

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY
Learning Management System Advisory Group

Minutes for the first meeting of the Learning Management System Advisory Group held on Wednesday 27 June from 1.00 – 3.00 pm in the David Myers Meeting Room, Bundoora campus, teleconferenced to the Shepparton campus and video-linked to the Bendigo, Albury-Wodonga and Mildura Campuses.

Present: Dr Kay Souter (**Chair**), Mr Jeff Barnes, Mr Peter Barton, Ms Helen Carter, Ms Eileen Clark, Dr Anthony Jarvis, Ms Shannon Kerrigan, Dr Katherine Legge, Dr Jennifer Masters, Dr Ben Ong, Mr John Pinniger, Mr Wesley Pryor, Ms Jennifer Rogers, Mr Cameron Rose, Ms Fiona Salisbury, Ms Bess Secomb, Ms Cindy Taylor, Ms Dianne Williamson.

Secretariat: Ms Sally Went

In attendance: Dr Ric Canale, Professor Denise Kirkpatrick (for item A2 only), Ms Sue Howley (*vice* Mr Rob Bassett), Mr Marcus de Rijk and Mr Douglas Oldmeadow (*vice* Ms Aly Waterson), Ms Carla Wallace (*vice* Dr Caroline Walta).

Apologies: Mr Rob Bassett, Ms Chris Campbell, Dr Caroline Walta, Ms Aly Waterson.

MINUTES

A PRELIMINARY BUSINESS

A1 Welcome from Chair and apologies received

Dr Kay Souter welcomed everyone to the first meeting and reported that she was Chairing the group following her new appointment as Acting Director (Learning and Teaching) which would take effect when the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) leaves the University in July.

A2 Introduction from Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

Professor Denise Kirkpatrick thanked members for agreeing to be part of the Advisory Group, and noted the importance of having an Advisory Group for the University's learning management system. One of the reasons was the increased usage of WebCT as a result of the University's policy to have a minimum online presence for every Unit by 2008, and also because of student demand for more flexible approaches to learning and greater access to learning materials.

The purpose of the Advisory Group was to be a forum for key stakeholders to raise issues about the use of WebCT and to provide advice and direction to the staff responsible for supporting WebCT in the Online Teaching Support Team (OTST) and Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

Professor Kirkpatrick reported that the establishment of the Learning Management System Advisory Group (LMSAG) was a key recommendation of the WebCT Taskforce. The Taskforce, made up of one representative from each faculty and the Academic Development Unit, worked with Dr David Green from Flinders University and Dr Ric

Canale from the University of Melbourne over two days in May to discuss strategies for the ongoing management of WebCT at La Trobe.

Action: Ms Went to distribute the WebCT Taskforce Report (LMSAG07/4).

In closing, Professor Kirkpatrick noted that the University has a commitment to use WebCT for now but the Learning Technologies Policy and Governance Committee have established a project to assess other options for the future.

A3 Membership, terms of reference and meeting schedule LMSAG07/2

The Advisory Group supported the terms of reference outlined in LMSAG07/2 after a small revision was made to say that the LMSAG would provide advice “on operational matters to *the relevant officers in ICT and the manager responsible for the Online Teaching Support Team...*” [new text in italics]. The Advisory Group agreed to meet monthly, on the afternoon of the last Wednesday of the month.

The Advisory Group discussed the terms of reference in detail, noting that their brief was broad, covering both technical and policy issues. In particular the Advisory Group was established to provide academic input into the management of the learning management system so that it was maximised as a learning and teaching application. It would also be a consultative forum for projects before concrete decisions were made about them and for which members could act as a conduit of information back to their faculties. Members of the Advisory Group had been selected because of their experience and positive attitude to learning technologies and as such would play a valuable role in promoting the system to their colleagues.

There was broad support for the Advisory Group being consulted when decisions were made about the schedule for server maintenance, with most members agreeing that it would be valuable to have a regular time set aside for technical maintenance of the system. Such a schedule would be widely publicised even if the times set aside were not always needed. Academic staff would then know not to set submission times for assessment through WebCT during scheduled downtime.

