Portal Management Group

Notes of the meeting of 17th January 2005, 4D24, Bolland Library

Present: Barry Cawthorne (Chair), Sid Baldwin, Margaret Needles, Helen Cole, Rich Egan, Emma Taylor (notes).

1. **Apologies:** Kevin Foreman, Katie Huthnance, Leon Smith.

2. **Minutes of the meeting of 13th December 2004**
Approved.

3. **Matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda**

   ### 3.1. Contacts with students reps arranged through Shelly Patel
   Barry reported that Shelly was unable to assemble a group of students before Christmas, but has been in contact with Katie, with an offer to contact HSC student reps.

   ### 3.2. Integration of Syllabus Plus
   Barry reported that Karen has been providing assistance with integration.

   ### 3.3. SMS text messaging
   Rich and Helen have informed Andy Mason of the potential of the Portal to assist with, and be assisted by, the SMS project.

4. **Demonstration of address maintenance**
Sid demonstrated an address maintenance service available via a demo server, which queries LDAP, and is the most suitable model for direct integration into the Portal. The service shows current registered student addresses for Home, Billing and Parent/Guardian, and allows students to add an address and remove a future address. Addresses are looked up via the QAS database used by the Post Office, and only valid addresses can be entered. Students wishing to enter an address which can not be validated (eg. a foreign address or a room in University-managed accommodation) must visit their faculty, where their address can be input. Margaret has prepared FAQs for users of this service. Barry thanked Sid for his demonstration.

5. **Progress to date**

   ### 5.1. Generic progress report
   Sid reported that a degree of success had been achieved in all areas, including progress on the implementation of the address maintenance application as a portal channel, and implementation of Webmail, Blackboard and timetabling. Portal developers are now concentrating their efforts on the portal infrastructure, to allow the progression from a development build to staging and testing, and a production system.

   ### 5.2. Requirements elicitation
   Helen reported that Katie had attended a meeting of the School of Allied Health Professions in HSC. Two volunteers were found at the meeting, and Katie is awaiting details of further volunteers from Steve West. Barry expressed concern at the apparent lack of engagement with HSC staff and stressed that the success of the pilot would be based on use of the portal by administrative and academic staff, as well as by students. While he recognised the commitment of Steve West

and Kevin Foreman, Barry expressed concern about the level of involvement by other staff in the faculty. He noted that Katie had received a more enthusiastic response from BBS, but was also mindful that piloting in a faculty other than HSC may be difficult.

5.3. On-line re-enrolment

Margaret has drafted a Project Initiation Document, which states that the preferred means of delivery of online enrolment is through the portal. The document also highlights interdependency with the portal as a risk. In order to accommodate the aim to deliver the enrolment service independently of any delays in the implementation of the portal, Sid suggested that enrolment be built as a portal application which could be accommodated as a stand-alone service if necessary.

Margaret noted that, as it had been decided that a payment system could not be completed by September 2005, the project had been divided into two phases:

  i.   Online enrolment to get the student record to EN;
  ii. The second phase will be developed when the payment system is in place, and will get the student record to ON.

Margaret is awaiting information from Finance on the payment system, and on the work to be undertaken by the newly advertised web developer post within Finance. Helen stressed the need for development of the payment system to take into account the bursaries and top-up payments to be introduced in 2006.

5.4. Staff facing portal: access to student photographs

The Student Photographs group met prior to this meeting. Work is in progress, and the group will meet again on 7th March.

5.5. Proof-of-concept of delivery through the portal to groups

Sid reported that delivery was dependent on the availability of groups and group membership. LDAP currently has groups and bulk e-mail addresses, but no group membership.

6. Recommendation to Project Board regarding timing and nature of pilot

Barry suggested that an alternative approach may be to pilot the portal to a faculty in which it will be well received as early as possible, with the features which can be made available. It was agreed that a small start with a limited pilot had worked well in the introduction of Blackboard. Margaret stated that the online re-enrolment project would be piloted with FAS, which has shown great enthusiasm, is well administered, and has a long history of using IT applications. Helen suggested that, if the pilot was to run within a faculty which shared modules, timetabling will become an issue. Sid suggested that access to timetabling could be limited to the participating faculty only.

It was agreed that the preferred means of piloting would be to release the portal in embryonic form and to make other applications available over time. It was also agreed that, in order to ensure use by students, the pilot portal service should incorporate added value (e.g. student address maintenance), rather than only systems which are already available (Blackboard, e-mail and Syllabus Plus). Rich would explore the feasibility of this approach with Sid and the portal developers and advise Barry accordingly. If the new approach is seen to be feasible Barry would explain the rationale to Steve West prior to the next meeting of the Project Board.
ACTION: Rich to consult Sid and the portal developers and advise Barry who will meet with Steve West if appropriate.

7. Dates of next meetings

7th February 2005 (apologies from Helen)
7th March 2005
All from 12:00 – 13:00 in room 4D24.

8. Any other business

None.