

Comments on UK Schools Scheme for IMS Enterprise

These suggestions follow the paper presented by Mark Berthelemy of Capita at the February 2004 meeting of the Learning Platform Stakeholders Group.

The substance of this paper is to propose a more structured grouping scheme. The problem, as I see it, is to allow the VLE to understand the complex grouping structure of the school. A group called, to take an example from Mark's paper "Y9 Sc A1" contains context information ("Y9" and "Sc" which is human-readable but possibly not machine-readable. The result is, from the perspective of the VLE, a flat structure, in which "Y9 Sc A1" is put in the same bag as "Y7 En B5". This prevents the VLE presenting the grouping information in a user-friendly manner.

My proposal therefore hinges around a more structured vocabulary for the "group type" field. As this structure may involve some repetition of identifiers (English department, English course, English sets), it also includes some basic formatting templates, most of which involve the inclusion of the group type with the identifier. The interpretation of the symbols used in the "Format" is:

#	Single digit, '0'.. '9'
[#]	Optional digit
*	Lower-case alphanumeric text (no length limit)

Level	Name	Format	Example
1	cohort	y#[#]-#####	"y7-2001"
2	year	y#[#]	"y9"
3	department	* department	"science department"
4	course	* course	"y9 chemistry course"
5	settingscheme	* sets	"y9 tutor group sets"
6	class	class *	"class a1"

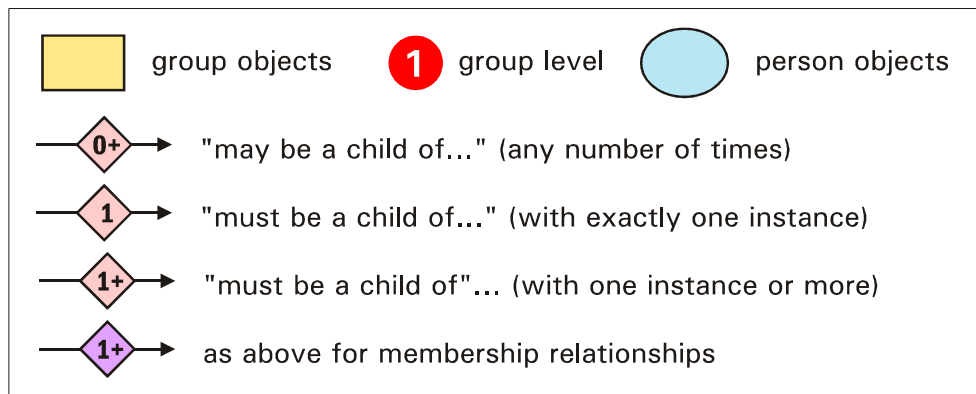
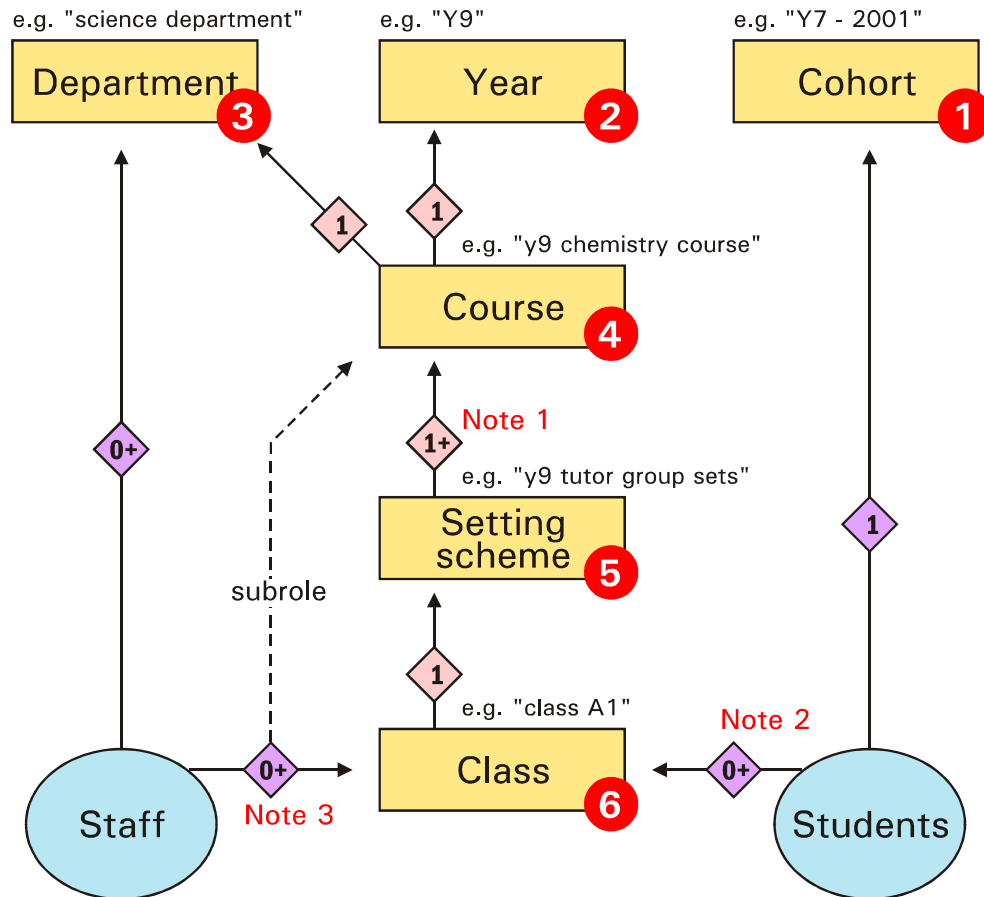
The relationships between the different groups are shown in the diagram.

Identifiers and descriptions

I propose that all identifiers should be lower-case. Descriptions, which is what will be displayed to the user, may be capitalised.

The 'short' description should not contain context information (e.g. "A1", not "Y9 Sc A1"). This allows the VLE to display short labels in context. 'Long' descriptions may contain context information relative to the school (e.g. "Y9 Science Group A1"); while 'full' descriptions could be used for global descriptions which contain source and time information (e.g. "Y9 Science Group A1 at Green Abbey School on 25 January 2004").

APPENDIX A



Note 1: Setting schemes may not be children of two courses which belong to different years.

Note 2: (a) Students may not belong to two classes which are members of the same setting scheme. (b) Students must belong to classes which are valid for their cohort.

Note 3: (a) Staff may not teach two classes in the same setting scheme. (b) The subrole for this relationship must reference a course (i) for which the target is registered (i.e. the class must be a child of a setting scheme which is a child of the course); (ii) which is a child of a department of which the member of staff is a member.