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**

- 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**

- **Desktop view**
  - General principles: web-optimisation for device-agnostic BYOD
  - Learning design for distance education and online narrative
  - Collaboration and contribution, not just browsing

- **Mobile view**
  - Mobile-optimised smart/touch-phone interface: ‘Launchpad view’
  - Latest News
  - Unread Forums
  - This Week

**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/mobisite