Portal Project Board
Notes of the meeting of 28th March 2007, 4D24

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

1. Apologies
John Rushforth, Warwick Jones, Tessa Harrison.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 31st January
Approved with two corrections/clarifications.
Item 5.1. Rich confirmed that he advised strongly against sending another message on 26th February, as this may have resulted in a large number of simultaneous logins, which the phased release had sought to avoid.
Item 7. Barry clarified that his action would go to the ISCG meeting of 4th May.

3. Matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda

3.1. Audit of faculty-specific web systems
Barry reported that Tessa had raised this issue at the ISGC meeting of 2nd March (Item 5a). Steve had suggested that this was better done by faculties, but the minute was inconclusive. Barry confirmed that he would seek clarification at the ISCG meeting of 30th March.

4. Roll-out

4.1. Verbal report
Rich reported that the roll-out had gone smoothly. He had received e-mail consent from the Board and PMG to release the portal to all users on 20th February and that this had been done with no adverse affects on performance. Some issues had been identified on each of the portal servers in the first few days following the release. Slow performance of one server had been addressed within 24 hours and performance issues affecting the photosets channel on the second server had been solved by day 11. Rich confirmed that there had been no outages following the roll-out and that the issues log was relatively light.

4.2. Usage statistics [paper circulated]
Rich reported that there had been 10,778 distinct users during February and that March usage was approaching the same level. Rich noted that there was a clear disparity between student and staff usage, which could be expected to some degree in a student-facing portal, but which needed to be addressed as staff are best placed to encourage student use. Barry confirmed that this may partly be due to the time of year, as staff would have less need to access student photosets after the start of the academic year, but stressed the need to encourage staff use. This issue had been discussed at the recent Portal Awayday and it had been agreed that staff use may be encouraged by prioritising the development of additional portal features for staff.

Rich circulated a summary of student feedback and a chart showing daily distinct user activity, which shows high levels of access to marks and a significant number of accesses to UWE e-mail. The feedback received was overwhelmingly positive, with the majority of users rating the portal as useful. There was a less definite agreement that the portal is reliable, but this was as expected, as the majority of respondents were first-time users. There was overall disagreement that the portal was difficult to use and general agreement that the portal

enhanced the respondents' university experience. Rich noted that, where negative feedback had been received, this had largely referred to the data presented rather than to the portal itself. Steve suggested that the portal was exposing process and administrative issues, which had been expected.

5. High Level Plan

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

Rich reported that preparation and roll-out had been completed and the portal was now in Section 3 of the plan, stabilisation. Rich reported on progress on the following issues:

- Item 29, ISIS Service Architecture. This has been absorbed into the ISIS architecture review.
- The issues identified in Item 30 have been dealt with.
- Item 33, uPortal 2.5 upgrade. The Portal Team are currently working on the upgrade. Unicon consultants had recommended that this be undertaken prior to the roll-out, but it had been decided that this represented too great a risk. Rich confirmed that the upgrade would be undertaken on 2nd and 3rd April on one server at a time. This would result in a brief period without resilience, but would allow the completion of the upgrade without any outage. Rich advised that, prior to the upgrade, there would be an IT Shutdown Weekend from Friday 30th March to Monday 2nd April.
- Item 34, Subtabs. In progress.
- Items 35-36, Addresses/personal details and Marks checker/academic record. Subject to review following the upgrade.

Barry advised that it had always been the intention to roll out re-enrolment (now called re-registration), in Section 4 of the plan, but that there had been a request from senior university management to develop online registration for new students. Barry advised that Item 39 (online re-enrolment) had therefore been subsumed by Item 37 and could be removed from the plan. Items 1 to 27 could also be removed from the plan in the next academic year.

5.2. New development (Online Registration) [paper circulated]

Barry advised the Board of the formal status of the Online Registration project and noted that the paper circulated highlighted the sequential dependency on new students being issued with user accounts. Rich requested a formal note that Margaret was leading the portal component of the online registration project. Margaret confirmed that Nick Bennett was the project manager for Welcome Week and the Administrative Processes Review and that Chris Griffiths would act as Academic Registry liaison.

