

Portal Project Board
Notes of the meeting of 26th July 2006, 4D24

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

1. Apologies

John Rushforth, Steph Keeble, Tessa Harrison.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 14th June

Approved with one correction to Item 7.1. Rich noted that Sid Baldwin's announcements model had been pursued, not implemented.

3. Matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda

3.1. Timetabling Manager

Awaiting confirmation by Tessa Harrison.

ACTION: Barry to e-mail Tessa for further information.

3.2. Recruitment to vacant posts

Rich confirmed that two appointments have been made. Emma Cooper will be taking up the part-time Web Developer post on 1st August, and Conan Cook will be taking up the Java Programmer post on 14th August. Interviews for the Senior Programmer/Analyst and System Administrator posts will take place on 27th and 28th July.

4. Review of progress with High Level Plan for 2005-2006

4.1. Phase 2 of the Re-enrolment Project

Margaret confirmed that Phase 2 of online re-enrolment had gone live on 12th July. A local student was initially asked to test the system, and enrolled successfully to ON. All categories of enrolment and types of payment have been represented and, to date, 55 students have provisionally re-enrolled online, and 9 have fully re-enrolled. Four students have re-visited myUWE to complete their re-enrolment, which indicates that they had followed the guidance provided. Margaret noted that it had not been possible to test the Student Loan Company download, but that two downloads had now been received, one of 2,000 students and one of 4,000. The channel will remain open until 15th September.

In response to a query by Warwick, Margaret confirmed that international students were currently excluded from online re-enrolment, as the rules which apply to their re-enrolment are very specific, and need to be formalised before they can be programmed. Margaret noted that she was recording a list of issues to consider for future development and extension of the re-enrolment channel.

On behalf of the Board, Barry expressed thanks to Margaret for this achievement. Barry also expressed thanks to Margaret's team, particularly Sid Baldwin and Steve Tromans.

4.2. Announcements channel

Rich confirmed that some optimisation had been put in place, and that Sid Baldwin's model was being pursued. Rich noted that consolidation of the announcements and portal tab feeds was needed before the channel was signed off. Barry noted that the ability to issue programme-level announcements was an essential part of the channel.

4.3. Academic Record channel

Rich reported that the Academic Record channel had gone live on 12th July, but that testing by the student involved in the re-enrolment tests had indicated problems. Given the sensitivity of the information contained, it had been decided to withdraw the channel. Rich confirmed that, subject to further testing by Margaret, the channel would go live imminently, showing Module Enrolments and Assessment Opportunities. Rich noted that the channel had proved far more complicated than initially anticipated. Barry noted that the channel was more ambitious than initially planned. Margaret reported that data issues had been experienced earlier than had been expected. In answer to a query by Steve, Margaret confirmed that these issues were due in part to legacy data from ISIS1 and also to early ISIS2 data before validation was in place.

Rich circulated screen shots of the new portal make-over and advised the Board that it was planned to make this live at the same time as the Academic Record channel.

4.4. Online submission of coursework

Rich reported that BBS and FAS had been approached to take part in an October pilot of online submission. As a pilot in October and November 2006 would leave little time for development of a production system for February 2007, Rich noted that he had asked the Portal developers to begin development of the online submission channel to production level.

4.5. News aggregator channel

Rich offered a correction to the minutes of 14th June and noted that the News aggregator channel had in fact gone live shortly after the previous meeting.

5. High Level Plan 2006-2007

Rich circulated a High Level Plan for 2006-2007, which has four sections:

- i. Preparation for roll-out (August 2006 – January 2007)
- ii. Roll-out (February 2007)
- iii. Stabilisation (March – April 2007)
- iv. Additional functionality requests

The detailed list in Section 1 attempts to identify outstanding actions and dependencies. Rich drew the Board's attention to Item 7, which identifies the need to define a post-production committee structure. Barry sought advice from the Board and noted the possible need for a group to determine future development needs but any group must be of a manageable size. Warwick suggested that, as a large amount of appropriate functionality was already in place, it may be appropriate to continue to generate suggestions for new development through existing structures in a managed way. Barry noted that, as Section 4 of the plan contained a number of suggestions for new functionality which had arisen through the pilot, these could be taken to ISCG for prioritisation.

Warwick suggested that the new policy of compulsory student attendance would create the need to monitor attendance. Rich and Steve confirmed that LSE used a manual register to monitor attendance. Steve also noted that HSC had begun a project to explore attendance recording, which included swipe control. Barry noted that it may be possible to generate a manual register from Syllabus Plus, and suggested that it would be useful to contact LSE about this issue.

In response to a query by Steve, Rich clarified that Item 3, ISIS service withholder, would allow individual portal channels to be disabled to prevent requests being sent to ISIS if it was found that a channel in the production system was putting particular stress on ISIS.

In answer to a query by Barry, Rich confirmed that the High Level Plan for 2006-2007 included a proposal to roll out the Photosets channel to all BBS staff (Item 19), but that he was unable to confirm this as he had not yet discussed the plans with Karen West.

ACTION: Photosets channel to be a substantive item on the Project Board agenda of 3rd October.

6. Risk register

Rich highlighted five areas of the risk register:

- 0101. This risk has been left at 9, but may be reduced following interviews on 27th and 28th July.
- 0102. This risk remains due to contention with the Bursaries project and the Blackboard upgrade.
- 0501. Prior to the Blackboard upgrade at the end of August, it has been confirmed that the portal will communicate with Blackboard Version 7 without substantial changes.
- 0503. Rich noted plans to undertake stress-testing of ISIS in the Autumn term.
- 0701. Rich noted that planned changes to the organisational structure would have an impact on the current portal, which is based on 9 faculties.

7. Dates of next meetings

3rd October 2006, 30th November 2006 and 31st January 2007.

Rich noted that he would be unable to attend the 3rd October meeting.

ACTION: Emma to re-schedule the 3rd October meeting and confirm venues.

8. Any other business

None.