emerging markets with infant diagnostics test kit

**E**nzolve Technologies, a UCD spin-out based at NovaUCD, the Innovation and Technology Transfer Centre at University College Dublin, has received finance from Enterprise Ireland and private investors to commence production of 'NeoScreenPak', a range of diagnostic kits for screening a variety of disorders that affect newborn infants. The initial test in the 'NeoScreenPak' range will screen for phenylketonuria (PKU) and each kit will contain sufficient materials to allow up to 1,000 newborns to be tested.

Enzolve Technologies, which is commercialising genetically engineered enzymes, enzyme-based specialty products and enzyme expertise, was co-founded by Professor Paul C. Engel and Dr Suren Aghajanian as a spin-out company from UCD's



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School of Biomolecular and Biomedical Science. The company which now employs four full-time staff, has partnered with another start-up, Europharma Concepts Ltd, based in Co. Offaly, to manufacture the kits.

According to Director of Enzolve Technologies Professor Paul C. Engel, the 'package deal' aspect of Enzolve's screening kits makes it cost effective and easy to use by hospital laboratory staff. "We've had interest from China, Russia and South America, huge markets where they are only at the beginning of the process of making newborn screening standard practice," he said.

Looking ahead, the company also plans to use its engineered enzymes as "biocatalysts" in asymmetric synthesis, powerful tools for making key building blocks for the pharmaceutical industry.