Section 3

Information for IT Support

Introduction

This section supports someone involved in the installation of WebPA. It has been tailored to those with an intermediate level of IT knowledge. The section is confined to information relevant to the installation, if you want to know more about why your department or institution may have decided to use WebPA, or to find out about the purpose or history of WebPA, you may need to read other sections as well.

Your role in the adoption of WebPA in your institution

It is assumed that you have either been asked to install WebPA on behalf of an academic tutor or you are embarking on the installation process yourself. Most installations begin by piloting with a limited number of academic tutors and a set of small cohorts. Depending on the size of the team behind the installation, you may also be asked to administer WebPA which involves changing optional settings.

As you are likely to be the key contact for technical and maintenance issues we highly recommend that you join the JISCmail list **http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/webpa.html**, where any new releases, patches and other relevant information are posted. This will enable you to stay informed about the latest developments that may affect your installation of the WebPA tool and to install bug fixes quickly. More information about joining the community of developers and users can be found at the back of this pack.

FAQs related to the installation of WebPA

Downloading WebPA

WebPA can be downloaded from SourceForge and installed on any suitable server. Installation on a shared departmental server for a small pilot is a good starting point. For more information about the installation see the documentation at **http://www.webpa.ac.uk/?q=node/30 .**

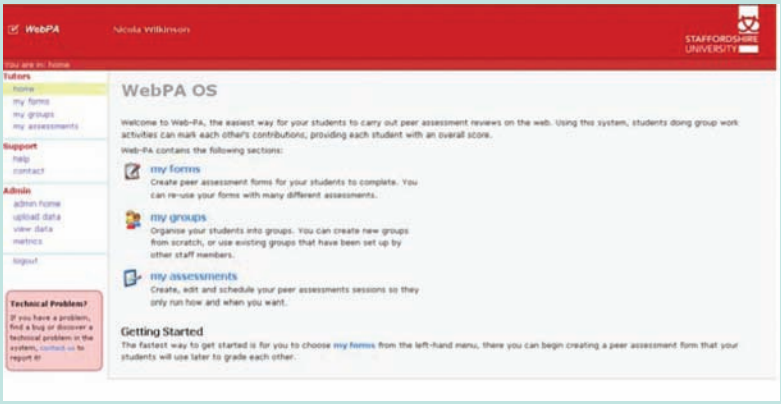


Figure 1. Institution specific corporate layout

WebPA is open source – what does that mean?

WebPA was initially released as an open source application in 2007. There is no charge for you to download, install and use the tool. However, there is a cost of ownership (see *Cost Implications*). There are also licence conditions to be adhered to (see Figure 2).

WebPA has been made available under version 3 of the GNU General Public Licence (GNU GPL) **http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/gpl.html.** The GNU GPL is used in around 60% of open source projects[1] and grants the downloader a licence to use the application. There are other elements to the licence that allow for distribution, modification and other such actions. You can find out more about this type of open source licence at **http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/resources/licencefinder.xml.**

I'm concerned that WebPA isn't enterprise-ready

One of the most common concerns relating to open source software is that the system won't be enterprise-ready. Traditionally systems are considered enterprise-ready when they can be considered to be reliable; don't need specialists to install and support the tool; fit with the established security models; can be administered locally without the need for more specialists; and use a standard database.

WebPA has been proven to be enterprise-ready in the institutional roll out of the tool at both Loughborough University and the University of Hull. On average at Loughborough University, over 50 academic tutors currently assess 8,000 individual group members using WebPA annually. In comparison, the University of Hull currently assesses an average of 500 individual group members a year.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

0. Definitions.

"This License" refers to version 3 of the GNU General Public License.

"Copyright" also means copyright-like laws that apply to other kinds o works, such as semiconductor masks.

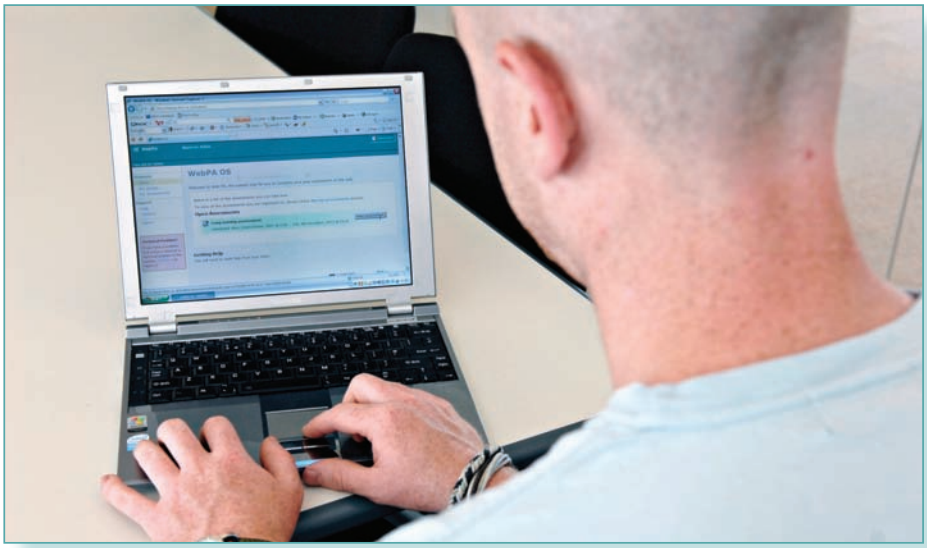
"The Program" refers to any copyrightable work licensed under this License. Each licensee is addressed as "you". "Licensees" and "recipients" may be individuals or organizations.

