

myUWE Management Group
Notes of the meeting of 14th January 2008
Room 4D24, Frenchay Campus

Present: Barry Cawthorne (Chair), Sid Baldwin, Richard O'Doherty, Simon Ramsden, Rich Egan, Margaret Needles, Ben Wynne, Polly Smith, Karen West, Kath Holden, Terry Davies, Kevin Foreman, Chris Griffiths, Emma Taylor (Notes).

1. Apologies

Becca Danes.

2. Minutes of last meeting 26th November 2007.

Approved.

3. Matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda

None.

4. Update on current programme of work

4.1. Academic Record channel extension

The extension will give access to results and notification of credit and assessment marks. Rich reported that the ISIS and portal work was well advanced and currently on-track for sign-off at the end of February. Margaret is working with the Academic Registry to draft guidance and the test plan and specification are in development.

4.2. Online coursework submission

As the previous pilot had not tested every aspect of the system, the pilot was extended for 2007-2008 with all MA Translation modules, plus a number of other Social Sciences and Humanities modules. In answer to a query by Kath, Margaret confirmed that additional SSH modules could join the pilot, but requests must go through Beryl Furey-King to ensure that the administrative load is managed and guidelines followed. Margaret stressed that additional modules could be included in the pilot if staff were prepared to accept work electronically and no additional administrative overhead was created. There would, however, be an issue if academic staff were expecting administrative staff to print and forward work received through OCS. In answer to a query by Barry, Margaret advised that no late work had been received but the pilot had raised the need to develop guidance in some other areas and this had been addressed. Barry asked what could be done to ensure that the submission of late work was fully tested. Kath anticipated that, with the current range of modules, there would be some late work. Margaret confirmed that all referral coursework runs had been set up ready for collection. All referral runs would be submitting to the same deadline but Margaret did not expect a large volume of submissions. Rich reported that work was required to develop a process for archiving old coursework submissions. It was suggested that this could be done when the Field Board is locked.

Barry asked that both items be kept on the agenda.

ACTION: Update on current programme of work to be a standing item on the MMG agenda.

5. Update on early progress with new work streams

5.1. Library portal and library record

Rich reported that there was sufficient proof of concept that student IDs could be used to get loan, holds and fine information. Simon Carter of the Portal team has

been speaking to Patrick Pollard (Library Services) and will write a specification. The next step will be to set up a group with Rich, Sid, Simon Carter and a Library representative. Ben noted that the Library portal was also part of the single sign-on initiative.

ACTION: Rich and Sid to set up group.

5.2. Student status letters

Margaret reported that data had been reproduced from ISIS and she was exploring the forms of data which would be acceptable to Banks and Councils for Council Tax certification. If exclusions are identified, Margaret will estimate the volume of students affected.

5.3. Photograph collection and updating

Margaret reported that she and Sid had met House Services and she will stay in communication with them as they are planning to pilot a new card with one faculty this year. Margaret advised that, as photo collection was currently part of the card production process, this process would need to be re-engineered. The two main issues in question are validating the acceptability of the photos and identifying the access controls on the card. Sid confirmed that a proof of concept of photo collection had been completed, which allows users to upload, re-size, watermark and store photographs, and a specification was now required. Rich warned of the potential for scope creep.

5.4. Student access to financial status in Agresso

Margaret and Sid have met with Richard Dewfall of Finance and have identified a web service provided by Agresso, which gives the end-user stand-alone access to Agresso and the ability to make payments through WPM. Richard Dewfall is organising a meeting with Agresso's Technical team and has also contacted the University of Southampton, who have implemented a similar system. Sid noted that he and Margaret may visit Southampton. In answer to a query from Barry, Sid advised that the web service may negate the need to connect directly to Agresso and could possibly be used for the deferred portal developments requiring a connection to Agresso.

5.5. Supplying photographs by additional groupings

Rich reported that there had been little progress to date and a meeting was required to discuss the groupings needed. The preferred system to accommodate this would be MIIS, but there were conflicting demands on developer time.

Barry asked that all new work stream items be kept on the agenda.

ACTION: Update on new work streams to be a standing item on the MMG agenda.

