NOTES OF THE eLEARNING STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 29 APRIL 2009 IN THE SENATE ROOM

MEMBERS OF THE eLEARNING STANDING COMMITTEE
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) (Professor Jane Long) - Chair
Associate Chair of Academic Board (Professor Brett Kirk)
Director of Centre for Advancement of Teaching and Learning (Professor Denise Chalmers)
President of the Guild (Mr Dominic Rose)
Director of Student Services (Mr Jon Stubbs)
Professor Geoff Hammond (Faculty of Life and Physical Sciences)
Mrs Eileen Thompson (UWA Business School)
Dr Nick Spadaccini (Faculty of Engineering, Computing and Mathematics)

Dr Kabilan Krishnasamy (Executive Officer) (Education Policy Services)

By Invitation:
Mr Grant Malcolm, Manager, Website Office

Apologies:
University Librarian and Director (Information Management) (Mr John Arfield)
Professor Sally Sandover (Co-ordinator of Regional Programs)
Mr Brian Greene (Strategy and Architecture Manager, ITS)
Dr Chris McDonald (Faculty of Engineering, Computing and Mathematics)
Dr David Glance, (Director, Centre for Software Practice)

1. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed the following members to their first meeting of the eLearning Standing Committee:

- Professor Brett Kirk (Associate Chair of Academic Board) as a member of the eLearning Standing Committee
- Mr Grant Malcolm (Manager, Website Office) as a standing invitee

2. UNIVERSITY POLICY ON SELECTING TEACHING MODES – Ref F9547, F26423

Members noted the University Policy on Selecting Teaching Modes (Agenda Attachment A) which had also been published to the University Policies site at http://www.universitypolicies.uwa.edu.au/page/117132.

3. WebCT AND BLACKBOARD – PROGRESS UPDATE FROM CATL

Members noted the progress report and sought clarifications particularly in relation to the performance of the WebCT system at UWA. Attachment A was prepared as a follow-up report in response to the following queries raised by members:

- the life cycle of a WebCT unit
- the way in which WebCT units were created
• what proportion of Semester 1 2009 UWA units offered have a WebCT site?
• how staff could tell what their students were doing in a WebCT unit?
• ‘number of students enrolled’ and ‘number of transaction’ – what they referred to?
• what units were offered via systems other than WebCT e.g. Moodle?

4. FACULTY- SPECIFIC ONLINE LEARNING MODULES

The Learning Language and Research Skills (LLRS) team submitted a request that Moodle be included as an additional online writing module for first-year students within the university’s centrally-supported Learning Management System (LMS).

At the meeting, however, this request was withdrawn on the grounds that the LLRS team would be developing the online writing module for first year students in MySource.

Notwithstanding this and given that WebCT would be phased out between 2010 and 2011 with the introduction of a new Blackboard system, members agreed that the University’s LMS should be fully reviewed in mid 2010 with a view to re-assessing the University’s online learning needs and the ability of Blackboard to meet those needs in the future.

Further, members also agreed that a set of guidelines, as a basis for establishing minimum standards, be developed for the use of softwares that are not centrally-supported by the University.

5. PROPOSED FRAMEWORK FOR DECISIONS REGARDING NEW TECHNOLOGIES ADOPTION AT UWA

Members considered a paper entitled, ‘Proposed framework for decisions regarding new technology adoption at UWA’, which was drafted in response to the Technical Coordination Group’s (TCG) view to explore a process for evaluating the adoption of new educational technologies.

Given that senior professional staff members and academics were approached by new companies promoting technologies and other IT related products, the TCG agreed to establish a set of protocols for evaluating new educational technologies.

The following brief comments were noted in response to TCG’s proposal:
• Timeline
  The proposal identified that the decision making process would last approximately 20 months from identifying the technology to full institutional implementation and that it would consist of four steps Nomination, Assessment, Trialling, Implementation. Members noted that a process with such a long time-line might be problematic.

• The Nomination Process
  The report noted that those technologies which have been nominated by fewer than 3 faculties should be rejected. Those with more than three nominations would be considered in terms of the following: their applicability across faculties, current university investment in the technologies, and their fit with broader institutional learning goals.

  Members noted that the logic of setting a minimum of three faculties for the nomination process was unclear.

  Further, it was noted that the report does not show how the proposed agreement would be aligned with the University’s planning process or the University’s OPP (Operational Priorities Plan).
Members agreed to establish an alternative evidence-based framework that would provide the basis for developing protocols at both the faculty and central levels.

