STUDENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS PROJECT BOARD

Action points from the meeting held on Wednesday 2nd September 2009 at 1pm in Room 6.02, G O Jones Building, Mile End

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minute</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>By whom</th>
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<tr>
<td>2009.12.3</td>
<td>SEMS data to be passed to SITS Business Analyst for checking</td>
<td>JS</td>
<td>ASAP</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009.15</td>
<td>Report on Confirmation &amp; Clearing to be written</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>ASAP</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009.17</td>
<td>Project Communications document</td>
<td>JR &amp; SM</td>
<td>01-10-09</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009.18</td>
<td>Reschedule meeting scheduled for 23rd September</td>
<td>LW</td>
<td>ASAP</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009.18</td>
<td>Date of next meeting</td>
<td>ALL</td>
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QUEEN MARY, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

STUDENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS PROJECT BOARD

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 2nd September 2009 at 1pm in Room 6.02, G O Jones Building, Mile End

Present: Dean Curtis (Chair), Wendy Appleby, Nancy Cooper, Dr John Holman, Dr Alastair Owens, Professor Julia Shelton, Professor Morag Shiach, Naz Tarmann, Leigh Ward, Carron Windsor

1. Apologies for Absence

2009.01 RECEIVED: from Sam Brenton, Deborah James, Stefan Milik, Dr Liz Smith, Heidi Voulstaker

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 8th July 2009

2009.02 NOTED: that minute 2008.18.2.1 referred to SITS set-up and not transcripts.

2009.03 APPROVED: with the above correction, as an accurate record.

3. Matters Arising from the Minutes

2009.04 NOTED: that there were no matters arising from the minutes.

4. College Wide Issue Log

2009.05 RECEIVED: a paper from the SITS Project Team outlining College-wide issues affecting the SITS project.

2009.06 NOTED: that the Academic Board Advisory Group (ABAG) had been formed and would meet on 29th September.

2009.06.1 RECEIVED: papers to be considered at ABAG.

2009.06.2 AGREED: that ABAG would need to make definite decisions on these papers at its meeting on 29th September.

2009.07 NOTED: that missing module and diet data was currently being followed up by the SITS team.

2009.07.1 NOTED: that it was planned to have a web-based application available to Departments to check their module and diet data, but that no target date had yet been set for this.

5. Confirmation & Clearing Report

2009.09  NOTED:  that, in general, SITS processes for Confirmation & Clearing seemed to work well.

2009.10  NOTED:  that results download from UCAS went quicker than expected.

2009.11  NOTED:  that Clearing screens seemed to work well for both Clearing Hotline teams and also departments.

2009.12  DISCUSSED:  SITS data issues, including categories of students not initially included in Admissions statistics.

2009.12.1  NOTED:  that some of these issues were unpredicted as they could not have been tested with test data.

2009.12.2  AGREED:  that, to some extent, there was a lack of understanding of process overview and that there was a need for more detailed documentation, more training for super-users and more detailed specifications for reporting needs.

2009.12.3  AGREED:  that data from SEMS would be sent to the SITS Business Analyst for testing and checking.

ACTION: JS

2009.13  AGREED:  that there needed to be better links between the SIS Project Team and departments.

2009.14  AGREED:  that there was a need to develop a small group of people who had a greater understanding of the SITS ‘back office’.

2009.15  AGREED:  that a report on Confirmation and Clearing, considering the issues above would be circulated (attached to these minutes).

ACTION: NC

6.  Project Communications

2009.16  RECEIVED:  SIS Communications Update from the Student Communications Manager.

2009.17  AGREED:  that a complete document with timescales, priorities, key actions and owners was needed urgently and would be discussed at the next meeting.

ACTION: JR & SM

7.  Date of Next Meeting

2009.18  AGREED:  that meeting scheduled for 23rd September would be rescheduled for early October.

ACTION: LW

Post-meeting note: this has now been rescheduled for
8. **Items of Other Business**

2009.19 Dr John Patterson

2009.19.1 NOTED: that due to retirement, Dr John Patterson had formally resigned from the Project Board.

2009.19.2 NOTED: that the Chair was currently seeking a replacement from the School of Medicine & Dentistry.

2009.19.3 NOTED: the Board’s thanks to Dr Patterson.

2009.20 Country Field in SRS

2009.20.1 NOTED: that due to an issue with the transfer of data from SITS to SRS, the country field for each student had been omitted.

