

Higher Education Information Directors in Scotland (HEIDS)

Approved Minutes

Thursday 14th September 2006
University of Stirling

Present:

Chair

Andrew McCreath Robert Gordon University AM

Secretary

Kathy McCabe University of Stirling KMcC

David Beards	Scottish Funding Council	DB
Paul Dean	Napier University	PD
Brian Gilmore	University of Edinburgh	BG
Frazer Greig	University of Abertay Dundee	FG
Alun Hughes	UHI Millennium Institute	AH
Peter Kemp	University of Stirling	PK
Tom Mortimer	University of Dundee	TM
Fraser Muir	Queen Margaret University College	FM
Brian Mullins	University of Paisley	BM
Moriama Oduyemi	University of Abertay Dundee	MO
Alan Richardson	University of Stirling	AR
Brian Robertson	University of Aberdeen	BR
Bruce Rodger	University of Strathclyde	BRO
David Rundell	Heriot-Watt University	DR

1. Apologies were received from the following:

Malcolm Bain	University of St Andrews	MB
Stuart Brough	University of Strathclyde	SB
Caroline Cochrane	RSAMD	CC
Heidi Fraser-Krauss	University of St Andrews	HFK
Louise Garden	Glasgow Caledonian University	LG
Paul Haley	University of Aberdeen	PH
Bill Harvey	Scottish Funding Council	BH
Garry Main	UHI Millennium Institute	GM
Simon Marsden	University of Edinburgh	SM
Sandy MacDonald	University of Glasgow	SMcD
Stuart McFarlane	Edinburgh College of Art	SMcF
Robert McGregor	Scottish Funding Council	RMcG
Catherine McMillan	Napier University	CM
Colin Watson	Glasgow School of Art	CW

AM welcomed two new members in absentia – Paul Haley and Sandy MacDonald – and noted that HEIDS looked forward to their presence at future meetings.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting:

The minutes of the meeting held at University of Dundee were approved with one minor correction.

3. Matters arising:

Forensic Investigation Procedures

The guideline document on Forensic Investigation Procedures remained work in progress. AM reported that agreement had been reached in England but that this did not cover Scotland. It looked difficult to conclude a similar agreement due to the need to negotiate this with each individual police force in Scotland. It had been indicated that it would be unlikely that an individual would be prosecuted under the envisaged circumstances. However it was considered that this did not provide sufficient security for staff in the front line. Work on this was continuing.

AM/LG

Oracle licences

Regarding support from SFC, DB stated that it might be possible to find money to look at a study into this, but that it would need a steer from Universities Scotland. In SM's absence, the group was not sure where the Oracle licences task stood, but suggested that SM get in touch with RMcG to consider what could be done, and that PK should contact Universities Scotland to investigate their possible support for a Scottish negotiation.

SM/PK

HEIDS website

It was agreed that the JISC mailing list should be used as the first source of information for the HEIDS website.

AM/KMcC

The logo remained work in progress.

Previous talks

It was agreed that the powerpoints circulated after the last meeting should be added to the HEIDS website also.

KMCC

Other actions from previous meeting

All other actions had been done.

4 Out of hours support

There was a very useful discussion and sharing of information about the arrangements in place in different institutions. Many of the issues were relevant to all. It was agreed that the issues raised would be summarised and reported anonymously, as follows:

There was a wide range of times viewed as core support hours: in some places this was 09.00 – 21.00, in others 08.00 – 22.00. Weekend support varied from 10.00 – 16.00 or 17.00, some covered Saturdays but not Sundays. (Some institutions supporting multicultural provision have been asked why Sunday is treated differently.) Some institutions faced enormously difficulties in providing any support outside of 9.00 – 17.00 on weekdays. Any institution with an overseas presence faced even more pressure to provide round the clock support. An example given was the need for special arrangements for students based overseas to take

exams using their VLE.

Many institutions reported a discrepancy between library and IT support core hours.

Some institutions expect to tackle extended support by introducing flexible working agreements involving shift systems, although others who had tried this found that staff on the flexible contracts often then applied for the former fixed hours contracts as vacancies arose. This led to significant turnover with associated recruitment and training costs. Some places plug gaps by using students

Some institutions managed support of key services, such as telephony, by using third party support. This was mostly in its early days but looked useful.

Most institutions reported that they mostly provided out of hours support and cover by tapping into enormous goodwill and 'heroics', but that this was unsustainable.

There was a variety of ways of compensating staff for out of hours work:

- Straight payment on an hourly rate
- A negotiated overtime rate
- Call out payments
- Time in lieu/annual leave (although this caused other problems)
- Stand by fees
- Mixture of above

In some cases, the staff were simply expected to do it as part of their whole time contract.

