

Portal Management Group
Notes of the meeting of 30th April 2007, Room 5D6

Present: Barry Cawthorne (Chair), Rich Egan, Simon Ramsden, Margaret Needles, Karen West, Sid Baldwin, Nick Coates, Emma Taylor (Notes).

1. Apologies

Kevin Foreman.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 12th March

Approved.

3. Matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda

3.1. Hartpury

Margaret confirmed that she was awaiting contact from Hartpury.

ACTION: Barry to e-mail Liz Smith to follow up, cc Margaret, Sid and Rich.

3.2. Reconstitution of PMG

Barry confirmed that he would now request nominations for membership.

ACTION: Barry to e-mail Executive Deans of the four faculties and the Bristol Business School and the Heads of Library Services, CSA and Academic Registry, cc John Rushforth.

3.3. Feed/Data Clean-up (PMG Item 8.2 12th March)

Margaret noted that isolating the registrations to be removed required faculty input, particularly from HSC, and requested that this issue be kept on the agenda under Matters Arising. Barry raised the need to contact Kevin Foreman about the issue of faculty engagement.

4. High Level Plan 2006/07

Rich reported the following:

- Item 29, ISIS service architecture, has been absorbed into the ISIS architecture review. Simon confirmed that the review was in progress and awaiting hardware.
- Item 30. Stabilisation is now completed with one short outage associated with the upgrade.
- Item 31. Specification of online registration is in progress.
- Items 32-35 are covered under substantive items 9 and 10 below.

5. Online re-registration

A paper on the work required to facilitate the availability of the Portal to new, unregistered students in advance of Welcome Week 2007 was circulated. This paper has been agreed by the Project Board and the ISCG.

ACTION: Emma to circulate the paper to PMG members absent from the meeting.

5.1. Progress Report

Margaret reported that she was having fortnightly meetings with the administrative team and noted the following:

- It has been agreed to amalgamate registration and re-registration forms, but has taken three weeks to arrange a first meeting with Nick Bennett to discuss this. Margaret expressed concern at the affect on the project of delays of this length.

- An issue has been identified which affects the mapping of data from IRIS to ISIS and could affect the income status of new students. As IRIS records only the fee status, the income status of many overseas students is being identified incorrectly as 'Home'. Margaret stressed the need for income status to be correct, as it is the basis on which fees are calculated. To address this issue, Esther Williams will set up some data in the IRIS test environment which Margaret and John Breslin will roll into the test area of ISIS to allow the income status to be checked. Margaret noted that, if the accuracy of this data can't be guaranteed, it may prevent the registration of new students. It was agreed that this issue should be added to the project risk register.
- Esther Williams has suggested that late students not checked by AIR should be defaulted to 'overseas' to prevent them from accessing the online registration channel.
- It has been agreed that students requiring admissions checks (qualifications, health and Criminal Record Bureau) should be allowed to register with checks pending, but not with failed checks. A declaration is needed in the online registration terms and conditions informing users that registration will be null and void if checks pending are subsequently failed. Margaret has drafted a declaration and has asked HSC and EDU to confirm that this meets their needs. Margaret has also requested a list of EDU and HSC awards which are subject to CRB checks but noted that she had not received a timely response from HSC. It was agreed that lack of engagement by faculties should also be added to the project risk register.

ACTIONS:

- **Margaret to add the income status and faculty engagement issues to the Online Registration risk register.**
- **Margaret to provide Barry with a draft e-mail for Kevin Foreman outlining concerns about faculty engagement.**
- **Barry to email Kevin Foreman.**

Sid confirmed that the first version of changes to the personal details channel, required to support the Online Registration Component, was ready for testing. Maintenance of emergency contacts and additional fields has been implemented and emergency details can be separated from the details channel if necessary.

5.2. Postgraduates and Federation Colleges

Margaret reported that a request had been made to include Federation Colleges in the scope. Margaret noted that this would be dependent on students satisfying all requirements and requested that this change in scope be noted.

ACTION: Margaret to report to the Portal Project Board to note the change of scope to include federation students, depending on how they are processed.

Margaret noted that Postgraduates had been excluded from the scope as they require intervention to calculate their fees. PGCE students are charged by RASP standard fee so it may be possible to include them, subject to a review of the feed to determine the ease with which this can be done. Margaret confirmed that she would be meeting Sue Porter and Sarah Hudson to review the feed and noted that it may be easier to include PGCE students than to exclude them.

