

Evaluation of portal frameworks

[\(based on San Diego State University's Rubric for Rating Commercial Portal Vendors\)](#)

Thanks to Paul Browning at University of Bristol

S = score, WS = weighted score

		Wt	Insufficient (0 points)	Adequate (1 point)	Excellent (2 points)	Oracle portal			uPortal			CleverPath			Sharepoint		
						Comm	S	WS	Comm	S	WS	Comm	S	WS	Comm	S	WS
I. Look and feel (of front-end)	Aesthetics	2	Static background with few or no graphic elements. No ability for variation in layout or typography.	There are a few graphic elements and there is limited ability for variation in type size, colour, and layout.	Full control of look and feel and changes can be made quickly. Appealing graphic elements are included appropriately. Differences in type size and/or university colours and logos are used well.	Uses wizard for PL/SQL, not for Java			No wizard; XSLT or CSS			Resizing portlets is clumsy. Changing themes is easy					
							2	4		2	4		1	2		1	2
I. Look and feel (of front-end)	Ease of use	3	Counter-intuitive interface, requiring greater than two hours of user training.	Somewhat intuitive interface, requiring two hours or less of user training.	Intuitive interface, requiring little or no user training.	Needs training, navigation difficult			Layout easy to understand			Need training on how to set options, navigate tabs					
							1	3		2	6		1	3		1	3
II. Security	Authentication	3	No authentication.	Requires multiple log-ins in order to access different databases.	Single sign-on for multiple functions from one central database (assuming appropriate infrastructure exists).	Retains and passes on credentials			Retains and passes on credentials			Uses internal database or external directory					
							1.5	4.5		1.5	4.5		1.5	4.5		1.5	4.5
II. Security	Authentication method	3	No authentication or authentication only against a local database.	One authentication method that can use an existing database.	Multiple authentication methods that can use existing databases (for example, can authenticate using an existing LDAP server or using Active Directory via Kerberos)												
							2	6		2	6		2	6		2	6
II. Security	Encryption	3	No access via secure connection	Secure connection can be specified but only in non-standard way.	Secure connection can be specified using standard method.	Uses SSL			Uses SSL			Needs support from Tomcat or IIS.					
							2	6		2	6		2	6		2	6
II. Security	Access	3	Information access is all or nothing.	User is allowed to access certain information based on their user type.	User is allowed to access and change certain information based on who they are and their user type.							Configuration of users is awkward					
							2	6		2	6		2	6		2	6
II. Security	Roles	3	Information access is all or nothing.	There is a limit to the number of roles a user can have in the system.	There is no limit to the number of roles a user can have in the system.												
							2	6		2	6		2	6		2	6

II. Security	Hosting	1	Server(s) under control of vendor at location undetermined by NIIMLE.	Server(s) located locally.	Server(s) located locally or at a location approved by NIIMLE.														
							2	2		2	2		2	2			2	2	
III. Personalisation	Information push	3	User receives targeted information relevant to their constituency but no dynamic data.	User receives information relevant to the individual, but limited dynamically updated data available.	User receives specific information relevant to the individual and available in real-time. For instance, student-specific course-schedule, enrollment details, and degree checklist.														
							2	6		2	6		2	6			2	6	
III. Personalisation	Information pull (portal editor)	2	No editing tool to customise the portal environment.	Editing tool for customising tabs, panel buttons colours, and fonts. Personalised view of all the information relevant to user-specific needs and preferences.	Editing tool for full customisation as well as the ability to subscribe to new channels (discussion boards, chat etc). User has ability to add/edit/remove information from a list of internal and external resources that the NIIMLE provides.														
							2	4		2	4		2	4			2	4	
IV. Support	Integration	3	No fit with existing relational databases, for example Oracle RDBMS	Some fit with existing relational databases, for example Oracle RDBMS	Great fit with existing relational databases, for example Oracle RDBMS	Can use ODBC and JDBC			Can use ODBC and JDBC			Can use ODBC and JDBC							
							2	6		2	6		2	6			2	6	
IV. Support	Implementation	2	Vendor relies solely on NIIMLE staff.	Vendor provides implementation training to NIIMLE staff and consultants for a fee.	Vendor provides implementation training to NIIMLE staff and on-site consultants for free.	Training readily available			Less available			Less available							
							2	4		1	2		1	2			1	2	
IV. Support	Scalability	3	Not currently in use at a large-scale reference site.	Currently being implemented at a large-scale reference site.	Existing large-scale reference site demonstrating that application server scales on Solaris.							CA claim tests indicate it can support millions of users							
							2	6		2	6		2	6			1	3	
IV. Support	Reliability	3	No reference site.	Some evidence from reference sites that service is reliable.	Clear evidence from reference sites that production service is reliable.							Only info is from CA and associated companies							
							1	3		1	3		1	3			1	3	
IV. Support	Load balancing	3	No vendor-provided load-balancing.	Vendor provides some assistance with enabling load-balancing.	Vendor provides load-balancing as part of solution (or via alliance with commercial partner).							Multiple portal servers can talk to one database server							
							2	6		1	3		2	6			1	3	
IV. Support	Maintenance	3	No plan for ongoing support or maintenance.	Weak plan for ongoing support or maintenance.	Strong plan for ongoing support or maintenance.							No specific info but CA are marketing aggressively							
							2	6		1	3		2	6			2	6	

