Portal Project Board
Notes of the meeting of 30th June 2005, 4D24

Present: Steve West (Chair), Barry Cawthorne, Margaret Needles, Steve Grive, Rich Egan, Warwick Jones, Emma Taylor (notes).

1. Apologies
Steph Keeble.

2. Minutes of meeting 27th April
Approved with four corrections:

> Item 3.1. Steve, rather than Barry, had confirmed the availability of the £100 book token.

> Item 5. TQA should read TQEF (the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund).

> Item 6.5. The last sentence should read:
> "Rich suggested that it may be possible to deliver this functionality through the portal."

> Item 9.1. Barry requested clarification to indicate that his announcement of the Portal would be in the June edition of the UWE bulletin, and not the IT Services e-mail bulletin circulated by Derek Norris.

3. Matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda

3.1. Merger of Portal Project Board and Re-enrolment Project Board
Steve West reported that, following discussions with CPE and Julie Lydon, the merger of the Portal and Re-enrolment Project Boards had been approved. Steve sought advice from the Board on the representation required. It was agreed that no further representatives were needed, other than a representative of Finance. Steve noted that members could be co-opted if required.

4. Updates

4.1. Re-enrolment
Rich reported that the Online Re-enrolment Project was currently on course. The intention was to go live on 18th July, but the project could potentially go live on 11th July, when the data needed becomes available. Margaret noted that the launch was also dependent on faculty processes. Steve West enquired how students would be informed of the project and encouraged to participate. Margaret confirmed that information on the project would be included in the faculty mailout sent to returning students on 1st July, but noted that no funding was available to offer an incentive to students to participate.

4.2. Student photosets
Rich reported that student photosets were on course for release on 1st September. Rich and Barry have given a demonstration to BBS module leaders and have discussed the project with Jane Harrington. Rich confirmed that student photographs were now watermarked, security issues had been addressed, and a feed between House Services and IT services had been established. Barry noted that he had been pleased by the response from BBS and by the engagement of the participating module leaders. Concern had been raised about the preservation of anonymous marking as the photosets included

students' names and numbers. Rich confirmed that the student number could be removed if this became a sensitive issue.

5. Risk analysis
Rich circulated the June version of the risk register, which contains one change to Risk 0102. Due to the appointment within IT Services of a Web systems Team leader with responsibility for UWEonline, this risk has reduced from 9 to 6.

6. IS Project Co-ordination Group
Steve West reported that CPE had approved the creation of the Information Systems Co-ordination Group, a high-level group which would provide strategic oversight of related projects. The core membership of the group would comprise:
-   Pro VC (Resources)
-   Academic Registrar
-   Director of IT
-   Director of Finance
-   Academic Development Co-ordinator

Steve noted that additional members may be co-opted where necessary, and proposed that the first meeting of the Co-ordination Group should consider the membership of the project boards and their work streams.

Rich queried the inclusion of web standards in the Online Learning and Academic Administration Systems Board and enquired where the university web site would sit. Rich raised the recent Education Guardian article, which had been critical of the UWE web site, and noted that the web site had a strong marketing component.
ACTION: Steve West to raise the positioning of the UWE web site at the first meeting of the IS Project Co-ordination Group.

7. High Level Plan for 2005-2006
Barry reported that the High Level Plan developed by Rich had been approved at the PMG meeting of 27th June. Rich circulated the plan and drew the Board's attention to additional text requested by PMG stating the need for feedback and evaluation to inform future developments in functionality.

Rich confirmed that, as the current manual system used to manage HSC students' access to the portal lacked the necessary robustness for a fuller rollout, portal users would be taken from a feed from Syllabus Plus in future. Rich noted that, as neither HSC nor FAS timetable at student level in Syllabus Plus, the timetable channel may not be available to portal users until September 2005, when BBS join the pilot. Barry noted that he saw the loss of access to the timetable channel as a regressive step, but confirmed that HSC were discussing how they might develop their timetabling processes. Margaret also noted that FAS had intended to begin timetabling at student level for some time, but were currently facing staffing issues. Barry noted that five of the nine faculties did timetable at student level and, although the view had been taken initially that systems should not drive faculty processes, it had become apparent that manual solutions would not be sustainable. Barry has therefore proposed that faculties should be informed of the processes needed to allow them to use the timetable channel within the portal. Rich confirmed that sets of business rules would be created for each portal channel developed, and would be taken to FASG. The Board agreed that this was a reasonable stance.

Rich reported that is was hoped to complete Phase 2 before the 1st August deadline. Margaret confirmed that Phase 2 would allow students to change their telephone number and preferred e-mail address, but noted that there had been resistance from

faculties to making other data available to change. Steve West expressed surprise at this resistance and noted that this data was owned by students. Warwick suggested that this wariness may have been caused by past experiences with IT Systems. Margaret suggested that the successful implementation of this facility would help faculties to accept it.

Rich noted that, by the completion of Phase 5, the majority of student preferences identified by JISC will have been made available. Steve West enquired whether a September 2006 rollout would be realistic. Rich confirmed that a rollout could potentially take place, but stressed that there was currently no resilience in place and the portal had not yet had a high volume of users. Rich anticipated that he would be able to answer this question with greater confidence in December 2005. Margaret stressed that the development of administrative and business processes also represented a substantial part of the portal project.

Steve West suggested that a more proactive approach may be taken by publishing a timetable of planned rollouts at the end of 2005, to allow faculties to consider their working practices and to give examples of how other faculties have adapted. Rich confirmed that the documentation of business practices would support a more proactive approach, but noted that the portal would also make differences in faculty practices more visible. Barry noted that development of the UWE portal had been very rapid, and that there was a need to ensure that further development was sustainable.

8. Timing of preliminary evaluation
Barry proposed that, in order to inform Steve Grive in advance of the planning round in February/March 2006, a steer on evaluation was needed from the Board in September 2005, and preliminary evaluation was needed in December 2005. Steve West suggested that it would be useful to establish which bids for evaluation would be acceptable, before requiring a FIN10. Steve Grive enquired whether the IS Project Co-ordination Group could take a proactive stance and signal their priorities for 2005/06.

9. Security statement
Rich reported that an internal audit of the portal and security had been undertaken. The existing Security Statement had been expanded to be more comprehensive, and the response from the auditor had been favourable.

10. Costs: application development within the portal vs stand alone applications
Barry raised a point made by Sid Baldwin at the PMG meeting of 27th June in response to the demonstration of the Scientia Student Allocator by Leon Smith. The allocator can be used to allow students to make changes to their timetables within set parameters, and it had been suggested that this could be delivered through the portal. Sid wished to stress the need to be aware of the additional development cost which would be incurred if an application developed for delivery through the portal subsequently required re-development into a stand-alone system if it was decided to discontinue use of the portal. This was noted by the Board.

11. Date of next meeting
20th September 2005, 10:00-11:00, Room FC78, Felixstowe Court.

12. Any other business
None.