

# Briefing paper for IT Administrators

*This briefing is designed to offer IT Support and Systems Administrators a quick introduction and guidance to WebPA, an online peer assessment tool.*

*For further information, please refer to the WebPA Resource Pack or visit the WebPA website at <http://www.webpa.ac.uk>*

## What is WebPA?

WebPA is an online peer assessment tool that can be used by any institution.

It can support any academic tutor who is using, or wishes to introduce, group work within their teaching practice. WebPA enables academic tutors to set specific criteria for the peer assessment of group work.

Originally developed over ten years ago at Loughborough University, WebPA has been further enhanced through a JISC funded project involving collaboration between Loughborough University, the University of Hull and the Higher Education Academy Subject Centres for Engineering and Physical Sciences.

As a result of this project, the WebPA tool is now available to all higher education institutions through an open source general public licence.

WebPA is an application which uses MySQL to run the back-end database and is written in PHP. As with all open source applications there is no charge for an institution to download, install and use the tool.

As a licence holder your institution will have access to the source code, enabling integration with your institution's Student Information Systems (SIS)

Since the first open source release of the WebPA tool in 2007, a further 17 higher education institutions have adopted WebPA and have begun implementing it with their students. A thriving community of users is rapidly developing.

In 2008, the WebPA tool gained international recognition for learning impact by the IMS Global Learning Consortium. At the same time it was also named '**Best Assessment Support Tool**'.

*"We are impressed with the success of the WebPA project and the impact on group work in higher education."*

David Kernohan, Programme Manager,  
E-Learning Team, JISC

## Why is my institution interested in adopting WebPA?

WebPA offers a number of benefits to the academic tutors who choose to use it, not least the opportunity of offering their students a fair means of assessing group work activity.



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On a departmental/institutional level WebPA offers:

- an assessment methodology that is readily accepted by students (reducing the number of student complaints regarding of group work assessment)
- a means of storing assessment records centrally
- a standard tool that can be used across the department/institution
- a tool that can help influence, develop and enhance assessment practice and policy.

## What is my likely role?

It is likely that you have been asked to install the WebPA software by an academic tutor who is interested in piloting it.

Most installations initially involve a limited number of academic tutors who intend to use the system with small cohorts.

However, experience elsewhere shows that the use of WebPA within an institution can quickly increase as its use becomes embedded and you should therefore consider this possibility when making decisions on the resourcing and support required.

## What will I now need to do?

In order to install WebPA you will need to take certain steps and make certain decisions:

- assess the potential costs of installing and running WebPA both in the short and long-term (See the Resource Pack for more detailed advice on how to do this)

- establish whether you can provide the resourcing and support required
- identify the skills that may be required and establish whether such skills are already available to you
- decide whether to install on a shared local server or, with the possibility of long term engagement in mind, on a dedicated central server
- decide whether you wish to tailor or configure WebPA to your institutional needs (for example, you may require the application to reflect corporate or departmental colours, style, appearance etc.)

## What additional steps should I take?

In addition to those listed above, you might wish to:

- join the WebPA JISCmail list (<http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/webpa.html>) where new releases, patches and other relevant information will be posted
- join the community of other WebPA users <http://webpa.ac.uk/?q=node/487> from where you can get advice, support and guidance.

## Where can I find further information?

For further information please refer to the WebPA resource pack, available as hardcopy or online at <http://www.webpa.ac.uk>

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