

Portal Project Board
Notes of the meeting of 31st January 2007, 4D24

Present: Barry Cawthorne (Chairing in the absence of John Rushforth), Tessa Harrison, Rich Egan, Steve Grive, Margaret Needles, Emma Taylor (Notes).

1. Apologies

John Rushforth, Warwick Jones.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 30th November

Approved with one correction to the final sentence of paragraph 5, Item 4 (Item 17, Online Coursework Submission pilot). Rich clarified that, at the time of reporting, faculties could control access to OCS, but this control was now within IT Services.

3. Matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda

3.1. Briefing to the UWEonline Support Group

Rich confirmed that a briefing had been delivered at the USG meeting of 13th December 2006 and had been favourably received.

4. High Level Plan

4.1. Summary of progress against High Level Plan [paper circulated]

Rich reported that, since 22nd January, all items in progress had been completed up to Item 27 with one exception, Item 15, which had been subsumed into a general review of ISIS2 architecture for which Simon Ramsden had developed recommendations. Rich advised that this work had been expected to continue into February.

4.2. Reorganisation of Portal Management Group [paper circulated]

Barry confirmed that the Project Board would stand down in the current academic year but noted that, to allow the new faculty structure to be put in place, the Board would continue in its current form until 4th July. The Portal Management Group would be then re-organised to reflect UWE's new organisational structure and the move from pilot to production system. Barry circulated the proposed membership and terms of reference of the new myUWE Management Group (MMG). One of the main functions of the MMG would be the prioritisation of requirements from the Student Forum, Business Group and Academic Group, but given the size of the membership, Barry proposed that a smaller sub-group could better manage the prioritisation process.

As the portal acts as a gateway to a number of separate university systems, a postscript was added to the MMG terms of reference at Rich's request, making specific reference to the role of MMG in forwarding queries and feedback to the appropriate groups. Rich noted that requests arising from the three requirement elicitation groups would also be referred onwards to the appropriate management groups where necessary.

The composition and terms of reference of the myUWE Management Group and the Requirements Prioritisation Sub-Group were agreed

5. Readiness for launch

Rich confirmed that the feed was in place and the system would be switched to the production hardware this afternoon.

5.1. Announcements and briefings: Bulletin; email; senior administrators in faculties

Rich confirmed the following:

- An article had appeared in the January bulletin, but had been smaller and lower profile than he would have expected.
- Prior to the publication of the bulletin, the content of the article had also been e-mailed to all Deans and Heads of Service.
- Rich and Margaret had briefed Faculty Administrators and Associate Deans and would be holding a second briefing this afternoon.
- Derek Norris had e-mailed an announcement to students and staff, but Rich noted that there was a question over whether the e-mail had been received by all intended recipients.

ACTION: Rich to check recipients of Derek Norris' portal announcement message and request that the messages be re-sent on 1st and 26th February.

5.2. Publicity and support: video presentations; viewlets; support website

Barry reported that three short video presentations describing the development of the portal were now available from the myUWE support site and a fourth presentation would be available shortly. Rich advised that the updated portal support web site would be made live on 1st February, and contained Animated Viewlet guides giving on-screen demonstrations of portal functionality. More Viewlets will be added in the course of the next month. Margaret confirmed that approximately 130 faculty administrative staff had attended awareness workshops during December and January. In answer to a query by Steve, Rich advised that a link to myUWE would be placed on the UWE Intranet Home Page from 1st February and that the external Welcome page would contain a 'login' link containing a list of services including myUWE. Rich confirmed that an actual login to myUWE would be developed for the Welcome page. A snippet will also be placed on the Intranet home page, which will remain at the top of the snippets list throughout February. Barry noted that a lot of work had gone into publicity and support and that this had been very worthwhile.

5.3. Database resilience

Rich reported that two databases were now in place supporting Announcements, News Feeds and Bookmarks: one located in the Frenchay machine room and one in the Botetourt House machine room. A decision had been taken to implement a consolidation service to mirror the live databases between the two sites, rather than proliferating databases. Work is underway to implement the consolidation service, but resilience has not yet been achieved. As a consequence, the database remains a single point of failure. Barry and Rich confirmed that UWEonline had operated without database resilience for over three years.

5.4. ISIS2

As noted in Item 4.1, Rich confirmed that the proposed review of ISIS2 had been subsumed into a general review of ISIS2 architecture for which Simon Ramsden had developed recommendations. Rich advised that ISIS had been tested with 400 individual requests to services. An issue with the Academic Record had been identified on Friday 26th January, but this had been corrected and tested and the channel re-deployed on Tuesday 30th. Barry noted that ISIS channels could be disabled if the level of accesses were found to be affecting performance, and a notice posted for users, for example, advising them to try to access the channel again after 4pm. In response to a query by Steve, Rich advised that channels would have to be disabled and re-enabled manually, but that this could be done remotely by system administrators.

