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

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.

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.

Mobile-optimised smart/touch-phone interface: 'Launchpad view'

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.

Device support
- Legacy devices [read-only launchpad]
- Smart/touch phones tabbed view
- Tablets and option to switch theme

General principles
- Web-optimisation for device-agnostic BYOD
- Learning design for distance education and online narrative
- Contribution and collaboration, not just browsing

Learning analytics

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?

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

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