ACTION: Margaret to report to the Portal Project Board on the proposed inclusion of Federation and PGCE students in online re-registration.

6. Online Coursework Submission: progress report

Margaret reported that the response to OCS had been very positive. In answer to a query by Barry, Margaret confirmed that no late work had been received yet, but that further submissions were due. HLSS are pleased with the system and have been downloading submissions without Margaret's help.

ACTION: Online Coursework Submission to remain on the PMG agenda.

7. UWEonline issues

7.1. Access: to consider the proposed removal of the UWEonline button from the home page in November thus forcing access to UWEonline through the Portal as discussed at the Portal Away Morning on 22 March 2007.

Barry confirmed that the proposal to remove the UWEonline button from the UWE home page in November 2007 had been approved by MGU. The PMG also agreed the proposal and it would now be taken to ISCG. In answer to a query by Sid, Rich confirmed that, prior to the removal of the direct link to UWEonline, a link would be placed to an intermediate web page advising users to access Blackboard via myUWE. Rich noted that the Student Handbook now advised users to access Blackboard via myUWE.

7.2. Naming of the UWE Portal and the VLE in 2007-2008

The proposal to re-name UWEonline as Blackboard has also been approved by MGU and was agreed by the PMG.

ACTION: Barry to raise the above items at the ISCG meeting of 4th May.

CHAIR'S NOTE: Both the recommendations in 7.1 and 7.2 above were agreed at the ISCG on 4th May.

8. Feed Report

Karen noted that the timetable web server had been down briefly after the maintenance weekend. Nick confirmed that he had spoken to Dave Spiller and that changes would be made to the way in which photosets feed figures would be reported. Margaret raised the need to formalise the handling of the daily e-mail of feed issues.

9. uPortal 2.5 Upgrade

Sid reported that the development and staging environments had been upgraded to uPortal 2.5 with no problems, but that, following an upgrade of the live service, there had been intermittent channel failures. Following two weeks of solid work, the Portal Team have now identified the issue causing these failures, have informed the open source contributors and have identified a work-around. The upgrade went live on one of the two live servers on Friday 27th April with no problems. Sid confirmed that this server was coping well with the load and that, if no further problems were experienced, the second live server would be upgraded shortly.

10. Subtabs: to consider a recommendation from RME, SB and MN that subtabs deployment be postponed until a later date, possibly to coincide with the extension of the Academic Record channel

Rich noted that there would be little advantage to users in deploying subtabs until the full academic record was in place. The group agreed. In answer to a query by Barry, Rich suggested that the deployment of sub-tabs should be re-considered when clear benefits could be seen and when they could deliver a better interface to users. Sid confirmed that the subtabs code base was in place.

ACTION: Rich and Sid to bring Subtabs back to PMG when they consider it would be a useful addition for users.

11. LARES project: possible implications for the Portal

Simon observed that all of the packages being considered as replacements for LARES had online facilities and that, as 80% of current accommodation uptake was at the applicant stage, applicants' first contact with UWE would be via a system outside the portal. Margaret confirmed that the LARES replacement would have a connection with the ADMIT applicant portal and Rich advised that SITS had a uPortal interface. This was noted.

12. Access Statistics

Sid circulated login statistics for February, March and April 2007 and noted that there had been lower usage in the Easter break, but a substantial increase in use on Monday 16th April. Staff use has tailed off with a lower level of daily use than students. Sid's proposal to bring current statistics only to future meetings was agreed.

13. Date of next meeting

11th June 2007 from 11:00-12:15 in room 4D24.

14. Any other business

14.1. Promotion of the Portal

Barry reported that he had received an e-mail from Beryl Furey-King in HLSS enquiring whether any additional arrangements were in place to advise students about the portal. Barry expressed surprise at this request as there had been a substantial uptake and enquired whether there was anything else which could be done. Rich noted that an additional reminder may not be required at the end of the second teaching block, but advised that information on the portal would be available in the 2007/08 student handbook and that removal of direct access to UWEonline in November 2007 would also increase use of the portal.

ACTION: Rich to e-mail Beryl Furey-King to advise.