

DEVELOP Steering Group

12/01 A meeting of the DEVELOP Steering Group was held on Monday 6th February 2012 at 12.30pm in Henley Business School room 102, Whiteknights Campus

Present:

Dr Martha-Marie Kleinhans - Chair
Ms Maria Papaefthimiou - Project Manager
Ms Sarah Sherman - External stakeholder
Mr Mark Gamble - External stakeholder
Mr Steve Ryan - External stakeholder
Mr Paul Bailey - JISC Critical Friend
Mr John Leary - Director, IT Services
Mr Edward Bates - Student stakeholder
Dr Karen Ayres - Internal academic stakeholder
Mr Pat Parslow - by invitation
Professor Shirley Williams - by invitation
Mr Guy Pursey - by invitation
Mrs Louise Hague - by invitation
Ms Jane Adams - Secretary

Apologies:

Professor Gavin Brooks - Pro-Vice-Chancellor Teaching and Learning
Mrs Sarah Morey - Acting Director, Centre for the Development of T&L
Dr Yota Dimitriadi - Internal academic stakeholder
Mr Aaron Sollesse - Student stakeholder
Mr Karl Hobley - RUSU President
Mr Alex Slater - RUSU Vice-President for Academic Affairs

12/02 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting, held on 11th July 2011 were approved.

12/03 Matters Arising

- i) Ms Papaefthimiou reported that discussion had taken place about which direction to take the content widget and a prototype stage was being considered.
- ii) Ms Papaefthimiou advised that an update on the questions used in the evaluation would be included in the demonstration of the widgets.
- iii) Ms Papaefthimiou advised the panel that the project team have agreed a way forward on the methods for evaluation of the project.

- iv) Ms Papaefthimiou advised that she would brief the panel on whether a paper would be submitted to Blackboard World later in the meeting.

12/04 Project update

A general update on the widgets and piloting to date was given by Ms Papaefthimiou.

With regards to the tagging and recommender widgets the panel were informed that the project had developed one as agreed in the previous Steering Group, which was now completed and being piloted with two academics.

The panel were advised that the ASSET widget has also been completed and piloted with twelve people. Mr Gamble reported that despite attempts to pilot this within his institution problems had arisen with the implementation of an appropriate video server; the widget had been developed to link with Dropbox, a secondary product which is no longer active. Despite these drawbacks Mr Gamble reported that he had been able to identify the widget and whilst he could not use it, he found it to be a good product.

The panel were advised that the Content widget, as developed to date, was only used for RSS feeds and as such discussions have taken place with the RISIS team about the possibilities of collaborating with them to develop this further. Ms Papaefthimiou highlighted that as this widget had been less pedagogically driven than the other widgets in development it had not been considered as high a priority.

The Portfolio template and feedback widgets have been developed and piloted by Mrs Hague and are due to be piloted further by Henley Business School by the end of February.

The Export widget has not been developed as this had been broadly based on the portfolio widgets and the project has run out of time however Ms Papaefthimiou reported that instructions for some of the widgets have now been embedded for the benefit of users.

The panel were advised that the final project report would contain eight case studies highlighting the benefits of using the widgets which had been developed. It was also reported that the project's outputs had been and would be disseminated at a number of events including webinars, conferences such as the Blackboard conference in Durham, the Online Educa, the Blackboard Teaching and Learning conference in Leeds, ALT-C and the Blackboard European conference in Antwerp. Ms Sherman added that it would be

beneficial for the project to submit a paper for the Moodle Moot, the call for which is at the end of February

Action: MCP to submit a paper to the Moodle Moot

Ms Papaefthimiou addressed some of the projects successes by informing the panel that the project team have been working closely with ITS throughout the duration of the project and also that Mr Pursey has been accepted on an M-Res based on his work on the project. It was however acknowledged that there had been some setbacks during the project, caused in part by staffing and technical changes. In some cases the academics the project team had consulted with had defined the development priorities of the widgets, which had therefore resulted in some widgets not being developed as originally envisaged.

