

ACADEMIC SERVICES USER FORA REPORT 2004-2005

1. INTRODUCTION

Academic Services annual User Fora comprised three open meetings, two on Talbot Campus and one at the Lansdowne. These were publicised by mention on the staff portal; two e-mails to all staff, students and the Students Union; posters located in all Schools, Library and Learning Centres and Open Access Centres and by word of mouth. A total of 18 staff representing five Schools attended. Issues arising from four e-mails were addressed.

It is pleasing to note comments from each forum praising the quality of service delivery throughout Academic Services. This report identifies, Section by Section, the topics discussed at one or more fora and records the comments raised and the responses made. The report and subsequent updated responses will be discussed by the Academic Services Executive and reported to the Academic Services Committee (ASC).

As apparently relatively few attendees have topics they wish to discuss it is suggested that for 2005/6 only two Fora be held, one at each campus.

2. BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Heritage Lottery Fund and DCDA

Comment: What are the next steps for the Dorset Coast Digital Archive (DCDA)?

Response: The DCDA project had recently been completed and the website was frequently being used. A new bid was being prepared to the Heritage Lottery Fund to digitise Tithe and Estate Maps for the South West Region. If the bid was successful digitising the maps would make them accessible nationwide.

3. COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES (CT)

3.1 Room Equipment

Comment: How is the 4-year plan to equip centrally-booked rooms progressing?

Response: All rooms were now equipped with 'blue sockets' and 'wireless connections' for students using laptops. There were now centrally-booked Learning and Teaching rooms at the Lansdowne campus. Training sessions can be arranged to show staff how the equipment works.

4. INFORMATION SYSTEMS

4.1 New Student Record System

Comment: How near to completion is the migration to Unit-e?

Response: In conjunction with Registry, Information Systems were in the process of moving work streams from the old student record system to Unit-e. Migration of data was 80% complete.

4.2 Staff Portal/Website

Comment: Please can you provide an update on the development of the Staff Portal?

Response: Information Systems, Registry and Marketing are working together to develop the University Staff Portal as the main access point for information. Feedback received was being incorporated into a revised portal view which it expected to include a facility for Staff to customise their view of the portal.

Comment: A discussion followed regarding search engine optimisation for the Bournemouth University website

Response: Good recall of Bournemouth University content is especially important for potential students, especially those from overseas and International and Corporate Communications have recognised this in the University marketing strategy.

5. INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMMES GROUP (IPG)

5.1 International Students

Comment: What will International Programmes be working on now they have joined Academic Services?

Response: Responsibility for the International Communications Group has now transferred from IBAL to Academic Services. Re-named International Programmes and led by H  l  ne Lewis, this academic group continues to have responsibility for supporting foreign languages provision, for providing international awareness/capability programmes, and, in conjunction with the International Office, for providing English language support. We look forward to contributing to initiatives to extend the internationalisation of the curriculum in line with the Curriculum Think Tank outcomes. The staff and the physical resources of the Language Centre will remain in Christchurch House for this year.

6. ICT SUPPORT

6.1 External Devices

Comment: Could external devices be attached to University PC's?

Response: The ability to connect USB devices will depend on the operating systems ability to recognise the device and use it without installing additional drivers. We have catered for the connection of memory sticks and devices using Microsoft Active Sync.

Comment: Would it be possible to install Microsoft Office at home using a University disk?

Response: Under Microsoft license it can be installed for your use at home. Disks are available to borrow from Bournemouth Campus: S302B and the Computer and Equipment Helpdesk at Talbot Campus. Borrowing a disk requires Staff ID to be handed in for the duration the borrower has the CD.

6.2 System Changes

Comment: What was the reason for the big number change?

Response: The old system would have been unable to manage expansion and the number change provides this flexibility

Comment: When will the migration to XP be complete?

Response: The switch to XP from NT is usually takes place in the evenings and should be complete by June

6.3 Wireless Networks

Comment: What is the procedure for new laptops being bought into the University and used in Wireless Networks?

Response: All students who want to use their own personal laptop around the University should bring their laptops to the Talbot Campus IT helpdesk for 'checking'. Students are encouraged to bring in their laptops to use in the University. In addition to blue network sockets, Wireless Network areas have been set up for flexibility. Any problems with personal laptops should be taken to the help desk although staff cannot physically touch the laptops, they can offer advice and provide 'Help Information Sheets'.

Comment: There was a discussion regarding the security issues of working in the Wireless Network areas.

Response: Wireless Network Areas are identified by 'blue' signs and more areas are being looked at to be wireless enabled as it provides flexibility for students. Students need to be encouraged to consider the security of their laptops when using Wireless Network Areas. Encouragement should be given to using security cables.

6.4 SPAM

Comment: What is being done to handle SPAM?

Response: SPAM is controlled by MailScanner which quarantines suspected SPAM mail. A system is in place to receive quarantined mail if the scanner has blocked something important that the user wants. Some staff receive a large number of notifications of suspected SPAM and it was suggested that they set up an In Box Rule to move mail identified as SPAM into a separate folder.

6.5 Service Level Agreement

Comment: The issue was raised regarding the lack of approved software in the Service Level Agreement. The general opinion was that approved software in level 1 of Service Level Agreement should be reviewed.

Response: This issue is to be taken to the ICT Co-ordinators group.

7. LEARNING SUPPORT

7.1 Additional Learning Needs Service

Comment: How is the staff raising of awareness taking place?

