

myUWE Management Group
Notes of the meeting of 6 October 2008
Room PR01, Frenchay Campus

Present: Barry Cawthorne (Chair), Rich Egan, Sid Baldwin, Simon Carter (in attendance), Nadine Fry, Polly Smith, Margaret Needles, Simon Ramsden, Chris Griffiths, Kevin Foreman, Karen West, George Coulsting, Kath Holden, Emma Taylor (Notes).

1. Apologies

Terry Davies, Jon Hallett, Katy Phillips.

2. Membership and welcome to new members

Barry welcomed the following new members to the group: Nadine Fry (replacing Richard O'Doherty as Bristol Business School representative), Jon Hallett (replacing Ben Wynne as Library Services representative), and Katy Phillips (replacing Becca Danes as Student Council representative). Barry noted that the terms of reference of the group had been updated to reflect changes to the elicitation process, but otherwise remained broadly the same as last year.

3. Minutes of last meeting 9 June 2008.

Approved.

4. Matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda

4.1. Staff profile pages

Barry noted that this had arisen from the elicitation process and had been awaiting a policy decision. Rich confirmed that staff profile pages had been discussed at the Web Management Group meeting of 8th September, where clarification had been sought on the acceptability of making staff e-mail addresses and telephone numbers publicly available. Rich advised that it had been agreed at the WMG that as these were University not private contact details they could be made available, but provision must be made for staff at risk to be able to withhold their details. Consideration should also be given to the impact of the appearance of the pages on the image of the university. Rich noted that Steve Grive had given him a strong steer that the mySite facility in SharePoint should be evaluated. The MMG noted that the obvious personalisation of staff profile pages appeared to make it a clear portal application. It was agreed in principle that staff profile pages should be added to the list of developments for consideration after the current tranche of work was completed.

5. Demonstration of Library channels

Simon Carter gave a demonstration of the library channel, which appears as a sub-tab on the myUWE home page. The library channel displays a list of users' loans, holds and fines and allows single sign-on access to a user's library account and the eLibrary. Sid noted that control of the single sign-on quick links at the bottom of the library channel had been delegated to Library Services. Rich confirmed that single sign-on had now been re-enabled. Barry thanked Simon and Sid and noted that he had received positive feedback on the library channel and that this was a significant development.

6. Online registration report including fees structure implications

Margaret reported that 15,000 students had registered online and confirmed that this figure included federation students. The system had also been re-engineered to simplify registration for HSC students to take them straight to 'ON' without the need

to calculate their fees. Both Chris and Margaret expressed concern about Hartpury's engagement, which had been slow. Barry noted that online registration had been developed as far as is possible unless work is done to simplify the university's fee structure. Margaret confirmed that it was only possible to reflect consistently formed information in an automated system, and if online registration was to be extended further, there needed to be a wide-ranging consideration of fees in the ISIS infrastructure and in the university overall. Chris confirmed that there was recognition that a fees group was required to agree a fees policy and noted that a group was being set up and was due to meet later this month. Barry suggested that UMG could give the group a steer. Margaret suggested that this issue should be raised at ISCG to give John Rushforth an understanding of the systems perspective.

ACTIONS:

- **Barry to take the issue of fee structures to ISCG.**
- **Margaret to provide Barry with a summary of her report for ISCG.**

7. Progress report

Barry advised that the progress report had been taken to ISCG. Rich reported on the strategic objectives:

- Single sign-on had been a very big project and Sid confirmed that this would continue to be so.
- Livemail integration had been completed.
- The upgrade to Blackboard Version 8 had been completed.

Six developments from the 2007/08 requirements round had been worked on over the last year:

- Council Tax Certificate letters had been made live in a pilot for BBS students. Margaret advised that she had been in communication with councils and had received positive feedback from South Gloucestershire. The next stage of the development will be to produce student status letters. Margaret noted that NatWest had informed her that they would not be accepting student status letters, so students would be advised that they would have to take responsibility for whether or not the letters were accepted. Rich noted that this development was a good example of scope-creep as it had also been necessary to develop an online validation service for the student status letters.
- Student photograph submission. Rich reported that the intended release at the start of the academic year had been delayed at the request of faculties to avoid confusion for students, so the delivery date has been revised to November and the intention is to deliver this service as a pilot this term.
- Rich advised that there had been no progress on the Finance channel as the Finance department had been engaged in the Kinetics roll-out.
- Sid reported that work is well advanced on Photosets groupings and the intention was to deliver this in November. This will also allow staff attached to Syllabus Plus activities to make announcements to those groups. Barry noted that it would be helpful to have a visual representation of the announcements structure and Sid agreed to demonstrate this at the next meeting.

ACTION: Sid to demonstrate the Announcements structure at the November MMG meeting.

