

Minutes of the eLearning Governance Group, Thursday 17 May 2007.

There were present: The Chair of the eLearning Governance Group Professor Derrick Armstrong, Mr Andrew Cooper, Director Architecture and Technology, Associate Professor Rob Ellis, Director of eLearning, Associate Professor Mark Freeman, Director Office of Learning and Teaching in Economics and Business, Mr Bruce Meikle, Chief Information Officer, Mr John Shipp University Librarian, Associate Professor Peter McCallum, Deputy Chair Academic Board and Mr Peter McGeorge, Assistant Director, CP&S. Ms Sally Paynter was in attendance.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from: Mr Andrew Cooper and Ms Su Hanfling, Director Sciences and Technology Libraries.

2. Chair's report

The Chair advised that he had nothing on which to report.

3. Streaming project recommendations

Associate Professor Ellis spoke to the report advising that the streaming solution would be working towards improving the quality of the University's online learning environment which would include streamlining files, podcasting, RSS feeds, downloading files and real time interaction. As was agreed at the February meeting the budget for the project would be \$490,000. The key stakeholders from the Learning and Teaching Community and the Senior executive had been consulted and given an opportunity to provide feedback.

Vendors were invited to provide presentations based on the following criteria

- Nearly full automation from capture through to use by the student;
- Robustness and the reliability of the system;
- Sustainability and cost effectiveness;
- Scalability and whether it can grow with faculty demands;
- Quality assurance for learning and teaching including fit for purpose file types; and
- Appropriateness of fit for academic content.

The vendors were grouped into two categories, those that offered real time broadcasts including virtual tutorial rooms and online real time images, chat and audio and those that offered object orientated solutions. The project group evaluated each vendor against the elimination criteria and only three vendors were able to show the interface that was ready to use three vendors, Electroboard/Starbak, Lectopia/Apple and Adobe connect/breeze. The two vendors provided a solution that fitted academic needs well and were not attempting to manipulate a corporate model to fit an academic context. Associate Professor Ellis explained the three options to the Group and advised that after careful consideration the project group recommended the use of the Lectopia/Apple solutions as it showed a very deep interface, gave clear diagnosis on screen if students were experiencing difficulty accessing the system and offered multiple file types and was compatible for students who were using both PC and Macs.

The Group discussed the following three recommendations

- 1. that the Lectopia/Apple solution be trialed to establish academic, policy and operational processes around it as phase 1 in Semester 2, 2007. This trial would provide a comprehensive report to eLearning Governance at end of 2007*

Members discussed the first recommendation and raised the following points during discussion:

- a trial of the Lectopia system in semester two 2007 would be managed within of 10 teaching spaces (8 large, 2 small) and from teachers desktops;
- two staff would be needed to support the trial, an HEO 7 position to assist vide-conferencing, scheduling and managements and HEO 5 to assist AV manager;
- a weakness in all the systems is that if a teacher forgets to attach their lapel microphone or forgets to switch it off after the session there can be inappropriate content recorded;
- students would not be downloading whole files but instead they would be streamed and buffered;
- copyright issues would have to be managed and conveyed to academics;
- faculties would be invited to participate in the trial and would provide a short evaluation report on teacher and student experience; and
- it was important to manage the scheduling of the trial to ensure quality and to match the expectations of teachers and concepts.

2. *that the Lectopia/Apple solution be rolled out as phases 2 & 3 in 2008 /2009 in line with the recommendations from the report on the trial from semester 2, 2007. Some care should be adopted in relation to the total number of rooms supported as lectopia-enabled for planning in 2009. This should be related to faculty-demand and central workload arising from first 18 months of use*

The Group noted that the results of the trials conducted by faculties would be evaluated and that when the Lectopia/Apple solution was rolled out faculties would work in consultation with central administration to draft a coherent set of guidelines for its use. The Chair advised that he was concerned about ad hoc evaluations conducted by faculties and that the result may be an ad hoc approach to the solutions development. Members agreed that a systematic evaluation needed to be made and from this a policy would need to be developed with a broader range of questions which extended beyond whether students liked the technology to how they interacted with it. The evaluation would be sent back to the eLearning Governance Group for discussion.

It was noted that Macquarie and Griffith universities had conducted a similar trial and had positive results with greater than 80-90% of students attending lectures and then using the eLearning tools to reinforce what they had learnt.

Members noted that an evaluation of the whole trial would be reported to the eLearning Governance Group at the end of 2007.

3. *that Adobe Connect (Breeze) Licensing be continued into 2008*

Members noted that there was still a demand for Adobe Connect (Breeze) and that it was recommended that the licensing be continued until 2008. After this time the Breeze manager would report on the demand, usage and expenditure of the program. Associate Professor Ellis explained that Breeze was intrinsically very different to how the Lectopia/Apple solution worked and that at scale; it is a series of virtual tutorial rooms rather than a process of capturing audio and video learning objects. Breeze is used by managers for virtual meetings and by a comparatively small number of staff seeking support for post graduate students or students studying predominately off campus.

The Chair suggested that the evaluation of the Breeze program be revised and that a working party be formed to assist in evaluating the need to continue the licensing agreement.

The Group noted the budget for the implementation of the three recommendations and confirmed that this included the costs of implementation. Other budgetary requirements including storage needs and other IT needs would be identified once the faculty trials had concluded.

Resolution 1/07

The eLearning Governance Group resolved to support all three recommendations relating to the streaming project.

4. eLearning support for faculties – expression of interest process

Associate Professor Ellis reported on the call for expressions of interest for 2008 strategic eLearning development projects. Members noted that there was lots of enthusiasm for the development of eLearning projects but that there was little time available to develop them because staff were busy and it was often difficult to turn educational goals into eLearning projects. Associate Professor Ellis advised that the *Guidelines for Strategic eLearning Development Projects: Call for Expressions of Interest for 2008 Projects* had been circulated to Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching) in each faculty and college and all were encouraged to apply by submitting a paragraph about the proposal by 27 July and then a written expression of interest by 28 September. The projects would be developed in Semesters 1 or 2, 2008. Members noted that between July and September advice would be sought about how feasible the projects were and eLearning staff would be deployed to work with Faculty staff to develop their proposals. The Group noted that there were currently 30-40 eLearning projects being developed and that there was more demand than resources for faculties wanting to develop eLearning projects.

A question was raised about the whether it would be more beneficial to develop one large project per faculty cluster rather than many smaller projects and whether these projects were based on the overall goals of the University. The Chair advised that the selection panel considering the strategic eLearning development project would adhere to strict guidelines which ensured that projects which reflected the University's key performance indicators would be selected over those that did not.

Resolution 2/07

The eLearning Governance Group noted the report.

5. AOB

There was no other business.