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

Conference or Workshop Item

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Student survey feedback

- Use of 'dead time', mobile use also includes 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

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

Theme design

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

Mobile-optimised resources

- Mobile-optimised smart/touch-phone interface: ‘Launchpad view’
- Resources
- Forums
- Study Planner
- Module homepage
- Latest News
- Unread Forums
- This Week
- Blog commenting
- Wiki read-only view (on handheld)
- Simple quiz question types
- Online narrative 'structured content'
- Forum threading & posting
- First released: October 2011

What next?

- Extending mobile theme to other access points. Realigning subject-based entry points around qualifications.
- 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

Generic guidance and device-specific peer support

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.

Learning analytics

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

Currently usage levels from viral, peer and self-discovery with no publicity. Longitudinal research will add further qualitative data for evaluation.

Current VLE platform

Legacy VLE platform

Student's Home portal

First released: October 2011

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

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