

Portal Management Group
Notes of the meeting of 11th June 2007, Room 4D24

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

1. Apologies

None.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 30th April

Approved.

3. Matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda

3.1. Hartpury

Barry confirmed that he had e-mailed Liz Smith. Margaret has offered five possible dates to Jeni Smith and is awaiting confirmation of the preferred date.

3.2. Reconstitution of PMG

Barry reported that he has e-mailed the five Executive Deans and three Heads of Service. He has received a number of replies, but will wait before chasing the remainder.

3.3. Faculty engagement

Barry confirmed that he had contacted Kevin to discuss this issue.

3.4. UWEonline and myUWE: access for externals; test users; guest accounts

Barry confirmed that, as noted in the minutes of 30th April, the proposal to re-name UWEonline and remove the link to the login page from the UWE home page on Monday 5th November had been approved by ISCG. Rich reported that a request had been received from a member of staff to access the UWEonline home page via the Portal, rather than the courses page, and that this request had been logged. Rich requested a note that the <http://online.uwe.ac.uk> URL would not be disabled as direct access to Blackboard would be necessary to allow those without access to the portal (external users, guest and test accounts) to log in, and to allow access to UWEonline in the event of a Portal outage. Barry confirmed that students would not be prevented from bookmarking the UWEonline URL.

3.5. Promotion of the Portal

Rich confirmed that he had contacted Beryl Furey-King to advise that, from November, the removal of the direct link to UWEonline would raise awareness of the portal. Beryl will inform her faculty of this.

4. High Level Plan 2006/07

In response to a query by Barry, Rich advised that a fix had been implemented for a security concern identified before the portal went live, and alternative solutions were also being explored including Central Authentication Services (CAS). There was a concern about the use of CAS single sign-on with Blackboard, and Simon Carter had identified Kerberos as a tool to supplement CAS and address this problem.

5. Online re-registration

5.1. Progress Report

Margaret reported that the Portal and ISIS teams were working hard and good progress had been made. The specification has undergone a lot of variation, but work is now underway to agree the content of the user interface. In response to a query by Barry, Margaret confirmed that the planned delivery date had been moved from Tuesday 17th July to Wednesday 18th July and there were no indications that this target would not be met. There was now a need to address user education and ensure a fit with faculty administrative processes.

Margaret expressed concern that although she had initially been assured that online registration would be running in a similar way to last year's pilot and would be optional with a paper alternative provided; the Academic Registrar had now advised that a paper alternative to online registration would not be offered automatically. Faculties would therefore have to identify which students would not be able to register online and send them the necessary paperwork. The Academic Registry had requested developments to ISIS to allow faculties to identify these students. Rich also expressed concern and stressed that this would have a significant impact on expectations. Margaret asked whether the group felt that this change in any way compromised the project. Barry noted that, while this change would cause an increase in the volume of online registrations originally anticipated, high levels of use must have been considered during development of the system. However, he expressed alarm at the assumption made by the Academic Registry that changes such as these would not have an impact and could be accommodated on the fly, and expressed concern that there would be first-time use on such a scale without paper forms as backup. Kevin noted that, although giving choice gave a better student experience, many students didn't have online access outside UWE. Margaret advised of the need to put faculty phone numbers on the portal for students to use to request paper forms. It was agreed that the Portal Project Board should be made aware of the risks of proceeding without a backup and the group gave their support to Margaret's request to the Academic Registrar that Margaret be included in all future discussions.

Barry noted that he had made it clear at the last meeting of the Project Board that the Portal team was working flat out to deliver online registration because of significant pressure from the University's Management, but that the project had been hampered as it didn't have an equally high profile within the University. Barry stressed that, if this kind of pressure was to be put on the team, the strategic purpose should to be made clear to the whole University.

ACTIONS:

- **Margaret and Rich to draft an e-mail outlining their concerns for Barry to send to the Academic Registrar.**
- **Barry to raise concerns at the meeting of the Portal Project Board on 4th July.**

5.2. Federation Colleges

5.3. PGCE students

Items 5.2 and 5.3 were taken together. Margaret advised that Federation Colleges and PGCE students would not now be included in online registration. There was still much work to be done to determine how the relationship between Federation Colleges and UWE would be managed and it was not possible to include colleges on an individual basis. PGCE inclusion is also not as straightforward as was first thought as PGCE is currently under review at UWE

and the students could not easily be identified. Margaret confirmed that Faculties had been informed and the decision documented.

