# Virtual learning environment (VLE) review news December 2017

# VLE review process overview

The following diagram illustrates the VLE Review process and shows staff and student consultation points:



Currently the review is in the requirements gathering leading to the formal procurement process in spring of 2018:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  End User Requirements Gathering  | Data Analysis and Reporting  | Working Groups Review and Analysis  | Reporting to SMT & Recommendation  | Formal ProcurementProcess  |

# Vendor Presentations

Demonstrations of the four VLEs in the APUC framework were held in Inverness and VCed to the Partnership from 25th – 27th September. Students and staff were asked to complete a checklist to evaluate the VLE(s). We have received valuable feedback from staff and students indicating an appetite for change.

# Student Demonstrations Feedback and Analysis

Working with HISA, lunchtime demonstrations of the four VLEs were run at Inverness, Moray and Perth College. Student engagement continues to be an issue as only 41 students attended the demonstrations. Students watched short demonstrations on each VLE and were asked a series of questions about navigation, ease of use, etc. They were also asked to rank the VLEs. The feedback from these sessions will be added to the data gathered as part of the recent staff and student survey and focus group interviews undertaken for the university by Dr Emma Clayes and her team.

# VLE UHI Sandboxes established for all four environments

Mario MacDonald, LIS, set up demonstration sites for the four VLEs and populated them with test assignments, announcements etc., and included content supplied by the Education Development Unit. Students and staff will be invited to test and score the four VLEs using the sandboxes by completing a series of tasks in each VLE.

Staff and students interested in accessing the Sandbox areas for each VLE should contact the VLE Review team at vlereview@uhi.ac.uk and request user access details.

# VLE online demonstrations and survey

Mario MacDonald, LIS, has created four short 10 minute overview videos:

* [Blackboard VLE demonstration](https://stream.uhi.ac.uk/Player/9309)
* [Canvas VLE demonstration](https://stream.uhi.ac.uk/Player/9302)
* [D2L VLE demonstration](https://stream.uhi.ac.uk/Player/9585)
* [Moodle VLE demonstration](https://stream.uhi.ac.uk/Player/9317)

Staff and students have been invited to watch the videos and then answer a [short survey](https://uhi.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/vle-review-online-vle-demonstrations) on ease of use and preferences.

# Strategic Direction for UHI Senior Management Team

John smith and Andy Brown presented a paper at SMT requesting strategic direction to inform the VLE review recommendation document.

It was:

* noted that the review was intended to identify the best VLE solution for
2019 + 5 years;
* noted that SMT expects online delivery requirements to grow. Actual student numbers may remain stable but more content to be provided online and more distance learning
* agreed that the focus should be on using technology well and delivering quality and reliable resources in innovative ways;
* agreed that staff should be supported in use of VLE technologies, development/training required to use systems ahead of any implementation;
* agreed that there is an aspiration to embrace digital assessment;
* agreed that there is a desire to exploit learning and user analytics;
* noted that the final report and recommendation will be presented to Partnership Council in 2018.

# VLE review work groups

Three work groups (technology, quality and pedagogy), informed by the survey and focus groups, have been established to provide the necessary feedback to ensure that the VLE meets the users’ and institutions’ needs.

## Technology

* John Alexander Smith, LIS, Executive Office (Lead)
* Donald MacLean, Perth College
* Richard Hughes, LIS, Executive Office
* Alistair Young, Executive Office
* Marion MacDonald , LIS, Executive Office
* Scott Connor, EDU, Executive Office
* Prof. Frank Rennie, Lews Castle College
* Jem Taylor, LIS, Executive Office
* Mike Burns, LIS, Executive Office
* Jacky MacMillan, EDU, Executive Office
* Student Representation through HISA

## Quality

* Andy Brown, Executive Office (Lead)
* Dr. Fiona Skinner, Executive Office
* John MacMillan, EDU, Executive Office
* Lindsay Henderson, North Highland College
* Liz Cook, Inverness College
* Jessica Borley, Perth College
* Valerie Innes, Executive Office
* Student Representation through HISA

# Pedagogy

* Prof. Keith Smyth, LTA, Executive Office (Lead)
* Callum Stephen, HISA VPFE
* Rona Campbell, recent graduate
* Dr Helen Coker, IC UHI
* Elaine Dalloway, EO
* Dr Gareth Davies, LCC UHI
* Donald MacLean. PC UHI
* Elizabeth McFarlane, AC UHI
* Elizabeth McHugh, EO
* Prof Frank Rennie, LCC UHI
* Dr Michael Smith, LCC UHI

# Canvas demonstration Glasgow School of Art (GSA) (APUC Vangard Client)

Andy Brown and John Smith attended a Presentation at Glasgow School of Art detailing the implementation experience for Stirling University and Glasgow School of Art move from Blackboard to Canvas – GSA were the APUC Vangard institution for the VLE Framework and through the Framework Agreement selected Canvas as their institutional VLE. Their experience was positive although they had some issues with migration of legacy materials from Blackboard. The feedback from staff about the new learning environment was positive and engagement was high. Stirling University took a fast-track approach to implementing and managing the move from Blackboard to Canvas in just six months; this included the formal procurement process. They went live in this academic year and generally the feedback was positive.

GSA Migrated material from Blackboard to Canvas while Stirling took the decision not to move any content from their legacy environment in to Canvas. At GSA their migration success rate was about 50% of the corpus. Manual migration was required to sort through various issues e.g. extremely large files and file structures with multiple embedded folders. Although Stirling did not formally migrate materials for staff they ran a test technical migration that demonstrated that a very small number of modules required additional manual handling. Both projects owners reported generally positive feedback from users and a high level of satisfaction with their interactions with the Vendor (Canvas).

The University of Stirling’s decision not to migrate was to ensure deletion of years of old material in their VLE. UHI students have also reported old material in Blackboard modules – the Quality work group will be considering this issue.

Communications and student engagement in the process were issues for both projects. Many staff at Stirling for example, despite receiving extensive communication throughout the project, did not understand the timeframe and delayed their engagement. Stirling are now moving into the second phase of their project regarding staff culture change and taking full advantage of the new VLE and its functionality.

# Procurement

UHI has received agreement from APUC that they will support us through the formal Procurement Process. Odette Ashman, Procurement Manager with APUC will assist the university through the formal procurement process early in 2018.

# Changes to project timeline

At the request of HISA, the project timeline has been extended to address issues of lack of student engagement. This has moved the timeline by two months, reducing the period required for staff development: Mon 10th September 2018 – Fri 28th June 2019. This will not impact on the new VLE start date of 1st August 2019.

# Online EDUCA Conference Berlin, December 2017

John Smith attended the online EDUCA Conference in Belin in December and met with Blackboard, Canvas, D2L, and Synergy Learning (Moodle). The four vendors presented overviews of their products and detailing the roadmap for each.

# Communications

Staff receive project updates through Yammer and a public project website has been created: <https://mahara.uhi.ac.uk/view/view.php?id=31325>.

For further information please contact Communications communications@uhi.ac.uk.