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Papers located in the back cover wallet:

Case Studies
Briefing Papers
A Community of Users
WebPA Student Surveys



Introduction



Rationale for the Resource Pack

This WebPA Resource Pack has been designed to support those considering the adoption of WebPA. WebPA is an online automated tool that facilitates the peer moderated marking of group work. It captures the various deliverables generated from the JISC funded project (see the section on history on page 4) in a usable guide and also helps to inform the implementation and embedding of the tool within a department and, ultimately, across an institution. All the experience and guidance within the pack is based on lessons learnt by the adopters of the WebPA tool and the project team.

Who should read this pack

The pack is aimed at a range of people who may be involved in the consideration and adoption of an e-learning tool. You should read this pack if you want:

- an overview of what WebPA is and does
- to know where and how to get started with WebPA
- to understand your possible role in relation to WebPA
- access to other resources that promote the pedagogical benefits of self and peer assessment for the moderation of group work by students.

How to use this pack

Each of the sections is targeted at a different user group. Dip in and out of the sections as required or point colleagues to relevant sections and give them the handouts at the end of the pack.

Background

What is WebPA?

WebPA is an online automated tool that facilitates peer moderated marking of group work. Students carry out a group task set by the academic tutor and follow this by an assessment on the performance of the group. A 'weighting factor' is generated for each individual group member which is derived from each student's input against defined criteria. Based on the total mark given to the group task, assessed and allocated by the academic tutor in the usual way, the weighting factor is then used to moderate marks providing an individual mark for each student.

The tool is convenient and flexible, lending itself to any type of university group assignment in any discipline. Academic tutors can determine the size of the groups, the overall number of groups for the task, the assessment criteria, when and how the assessment is delivered and a whole host of other flexible parameters.

The WebPA tool was made available as an open source application in 2007 and is based on sound pedagogical research. Academic tutors at

Loughborough University have been researching the use of the tool in teaching over the past ten years. As the tool has been widely adopted, other academic tutors are now carrying out research in their own discipline areas, demonstrating both the appeal and the versatility of WebPA.

Why use WebPA?

Contemporary pedagogy has heavily promoted the benefits of student-centred team work. However, the allocation of fair and equitable marks still remains a major problem. Students express strong disquiet about receiving an overall group mark and wish to

"This fair method allowed us to identify each other's strengths and weaknesses, meaning that we worked better in subsequent group activities. The feedback I received has been invaluable to my personal development." Luke Field, Third year undergraduate student, Loughborough University

be assigned individual marks that reflect their personal effort and ability. This is where the WebPA tool can help ensure that students view the assessment process more positively.

History of WebPA

The WebPA tool has been developed over a number of phases and was originally adapted from a paper-based system into a complex Microsoft Excel spreadsheet in 1998. As the internet became more widely used the tool was rewritten to work as a simple web-based system.

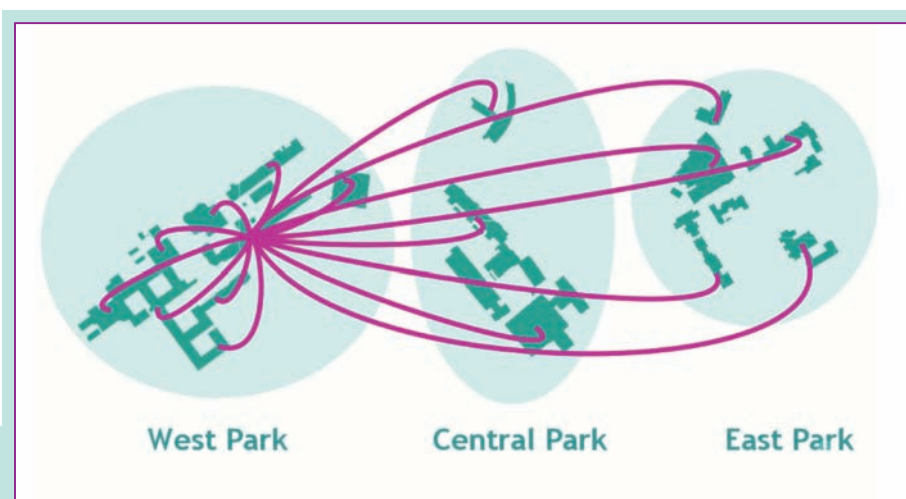


Figure 1. Spread of WebPA across the Loughborough Campus



Later it was found that the tool used a similar methodology to that outlined in Goldfinch and Raeside (1990), utilising the same basic principles.

In 2006 the WebPA project was set up in partnership with the University of Hull and the Engineering and Physical Sciences Higher Education Academy Subject Centres. Funding was received from the JISC e-Learning Capital Programme. This allowed the consortium to make the tool available as an open source application in mid 2007, incorporating new features and processes and widening its use to other UK higher education institutions (HEIs). By 2009, the users of the WebPA tool had formed a community of approximately 17 HEIs, including colleagues in Australian universities. This community of users is continuing to grow and provide support to new adopters of the WebPA tool.

In 2008, WebPA was awarded a JISC Learning Impact Award, recognising the use of technology to improve learning. WebPA was the only UK project among the twenty-three shortlisted finalists.

In addition to receiving an award, the WebPA tool was named 'Best Assessment Support' for the 'best in category' awards.



"WebPA is simple to use and affords me a unique insight into the operation of my groups. It eliminated the bickering that my old 'paper' method used to promote - and the students like it" Professor Rob Parkin, Head of the Wolfson School of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering, Loughborough University

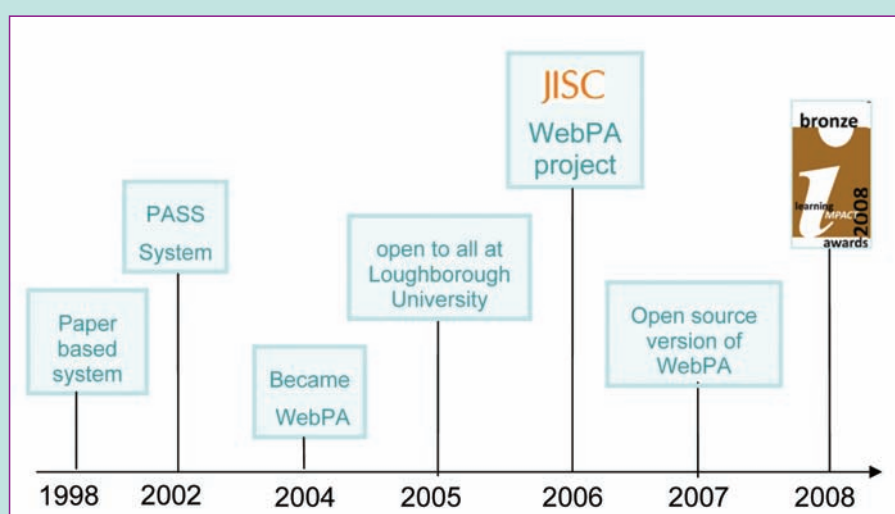


Figure 2. History of the WebPA tool

