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

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

- **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.

- **Device Support**
  - Legacy devices [read-only launchpad]
  - Smart/touch phone [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
  - Rich media contribution and collaboration

- **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**

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