

SUNET VS LMS

During the last few years ITHU – an informal network for IT in higher education – have been working on a proposal to have Sunet get involved in operating Learning Management Systems.

Learning Management Systems (LMS) are core business for most universities and it is only natural that there is significant investment in existing systems and processes. It is not at all obvious that Sunet can add value in this space.

On the other hand there are also several reasons why Sunet should get involved; notably the fact that 15 (about half) of the major educational institutions in Sunet have expressed strong interest in taking part in some form of common LMS platform.

There are relatively few vendors in this space – fewer than 10 in fact. This makes it feasible for Sunet to treat LMS as a normal service establishment process but because an LMS is a substantial investment, such a process would require Sunet and Sunet customers to have a lot more information about business models, pricing levels, service delivery models etc than we have today. Collecting that information probably requires a tender process which requires commitment from our customers – a classic case of catch 22.

However we have recently discovered that our nordic neighbors have identified not only the same need (a common LMS) but also almost all the same key requirements. Under the NORDUnet strategy, this makes it possible for Sunet and our sister organizations in the nordics to conduct a shared framework tender (using a competitive dialogue). This is good news for Sunet customers because it allows us to defer the decision to establish a common LMS platform service to a later stage when we (as the result of the framework process) know more about business models etc.

This is what is happening now:

1. Right now Sunet is helping NORDUnet to prepare a joint competitive dialog tender for a framework contract for a SaaS LMS platform that Sunet, Funet, Deic and Uninett can call of in each country. Sunet has made no commitment to sign or call of the contract at this stage and no Sunet customers will be listed on the framework tender. The technical requirements are being developed by a group led by Lars Bourelius (BTH) <lasse.bourelius at bth.se>
2. When the framework contract is in place Sunet customers can decide if they want Sunet to call of the framework contract and integrate the SaaS offering with SWAMID to establish a common LMS service for Sunet.

If all fails we have only "wasted" a few hours writing a framework tender. If all goes well we will have the possibility to establish a joint LMS platform in Sunet backed by the shared volume of all the nordic countries. This is nordic collaboration at its best. Stay tuned for more updates and if you have questions, please get in touch

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