myUWE Management Group
Notes of the meeting of 27 April 2009
Room 4D24, Frenchay Campus

Present: Steve Grive (Chair), Rich Egan, Simon Ramsden, Katy Phillips, Margaret Needles, Sarah Hudson, Sid Baldwin, Karen West, Kath Holden, Jon Hallett, Kevin Foreman, Emma Taylor (Notes).

1. Composition: To note change of Chair

Steve noted that he would now be chairing MMG, as Barry Cawthorne has been asked to concentrate on the ISIS Review. The last meeting of the 2008/09 academic year will be on 8th June, and the group will then be reviewed.

2. Apologies

Nadine Fry.

3. Minutes of last meeting 2 March 2009

Approved.

4. Matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda

Item 5. Requirements elicitation update to be added to the agenda of the next meeting.

Item 6.6. Rich advised that he and Barry had not met due to the change in Barry's responsibilities, but there had been some movement in the area of SMS text messaging. Katy had submitted a paper to Academic Board outlining the SRC's view of acceptable usage, which included notice of university shutdowns, lecture cancellations and room changes. Katy expressed concern as, following the submission of the paper, a message had been sent giving notice of the GDP Tutor of the Year, which was considered by students to be a marketing message, and unacceptable.   Katy stressed that students had strong objections to the use of SMS texts for marketing and advised that she would be raising this with Geoff Channon. In answer to a query by Margaret about the use of SMS messages to remind students about registration, Katy confirmed that this would probably be acceptable, and advised that she would raise this with the SRC. Steve advised that this issue had been discussed by the Information Systems Co-ordination Group, who had proposed that an opt-out clause be allowed and that texts should not be used for marketing. The ISCG had also suggested that a communications group be formed with the membership including a student representative.

ACTION: Requirements elicitation update to be added to the agenda of the next meeting.

5. Online Registration 2009 & Centre for Sport Membership

Margaret reported that this was progressing well and she was working with Nick Coates and Pete Rogers to develop an advert for membership containing a link to the online store. To avoid distracting from the registration process, the advertisement will be visible when a student has completed their online application. Margaret noted that the advert would be visible to all students, so must be clear that it is for the Frenchay CFS. Rich sought the opinion of the group on a request he had received from Neil Clarke of the Students' Union for a link to SU membership activation or renewal from online registration. This request was approved.

6. Calendaring Aggregator

Sid reported that a proof of concept was now in place, including University closure dates, to help plan coursework submissions. Due to staff sickness, the visual myUWE branding is still being worked on.

7. Coursework Submission Forms

Margaret noted that this was now an official university process change project and she had consulted with a group including the Academic Registrar, who had given her authority to continue. Margaret will pass final drafts of the cover sheet to School colleagues this week. There is still some discussion on anonymous marking and Margaret will be meeting with Katy to discuss student expectations. Cover sheets will be piloted from November 2009 and the pilot will be run with all coursework in the School of Life Sciences. Margaret noted that SOLS had been selected as they had approached her first and their programmes were largely self-contained. Margaret outlined the process which would take place – students will see all coursework submissions and deadlines in myUWE and will be able to download coursework cover sheets with a school-specific declaration and pre-populated information to identify the coursework. An important process change is that the sheet will be bar-coded and, on scanning by the School, will be recorded in ISIS as having been received. The Business Systems Team have purchased a laser scanner, which has been tested successfully, and Sharon Burden will be testing and reviewing a prototype of the scanning process with School colleagues.

8. Council Tax Certificates

Margaret reported that this was still in pilot. The intention had been to go live, but there was a need to review the authentication of documents and document retention and arrive at a policy. A change of wording has been signed off the by Academic Registry. Rich noted that, previously, recipients of the letter had to verify the letter with the student e-mail address but there had been a question over the use of the e-mail address and clarity was needed over how long the document would be available to view. Sid advised that the policy and practice aspects identified in the pilot were now under development. In answer to a query by Steve, Margaret confirmed that the intention was to make this service live in September, when demand is at its peak.