IV. Support	Vendor support	2	Vendor requires toll call during business hours. No email or Web-based help.	Vendor provides email and Web-based help. No phone or fax help (24/7).	Vendor provides email, Web-based and toll-free help (24/7) for free.						eSupport options. Unclear how these are charged for							
							2	4		1	2		1	2			2	4
IV. Support	Dependencies	2	Requires installation of several packages (other than product) that are not already in use locally.	Requires installation of one or two packages (other than product) that is not already in use locally.	Does not require any software that is not already in use locally.	Needs mod_jserv					Only needs a database server							
							1	2		2	4		2	4			1	2
IV. Support	Long-term viability - vendor experience	2	Vendor is in pilot phase and has no experience or references.	Vendor has experience in higher education portal development but has limited references.	Vendor has significant higher education portal development experience and can provide numerous references.													
							1	2		1.5	3		1	2			1	2
IV. Support	Long-term viability - commitment to product	2	Vendor company is small with limited funding to develop product.	Vendor company is investing some funding in product.	Vendor company has ample financial backing that is committed to developing the product.													
							1	2		1	2		1	2			2	4
V. Standards	API (Application Programmer Interface)	3	Portal API cannot pass information to other applications, or is not available to campus.	Portal API can pass some information to other applications and is available on a limited basis.	Portal API can pass information to other applications, seamlessly integrating multiple sources of information and campus can write their own interface, for example passing user preferences between applications						APIs are provided for XML, Java, Web, Templates and Custom Portal Installation							
							2	6		2	6		2	6			2	6
V. Standards	Accessibility - output in different formats	2	No tools for outputting in different formats	Vendor provides tools for a limited number of standard formats	Vendor provides tools giving full flexibility of output format													
							1	2		2	4			0			1	2
V. Standards	Accessibility - administrative tools	2	No tools for ensuring that site meets WAI accessibility guidelines.	Some help provided to ensure that site meets WAI accessibility guidelines.	Good set of tools provided to ensure that site meets WAI accessibility guidelines.													
							0	0		0	0	Nothing provided	0	0			0	0
VI. Administration	NIIMLE staffing	2	Seven or more full-time NIIMLE staff required for managing and maintaining system software.	Between four and six full time NIIMLE staff required for managing and maintaining system software.	Three or fewer full time NIIMLE staff required for managing and maintaining system software.	One person to maintain					One person to maintain							
							2	4		2	4		2	4			2	4
VI. Administration	Vendor staffing	2	Vendor relies solely on NIIMLE staff.	Vendor provides training to NIIMLE staff and consultants for a fee.	Vendor provides training to NIIMLE staff and data migration/integration consultants for free.													
							1	2		1	2		1	2			1	2

VI. Administration	Fit with existing staff skill set - management of software	3	No existing staff currently have skills required for management of system software.	Only one or two members of staff currently have skills required for management of system software.	Three or more members of staff currently have skills required for management of system software.	Oracle, Portal interface, Apache, PL/SQL	1	3	MySQL, Apache, Tomcat	1	3	SQL Server, Apache, Tomcat	1	3	1	3
VI. Administration	Fit with existing skill set - development	3	No existing staff currently have skills required for developing applications using the software.	Only one or two members of staff currently have skills required for developing applications using the software.	Three or more members of staff currently have skills required for developing applications using the software.	PL/SQL, Java	2	6	Java, XML/XSLT	2	6	Java, SQL Server	2	6	2	6
VI. Administration	User definition	3	System will NOT allow NIIMLE administrator to define custom user types.	System will allow NIIMLE administrator to define limited user types.	System will allow NIIMLE administrator to define custom user types.		2	6		2	6		2	6	2	6
VI. Administration	Information channels	3	System will NOT allow NIIMLE administrator to define custom information channels.	System will allow NIIMLE administrator to define limited information channels.	System will allow NIIMLE administrator to define custom information channels. No limit to number of information channels.		2	6		2	6		2	6	2	6
VI. Administration	Hardware resources	3	Hardware requirements do not coincide with university standards.	Hardware requirements loosely coincide with university standards.	Hardware requirements coincide with university standards.		2	6		2	6		2	6	2	6
VI. Administration	Pricing - software	3	Annual licence fee and Service Level Agreement costs not based on fixed price schedule or exceeds budget.	Annual licence fee and Service Level Agreement costs based on fixed price schedule.	Annual licence fee and Service Level Agreement costs based on fixed price schedule and are under budget.		2	6		2	6		2	6	2	6
VI. Administration	Pricing - production service hardware	3	Large increase in hardware required for production service	Modest increase in hardware required for production service	Will be able to run production service on current hardware		0	0		1	3		0	0	0	0
VI. Administration	Pricing - development hardware	3	Large increase in hardware required to develop service	Modest increase in hardware required to develop service	Will be able to develop service on current hardware		1	3		2	6		1	3	1	3
VI. Administration	Online help, documentation and training	2	No help putting portal applications into production.	Plan for integration, but little useful documentation and training.	Clear integration, with plenty of supporting documentation and face-to-face train-the-trainer training. Several online help features, for example tutorials, job aids and FAQ's.	Lots of documentation	1.5	3		1	2		0.5	1	1	2

VII. General	Essential channels	2	No indication of off-the-shelf channels for HE.	Some off-the-shelf channels for HE available or being developed.	Many off-the-shelf channels for HE available or being developed.	Can use inline frames	0	0	Aleph and Blackboard	1	2	0	0	0	0
VII. General	Exit strategy	3	Channels are non-standard and would require a lot of work to transfer to another framework.	Channels are written using standards but would require some work to transfer them to another framework.	Channels are written using standards and can be very easily transferred to another framework using those standards.		0.5	1.5	Less work needed if only Java used (thought to be unlikely)	1	3	0.5	1.5	1	3
TOTALS							143			150		135		136	

Total scores

	Maximum	OP	uPortal
I. Look and feel (of front-end)	10	7	10
II. Security	32	30.5	30.5
III. Personalisation	10	10	10
IV. Support	50	40	34
V. Standards	14	8	10
VI. Administration	60	45	47
VII. General	10	1.5	5
Overall	186	142	146.5