

**myUWE Management Group**  
**Notes of the meeting of 8<sup>th</sup> October 2007**  
**ITS Meeting Room, Botetourt House**

**Present:** Barry Cawthorne (Chair), Polly Smith, Rich Egan, Sid Baldwin, Chris Griffiths, Terry Davies, Richard O'Doherty, Kevin Foreman, Ben Wynne, Simon Ramsden, Kath Holden, Emma Taylor (Notes).

**1. Apologies**

Margaret Needles, Karen West.

**2. Welcome: Composition and Terms of Reference**

Barry welcomed the group and circulated an updated Terms of Reference document. Barry advised that Terry Davies was now acting as representative for the Faculty of Environment and Technology.

**3. Update on status of portal**

Rich clarified that the University currently had two portals – the myUWE student and staff portal, and the SITS e:Vision enquiries and admissions portal.

Barry outlined the development of the myUWE portal to date and noted that a major role of the myUWE Management Group (MMG) would be to prioritise requirements. As a large number of requirements had already been identified, it is anticipated that the role of the group would also be to manage expectations. Barry stressed that the group had a steer from the Information Systems Co-ordination Group (ISCG) to consider requirements which were of benefit to the whole University, rather than to individual faculties. Barry noted that myUWE was currently primarily a student portal and raised the need to develop the facilities available to staff. Chris raised the general issue of complaints and appeals and noted that, as the portal shows a personalised view, it's not possible to access a particular student's view. Barry confirmed that there were data protection issues but also that a portal was defined by the presentation to users of data of personal relevance.

**3.1. Online registration**

Rich reported that, of the 14,000 Undergraduate Full-Time and Sandwich students eligible to enrol online, over 10,000 had done so. Approximately 3,000 of this total were new students. £2 million has been taken in fee payments with £1 million of that total taken as debit and credit card payments. Barry noted that this level of take-up was indicative of the value of the facility to students. A huge amount of work had been done by Rich and his team and there had been very good feedback from students. Sid circulated a graph illustrating the rate of payments and registration income. Kevin noted that a number of HSC students had been 'lost' and hadn't come to the attention of administrative staff as they had registered online. Rich advised that reports could be run in ISIS to identify students who have registered and suggested that this and any other faculty issues should be discussed at forthcoming Portal and Welcome Weekend wash-up meetings.

**ACTION: Margaret Needles to be asked to contact faculties to request issues to raise at the Portal wash-up meeting.**

**3.2. Online coursework submission**

The Online Coursework Submission (OCS) system has been developed to provide a more robust means of receiving and tracking coursework than is offered by Blackboard, including the tracking of submissions and provision of evidence in the event of contention or complaints. Rich reported that two pilots of

OCS had been run, but neither had been adopted on a large scale or had tested the receipt of late submissions. Rich advised that OCS would continue to be run in a managed mode until all aspects of the system had been satisfactorily tested and asked any faculties wanting to use the system to advise the Portal Team of their intentions. Barry stressed that the system had been developed primarily for distance learning courses, such as MA Translation, and was not intended to be used for the large-scale collection of work, or for the forwarding and return of work. In answer to a query by Polly, Rich advised that, while the system itself was capable of handling large numbers of submissions, faculties would be seriously affected by the shift in work which would be required to print and distribute a large volume of coursework to marking tutors. Barry was clear that coursework of students taught on campus was normally best collected by the usual post-box type method.

### **3.3. Hartpury**

Rich confirmed that, following awareness sessions run by Margaret Needles, Hartpury HE students had been given portal access from Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> September. All UWE HE students now have access to myUWE.

## **4. Current programme of work**

### **4.1. Start of academic year**

Rich reported that there had been a lot of volatility at the start of the academic year. For this reason, there would be a focus on stability rather than development at the start of future years. A large volume of queries had been received by myUWE support at the start of term, not all of which related directly to myUWE, and which included issues of pastoral care.

### **4.2. Staff timetable channel**

Barry advised that a staff timetable channel would increase the portal functionality available to staff and was being developed in the interim period following the final Portal Management Group meeting but before additional requirements were generated by the consultative groups. Rich confirmed that the target for completion was mid-October.

### **4.3. Academic Record channel extension**

This functionality will also be developed before additional requirements are received.

## **5. LiveMail: single sign-on**

LiveMail is an alternative to student Webmail. Rich noted that, due to the speed of its introduction, it had not been possible to accommodate single sign-on to LiveMail within the Portal. Barry stressed the need for this to be addressed as single sign-on was a significant part of the portal and it would be a retrograde step to require an additional login to LiveMail. Sid confirmed that Microsoft had released APIs to allow single sign-on, which may offer a potential solution, but will require significant work and developer time. In answer to a query by Kath, Sid confirmed that there was currently forwarding for UWE student e-mail addresses using LiveMail.