6. Single sign-on

Rich reported that the work was taking longer than hoped, but progress was being made and the current objective was to have a new SSO method in place by the end of January, pending resolution of a problem with hyphens in student web mail and some environmental changes being made. Rich stressed that this was a non-trivial exercise, but one positive outcome was that ISA, the new SSO method, should allow single sign-on into Live Mail. Rich was optimistic that ISA could also allow single sign-on into Staff e-mail. In response to a query by Ben, Rich clarified that the work underway was to switch existing portal services to the new SSO model. Sid noted that Firefox Version 3 would be launched shortly, with potential compatibility issues for Webmail, so single sign-on access to Live Mail may become a higher priority.

7. Online registration

Margaret reported that she had been working with Nick Bennett and a small group of Faculty staff to review the whole registration process. The group have been picking up issues of working practice to inform development for next year, including the question of whether it would be possible to take all students to provisionally registered through online registration. Margaret noted that, in order to allow this, a means would need to be found of handling students with multiple registrations. Hartpury have approached Margaret about online registration but she expressed reservations about whether they have the required registration process in place. Margaret, Chris and Sarah Hudson will be visiting Hartpury to discuss these issues. Margaret noted that online registration was currently being used for the January intake of HSC students but no fees were being taken as the students are NHS funded. Barry requested that online registration be kept on the agenda.

ACTION: Online Registration to be a standing item on the MMG agenda.

8. Outcome of review of elicitation process

Barry noted that he was pleased with the outcome and that genuine new ideas had emerged from the process, as discussed under Item 5 above. As an estimated six months worth of work had been generated from the first meetings, it had been agreed to cancel the February meetings of the elicitation groups. Meetings will resume as scheduled in May to determine the next tranche of work for the summer and the start of the 2008/2009 academic year. Barry noted that Student Services had been omitted from the elicitation groups in error (SS should have been included in the Student Forum) and that he had apologised to Theresa McGoldrick. Student Services will now be represented in the Business Group. Barry raised the need to re-consider the Student Forum due to issues of quality of engagement, and suggested that Keith Hicks' Student Ambassador Group could be used to elicit student requirements. Barry stressed that, as with all other portal developments, this was an open process and a list of outcomes and priorities had been published on the project pages of the myUWE support site at:

<http://info.uwe.ac.uk/myuwe/project/elicitation.asp>

9. Ongoing feed issues

Rich noted that the feed was currently being monitored manually by an IT Services Business Analyst. This should be done through MIIS in the future, but this depends on the availability of appropriate developer resources. Rich raised the issue of re-alignment of faculties, which would have an affect on student announcements. Problems with feed data on 8th January had caused students to lose access to timetables, but this had been addressed immediately. Rich requested that this be a standing item on the MMG agenda given the dependency of the portal on the quality of data in the feed.

ACTION: Ongoing feed issues to be a standing item on the MMG agenda.

10. System and performance report

Rich thanked Sid, the Portal team and colleagues in IT Services for cover over the Christmas closure period, including the power shut-down on 31st December. Sid reported that there had been full system availability over the Christmas closure, apart from 31st December, and there had been just over 1,000 logins to myUWE on Christmas day. The power shut-down hadn't affected the ITS building on the Bristol Business Park so as there are portal servers on both the Frenchay and Business Park sites, it was possible to maintain most portal services throughout 31st December. Sid noted however that, when services were brought back up at 3pm on 31st December, the SOAP services which connect to ISIS couldn't be re-started remotely so they remained down until 2nd January. This resulted in two days on

which students couldn't get to their Academic Record or Addresses. Barry thanked Sid and requested a formal note of thanks to him and his team for their effort and their response to the short-notice shutdown of 31st December.

11. Dates of remaining meetings for 2007-2008

3rd March 2008, 14th April 2008, 9th June 2008, all in room 4D24 and all scheduled from 11:00-12:30.

12. Any other business

12.1. Pay Equality Project

Sid advised the group that, as a consequence of PEP, some members of the Portal Team had additional leave which must be taken by the end of March 2008, so staffing levels may be affected. Rich stressed that the impact of this should not be underestimated.

12.2. Visit to Manchester Metropolitan University

Barry reported that he and Rich would be giving a formal presentation on the myUWE portal to Manchester Metropolitan University. In response to a query by Kath, Barry advised that he thought UWE was within the top quartile of UK portal users. Sid confirmed that approximately 10 UK universities were using the uPortal framework, and there was a large user community in the US.