5.4. Risk Register

Margaret reported that the following were the only changes to the register:

- Risk 0701. The likelihood can now be reduced to 1 as the test download produced a good match of data.
- Risk 0705. The likelihood can now be reduced to 1 as income statuses are now rolling in correctly following work by John Breslin. Late applications won't roll in until they've been checked by AIR.

Rich confirmed that the work on personal details required for Welcome Week would go live on 12th June. The process for issuing new user accounts has been defined and development work is now required. Sid confirmed that a proof of concept for acceptance of the acceptable use policy had been completed and was now being developed. In answer to a query by Barry, Rich confirmed that existing students would also be required to accept the policy but there was a need to judge the tone and presentation of this reminder.

6. Planning for the start of the 2007-2008 academic year

In the first new academic year with the live portal, Barry anticipated that there would be a greater number of accesses by staff to view photosets. Rich confirmed that there would be a larger impact on ISIS, Syllabus Plus and other supporting systems but suggested that two factors may mitigate this:

- Many users will have accessed the portal to register online before the start of term.
- The separate link to Blackboard won't be removed from the UWE home page until early November.

Rich noted that he had requested this agenda item to raise awareness and assured the group that there was no immediate call for concern. Sid enquired whether there were any changes to the externally sourced e-mail project. Karen advised that two new Syllabus Plus servers would be commissioned shortly and the software had been upgraded, resulting in greater stability. Simon confirmed that resilience was being put in place on the ISIS application server. Barry agreed that as much as possible had been done to manage the impact of the portal at the start of the new academic year.

7. Online Coursework Submission Pilot

Margaret reported that the online coursework submission system had worked very well for the collection of work and there was now a demand for an onward transmission and return system. Following a small pilot with FAS, a further pilot has been run with MA Translation in HLSS. There has been a lot of student feedback querying the on-screen messages and the Portal Team are now trying to refine these to show users which submissions have been made. Margaret enquired whether the outcomes of the pilot should be reported to allow faculties to consider whether they would use the system in the next academic year. Barry expressed concern that the receipt of late work had still not been tested in the live system. Sid noted that this had been done in the test environment but Barry was reluctant to release the system across the university until late work had been submitted in the live system. Rich suggested that the system be released in 'managed' rather than 'pilot' mode and this was agreed. It was agreed that the online submission system used by HSC for IP3 modules would not be scalable to meet the needs of all HSC modules.

ACTION: Margaret to arrange a meeting with Beryl Furey-King in HLSS to discuss OCS use in teaching block 1 of 2007-2008.

8. Reconsideration of Subtabs

There are currently seven tabs in the portal, excluding the registration tab. Sid gave a demonstration of subtabs, which will save screen space and reduce the overhead of multiple calls to ISIS in a single tab. Sid noted that the tab graphic would indicate whether or not a tab contained subtabs, but the current graphic may be refined slightly before subtabs go live. In answer to a query by Simon, Sid confirmed that there would only be a hit to the database when a subtab was clicked on.

The following subtabs were demonstrated:

- Within the Courses tab, subtabs for Blackboard, Coursework Submission, and Timetable.
- Within the Marks tab, subtabs for Academic Record, and Marks Checker.
- Within the My Details tab, subtabs for Personal Details, and Address.

The group approved Sid's proposal to put subtabs in place when online registration goes live on 18th July. Barry thanked Sid.

9. Linking to PPB and PMG notes

Rich reported that notes from the Management Group of UWEonline (MGU), the UWEonline Support Group (USG), the Web Standards Group and, potentially, the Web Management Group were accessible online and enquired whether the Portal Project Board and Portal Management Group notes should also be made available (intranet only). Barry requested that this be done and the Project Board informed. Barry noted that Project Board notes would be of most interest as these dealt with strategic development of the portal.

ACTION: ATG to place PMG and PPB notes on the myUWE project web pages, accessible via the UWE intranet only.

10. Single sign-on

This item was discussed under Item 4. Sid noted that CAS was a centralised way of accessing different applications and would benefit the university as a whole. CAS has been taken on by JSIG, who also oversee the development of uPortal, and is becoming increasingly widely used by universities.

11. Performance and Access Statistics

Sid circulated access statistics for May 2007. The breakdown of accesses by month indicates that similar numbers of students were accessing the portal in February and May, but that re-use was increasing and there were a greater number of repeat visits in May. Barry suggested that the removal of the direct link to UWEonline in November would increase the number of individual users.

12. Dates of meetings for 2007-2008

Tuesday 24th July, 2pm, 4D24. Further dates to be confirmed.

13. Any other business

None.