To "modify" a work means to copy from or adapt all or part of the work in a fashion requiring copyright permission, other than the making of an exact copy. The resulting work is called a "modified version" of the earlier work or a work "based on" the earlier work.

A "covered work" means either the unmodified Program or a work based on the Program.

Figure 2. Licence terms and conditions

[1] 'Open Source License Resource Center / Black Duck Software'. Blackducksoftware.com. http://www.blackducksoftware.com/oss Retrieved on 2008-11-17



How is the security of the tool addressed?

Due to the number of adopters choosing to use WebPA, the security of the system has been, and is being, continually addressed through fixes provided by the community. Due to the nature of open source development, future security issues need to be raised with the community so that they can be dealt with in a timely and appropriate manner. There are ways to help keep WebPA a secure tool – to find out more read the briefing paper on joining a community of developers and getting support.

Integration with institutional systems

The WebPA system can be linked to other institutional systems as required. As you have access to the system's underlying code (written in PHP and MySQL) you can ensure integration with the Student Information Systems (SIS) for your institution and perform testing on the system before piloting with academic tutors and students. Community members have contributed to the development of a seamless login module for use with the Blackboard Vista VLE **http://webpa.svn.sourceforge.net/viewvc/webpa/branches/bb_powerlink/**.
Further contributions are being developed for other VLE systems.

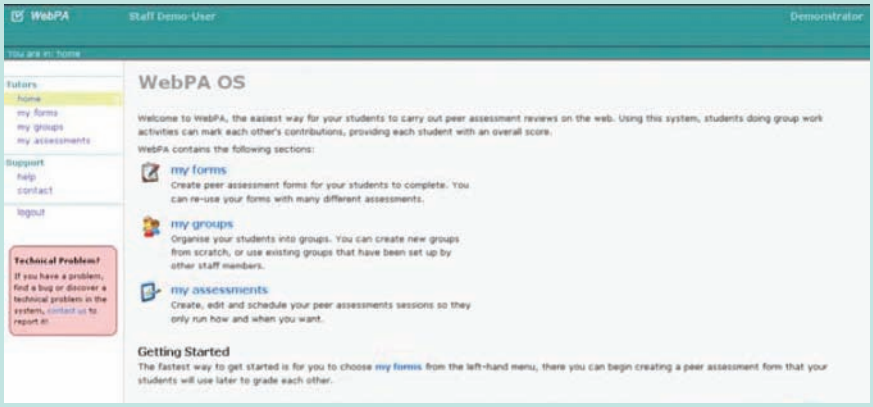


Figure 3. WebPA out of the box

What about WebPA's scalability?

WebPA can be used by one academic tutor with a small cohort or with a number of academic tutors and their associated cohorts. Figure 4 shows the increase in usage at Loughborough University over a four year period. The largest single cohort of students to carry out an assessment so far has been 290. In contrast, at the University of Wales, Newport there is currently just one academic tutor with 30 students.

How can I future-proof WebPA?

Ensuring that WebPA is future-proof is another common concern. However, by adopting a system that is open source, you have a copy of the underlying source code. This enables you to customise and update the tool to suit your institutional needs. Within the community there are other institutions who have adopted WebPA and are making changes which are subsequently being released back to the community through SourceForge. Through this collaborative approach you and your university will benefit from these new features and security updates as the tool is continually developed and maintained.

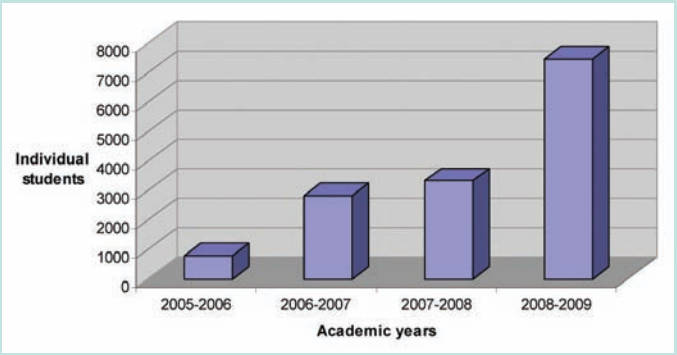


Figure 4. Increase in number of students being put though the WebPA tool at Loughborough University

Thinking ahead

Experience has shown that nearly all WebPA pilots have been successful and quickly expanded to many users, often beyond the initial department. If possible, plan for future growth and usage from the outset. For example, the University of Hull has WebPA centrally hosted on its own server.

Tailoring WebPA for my institution

WebPA has several, easily configurable settings that you can change to get up and running quickly. For example, you can configure the tool to change the 'help' email address **http://www.webpa.ac.uk/?q=node/211 .**

More detailed configuration is optional when putting the tool into practice, including automatic emailing and the provision of feedback structures, which will need to be defined by the academic tutor or learning technologist/educational developer.

