

**Portal Management Group**  
**Notes of the meeting of 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2006, Room 4D24**

**Present:** Barry Cawthorne (Chair), Rich Egan, Helen Cole, Mike Garnier, Debra Campbell, Sid Baldwin, Emma Taylor (Notes).

**1. Apologies**

Kevin Foreman, Sarah Mackie, Karen West.

**2. Minutes of the meeting of 27<sup>th</sup> February**

Approved.

**3. Matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda**

**3.1. Progress on roll out bid**

Rich reported that:

- The Fin10 has now been signed off.
- Hardware has been purchased early to take advantage of an offer of higher specification servers for the same cost, and is now being set up.
- Approval has been given for early recruitment to the Faculty Liaison post as requested.

**3.2. Outcomes from Awayday**

Barry circulated a summary of the outcomes, which he is taking to the Portal Project Board meeting of 7<sup>th</sup> April. The outcomes include the following points:

- Faculty Liaison emerged repeatedly as the most important requirement.
- Lack of consistency of Syllabus Plus data has the potential to present a significant risk. In order to address this, Tessa Harrison has been invited to join the Portal Project Board and she has agreed.
- Shortage of analysis expertise is another potential risk.
- The February 2007 launch of the portal is still seen as ambitious but achievable. Barry stressed that a launch prior to February 2007 would not be achievable.

**3.3. Testing of component systems**

Rich raised the need for test data to allow checks to be made of the match between the live and development environments in the portal. Rich requested that this item be carried forward to the next meeting of the Group, when Karen West is in attendance.

**4. Students registered in more than one faculty**

Sid raised the issue of students registered on awards in more than one faculty and noted that, as the current feed searches faculties in a set order (FAS first), and assigns users to the first faculty in which they are found, whether or not this faculty owns their primary award, students may be prevented from accessing the portal channels to which they are entitled. Possible means of addressing this problem include considering how the portal could support more than one faculty per user; or removing faculty orientation from the portal. It was agreed that this issue may affect access to timetables by students who are registered in HSC and an additional faculty, as HSC don't timetable at student level. Sid noted that his concern was for potential portal functionality which relies on a faculty identifier, and noted that there had been an agreement not to provide faculty-specific functionality in the portal. Barry noted that use of the timetable introduced a faculty-specific requirement.

**ACTION: Helen to arrange a meeting with Rich, Sid, Mike, Margaret and Richard Norman to discuss possible technical solutions.**

## **5. Coursework Submission**

Rich reported that Coursework Submission was on course for completion by Easter, and anticipated that development work would be completed by the week beginning 10<sup>th</sup> April in readiness for staging and demonstration. It was agreed that online submission should be tested with a small group of students, ideally from a faculty already using the portal.

Rich noted that HSC had originally been approached at Kevin Foreman's suggestion, but it had become apparent that, as HSC have an existing e-submission service, there was the potential for students to submit coursework to both the existing and pilot systems at different times, causing confusion over the correct version of the coursework submitted. FAS have advised that there is no undergraduate coursework submission in the summer term, but that there may be some Postgraduate coursework. BBS referral students are submitting in the summer term, but reservations were expressed about using referral students to pilot this service.

It was agreed that FAS Postgraduates would be the most suitable group to pilot coursework submission. Debra confirmed that Environmental Health Postgraduates had a summer hand-in, and that there were approximately two hundred FAS Postgraduates in total. Rich noted that Jan Dekker had requested the inclusion of FAS Postgraduates at the early stages of the portal pilot, and stressed the need to ensure that support structures are put in place in FAS to support this pilot.

**ACTION: Debra to confirm numbers of FAS postgraduates and attend the meeting between Margaret and Jan Dekker on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> April.**

## **6. Academic History**

Margaret reported that, while progress was taking place, this had not been as fast as originally hoped, and that Academic History would not be available by Easter. Margaret has received assurance from John Barton that getting the necessary data from ISIS won't present performance problems, but the content of results is awaiting sign-off by the Academic Registry. Mike noted that work had been done to refine the names used for items in the academic history, as the terms currently used may not be intuitively understandable to new students. Margaret suggested that, if a quick delivery is required, it may be possible to deliver modules and credits only, and either to leave results until a later release, or refer to results outside the portal.

It was agreed that, if Karen Williams feels that she is unable to sign off results, or doesn't have authority to do this, Tessa Harrison should be consulted. If sign-off is not possible, results will be excluded from the Academic History channel, and only details of modules and credits provided.

## **7. Online re-enrolment**

Margaret reported that it would not be possible to proceed with online payment without confirmation from WPM that the selected payment method could be passed to ISIS to allow the creation of a fee record. Margaret confirmed that she would be meeting with Finance and WPM to discuss whether this is possible. Barry noted that this represented a significant risk, and asked Margaret to report this to the Project Board meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> April. Sid noted that there was the potential for a web service to receive a call from WPM, but that it would not be possible for WPM to call ISIS. Sid noted that, while he may be able to attend a meeting with WPM in the capacity of portal lead, he could not offer advice on re-engineering the infrastructure.

**ACTION: Margaret to provide a summary of the issue for the Portal Project Board meeting of 7<sup>th</sup> April.**

## **8. Announcements channel**

Sid reported that the current channel optimisation work was nearing completion. Mike confirmed that Bryan Mitchell had made significant progress towards providing a proof of concept of the alternative announcement structure.

## **9. Staging service**

Sid reported that the staging service was now in place, allowing demonstrations of a comprehensive end-user view of the portal (previously, demonstrations using a student ID had to be delivered in the development environment). Rich noted that use of live, development and staging services was a classic development model, and that the introduction of the staging service had met an objective identified in the high-level plan.

## **10. Design makeover proposal**

The current portal presentation is a re-branding of the original uPortal out-of-the-box presentation. Sid demonstrated a new portal design, which includes icons in tabs and colour-codes different areas of the portal, and noted that Aaron Johnson had done a significant amount of work to re-design the user interface with consideration of future accessibility. The Group approved the new design.

## **11. Proposed dates of next meetings**

15<sup>th</sup> May 2006, 11:00 – 12:15

26<sup>th</sup> June 2006, 11:00 – 12:15

These dates were agreed. Both meetings will take place in Room 5D6, Bolland Library, Frenchay Campus.

## **12. Any other business**

### **12.1. My Marks Channel**

Sid enquired whether the provisional module marks channel would be re-named as suggested at the awayday. It was agreed that the name should be changed, and 'Marks checker' or 'Check my marks' were suggested as possible alternatives.

### **12.2. Logins to the pilot portal**

Sid reported that there had been high levels of usage of the portal, even in pilot form, and that there had been 13,000 individual logins to the portal in the last month.

**ACTION:** Rich to bring access figures to the Portal Project Board meeting of 7<sup>th</sup> April.