A further twelve developments have been commissioned for 2008/09:

- Online Coursework Submission roll-out. Margaret reported that end-to-end testing was now being done. Two Faculty Academic Registrars had informed her of the faculty staff who would be administering OCS for their faculties and she would send a reminder to the remaining FARs. Simon Ramsden confirmed that the ISIS release to calculate 24 hour and 10 day late times

would go live overnight. In answer to a query by Kevin, Rich advised that the portal OCS system would not be linked to HSC's own system, as the brief was to work on university-wide systems. Margaret noted that HSC students could still use the portal OCS system.

- Requirements elicitation channel. Barry reported that the requirements elicitation process had been reviewed after one year. The student group had not met, attendance at the academic group had been patchy, but the business group had been very successful. The updated process for elicitation in 2008/09 was circulated to the group. A myIdea channel will be introduced as a sub-tab on the Home tab on 7th October and a feedback box will also appear on every portal page. The submissions from these will be collated into a report for consideration by the Requirements Prioritisation Sub-group (RPSG). Rich confirmed that the identities of those submitting suggestions would be available, allowing multiple submissions by individuals to be identified. In response to concerns raised by Chris of possible conflict between the portal elicitation process and the Academic Registry business process review, Barry advised that he could see no problem if there was co-operation and communication between the two processes. Margaret assured Chris that, if an issue arose which concerned student administration, the Academic Registry would be consulted.
- Online notepad. Rich advised that the online notepad would be made live on 7th October.
- Examination Timetables. Rich advised that this development was on target for a November release for the January exams.
- Coursework submission forms. Margaret advised that specifically tailored sheets could be provided by school, but not for individual modules. Rich noted that, while OCS was not expected to be heavily used, there was concern about the potential for a sudden hit on ISIS around submission deadlines. In order to manage the demand on ISIS, Simon Ramsden's team are looking to mass-produce submission forms. Margaret advised that she and Nick Coates had begun the business analysis for this.
- Student Allocator. Development is pending business analysis and specification and there have been some encouraging preliminary meetings.
- Calendaring aggregator and E-mail aggregator. Preliminary investigation of the Calendaring aggregator is under way, but development has not commenced on the e-mail aggregator.
- Academic Record Phase 3. Consultation with the Academic Registry has begun and is awaiting a specification.
- Car parking channel, Student registration details, changes to the address channel. These developments were identified as 'H2', high priority without time constraints, and have been scheduled for 2009.

Barry advised that future progress reports would report only on changes. In answer to query by Barry, Rich confirmed that there were currently no bottlenecks requiring intervention.

8. The 2008-2009 requirements elicitation process

Discussed under Item 7.

9. Single sign-on

Rich requested that it be put on record that there may be an emerging need to take single sign-on as more than a portal issue in the future. Single sign-on had emerged as a very large issue, which had taken up a significant amount of the Portal Team's time and had affected the development work possible in the last year. Rich warned

that this was likely to grow and noted that most universities with portals had a separate team of staff dealing only with single sign-on.

10. Change management for portal dependencies

Rich noted that there had been dramatic changes to which the Portal Team had been required to respond. These changes include the policy decision to give all new students Livemail accounts, which then had to be accommodated in the portal, and the upgrade to Blackboard 8. In light of this, Rich expressed concern about the way in which environmental changes to the portal were managed. Rich advised that Blackboard system changes were managed via the Blackboard Systems Administrators Group (BSAG), which has a membership of IT Services staff, but a group handling system change issues for the portal would require membership from IT Services, CETTS, Library Services and, when the finance channel is added, Finance. Rich asked whether the MMG would be prepared to support this. The group agreed.

11. System and performance report

Sid reported that there had been no significant outages. The previous week had seen the greatest number of accesses to date for the portal behind single sign-on, with 955 concurrent users. The previous highest number of accesses had been 650 when single sign-on was not in place. Sid advised that the portal team had tested the ability of the system to cope with higher loads, but monitoring would continue. There were 334,000 logins in total in September 2008, which represented an increase of 15,000 on September 2007. Sid noted that this increase in users was partly driven by accesses to Timetables and Blackboard through the portal. Sid noted that peaks in performance times (the time taken from clicking submit on single sign-on to getting a fully-rendered portal front page) were related to the running of backups and these had particularly affected load times at weekends. In answer to a query by Barry, Rich advised that backups ran in a set order and would normally run overnight but if the time taken by backups increased for any reason, they would over-run into the day. Sid stressed that, as we continue to add dependencies to the portal, this problem will increase. IT Services are working collectively to address this issue and work to address data congestion will take place during the shutdown weekend of 24th to 27th October.

12. Dates of remaining meetings for 2008-2009

24 November 2008 in 2A27; 12 January 2009; 2 March 2009; 27 April 2009; 8 June 2009. All scheduled to take place in 4D24 (apart from 24 November meeting) and from 11:00-12:30.

13. Any other business

None.