From: Jack Aitken
To: David Newall; Frank Coton
Subject: Senate minute on MyCampus.
Date: 20 January 2012 17:14:18

Frank, David,

I'm pasting in below the draft Senate minute on MyCampus. Could you please let me know of any comments? - I won't make a habit of this, but just want to ensure you are comfortable and that I've got the gist of it right. Andrea & Graham will get the full draft on Monday.

Thanks v much

Jack

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MyCampus Lessons Learned Working Group update

At its meeting in October, Senate had discussed difficulties that had arisen in the introduction of MyCampus, particularly concerning student registration and enrolment. A key priority had been the need to learn lessons from the difficulties experienced, and Vice-Principal Professor Coton had been asked to convene a working group that would consider this. Senate received a paper from the Working group providing an update on its activities and findings.

Professor Coton began his report by outlining the process the working Group had followed. Meetings with staff groups had been held and a focus group had taken place involving the SRC. A Sharepoint site for staff had been established, which was openly accessible. An email box was also set up for students to submit views. Many comments had been submitted by staff and students. The Working Group had then held discussions with the Student Lifecycle Project (SLP) team to begin to identify solutions to issues already identified. A document listing the key issues was then produced and issued on the Sharepoint site. In the next phase of activity, comments were sought on the key issues document to ensure concerns had been accurately captured and top inform prioritisation. Responses from staff and students dealt with both broad and detailed issues. The final report from the Working Group would cover both sets of issues. There had also been consultation with Queen's University, Belfast (QUB), which had previously introduced a similar system.

The update report grouped issues under the following headings, although some of the lessons would apply beyond MyCampus:

- User interface
- Student finances
- Enrolment
- Access to information
- System performance
- Data management
- Communication
- Training and support

The update report Senate had received reflected much of the final report. This would be issued shortly, and would contain specific actions, and Professor Coton summarised key aspects.

MyCampus was the biggest change in software the University the University had implemented. It was necessary to have a clear vision for the system and to be clear on its objectives. These were not yet available. Staff expectations of the capabilities of the system varied and it was important to set these expectations correctly.

MyCampus implementation had been constrained by timing and resource issues: missing the go-live date would have necessitated a costly one-year delay. But this had been done at the expense of compromised decisions around, and full consideration of, delivered functionality.

A much higher priority would be placed on communications. A vital aspect of this was the provision

of opportunities for the community to contribute views and be sure they were being heard. Many had felt they had not been listened to in the consultation period prior to implementation. University restructuring had interrupted and in some areas fragmented the flow of communications. At the point when training was offered, some staff did not know what their roles would be in the new structure. This had also affected accountability: in some instances, the locus of SLP Champions had also changed with restructuring. Staff did not know who to contact about difficulties. These matters required to be corrected. Similarly, more online guidance and other support materials were needed.

When difficulties had been encountered during registration and enrolment, temporary workarounds had been developed. For the future, these would have to be removed in order that bad practice did not become established.

A critical issue was that the usability of the system was poor for students and staff; this also required to be addressed. This had had a particularly bad impact on advisers. Further clarification of the role of the latter was needed, and account had also to be taken of those, such as Honours programme conveners who carried out roles like that of advisers. The interface required to be improved tin order that it supported those in advisory roles rather than further burdened them.

The Group had strongly felt that rigorous piloting that replicated real conditions was required before new software was introduced, and that it should only be introduced if it worked successfully. Some aspects of MyCampus had not been robustly tested. A representative user group should be involved in the specification, development and testing of the solutions identified and in future upgrades.

Change to the registration and enrolment processes was also needed. This session, international students had experienced particular difficulty, and had been unable to enroll because of the system's requirements for academic and financial registration. This had given a poor first impression of the University.

The University had traditionally, and correctly, emphasised the choice available to students. However, choice featured within the system even where programme structures meant that there were no choices. This added unnecessary complication and the Group was recommending that it be removed.

Professor Coton's report recognised that mistakes had been made and that the University had to commit to fixing the system. This would take time. It also required that the community as a whole accepted that achieving the desired improvements and benefits was a shared responsibility.

In discussion, a number of comments related to the ambitiousness of the original project and the desirability of adopting a pragmatic approach to what could realistically be achieved and by when. It was noted that some elements had already been deferred, such as direct admissions for non-UCAS applicants. Several members agreed with the point that tutorial timetabling could be much more efficiently organised locally; this was likely to be a recommendation of the Working Group. The Secretary of Court, who convened the SLP Project Board, reported that the Board had met in December and earlier in January and had been able to consider draft versions of the Working Group findings. This had led to the development of a revised Project Plan which reprioritised items, with some deferred. The revised plan would be considered by the SMG on 18 January.

Discussion also addressed the sequencing of enrolment and the provision of studies advice. It was reported that it was possible for students to enroll ahead of receiving advice and that this had been requested by some subjects where there were few options available to students. However, this was not a requirement, and it was possible for enrolment to follow the provision of advice on course choices.

Mr Newall reported that he would be discussing with the Heads of College the provision of resources to assist Schools. The point was made that resource calculations needed to take account of the levels of stress system changes produced. It was queried whether there would be remuneration for staff who had been particularly affected by difficulties with the system. Mr Newall noted that the recognition and reward scheme provided means to address this and that cases would be viewed sympathetically.

Professor Nolan noted that not all difficulties with the system could have been anticipated: the development had coincided with restructuring, but also with the economic crisis. However, members were emphatic that concerns were being expressed about the system to the SLP team ahead of introduction that there were problems and that aspects were not yet ready to be

implemented. Professor Nolan reported that SMG wished to acknowledge fully the severe difficulties that had affected academic and administrative staff and she apologised for this as a member of SMG, expressing concern that the system should be significantly improved in the coming period. Senate would receive regular updates on developments.

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