

Portal Management Group

Notes of the meeting of 17th October 2005, Room FC78

Present: Barry Cawthorne (Chair), Margaret Needles, Rich Egan, Sid Baldwin, Mike Garnier, Helen Cole, Karen West, Emma Taylor (Notes).

1. Apologies: Kevin Foreman, Jenny Wills.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 5th September 2005

Approved.

3. Matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda

3.1. Student allocator

Barry has received confirmation from Leon Smith that he is awaiting information from Scientia on accessibility issues for inclusion in the PID. Karen noted that, following Leon's resignation, CETTS are re-evaluating current projects and resources available.

3.2. Prize draw

Rich has received confirmation from Sandra Ball (PA to Kevin Foreman) that the book token prize was sent to the winning student's home address during the summer.

4. Update on student photosets channel

Rich confirmed that the support page and feedback form for the student photosets tab had been completed, and circulated a screenshot of the feedback form. Helen reported that the processing of student photos from House Services was now automated.

Rich reported that, since going live on 14th September, 17 of the possible 39 users had accessed the photosets channel, with three being particularly heavy users. Rich noted that this level of use may be due to a high proportion of the staff attached being Visiting Lecturers, who have not had the opportunity to access myUWE. The 17 current users have accessed the channel a total of 70 times, with the bulk of the accesses falling in the last twelve days of September.

One feedback e-mail has been received from Sarah Mackie, in which she raised the following points:

- There had been an over-allocation of students to seminars in Management and Organisational Behaviour.
- Module leaders may not be teaching any seminar groups, but it would be useful for them to have access to allow them to check group membership.
- In order to facilitate access by module leaders, Sarah queried whether students could sign a declaration to allow access to their photographs by staff not directly involved in their teaching.

Karen confirmed that a problem with 'ghost' student attachments in Syllabus Plus had been identified and has now been rectified. Margaret enquired about the Data Protection implications of access to student photographs by module leaders. Rich confirmed that he had been advised by John Elliott that only those staff involved in face-to-face teaching of students should have access to their photographs. Barry noted that the issues raised by Sarah had been identified before the launch of the photosets channel. Margaret enquired whether the role of module leader could be

identified in Syllabus Plus. Karen confirmed that 'module leader' existed only in the description field of a module, and not as a role.

Barry enquired whether the photosets channel was scalable. Karen noted that an attempt to increase use within BBS may be problematic due to the large number of Visiting Lecturers, but suggested that it may be possible to scale out the channel to CEMS (although the faculty has an existing system to allow access to class lists). Karen noted that linking staff numbers with Syllabus Plus represented the most significant challenge in scaling up usage. Margaret confirmed that she had been working with Bryan Mitchell to allow secure access to staff information while work was undertaken to integrate ISIS and Syllabus Plus. Rich noted that the photosets channel was not yet being used robustly enough to give a clear indication of scalability.

5. Release of pilot functionality (excluding the timetabling channel) to FAS undergraduate students

Rich reported that he, Barry, Sid and Margaret would be giving a demonstration of current portal functionality to FAS academic and administrative staff on Wednesday 19th October, and that all FAS undergraduates would be advised on Thursday 20th October that they can access the following via myUWE:

- UWEonline
- Provisional module marks
- Change of address
- Webmail

Rich noted that the timetable channel would not be available to FAS undergraduates.

Margaret confirmed that she would be discussing implications and protocols with FAS administrative staff, and noted that the release of marks to undergraduates in mid-November would provide an opportunity to test the protocols developed.

6. Announcements channel

Mike noted that two separate but related issues existed: who should be able to see announcements; and who should be able to post announcements. Mike reported that he and Sid had been working to identify a hierarchy which would increase the speed at which group membership could be identified, and circulated a diagram of two possible hierarchical grouping structures. Following a discussion of the existing groupings within ISIS and Syllabus Plus, Rich suggested that, for the purposes of the pilot, groupings may be made manually, or based on modules, module runs, and tutorial groups where attachments exist. Sid raised the need to attach administrators to modules to allow the publication of announcements. Margaret confirmed that an ADMIN/TECHNICAL role exists in ISIS, which would allow this attachment. Barry stressed the need for any solution to be scalable.

ACTION: Groupings to be discussed further on Thursday 20th October.

7. Phase 2 of the re-enrolment channel

Margaret confirmed that she had e-mailed Julie Lydon to request advice on the remit for design and analysis work of Phase 2 of re-enrolment. Barry expressed concern that issues raised previously relating to the proposed delivery of a production re-enrolment system through a pilot portal had not been addressed. Margaret noted that Finance had made the decision to purchase a finance system, but had not yet placed an order. Sid suggested that users may complete their re-enrolment within the Portal, and then be directed to the Finance system.

Barry suggested that the payment of fees should be addressed by the Project Co-ordination Group, chaired by Steve West, and stressed that it would not be possible

to deliver re-payment via the portal in September 2006 as not all students would have access to the portal at that time. Barry also expressed reluctance for the payment of fees to be done outside the portal. Rich confirmed that a substantial resource would be required to deliver a live portal to all students by September 2006.

8. Transition from pilot to production level system

Barry reported that he and Rich had met with Steve West and Steve Grive to request a steer on the requirements for the 2006/07 academic year. Steve West had requested an estimate of the resources which would be required to allow all of the planned pilot functionality to be made available to the whole of the university for 2006/07. Barry informed the group that he and Rich were preparing this information for the 7th December meeting of the Portal Project Board, to meet planning round deadlines. Rich noted that, as three of the four systems in the pilot had changed during the course of development, the potential need for re-engineering must be considered.

9. Consistent use of component systems e.g. Syllabus Plus

Barry reported that he had stressed to Steve West as strongly as possible the need for the commitment of Senior Management to the consistent use of the systems used by the portal. Barry emphasised that the scale up of the portal was predicated on the consistent use of component systems.

10. Date of next meeting

28th November 2005, 11:00-12:15, Room 4D24

11. Any other business

11.1. Student feedback

Sid reported that feedback had been received from an HSC student requesting the restoration of access to timetables through the portal, as they had found this functionality very useful.