Another common area is changing the look and feel of the tool to better fit your department or institutional scheme (See Figure 5). Documentation on changing the look and feel is available from **http://www.webpa.ac.uk/?q=node/311 .**

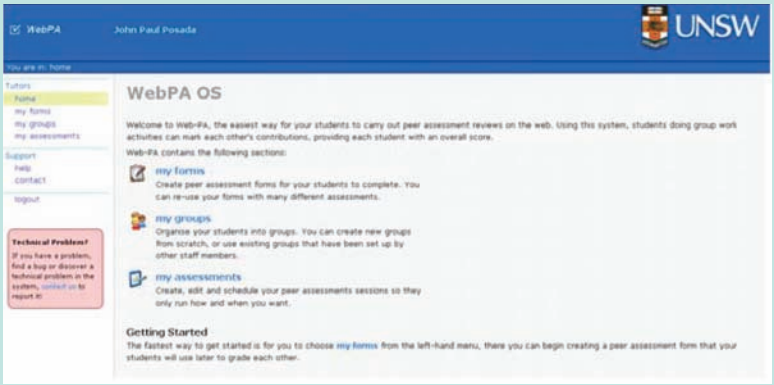
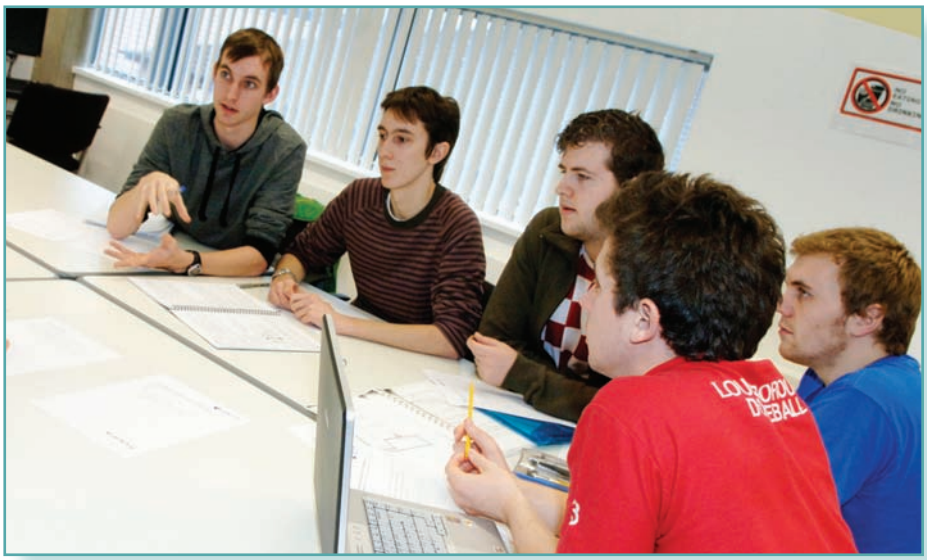


Figure 5. Example of Institution specific corporate layout

Cost implications

When considering the cost implications of the WebPA tool, there are a number of factors which need to be taken into account. One of the main areas for consideration will be the total cost of ownership (TCO) in implementing and running WebPA. This TCO will be dependant on your institution and the decisions made by the team implementing WebPA.

The TCO depends upon a number of varying factors beyond the implementation phase and the systems architecture. For instance, if the implementation is on proprietary web servers (e.g. a Microsoft 2K server) then costs may be incurred. Consideration is required as to whether the cost is direct, through the requirement of the server for WebPA alone, or if it is indirectly incurred, through a server being available for the installation of the tool. Still, there are other, longer term costs that need to be factored in. These long term costs include the support of the tool, training, and maintenance beyond any pilot.



Initial implementation may be cost-free if a server is available for the piloting of tools within the institution. It is then at the next stage, as the piloting ends and embedding takes place, when costs are more likely to become evident. This should not dissuade you from supporting an installation but rather ensure that you are fully informed when the time comes to move on from a pilot, particularly as open source is seen as being 'free'.

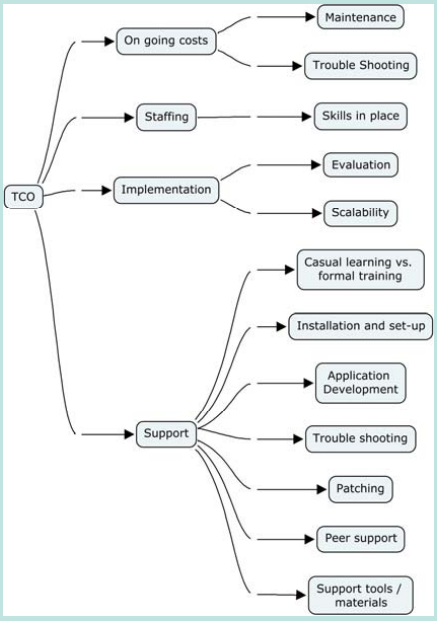


Figure 6. Total cost of ownership factors