

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY
Learning Management System Advisory Group

Minutes for the fifth meeting of the Learning Management System Advisory Group held on Wednesday 31 October from 2.00 – 3.00 pm in the David Myers Meeting Room, Bundoora campus, videoconferenced to the Albury-Wodonga, Bendigo and Shepparton Campuses. Teleconferenced to Mildura.

Present: Dr Ric Canale (**Acting Chair**), Ms Lilian Austin, Mr Jeffrey Barnes, Mr Rob Bassett, Dr Chris Campbell, Ms Eileen Clark, Dr Anthony Jarvis, Dr Katherine Legge, Dr Jennifer Masters, Mr Wesley Pryor, Ms Jennifer Rogers, Ms Fiona Salisbury, Ms Cindy Taylor, Dr Caroline Walta, Ms Dianne Williamson.

Apologies: Mr Peter Barton, Mr Marcus de Rijk, Ms Shannon Kerrigan, Dr Ben Ong, Mr John Pinniger, Ms Bess Secomb, Dr Kay Souter,

Secretariat: Ms Sally Went

In attendance: Mr Michael Piko (ICT), Ms Alyson Waterson *vice* Mr Marcus de Rijk

MINUTES

A PRELIMINARY BUSINESS

A1 Welcome from Chair and apologies received

The Acting Chair welcomed members to the meeting and noted apologies as above.

A2 Confirmation of the previous minutes, 3 October 2007 LMSAG07/32(M)

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings.

A3 Action arising from the previous minutes (not covered elsewhere on the agenda)

A3.1 WebCT performance for large unit enrolments LMSAG07/34

Rob Bassett and Michael Piko reported on the investigations they had conducted to address concerns about the performance of WebCT for units with large enrolments. There were three issues to be considered – the respective performances of the central infrastructure, the WebCT application and the local client system.

Rob reported that the number of servers available to WebCT has doubled this year and the database infrastructure is also being doubled, but to be sure that this will manage the increased enrolments in 2009, it is recommended that formal load testing be conducted. ICT does not have the budget for this as it would be in the order of \$50,000 - \$150,000 so funds would have to be found from outside ICT if this was to occur.

Limitations within the application itself are already addressed by weekly restarts of WebCT in order to improve its stability. The only other solution to the inherent limitations of WebCT is to investigate larger scale products.

The third issue is the way in which WebCT delivers code to the client system. When viewing a large list of students in WebCT, the application does not break it down into pages but displays a long list which uses up significant resources in the local system. This could only be rectified if WebCT was reprogrammed, which would have to be done by Blackboard (the company who own WebCT).

The Chair thanked the ICT staff for the detailed advice provided and recommended that the Upgrade Management Working Party look at alternative products that would address some of these issues.

A3.2 Recycling units

LMSAG07/35

Lilian Austin spoke to the paper from the University's educational designers which strongly opposed new WebCT shells being created for every unit each semester. Ric Canale advised that the process of automating the creation of WebCT units would only apply to new units that have never had a WebCT presence and the previous practice of recycling existing units would continue.

As the deadline for a compulsory online presence had been extended, it would be up to unit co-ordinators to decide whether they created their WebCT units for 2008 or waited til one was created for them when the automated process was established.

B GENERAL BUSINESS

B1 Report from the Learning Management System Consultant

Ric Canale, in his capacity as LMS Consultant, reported that WebCT downtime was being scheduled in order to test version 6.2.2 which La Trobe and other universities will be moving to before Christmas. If any problems occur, the University will revert to version 6.2.1, but no inconvenience should be experienced by users during this period.

Ric also reported on the follow up from an item raised at the August meeting about special cases of students who were not enrolled but were manually registered as WebCT users. These students have now been identified as either honours or postgraduate students who needed access as tutors or for their own learning, or a student whose enrolment on SIS had been delayed, or for units where there was a starting date earlier than the beginning of semester. The WebCT Team were now looking for more efficient ways to register these students and eliminate manual handling.

It was noted that more WebCT training had been scheduled for the remainder of 2007 and the beginning of 2008 and these dates were listed on the training@latrobe website and the WebCT website. It was hoped that regular "drop in" sessions could be scheduled at the larger campuses to provide support to academic staff.

B2 Report from the LMS Automation Project Working Party

There was no one present from this working party to report on progress.

B3 Report from the Library Outreach into WebCT / Compliance Project Working Party LMSAG07/36

The working party provided the committee with a written report of their meeting held on 8 October. The group are going to prepare an overarching statement of intent and purpose, as their role has changed since the decision was taken to delay the compulsory online presence for every unit. The working party noted that it was timely for them to become engaged with the Library's new 'e-reading' project as the Library was eager to have input from teaching staff in this project.

B4 Report from the LMS Training Resources Working Party LMSAG07/37

The working party provided the committee with a written report of their meeting held on 9 October. The working party provided substantial feedback to the work being undertaken by George Ciotti to redesign the LMS website.

B5 Report from the LMS Upgrade Management Working Party LMSAG07/38

The working party provided the committee with a written report of their meeting held on 24 October. The working party has defined their brief as "to provide input into and report on the progress of any enhancements of upgrades to the LMS environment; and ensure the LMS environment offers a coherent suite of tools as judged from pedagogy and learning management considerations". The group were preparing a task register for their activities.

C OTHER BUSINESS RAISED BY MEMBERS AT THE MEETING

C1 Other business

There was no time at the end of the meeting for other business.

D NEXT MEETING

Secretarial note: The next meeting of the Learning Management System Advisory Group was scheduled for 29 November 2007 but was cancelled.

The meeting closed at 3.00 pm.

Distribution

Ms Lilian Austin, representing the educational designers
Mr Jeff Barnes, Law and Management
Mr Peter Barton, Education
Mr Rob Bassett, ICT
Dr Chris Campbell, Education
Dr Ric Canale, LMS Consultant
Ms Eileen Clark, Albury-Wodonga Campus representative
Mr Marcus de Rijk, Online Teaching Support Unit
Dr Anthony Jarvis, Humanities and Social Sciences
Ms Shannon Kerrigan, Equity and Access Unit
Dr Katherine Legge, Science, Technology and Engineering
Ms Jennifer Masters, Bendigo Campus representative
Dr Ben Ong, Science, Technology and Engineering
Mr John Pinniger, Academic Services
Mr Wesley Pryor, Health Sciences
Ms Jennifer Rogers, Mildura Campus representative
Mr Cameron Rose, Humanities and Social Sciences
Ms Fiona Salisbury, Library
Ms Bess Secomb, Library
Dr Kay Souter, Acting Director (Learning and Teaching), **(Chair)**
Ms Cindy Taylor, Law and Management
Dr Caroline Walta, Shepparton Campus representative
Ms Dianne Williamson, Health Sciences

Minutes only:

Associate Deans (Academic/Learning and Teaching)
Educational Designers

LOG OF ACTIONS

Meeting	Date	Item	Action	Resp.	Status
2	25.7.07	A2	WebCT Team to prepare a presentation on the optional settings within WebCT for the next meeting.	RC to liaise with WebCT Team	