12/05 Presentation of the widgets which have been developed

Mr Pursey began his presentation with a demonstration of the Portfolio widget. Mrs Hague explained that in her opinion the widget is very user friendly and has reduced the level of email queries about technical support from students, this in turn has reduced the level of time and effort required from staff. Mr Pursey acknowledged that there were still some adjustments needed to the widget however as it is still at the coding stage there are aspects which can be adapted. He also advised that this is an area he intends to pursue in his research. Mr Bates queried whether students would be confined to one particular portfolio and Mrs Hague added that it would be useful to gather feedback from 2nd year students next year to see if the widget had helped them.

After the demonstration of the Feedback widget a discussion took place about the benefits of anonymity and whether usernames or full names should be used. Mr Bates raised concerns that if each comment generated an email that this could bombard user's email inboxes and Mrs Hague added that it should perhaps be a requirement to share the feedback with personal tutors. Mr Pursey advised that despite running a focus group to address some of these matters no students had turned up. Dr Kleinhans suggested that the qualitative style of the feedback hoped for was better suited to surveys and not focus groups so the feedback that the project team were looking for would have been unlikely at a focus group anyway.

The presentation moved on to the Tagging and Recommender widget which is based around a tag cloud to highlight the more popular keywords. It was clarified during discussion that there is no moderation of tags but the tagging will be done by lecturers and not by the students themselves. Due to the complexities of this widget it was advised that there are a number of other considerations

surrounding the duration of the tags and whether they should carry forward from each year, as well as the possible use of links attached to tags, that could be considered in the future but that the project had not been able to cover these. Ms Papaefthimiou advised that whilst there were other improvements and considerations that could be looked at in relation to the development of this widget it had ultimately been developed to allow students to find content more quickly and therefore it was still useful as the case studies will hope to show.

The final presentation was of the Video widget which was built as an extension of the ASSET project. Mr Parslow explained that because of the timing of the project following the Blackboard 9 upgrade some native video functionality now exists in Blackboard. The impact of this widget has also been harder to gauge as users have perceived this to be an embedded function of Blackboard rather than a separate widget, though this was reported to be one of the projects successes. Discussion took place about the use of the widget for other platforms and it was confirmed that the code is open source however as Mr Gamble had advised previously there had been some problems with server access. Mr Pursey advised that the code needs to be finalised in order to make it more widely available.

12/06 Conclusion of the project

Ms Papaefthimiou explained that as the project is in its final month the project team are taking stock and looking at how much can be evaluated in this timeframe. Since piloting was delayed some evaluation will have to take place shortly after the end of the project and feedback was requested from the panel to send back to JISC. Mr Ryan advised that in his experience the development of projects always takes longer than anticipated on the original plan and therefore dissemination and evaluation tend to be squeezed. He added that there were useful pedagogic outcomes of the project but that he would have liked to have seen more technical aspects. Ms Sherman added that in general she agreed with Mr Ryan's views on the project and Ms Papaefthimiou confirmed that the project had not covered as much they had wanted.

Mr Gamble suggested that the feedback to JISC should be that the project has shown successful ways of working and if it had been turned down then this valuable work would not have happened. He concluded that good material had been produced and the University of Reading was to be commended.

Mr Bailey suggested that as an exit strategy the project should put together more user based studies and concluded that ongoing evaluation from this would be useful to capture.

Discussion took place around the bidding process for JISC and the panel agreed that in general project managers promise more in bids than they can realistically deliver but that this was perceived as the best way to obtain funding. Ms Sherman added that this would have been the case on a much smaller project and was not the fault of this particular project but symptomatic of the process as a whole.

Ms Papaefthimiou concluded that it was important to continue the work so that it could be transferred to other schools and that if the technology was well designed then there was scope to achieve more over a longer timescale.

Ms Papaefthimiou advised that a draft of the final report would be completed by the end of February and that this would be sent to Dr Kleinhans for her comments. Dr Kleinhans requested that the draft also be sent to the external stakeholders for their comments.

Action: MCP to send a draft of the final report to Dr Kleinhans and the external stakeholders by the end of February

Dr Kleinhans concluded the meeting by thanking all the external stakeholders for their help and Mr Bailey for his attendance at the meeting.