

# **DRAFT Process for the enhancement of ANU's Learning Management Service**

*Dr Markus Buchhorn, Director ICT Environments, Division of Information  
December 2007*

## **Process**

The process for the review and implementation has several key elements. An overarching principle is the need to move forward with continuity as far as possible, creating minimal disruption for the current large user base. This will mean continuing to operate and support the current platform throughout 2008 and possibly beyond, as well as providing early access to the new platform as early as possible for teaching and support staff to become familiar with it.

The Division of Information carries the responsibility for the implementation of the process, and for many elements of the support of the resulting service. It needs to work with all areas of the University in a consultative and informative fashion, including users involved in teaching, learning and administration.

The key elements of the process are:

- Identifying the issues with the current platforms that constrain the University from meeting its accessibility, usability and flexibility visions, and any opportunities to extend those visions. These in turn lead to a set of requirements (documented separately) that can be taken to market. It is unlikely that any single product will meet all of the requirements, so some sense of relative priorities needs to be developed during the process.
- If a combination of platforms can maximise outcomes for the University, the process will consider the combination as well as the individual platforms. The likeliest area to benefit will be separating the content management from the presentation interface, i.e. having a dedicated materials management platform which can deliver materials to a presentation platform, or several. This would maximise flexibility for the re-use of materials across courses, years and platforms if necessary (e.g. industry-targeted courses that require the use of other platforms).
- The requirements will be taken to market in late 2007 or very early 2008, to produce a short-list of feasible candidates that provide maximum benefit for the University as a whole. As the choice of platforms is fairly small, the short-listing process should be very quick.
- This will be followed by a more in-depth evaluation process of the shortlisted candidates, based on evaluation criteria derived from the requirements, and input from appropriate staff from the teaching and support community. This will lead to a decision around the core platform(s).
- To provide the earliest opportunity for staff to become familiar with the new platform, a hosted solution may be deemed appropriate to start with, subject to careful risk analysis. The longer-term deployment will depend on further analysis of the requirements of the chosen platform.
- As part of building the University's support base, as quickly as possible, there will be a process to learn from the experiences of other users around Australia and beyond, including their migration processes and support materials.

- There needs to be some consideration of, but not necessarily decision on, platforms that provide augmenting services, and platforms that may supplant elements in future years. The timeline for these platforms may be shorter or longer as appropriate.
- Once the new platform is available in some form, a migration process and timeline will be developed. This will be informed by the early experiences of staff evaluating and migrating to the new platform. It is likely to take two semesters at least to fully migrate.

All of these elements will be considered and reviewed by the Academic Systems Assurance and Advisory Committee; members of the AcS-AAC include representatives from the College Education Committees and the College Research Committees.

The requirements statement identifies various needs and opportunities that could be met by upgrading the current platform. An additional pressure to upgrade, due to the current platform losing vendor support, has been removed as the vendor has extended support for another two years.

There are several cost issues associated with moving to a new structure and platform(s) for the service. These include the costs of:

- purchasing the underlying platforms, and their maintenance
- developing new support materials for teachers and for learners
- any necessary support in development of additional enhancements
- support to manage the change process, including dual platform operations

The timeline for the process follows from the consideration by the AcS-AAC. The broad intention is to provide opportunities to use any new platform(s) from early 2008 for staff prepared to self-support at some level, while maintaining the current platform. During 2008 support materials and processes will be developed for the new service, and support provided to migrate courses across. The existing WebCT platform will continue to be supported through 2008 as support is developed for the new platform.