

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

Present: Barry Cawthorne (Chairing in the absence of John Rushforth), Steve Grive, Sid Baldwin, Chris Griffiths, Warwick Jones, Emma Taylor (Notes).

1. Apologies

John Rushforth, Rich Egan, Tessa Harrison, Margaret Needles.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 23rd May

Approved.

3. Matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda

3.1. Review of Online Registration in October 2007

Barry confirmed that he would arrange a date for the review.

ACTION: Barry to organise a review meeting and keep the new myUWE management group informed.

4. Online registration

4.1. Progress report

Barry requested that a note be made of Margaret's report to the Portal Management Group meeting of 11th June under Items 5.2 and 5.3. Consideration had been given to including Federation Colleges and PGCE students in online registration, but Margaret had advised PMG that this had not been as straightforward as expected and these students would not now be included. Faculties have been informed and the decision has been documented.

Sid gave a report on progress in three areas:

- Re-structuring of data in the portal into sub-tabs.
In order to manage the increasing number of tabs visible to users, sub-tabs have been used to group areas of functionality under parent tabs. Sid confirmed that sub-tabs were in place in the development environment and were due to go live on Monday 9th July to allow one week to bed into the live environment before online registration goes live.
- User ID activation.
This project lies outside the portal development team. Sid has received an update on progress advising that most of the back-end work on the feed from IRIS to ISIS has been done and work on the initial e-mail to application addresses has been completed. Sid confirmed that e-mails would be sent to students 48 hours after the feed, but was unsure whether the feed would start on 16th or 18th July. From 6th August, the Academic Registry will be able to clear 'strikes' (students who are locked out of the system following three incorrect attempts to set up their ID). The web form to allow students to enter their user ID and applicant code to receive their password is now under development. Chris confirmed that, 21 days after enrolment, the Academic Registry would be able to remove EE students whose accounts had not been activated.
- Registration.
This is running slightly behind schedule, but Sid expressed confidence that there was sufficient contingency to allow the delivery deadline of 18th July to

be met. The feed has been tested manually but won't start until 18th August. The web service (which checks registration forms, marks students from EE to EN, calculates fees and handles the switch from EN to ON) has been implemented on the main development server. Manual testing with new and returning students was completed on 3rd July. Testing will commence today on the user interface and a stand-alone proof of concept of the web service. Sid noted that the web payment system required signing off before implementation, but confirmed that Nick Coates, Margaret Needles and Richard Dewfall had tested the WPM system in isolation. The next step will be to include WPM in the stand-alone service to allow end-to-end testing. In parallel with this development, creation of a portal channel to the stand alone web interface is in progress with a target for completion by Friday 6th July to allow one week for end-to-end testing. The intention is to push the channel to staging and development for testing on Monday 16th July and to push the channel to live on Tuesday 17th. Only a few outstanding changes remain to be made by WPM and Nick Coates is now liaising with WPM and reporting to Margaret.

In response to a query by Steve, Sid estimated that there would be a relatively small proportion of registrations between 18th July and the mid-August publication of A-Level results. Warwick suggested that this figure would be unlikely to exceed 1,000. Barry advised the Board that he would be on leave when Online Registration was launched and asked Steve to inform John Rushforth and UMG if the launch was successful. Barry thanked Sid and noted that this was very good work, which had been done under real pressure and, if delivered, would represent a significant achievement by everyone involved.

4.2. Risk register

Barry noted the following changes:

- Risk 0505. Difficulty in engaging with WPM. Sid confirmed that, as of last week, WPM had assigned a developer specifically to this project. The developer has been very communicative and has addressed a number of outstanding issues.
- Risks 0701, Lack of valid Student Support Number and 0705, Income status data. Mitigating action has resulted in the likelihood of both risks being reduced to 1.

Sid also requested a note of Risk 0101, sudden loss of key development staff, as the principal portal developer for online registration is currently on sick leave. Sid confirmed that he had moved another member of the team to cover this absence and anticipated that this would not affect the ability to deliver online registration.

5. Portal Management Group issues

5.1. Project profile

Barry noted that there had been a strong strategic steer from University Management that the Welcome Weekend would be benefited by allowing online registration by new and returning students. However, this steer had not been matched by awareness within faculties and Barry noted that it had been necessary for him to contact Deans to stress the priority of the project. Barry confirmed that he would raise this issue at his wash-up meeting with John Rushforth and would stress that, if there was significant pressure to deliver a project, its profile within the university should be equally high.

ACTION: Barry to raise this and other relevant issues with John Rushforth.