5.5. Syllabus Plus [revised paper circulated]

Following Karen West's verbal report to PMG on faculty timetable portal compliancy, Barry had requested a printed summary, which was circulated to the Board. In response to a query by Steve, Margaret confirmed that students would require a presence in Syllabus Plus to see the Timetable tab and that FBE and HSC students would not see the tab. Margaret suggested that HSC may use EDU's timetabling model. It was agreed that a significant amount of work had been done by CETTS and that the timetabling position was better than had been expected in the past. In response to a query by Steve, Rich confirmed that individuals not enrolled on any courses in UWEonline would still see UWEonline Courses within the Courses tab, but would see a message informing them that they had no courses. Barry noted that generic UWEonline material such as the Library tab would still be available to all users.

5.6. Online Coursework Submission

Rich confirmed that close control of the Online Coursework Submission and Announcements Publishing channels would be retained and that Margaret was leading a project to identify up to ten announcers within each faculty. OCS has been piloted on two occasions, the first of which had no submissions. The second pilot involved two coursework items and received a number of submissions, but it had been agreed by PMG that, as this was a sensitive system, a larger pilot was required. A pilot will now run in March and April with the MA Translation distance learning award, involving the submission of a larger number of work items. Control over access to OCS has been removed from faculties for the duration of this pilot. Rich noted that concern remained within the wider community that OCS may be used to collect large amounts of coursework and that administrative staff would be required to print this for marking.

Margaret noted that a regulatory framework covering online submission was needed before OCS was released more widely as nothing was currently in place. Margaret confirmed that she would collect any further issues arising before raising these on a more formal basis. In answer to a query by Steve, Barry confirmed that OCS had sufficiently robust tracking mechanisms in place to address student contention about submissions, and that it would be our recommendation to LTAC that OCS should be the only university-supported mechanism for online submission, subject to further piloting and tests.

6. Report of security audit prior to launch

Rich reported a security issue and confirmed that steps had been taken to mitigate it.

7. Risk Register [paper circulated]

Rich highlighted the following risks:

- 0102. This risk has been significantly diminished by the re-timing of the ADMIT and HERA projects.
- 0402. This issue had arisen consistently as the portal currently only links to university-wide systems.
- 0502 and 0503. Rich advised that everything possible had been done but the launch would be the true test.
- 0504. A security audit has been undertaken.
- 0703. Rich raised the need to develop a new risk register for the production portal for the next Project Board meeting.

- 0704. Inadequate data has had some effect, but in constrained areas. The portal would not be released to Hartpury and timetables would not be released to FBE and HSC.

In reference to Item 0402 in the risk register, Barry noted that each inclusion of a faculty-specific system may require considerable effort without delivering university-wide benefits. Barry stressed that a steer was required and proposed that the issue of requests for access to faculty-specific systems via the portal be re-visited at the next meeting of the Board and taken to the next meeting of the ISCG. Tessa proposed that an audit of all university systems would provide valuable information. Rich suggested that the model used by Chris Wallace to audit CEMS systems could be applied to the whole university. Barry noted that the management of expectations remained an issue and that a full programme of development was already in place until July. Rich advised that it may be possible to identify a means of facilitating linkage to faculty systems which had a relatively low development cost, for example by using faculty groupings to deliver faculty-specific bookmarks. Barry stressed the need to ensure that any system made available through the portal met university standards and suggested that faculty systems may be examined to determine whether they could be developed to benefit the whole university.

ACTIONS:

- **Tessa to raise the need for an audit of faculty-specific web systems with ISCG.**
- **Barry to raise the following with ISCG:**
 - o **The need for a policy on consistent use of university systems.**
 - o **The need for a policy on connection of faculty systems to the portal.**

8. Process for requirements prioritisation

Barry noted that, while he was anxious not to have to turn down requests, a full programme of development was already in place until July and a process for identifying and prioritising future requirements was also in place. A major task would be the management of expectations of what can be provided with the resources we have available. He requested and received the full collective support of the Board in this endeavour.

9. Dates of final meetings

28 March 2007; 23 May 2007; 4 July 2007; all 10:00-11:00, in Room 4D24.

10. Any other business

10.1. Online Re-enrolment: pilot to production

In answer to a query by Steve, Rich confirmed that Margaret and Nick Coates had begun business analysis. Margaret confirmed that the project would begin in March. Three months had been allowed for consultation and testing would take place in June and July.

10.2. Pilot channels within the production portal

Rich noted formally that following the launch to production, new channels would be piloted within the production portal and a mechanism was in place to control access.

10.3. Portal Project

Barry offered thanks and congratulations to those involved in the successful management of the portal project.