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

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Student survey feedback

- Use 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

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.

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 interogate device usage breakdown, comparing trends across different services.

Longitudinal research will add further qualitative data for evaluation.

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

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