5.2. Service expectations

Barry expressed concern at the decision made by the Academic Registry that all eligible students would be required to register online as this decision would have a significant impact on the project but had been made without consultation. Barry stressed that it could not be assumed that this kind of decision would not have an impact and noted that a significantly greater number of students would now be using online registration than initially anticipated. Sid confirmed that 10% of those eligible to enrol online during the 2006 pilot had done so. Steve enquired what the fall-back position would be in the event of a system failure. Chris advised that, if a significant issue arose with online enrolment, the second mailing would give an opportunity to send paper registration forms and FD1s. Chris confirmed that he had discussed this with Margaret and assured Barry that he would ensure that there were clear boundaries and communication between the technical and operational sides in the next phases of the project. Barry thanked Chris and recognised that he had only recently been appointed.

ACTION: Barry to raise this and other relevant issues with John Rushforth.

5.3. Online Coursework Submission in 2007-2008

Barry advised that online coursework submission would still be in managed mode during the first teaching block of the 2007-2008 academic year as there has still only been a relatively small throughput with no late work received to date.

5.4. Online access to PPB and PMG notes

Barry confirmed that notes were now available on the UWE Intranet.

5.5. Additional Item: Field Board results in the Portal

Barry reported that a complaint had been received from an academic in CEMS that incorrect Field Board results were being displayed in myUWE. Barry advised that an external examiner had made comments on marks at a Field Board which were changed, but the Field Board had been erroneously locked before the marks had been changed, thereby triggering publication of incorrect marks. Barry expressed concern that, although this was due to actions within the faculty, the portal had immediately been blamed. Barry stressed that we were now showing data to which students would never previously have had access and that, prior to the release of the portal, there would have been no visible consequence to this action. Barry stressed the need to make John Rushforth aware of the need to remind faculties of this. For the first time in September and October 2007, students will see their module enrolments and this will also be an issue for faculties at the start of the academic year. Warwick stated that there was always the possibility that Field Board marks would be changed, but Barry stressed that changes should be made to field board marks prior to locking as the locking process indicated that marks have been finished and finalised for use by Award Boards. Chris confirmed that he and Margaret had attempted to warn faculties of this issue at their portal awareness-raising sessions in December 2006 and January 2007 and had asked faculties to consider the impact on their working practices of the publication of previously private data. Chris noted that there was a lot of evidence that this advice hadn't been taken on board by faculties and the Academic Registry and IT Services were now bearing the brunt of this. Chris noted that there was an onus on the Academic Registry to give clear guidance to faculties of how the portal would affect the way in which Field and Award Boards are managed and, in response to this, he has advocated the creation of an assessment working practice manual. Sid noted that he was aware of a works request for an alert to ISIS users of the consequence of changes to module codes and suggested that it may be helpful to have a similar alert for administrative staff of the consequences in the portal when Field Boards

are locked. Barry thanked Sid for this suggestion and agreed to raise this with the myUWE Management Group.

ACTION: Barry to raise the issue of Field Board locking at the first meeting of the myUWE Management Group and obtain further information from Simon Ramsden before a Software Change Request is raised.

6. myUWE Management Group

Barry confirmed that he had written to all Executive Deans and the three Heads of Service requesting representatives for the myUWE Management Group and had received responses from most, but not all. Three consultative groups will discuss future portal requirements:

- myUWE Academic Group, which will also include Library Services.
- myUWE Business Group, comprising representatives of administrative staff, CSA and the Academic Registry.
- myUWE Student Forum. Barry has met the new President and Vice President of UWESU, who will take responsibility for this group.

7. Usage statistics

Usage statistics from June were circulated. Sid confirmed that Thursday 21st June had been the busiest ever period of portal activity with over 220 simultaneous users at mid-day, possibly due to students wanting to access their results. Distinct users for June had increased from 10,000 to 13,000. Sid was pleased with portal performance at this time of heavy use. Steve noted that field board reports would also have been running, showing that ISIS was successfully handling a large amount of activity. Sid noted that many students were initially going to the Marks Checker tab to access their results, rather than to their Academic Record, but he anticipated that the introduction of subtabs would make this clearer to users. Sid noted that, overall, he had been very reassured by the performance seen, which boosts confidence for the quantity of registrations expected.

8. Any other business

8.1. To note this is the final meeting of the Portal Project Board

Barry passed on thanks to all and noted that a lot had been achieved and the Portal had been well-received. He also offered his warmest congratulations to Rich Egan for such a well managed project and thanked Sid for his management of the team.

8.2. Support arrangements for online registration

Steve enquired what support arrangements were in place for students registering online. Sid confirmed that there were full support web pages and a portal contact e-mail address, which was regularly monitored. Students will be directed to their faculties in the first instance and comprehensive faculty contact details are provided. Chris confirmed that the Academic Registry was also writing working practice notes for faculties and Margaret would be giving a demonstration of online registration to faculties in enrolment registration briefings.