## **6. Requirements elicitation and prioritisation**

Barry advised that the requirements elicitation and prioritisation process would be managed by MMG and facilitated through the consultative groups described below. Strategic requirements would be approved by the ISCG. Barry noted that two deferred items – debt status and exam feedback – would be raised at the first meeting of the Business and Academic consultative groups respectively. Rich

advised that the initial requirements list was compiled from requests received to date. Barry stressed that the project sizes given were best-guess estimates as it wouldn't be possible to gauge the size of a piece of work until it had been specified.

Richard raised the need for informed consideration of requirements and asked for further information on what would and would not be possible. Terry noted that it would be useful to hear what faculties were trying to do. Ben enquired whether it would be feasible to develop criteria on which decision-making and prioritisation could be based, such as the number of users who would benefit and the financial implications. Rich stressed that the one of the clearest criteria must be that any development should benefit the whole university. Barry outlined some of the functionality provided by other portals within the HE community, such as the provision of payslips online by LSE, and noted that one head of service had enquired about the possibility of providing the equivalent of the leave card system online. Sid stressed that it was difficult to answer questions about the feasibility of individual requests without further investigation. In illustration, Sid cited the example of Student Photosets, which required ISIS, Syllabus Plus and photographic data from the House Services database, the implications of which weren't obvious until development had begun. Simon stressed that all developments involved a significant amount of complexity. Rich confirmed that the role of MMG would be to balance technical issues and resources with needs. Barry emphasised the need to take a pragmatic view as some requests may turn out to be harder or easier than first thought.

## **7. Establishment of the consultation groups**

Barry confirmed that he had asked the consultative groups to meet once a term in the weeks beginning:

29<sup>th</sup> October, 5<sup>th</sup> November and 12<sup>th</sup> November 2007;

4<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> February 2008; and

5<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> May 2008.

### **7.1. Student Forum**

The Student Forum will be chaired by Becca Danes, Vice President of the Student Representative Council.

### **7.2. Business Group**

The Business Group will be chaired by Margaret Needles. Membership will comprise representatives from administrative and other areas of the university's business.

### **7.3. Academic Group**

Barry confirmed that he would be chairing the Academic Group, which would include representatives from Faculties and Library Services.

## **8. Student Rep database request**

Simon confirmed that this was an interface to record meetings and the representatives attending.

**ACTION: Rich to ask Becca Danes to put this request back for discussion by the Student Forum.**

## **9. Membership of the Requirements Prioritisation Sub-Group**

Barry noted that a smaller sub-group of MMG would be required to prioritise the requests arising from the consultation groups and asked the faculty and service representatives each to decide on a representative for this group. Barry re-asserted the importance of identifying requirements which would give the greatest benefit to the university as a whole.

**ACTION: Faculty and Service representatives each to decide on a representative for the prioritisation sub-group and inform Barry before 22<sup>nd</sup> October.**

#### **10. Performance and access report**

Sid circulated a report of portal accesses during September. Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> September was the busiest day to date with 6521 distinct users – a fifth of the university and almost twice as many users as the previous highest total. Portal performance was not affected by this level of access, but there was an impact on back-end systems, giving a good gauge of the areas which need support when demand is high. This high level of access now puts UWE into the high user category of uPortal users, and UWE has now joined JSIG to show support for the uPortal software.

Sid reported that the photosets tab had been withdrawn temporarily at the start of term, and there had been one day of disruption to payments caused by a failure of the feed from Agresso to the 3<sup>rd</sup> party WPM payment system, which was fixed the following day. A new system is in place to load-balance the application servers for ISIS queries and there have been no performance problems at this stage.

#### **11. Dates of remaining meetings for 2007-2008**

26<sup>th</sup> November 2006, **room change** Room PR01 (old Physical Recreation building).

14<sup>th</sup> January 2008, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2008, 14<sup>th</sup> April 2008, all in room 4D24.

9<sup>th</sup> June 2008, venue to be confirmed.

#### **12. Any other business**

##### **12.1. Photosets**

Rich reported that Photosets channel had been adversely affected by the availability of data, but this had now been corrected. He confirmed that all teaching staff had been sent advice via an e-mail on 5<sup>th</sup> October. Sid reported that requests for access to photos had been received from module leaders and personal tutors, but stressed that the photosets channel as specified was not intended to provide these categories of data. Barry confirmed that, if module leaders were to be granted access, their status as module leader would need to be confirmed, and this information was not recorded in any central system and, in any event the formal role of module leader would also need to be defined. These requests also raise a data protection issue as, occasionally, module leaders do not actually teach the module and it isn't clear under the Data Protection act that academic staff have the right to view photosets of students they don't teach.