To this end, the Chair suggested that a Working Group be set up comprising:
- Dr Nick Spadaccini (Convener)
- Professor Denise Chalmers
- Mr John Arfield or Nominee
- Mr Grant Malcolm
- Leitha Delves (or nominee from the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences)
- Mr Jon Stubbs (as a Reviewer)

Terms of Reference 1:
- a. to draft guidelines as a basis for establishing minimum standards for the development of applications and resources that support learning that are not centrally supported
- b. to devise a strategy for assessing learning technologies in relation to their applicability, scalability and reliability at the faculty and central levels
- c. to develop guidelines/protocols for evaluating new educational technologies and other IT products for Teaching and Learning use including commercial products within faculty and central levels
- d. to report by December 2009, making any interim reports and recommendations as appropriate

Terms of Reference 2:
- e. To undertake a preliminary scoping study of the University’s online learning needs through a process of wide consultation and the ability of the University’s current LMS to meet those needs in the future
- f. to report by December 2009

The attached report on the use of Lectopia (Attachment B) was sought at the Committee’s request and has been included herein for information for members only.
The Life Cycle of an LMS Unit

The typical lifecycle for an LMS unit over a teaching period is shown below:

How an LMS unit is created

An LMS unit is created based on request from the Unit Coordinator (or their School’s Administrative Assistant). Requests are submitted via the eDS online form that is available on the Staff WebCT support website. This form requires the unit coordinator to provide:

- Their details - username, phone number and email address (for the purposes of adding them to the unit once it has been created).

- The UWA Unit details - unit code, title, teaching period, student access start/end date (for the purposes of making the unit available to students once created).
- The Unit Content – whether the unit should be created based on a Faculty template, a copy of a previously offered WebCT unit or a blank WebCT unit.

Faculty templates (with the provision of branding and some tools e.g. Unit Outline) have been created by the Faculties of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences; Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences and the UWA Business School.

Given that LMS units are only created and populated based on a request from a UWA Staff Member (rather than a copy of every unit officially offered through Student Management System), every LMS unit has a Unit Coordinator and students with access to it and assumed interacting within it.

In addition, if an LMS unit is seen to be empty by enrolled students, they are able to contact the Student Internet Support Office and/or the eLearning Development and Support Team who will contact the Unit Coordinator to investigate whether the staff member intends to use the LMS unit. Units which are subsequently not required by staff are archived immediately.

**What proportion of Semester 1, 2009 UWA units have a WebCT site**

There are approximately 600 WebCT units in Semester 1, 2009. Overall, this number represents approximately 40% of UWA units offered in Semester 1, 2009.

The UWA Business School, Faculty of Education and Faculty of Law have approximately 70% of their Semester 1, 2009 unit offerings supported by WebCT. The School of Indigenous Studies, Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences and Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences have approximately 50% of their Semester 1, 2009 unit offerings supported by WebCT. The Faculty of Engineering, Computing and Mathematics and Faculty of Life and Physical Sciences have
approximately 30% of their Semester 1, 2009 unit offerings supported by WebCT. The Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences have approximately 20% of their Semester 1, 2009 unit offering supported by WebCT. This represents their core unit offering and a few of their postgraduate units.

How can staff tell what their students are doing inside an LMS Unit

LMS units are populated with every student enrolled in the appropriate unit code and teaching period. This information is provided by the Unit Coordinator at the time they request the unit.

Once the unit is being used by students, Unit Coordinators can use a tool called, ‘Tracking’ to generate different types of reports regarding students’ use of the unit. These reports include:

- general or detailed student activity
- how often tools (e.g. Assessment, Assignment) are accessed
- how often items such as quizzes and discussion topics are used
- which files are most frequently viewed/downloaded

Unfortunately, aggregate statistics regarding student participation across these units is not able to be extracted, due to the limitations of the current system and administrative processes. However, across all of these units of study there are approximately 53,494 student enrolments. These are not unique student enrolments but rather a reflection of the fact that one student may be enrolled in several units, and each “seat” a student has in each unit of study makes up this total.
What the number of transactions means

Transactions means the number of requests received by the system from staff and student users each day. This means a click made to request a page or download a document or accessing an assessment or an assignment.

What units are offered via systems other than WebCT e.g Moodle

Whilst WebCT is the centrally supported LMS at UWA, it is not the only LMS used by staff. Some faculties e.g. The Graduate School of Education and The Centre for Water Research are currently offering a small number of units via another LMS, Moodle. Based on eLearning Development and Support Team interactions with these groups, the number of units offered via Moodle is currently less than 15 units.