9. Student Status Letters

Sarah reported that she had met with the Academic Registry to get the content signed off and caveats have been drafted as faculties had concerns about the use of the letters for council tax exemption as well as visa applications. The Academic Registry are awaiting sign-off from Bill Evans and the application is being developed. Rich noted that the decision had been made not to allow the free-text insertion of the address as it could expose the University to risk. In answer to a query by Steve, Sarah confirmed that the intention was also to make this service live in September, when demand is at its peak.

10. Photos Upload

Margaret advised that this was still suspended and will require a lot of work on the security of data on the Facilities side. The Sharepoint approvals process needs to be made more user friendly for security staff, and Bill Ferrier is undertaking some systems analysis. In answer to a query by Steve, Sid confirmed that Outlook 2007 was being rolled out to security staff. Rich noted that the myUWE photo submission process was working, but is currently withdrawn, and was a classic example of a project going out of scope with a requirement to look at what is done with the data once it's been obtained via myUWE.

11. Finance channel

Sid confirmed that, as reported in Item 6 of the previous notes, development of the Finance channel had been suspended pending single sign-on (SSO) into the student allocator, which is now complete. The remit for myUWE had been to provide SSO into Agresso and a summary of a student's financial information, but Agresso had reversed their original advice that Active Directory could be used for SSO, so the situation was now unknown and the portal team were having to reconsider whether

SSO into Agresso could be achieved. The finance summary channel is not dependent on SSO, so is being developed. Much of the infrastructure development is in place and work is now underway on the interface. Sid advised that work was underway to release the channel in September giving financial information in summary form, but warned that this was highly likely to exclude SSO functionality. Margaret suggested that students would be unlikely to be too concerned at having to re-authenticate if they were entering payment information.

12. Visibility to students of modules enrolled on but unavailable
Rich noted that there was a lack of clarity for students about whether a Blackboard course wasn't visible to them in myUWE because it hadn't been made available, or because the student wasn't attached to it. The intention is to show courses on which a student is enrolled, but which their tutor isn't currently using in Blackboard. Sid confirmed that tutors would also see which of their courses were unavailable to students. Rich advised that a specification had been signed off and the developer responsible had now returned from extended sick leave and was working on this as an active development.

13. System Administration Report
Sid reported that there had been 600,000 logins in February and 570,000 in March with no noticeable impact from this loading. He was confident that this was now the likely normal level of loading, but there may be further increases as more services are added to the portal. Sid advised that myUWE was deliberately made unavailable during the maintenance weekend of 18th - 19th April as work was being undertaken on many of the services on which it depends. Rich confirmed that a holding page had been made available, which directed users to Blackboard and other portal services. Sid noted that there had been some issues affecting the myUWE servers following security patching during the maintenance weekend, but there had only been one occasion of approximately 10 minutes on which both of the servers had been unavailable at the same time. The portal developers were working hard to find a work-around for this problem and a successful fix had been applied to one of the servers, so would be applied to the second server to return the portal to normal operation. Sid advised that the intention was to switch from LDAP to Active Directory authentication during tomorrow's at-risk period and anticipated that there would be some performance benefits.

14. Date of remaining meeting for 2008-2009
8 June 2009. Scheduled from 11:00-12:00 in 4D24.

15. Any other business

15.1. Requests from CETTS
Karen raised three items relating to timetabling:
- Feedback from students on activities outside the default times has indicated that they have missed items from their timetable. Karen enquired whether the timetable tab could show all week, Monday to Sunday, and all day, 08:00 to 21:00 as the default view to ensure that no activities are missed.
- Feedback from students has indicated that they have had difficulty finding their timetable within the courses tab. Karen enquired whether access could be made clearer.
- Karen enquired whether it would be possible to produce photo class lists with just names in grid format to allow staff to monitor attendance. Karen acknowledged that this may be superseded in the future by ongoing work on attendance monitoring.
Rich confirmed that he would take these requests away for consideration.