Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 30 April 2014 at 10:00 in H/G19

Present
Tom Stoneham (Chair)
Linda Brosnan (Secretary)
Mike Dunn
Thomas Ron

13-14/20 Apologies
Apologies were received from Blayn Parkinson, Helen Petrie, Julie Allinson, Steve Campbell, Amanda Wright and Alison Thompson

13-14/21 Minutes of the last meeting
The minutes of the meeting held on the 14 January 2013 were approved with the following amendment:

13-14/19 AOB b – The YUSU Disabilities Officer should read the YUSU Disabled Students Officer

13-14/22 Matters arising
a 13/14-15, third bullet point, ‘The use of Google application for e-learning’
At the last meeting it was agreed to invite a member of the IT Services Google Applications Team. Mike Dunn has agreed to join the forum.

13-14/23 Feedback from the meeting of the Disability and Accessibility Group held on 11 February 2014
The Forum noted the feedback from the Disability and Accessibility Group. A discussion between the Director of Student Support Services, Director of Registry Services and Head of IT Services is planned to look at the provision of laptops for students to use in examinations.

It was reported that discussions have also taken place in IT Services about managing and configuring laptops for students to use in examinations.

13-14/24 Update from EDLT
• VLE
It was noted that following the recent re-tender process it has been agreed that Blackboard will be the supplier of the VLE for the next five years. Testing of the system is scheduled to take place over the next two months before the upgrade in July.
During discussion the following points were made:

Accessibility of regular updates from Blackboard will need to be thoroughly tested before going live.

A member of the forum would like greater integration between e-Vision and the VLE. It was suggested that a link is added to e-Vision that would open the VLE in a new window and vice versa. Other members of the Forum agreed that this would benefit both staff and students.

There was a discussion about contacting students through the VLE and Google apps. Some members of staff have found that students interact better via Google Groups compared to using discussion boards on the VLE. It was suggested that Google+ which has a ‘Communities’ feature might be another option.

- TechDis
  TechDis is a leading UK advisory service on technologies for inclusion and accessibility. They offer a wide range of resources for organisations including those in the higher education sector.

One of the latest developments is TechDis Voices, a text to speech technology with two naturally sounding voices. It was noted that following testing earlier this year there are plans to make this technology available to staff and students at the University. In addition, five accessibility applications, listed below, will also be made available to staff and students after the Summer upgrade. Supporting material for these applications is to be developed during the Summer.

Lingoes  
Balbolka  
Tbar  
VuBar  
ssOverlay

There was a discussion about the applications listed above and whether or not they can be accessed via a smartphone and/or tablet.

A member of the Forum suggested that TechDis could be invited to attend the next meeting of the Forum to discuss the range of applications they can offer to the University. It was felt that there should be an initial discussion with TechDis before they are invited to a meeting. Also, to raise awareness in departments, a presentation to other groups might be more appropriate, for example, the Administrators Forum.

**Action - LB**
13-14/25  Update on accessibility testing project (Protea)

It was noted that there had been extensive testing on the accessibility of the VLE during the re-tender process and discussions with Blackboard are continuing. Also members of the Forum were invited to present a paper on the testing at the Blackboard learning and teaching conference.

13-14/26  Review of Assisted Technologies

● There will be an upgrade to the applications available in the classroom during the Summer.

● The Teaching and Learning Team are working closely with the Academic Liaison Librarians.

13-14/27  AOB

a. The YUSU Disabled Students Officer raised an issue relating to the provision of an amanuensis (writer) for students during examinations. It was agreed that the Secretary of the Forum would contact the Examinations Office to clarify the process for providing an amanuensis.

Action - LB

Post meeting note – The Examinations Manager confirmed that the process for the provision of an amanuensis is that: ‘once an Amanuensis has been approved, it is the Department's responsibility to provide an amanuensis for students taking examinations.’

b. The YUSU Disabled Students Officer reported that students had tested hearing loops in some of the lecture theatres on campus. The results showed that a number of the hearing loops were functioning well but some only partially and others not at all. It was suggested that lectures scheduled in a lecture theatre where the hearing loop is not functioning should be recorded through the lecture capture system.

It was agreed that the results of the testing would be forwarded to the Secretary of the Forum to follow up with the Audio Visual Team.

Action - LB

13-14/28  Dates of future meetings

Suggested dates and time for the 2014/15 meetings to be circulated during the Summer.

LB/May 2014