2009.20.2 NOTED: that this may pose a possible problem with HESA return.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 2.10pm.
Confirmation and Clearing Report

Overview

Processing

Confirmation
- Results download was quick and went very smoothly
- Confirmation reports were easy to use and we received positive feedback from admissions staff
- No major helpcalls or issues on the process

Clearing
- The screens and processes in SITS worked very well
- The burden of data inputting was shifted from the departments and admissions staff to the phone room, which may have caused a slightly slower transfer of the callers to the departments, but will have improved data accuracy for those departments that used it
- Training went well and there were very few help calls to the SITS team from either Admissions, the phone room or departmental staff regarding clearing, on the whole data inputting accuracy was high
- The team have had some good feedback from departments on the use of e:vision screens for departments during clearing, notably from Physics

Reporting

Admissions
- There were several issues with the specification and testing of the admissions confirmation reports that were highlighted and resolved on the second day of confirmation week.
  - Main issue was a missing status in the standard snapshot reporting that was missed in testing (mainly because there were no applicants with this status at the point that testing was done)
  - Other issues were changes to the original specification

Departments
- An issue was raised at the Project Board of the 2nd of September (and also previously at PSG) regarding reporting. It was suggested that SITS data did not accurately reflect the state of the data at UCAS and that the Admissions Office reporting was not providing a full count of all clearing applicants. Having investigated this further it is clear that SITS data does accurately reflect the state of data at UCAS, however this has highlighted a number of issues which are outlined in more detail below
**Issues in Detail**

During investigation into the issue with reporting that was raised at both PSG and the SITS Project Board there are a number of issues that need some consideration:

- Some departments have “opted out” of using SITS clearing functionality for the clearing process, instead using a combination of their own standalone departmental databases, UCAS web update, and SITS applicant information. Whilst SITS has a direct interface with UCAS the standalone systems do not, so their usage increases both the complexity of the business process used for managing clearing applications and the likelihood that there will be disparity between the systems.

- At least one department seems to be maintaining an additional separate database populated with a subset of data from SITS, which is being used for comparison purposes. It is presently unclear how that system is populated, however the data it contains is certainly not representative of the data held in the Live SITS system, since it is neither a real-time data link, nor a full dataset.

- There does not seem to be a College-wide admissions reporting strategy in place. There are inconsistencies in how departments and central admissions count data (for example whether or not deferred applications should be included) and the team have received no specifications for College-wide reports to be produced from SITS.

- It seems that a clear understanding of changes to admissions business processes has not been fully conveyed to departments. In particular the way in which UCAS data is managed has changed significantly and these changes will have impacted departmental processes during clearing. It seems that to some extent where processes are not specifically performed in SITS there has been little to no process review, leading to misunderstanding and inaccuracy, and also to a missed opportunity to utilise some of the functionality available in SITS.

**Recommendations**

- That SITS is recognised as the authoritative source of data for all student records, including applications, and that no other departmental based databases are used for managing this data. Instead we should provide a web-based, read-only view of the live admissions data in SITS to nominated departmental staff across all departments. Amendments to the data should be made via the central admissions office rather than by departments to avoid errors.

- Reports from SITS should be pre-defined, in a standard College-wide format, and made available to nominated departmental staff across all departments via the web. This would allow the use of agreed selection criteria and also the provision of detailed online help to explain exactly what the reports are counting, and would ensure that reports comparisons will always consider “like with like”.

- Any issues regarding the accuracy of data in SITS should be raised with the data owner and the SITS team before being publically communicated across the College. This may help ameliorate any damaging negative impact on perception of the system across the College and would give the project team an opportunity to address any issues or errors as soon as possible.

- The introduction of a clearly defined admissions process guide, targeted at all staff involved in any part of the admissions process, including central admissions, departments and other offices such as DDS and the International Office. This should include standard admissions and UCAS processes,
outline of the admissions annual cycle, reporting and communication with students at the very least. It would also be useful to provide departmental level training in these processes

- The introduction of an admissions user group which includes representatives from the departments and has responsibility for considering process change and development issues, and to develop change requests, reporting and standard letter specifications for the project team to action