B GENERAL BUSINESS

B1 Report from the WebCT Consultant LMSAG07/3

Dr Ric Canale spoke to the group about his role as WebCT Consultant to the University over the next six months. Dr Canale will be examining the systems and the practices associated with WebCT and would be talking to academic members of the Advisory Group over the coming weeks to determine how WebCT is used across the faculties and what expectations there are for its future.

Dr Canale reported that WebCT had developed a greater scale and complexity in how it was used which required more formal processes than when it was first introduced at La Trobe. There were more users than for other major University systems such as the finance and student systems, but fewer resources to support it. To alleviate this problem a decision was made recently to transfer responsibility to ICT from 1 July for running the application. This would enable the WebCT Team within the OTST to focus their skills more effectively.

Another issue being addressed was the level of support provided to users. Plans were in place for some of the WebCT user support to be provided by the ICT Help Desk after they have implemented a new system called Front Range. Telephone enquiries about WebCT will then be routed to one point, with Help Desk staff providing level 1 support (such as assistance with login) and level 2 and 3 support (specific issues in WebCT)

being provided by the WebCT Team. Students will continue to receive support from Study Hall and Library staff. It was noted that consideration also needs to be given to supporting regional students without them incurring expensive STD costs to call Melbourne.

Dr Canale will also be looking at the most effective way to provide training to both staff and students and noted suggestions from the Advisory Group about including student training in orientation programs and classes early in semester. Having a well designed website to complement the phone service was one of the projects of another recently appointed consultant, Mr George Ciotti, who commenced with the WebCT Team this week. Members advised that they would prefer to see separate WebCT sites for staff and students given the different issues they encounter when using the system, and also that it was critical to perform user-testing during the design phase of the new WebCT site(s).

An issues register is being maintained for WebCT and Dr Canale undertook to distribute this to the LMSAG each month.

B2 Minimum online presence

It was noted that there was an urgent need to communicate to the University community about the educational reasons behind the decision to have an online presence for all Units, and also provide information on how this could be managed. A lot of activity around WebCT had been noted in some departments in preparation for having an online presence for all their Units by 2008, whilst other departments appeared to believe the process was going to be automated for them.

***Action:** The Chair to write to the Vice-Chancellor requesting an all-staff email on the minimum online presence.*

The Advisory Group noted that a staged approach might be more realistic, with a minimum presence automated and then with individual staff adding content to their sites. The WebCT Taskforce had recommended a project be established immediately to determine the requirements and impact of having an automated process to create a WebCT presence for every Unit (eg one component would be ensuring the Unit Database, which would populate the WebCT sites, was completely up to date)

B3 Migration management

Ms Helen Carter reported that she had prepared a report on the status of the current migration of WebCT Units to WebCT version 6.0 for second semester which she would distribute to the group after the meeting (LMSAG07/5).

***Action:** Ms Carter to forward WebCT Migration Report to the committee secretary for distribution to the Advisory Group after the meeting.*

B4 Monitoring and reporting requirements

Owing to a lack of time, the Advisory Group were unable to discuss this item in detail and were asked to consider by the next meeting the type of reports they would like to access from within WebCT to assist with their teaching. As many members were not aware of the range of reporting and monitoring possibilities in WebCT, the Chair invited the WebCT Team to give a presentation at the next meeting.

***Action:** WebCT Team to prepare a brief presentation on WebCT reports for the next meeting of the LMSAG.*

C OTHER BUSINESS

C1 Other business raised by members at the meeting

Members asked how matters raised at Advisory Group meetings could best be communicated to their colleagues. The Chair reported that the minutes would be posted on the Learning and Teaching website so members could encourage their colleagues to access those. Major issues requiring faculty-wide consideration should be directed to Faculty Academic Committees.

D NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Learning Management System Advisory Group will be on Wednesday 25 July, from 1.00 – 3.00 pm, David Myers Meeting Room. Regional campus venues to be arranged.

The meeting closed at 3.00 pm.

Distribution

Mr Jeff Barnes, Law and Management
Mr Peter Barton, Education
Mr Rob Bassett, ICT
Ms Chris Campbell, Education
Dr Ric Canale, WebCT Consultant
Ms Helen Carter, Academic Development Unit
Ms Eileen Clark, Albury-Wodonga Campus representative
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 Aly Waterson, Online Teaching Support Team
Ms Dianne Williamson, Health Sciences