Margaret raised the security issues involved in issuing user accounts to unregistered students and the dependencies identified in Item 1a of the paper and enquired whether these issues would be taken to the ISCG. Rich confirmed that the issues identified in Item 1a had been raised with the ITS management team but that Item 1b (implications for faculties raised by access to unregistered students to online services and for acceptable use and related policies) was not within the remit of IT Services. Rich enquired how the issues raised in Item 1b would be communicated to faculties and services. Margaret emphasised the need for a clear indication of the areas of responsibility of the portal, faculties and the Academic Registry. Barry stressed that this was a serious policy issue and asked Rich to write a brief paper on these issues to be taken to the ISCG meeting of 4th May.

Margaret raised the need for new students to accept the terms and conditions of system use and enquired whether it would be possible to force acceptance by first-time users on the portal login page. Rich advised that removal of other means of access to the portal's component systems would make this easier to manage in the future.

Barry noted that most of the high-level risks were outside our control. The following level 9 items from the risk register were highlighted:

- Item 103. A major review of ISIS is underway, and the Business Systems team will not be working exclusively on online registration.
- Items 301, 302 and 401. A scope has not been defined. Margaret confirmed that she was currently writing the scope, which would then need the agreement of the Academic Registry.
- Item 701. A valid Student Support Number is critical to this project.

Steve enquired whether a PID was required. Barry requested that Margaret's document be taken to ISCG and ISCG request a similar document from the Academic Registry.

ACTIONS:
- **Rich to draft a short paper for ISCG on the security issues and dependencies of online registration for the ISCG on 4th May.**
- **Emma to bring copies of the Online Registration portal document to the ISCG meeting of 30th March.**
- **Barry to request at the ISCG a PID-type paper from the Academic Registry for its area of responsibility of the registration component.**

5.3. Deferred development

Barry noted that the planned developments had been deferred and that this had implications for the elicitation process.

5.4. Elicitation process

Barry confirmed that the re-constituted Portal Management Group would take over after the last meeting of the Board on 4th July. The intention had been to set up the elicitation groups at this point, but as the deferred work would take at least to the end of 2007, the re-constituted Management Group would now set up the elicitation groups for an October/November start.

6. Policy on connection to faculty systems through the portal

Steve reported that he had received a request from Alison Hoddell, Associate Dean of FBE, for access to fbeWeb via the portal. Steve had advised Alison that there was an agreed programme of portal development to the next academic year and that the development she was requesting would require approximately six months work. Alison has now e-mailed Steve to advise that she has received approval from Steve West for £15K for six months programming time. Barry confirmed that he had received advice from Steve West that this was money the faculty had set aside from its budget not additional funding provided centrally. Barry noted that up to this point the clear steer from the University Senior Management was to maximise the benefit of the portal to student body as a whole, not to just one faculty.

It was agreed that it would be appropriate for the ISCG to reaffirm the strategic steer on this issue and that Steve should contact the members advising that the policy to date had been that faculty-specific systems would not be prioritised for support through the portal and requesting a re-affirmation of this policy. Steve advised that, if any future development work was to be done to allow faculty systems to connect to the portal, this would probably be in the form of a single building block, which faculties would have to adapt for their own use. Barry noted that Alison's e-mail

raised enough issues relating to UWEonline for this to be taken to MGU and for Liz Falconer to be asked to speak to Alison to clarify her expectations and advise on whether they can be met and if so how.

ACTIONS:
- **Steve to e-mail ISCG members to raise this issue in the meeting of 30th March and request a reaffirmation of policy.**
- **Barry to take the UWEonline issues raised by Alison to MGU.**

7. Hartpury

Barry reported that he, Rich, Margaret and Sid had had a very positive meeting with Liz Smith, the Vice Principal of HE, the Head of IT, and Jeni Smith, ISIS administrator. The work required on processes to enable Hartpury to use the portal will be undertaken in consultation with Margaret.

8. Dates of final meetings

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

9. Any other business

None.