**myUWE Management Group**
**Notes of the meeting of 10 May 2011**
**Room 5D6**

**Present:** Steve Grive (Chair), Sid Baldwin, Rich Egan, Margaret Needles, Richard Norman (CETTS representative in place of Karen West), Richard Dewfall, Neil Porritt.

## 1. Apologies
Karen West, Kath Holden, Sharon Bohin, Gail Wilson, Valerie Watson, Polly Smith, Jon Hallett.

## 2. Matters Arising
The notes of the previous meeting were received and accepted. Neil Porritt reported that he had reviewed the support site guidance on portal use, an action from the March meeting. He felt that the site primarily provided instructions on use, and fulfilled this purpose. However, he offered the suggestion that it might benefit from a narrative for beginners. Margaret Needles referred Neil to the "Getting Started" screens.

## 3. Strategic role of the Portal
Richard Egan provided a summary of the strategic role of the portal as a student-facing service in the context of three other primary systems: a website for public use (delivered through the Web Content Management System, and overseen by Marketing and Communications); a staff intranet being prototyped in SharePoint as part of the HP partnership initiative; and the Blackboard Virtual Learning Environment (which supports learning and teaching). He drew a comparison with other online services, where the portal fills the role of customer engagement. IT Services will seek to migrate the small amount of staff-facing content from the student portal to the staff intranet or Blackboard, as appropriate.

Richard Dewfall asked about content which had multiple uses, for example fees information which is relevant to both prospective and current students? Richard Egan advised that there was an assumption that content could be maintained in one place but be visible from others. For example, fees information might be maintained in the CMS for the web site, but also be linked from the portal for current students. We would always seek to maintain the content in one place, but be pragmatic about the best place. RD asked if this meant the portal would have to look like the public website. RME advised not, we could "skin" content with the appropriate look and feel for the audience.

Steve Grive asked whether this would apply equally to content shared between staff and students, for example regulatory information. RME advised that such content might be maintained in SharePoint, and again be made visible to students by linking from the portal.

ITS are reviewing the value of a pre-login page for students to give current students access to generic content which may be a factor in the above. Neil Porritt asked if this would form a "student intranet". RME advised that terminology has proven to be a sensitive issue when communicating with students and staff, and for that reason we would prefer to reserve the term "intranet" for its traditional use as a staff-facing service. Any unauthenticated page would still be considered part of the "myUWE portal" and communicated as such to students.

The group supported the above.

## 4. Recruitment and staffing

Sid Baldwin advised that Sarah Sloan, the new appointee to the second Java programmer role, had now started. Unfortunately, she has joined at a time when the other programmer is on paternity leave. But the new appointment restores us to a full complement of Java programmers and once Sarah has settled into her role we hope to be able to move out of "maintenance mode" for the portal.

## 5. Online Registration 2011

Margaret Needles reported that the project is progressing well and remains on target to deliver the planned development for Online Registration 2011. The biggest risks to the project at the moment are changes or reviews of processes on which Online Registration depends. These are external to the Online Registration project, but can have a major impact. We are responding to them as best we can.

## 6. Online Registration 2012

Richard Egan advised that the decision to drop our plans to include International Students and Post Graduate Taught students in Online Registration for 2011 had led to a conclusion on the part of BIP and ITS that we need to move from our currently rules-based fees collection model to one which accommodates a degree of discretionary discounting in advance. We anticipate a need to be more market-responsive from 2012, and therefore to offer more flexibility in the fees which students are charged. This assumes a "net charging" model, where a student is told the net fee for which they are liable, rather than (as proposed and abandoned for 2011) the payment of a full fee at registration, followed by the issue of discounts post-registration.

It should be assumed that students will want to have visibility of their net charge in advance and therefore in the SITS welcome portal. RME explained that a group of ITS staff had convened to review this, and developed the outline of a technical model which assumed the need for SITS development to hold the discretionary discount data.

Richard Dewfall asked if this meant that all fee data would henceforth be held in SITS. RME advised that we should only manage data in one place, and it was assumed that ISIS would remain the definitive management system for rules-based fee data. However, discounts for individual students would probably be maintained in SITS and passed to ISIS at roll-in. SITS may need to know the rules-based fee data, but would not be the definitive repository for it.

RME advised that he had met with Jo Midgley (AID) who supported the proposal in principle. A further meeting was scheduled for this week.

## 7. uPortal 4

Sid Baldwin advised that a new version of the uPortal framework (on which the myUWE portal is based) has recently been announced. This is uPortal 4, and myUWE is currently running on uPortal 2.5.3. We had hoped to migrate to uPortal 3 some time ago, but significant upheavals in portal team staffing and the unanticipated complexity of migration had prevented this.

The new version of the uPortal framework is not in Sid's view as dramatic an upgrade as the move from version 2 to version 3. Upgrade would give better currency and the implementation of a more contemporary user interface which exploits recent trends towards more dynamic interaction between the user and the portal exploiting technologies like AJAX, and better support for user customisation such as drag and drop functionality.

Now the portal development team is in a better position to move out of maintenance mode, we hope to revive our upgrade plans, and SB advised that we will consider the merits of migration to uPortal 4 rather than uPortal 3.

SB reported that uPortal 4 is accompanied by the announcement of the uMobile platform, which supports delivery to mobile phones.

**8. System Administration Report**
Sid Baldwin circulated a statistical report on usage. March 2011 had been our busiest month to date.

SB advised that we had suffered an 8-hour overnight portal outage since the last meeting, which had been due to a database issue. Changes have since been made which will avoid complete loss of service in the event of a repeat.

The portal had also been replaced with a holding page over the recent ITS maintenance weekend, to avoid complications due to interruptions of the various systems on which it depends (e.g. ISIS). This is standard practice at maintenance weekends.

**9. Date of next meeting**
11th October 2011, Room 2A027, 10:20 to 11:20.

**10. Any other business**
None.