Response: Staff Development workshops will be taking place at Talbot Campus and Lansdowne, focussing on many different aspects of ALN. They will aim to increase staff awareness of a number of Additional Learning Needs which affect students currently studying at BU. Schools are encouraged to work closely with the ALN service when students apply to identify any that may need help as soon as possible.

Comment: There is a student a visually impaired student who finds using the shared computers in the labs difficult as the settings the default profiles are set to are unsuitable, how can he be helped?

Response: IT Services could possibly use specific software to set up an individual profile for him that is specific to his needs. This would mean that each time he logged on his own profile would appear enabling him to carry on. Discussions are taking place between Additional Learning Needs and the student about how the student would like to proceed. There are two options, one the student uses his own laptop and ICT Support with the use of this machine or the student identifies which University computers he will sit at to carry out his work.

Comment: There was discussion about e-mails submitted in advance asking what was being done about the automatic doors in the library being closed in cold weather.

Response: Academic Services is working with the Student Union and Estates to improve the access in all weather. Amendments to the heat curtain were about to be made to enable increased heating over the doors. Estates are also going to consider repositioning facilities such as cigarette bins away from the doors to ensure smoking students do not stand by the doors keeping them open. A semi automatic opening device is also hoped to be installed enabling the student to override any cold weather closure still required.

Comment: An e-mail presented the issue of the barriers at the library entrance not being at a suitable height for wheelchair users

Response: Barriers are there to ensure the security of library materials and cannot be removed. However, the barriers were changed from metal barriers when the new library opened. The query will be taken up with the manufacturer to find out whether a more suitable barrier is available. It has now been established that no alternative is currently available. This will be kept under review.

7.2 Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) Project

Comment: There was a discussion regarding the success of PAL

Response: PAL has been implemented in all Schools except IHCS although it is possible it will included in some programmes. PAL has been designed to enhance the experience of 1st year students by giving them support from a second year student. The agenda for the session is set by the group – not the leader and they are then able to solve their problems through discussion.

Comment: What is the next stage for PAL?

Response: PAL will be recruiting new leaders for next year as they have had positive responses from the Heads of Schools. Schools are being consulted on whether they want to extend PAL into other programmes. There have been expressions of interest in PAL from Partner Institutions. A bid has been made for TEMPUS funds to support a consultancy on PAL at the invitation of the University of Fez, Morocco.

7.3 Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)

Comment: How far has the decision on a corporate VLE reached?

Response: There are currently a number of in-house VLE systems based on BUBBLE or Blackboard. The University has decided to move to a standard VLE in conjunction with the development of an E-learning Strategy. A sub-group of the Strategy Group is overseeing the procurement of the standard VLE and has developed a detailed specification in consultation with Schools and Support Services. Another sub-group is looking at generic issues associated with interoperability between University IT systems and a VLE. The decision will be made in April with the intention of implementing the standard VLE from September. A phased process of implementation will take place over two years.

8. LIBRARY SERVICES

8.1 Noise

Comment: There was a comment about the amount of noise in the Library

Response: The students are being informed in their inductions about the different zones in the Library and are encouraged to apply peer pressure in those upper floors which are designated as silent areas. Students are also encouraged to use study rooms or find elsewhere to work to avoid causing disruption. The situation has improved and now the top 3 floors are much quieter but there is a need to increase student participation. Staff will continue to ask people to work quietly. Security Staff will walk the floors as well as use of CCTV monitors to spot gatherings of students.

Comment: What are the rules about food and drink in the library?

Response: Water is allowed but not food or other drink, attendants will be monitoring this but the prime concern is noise.

Comment: Where can students study in groups if all the study rooms in the library are full?

Response: Receptionists at Poole House can advise students of empty rooms where they can study across the campus.

8.2 E-Resources

Comment: There was a comment about the additional tax on e-resources

Response: Unfortunately there is VAT on e-resources which doesn't exist on printed versions.

Comment: Should there be fewer copies of a wider range of books as multiples have been seen that do not seem necessary?

Response: As the move to E-books is taking place multiples shouldn't be bought in such great numbers unless there are significant numbers of students requiring simultaneous access and no viable e-options.

Comment: How can we measure the effectiveness of e-resources?

Response: The library is taking part in a nationwide study to research a package which may enable us to discover some information about the impact of e-resources.

9. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

9.1 Staff Development Workshops

Comment: There was discussion about the latest Staff Development Workshops

Response: There are workshops taking place at both Talbot Campus and Lansdown to raise staff awareness about additional learning needs.

Comment: Accessibility to events at Lansdown is poor from Portsmouth

Response: It would be possible to deliver workshops in Portsmouth.

Comment: There was positive feedback about the range of workshops but a general agreement that finding the time for them is difficult.

Response: Following feedback that staff are not always able to attend a full day event, a number of half day workshops have been developed and this has attracted some staff who had not previously attended events. Staff do not need to feel constrained by the dates in the staff development programme as we are able to arrange bespoke sessions for groups of staff at a date and time that suits them if requested, and a number of groups have taken advantage of this facility. However, it is worth noting that even when brief workshops have been offered, for example the disability programme ran a series of 1-2 hour events, they were not necessarily well attended in the Autumn Term, although this may have been due to the time of year. We are currently developing a number of ways in which staff can access staff development without attending an event, for example the Minute Writing Handbook and the web and library resource information boxes on the staff development web-site. A number of staff have also volunteered to become mentors and we are able to broker mentoring relationships if requested.

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Chair
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