OU Mobile VLE: extending the reach of studying through the mobile web

Conference or Workshop Item

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Monitoring usage

Building on prior longer-term logging of mobile usage on student portals. Working with comScore to interrogate device usage breakdown, comparing trends across different services.

Student survey feedback

Survey taken in October 2010 with n=557 responses, followed up by ongoing feedback.

Event of 'dead time', mobile use also includes that on sofa.

Mobile phone contracts predominate [from current user sample]

Usage: Touch phones (up) Smart phone (down), changing bi-yearly

Assessment [scores] remain a key driver

More frequent visits via mobile over the 2010 period

Reading updates and forums are the most completed activity

Accessing different parts of Study Planner important

Switching view or mode depending on requirement

Downloadable resources preferred in standard formats

OU app for adding multimedia rather than 3rd party/intermediates

Self-help, FAQ-based and crowd-source online support sufficient for device specifics

Establishing a test case of reporting on curriculum use of mobiles.

Thin-client/HTML5 apps in prototype, including:

- Tokenised (easier) sign-in, with 2-tier authentication
- Cached content packages – incl. multimedia and eBooks
- Mobile services for distance and blended learning
- Rich media contribution and collaboration

Current usage levels from viral, peer and self-discovery with no publicity.

Longitudinal research will add further qualitative data for evaluation.

Extending mobile theme to other access points.

Realigning subject-based entry points around qualifications.

What next?

Activities optimised for smaller screens, concentrating on key and usable functions.

Navigation and optional features separated out.

Signposting to activities in planner, sub-pages and embedded throughout. Tool development for mobile now mainstreamed. Some constraint on text entry in first release.

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Generic guidance and device-specific peer support

Desktop and mobile themes redesigned in parallel around the central study planner structure, and progress ‘tick boxes’. Usability and Accessibility tested with students.

Theme design

Mobile-optimised smart/touch-phone interface: ‘Launchpad view’

First released: October 2011

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with thanks to the Mobile VLE team and practitioners at the OU | www.open.ac.uk/mobisite