Some institutions charged administrative areas for additional out of hours support. This had the effect of making them think twice about the real need and this had led to a decrease in this type of request.

There was some discussion about 'follow the sun' cover and a possible shared support service across Scottish institutions. People with experience of 'follow the sun' reported that it was not as simple as it first appeared due to the need to share important information and access eg system passwords, if such arrangements are to work. In reality, this service can become little more than a call handling and recording service with the receiving staff having no power to resolve problems.

Some institutions facing merger arrangements are looking into re-locating servers to a local council data centre and considering the associated support arrangements.

Almost all institutions expressed concern at the impact of the framework agreement on the various support arrangements, believing that a lot of goodwill could be lost. This is covered in more detail in the next item.

NB In addition to the discussion at the meeting, Malcolm Bain circulated an email to HEIDS providing a very detailed description of the out of hours support arrangements at St.Andrews.

5 Framework Agreement

As with the previous item, there was a very useful discussion and sharing of information about the status of the process in different institutions. As before, many of the issues were relevant to all. Again, it was agreed that the issues raised would be summarised and reported anonymously, as follows:

Some institutions had completed the whole process by the August 2006 target. Others had assimilated scale points at the August deadline but had yet to complete the role mapping exercise. Yet others were still working on the role analysis task prior to mapping. Of those institutions who had not yet completed the exercise, most expected a high number of contested gradings, thus prolonging the process.

There were mixed reports over the outcome of the process. Some reported a generally positive outcome, with many staff at the bottom end of the scale doing very well. Some institutions reported a high number of green circled positions, which was good news for individuals but caused some grade disruption and managerial issues.

Other institutions had a less positive experience to report. Many staff had been red circled, which was causing a major impact on morale and goodwill. In some cases, the new gradings had yet to be announced but many staff had drawn their own conclusions based on hearsay and, in some cases, watching job adverts.

Most institutions noted the difficulties around the mid-point grades where staff on grades which previously attracted overtime payments found themselves assimilated to a higher grade, but no longer being eligible for overtime payments. This was generally not well received and was one of the major causes of concern regarding the provision of out of hours support, as mentioned in the previous item.

There was general agreement that the new grading structure was too flat; that there was too much compression of grades and a lack of granularity to reflect the full range of roles. It was felt that the new structure was designed mostly to handle academic staff and was geared to ensuring that overtime should not be paid.

There was variety in how institutions had handled the harmonisation of terms and conditions and consolidation of shift allowances; some had and some hadn't.

It was agreed that, as the framework agreement process continued, any issues arising should come forward to future HEIDS meetings, to consider shared experience.

All

6 **JISC Strategy consultation**

The discussion centred around whether there was any specific Scottish angle that HEIDS would wish to add to the overall picture.

There was a general feeling that, with so much HEFCE money being addressed to new initiatives, this was having a distorting effect on the development programme, leading to a focus on England. It was felt that this was being added to by the way in which JISC was addressing the e-government initiative by working to the English agenda. It was perceived that Scotland was missing out.

DB stated that the JISC budget must stand unless Universities Scotland indicated otherwise. He noted that Scottish institutions were innovating and did not want to have funding top-sliced.

There was also a view that the really useful JISC achievements were when it tackled cutting edge developments. Such activities inherently carried risk. However the current development programme seemed to be risk averse and less strategic than would be desired.

AH suggested that it would be useful to put a paper to the next JISC as a discussion starter to ask JISC to address parity of esteem within its entire community. AH

7 **UKERNA consultation with MANS for RPAN3**

This item had been added to the agenda as the result of much email traffic around HEIDS. As had been outlined at the previous meeting, UKERNA was looking at the RPAN3 contract and had started a process of consultation with all the MANS individually. There was a view that UKERNA wished to have fewer MANS in Scotland. However institutions currently running MANS were not interested in running a 'super Scottish' MAN. It was believed that the current excellent network in Scotland was as a direct result of the MANS.

It was noted that UKERNA believe that they have a branding problem, and wish to be promoted more in the sector. However this was not considered to be a role for the MANS.

There was a feeling that not all stakeholders were proportionately represented on HEIDS.

UKERNA were looking for strong sign-off powers and more formal approval to drive connectivity. There was a view that the MANS delivered additional services outside of UKERNA and so there was a question over how UKERNA could have sign-off on this. However the point was made that the MANS are funded centrally and therefore UKERNA have a right to have a say.

It was agreed that HEIDS needs to keep abreast of the outcome of SMCG and to share responses but that the review would be primarily driven by SMCG and the MANS at this stage. . There would be a further report at the next meeting. AM

8 On-line enrolment

KMcC gave a short presentation on the University of Stirling's approach to on-line module selection and administrative enrolment.

9.1 SFC

DB noted that the draft SFC corporate plan gave a high profile to innovation and learning and was currently awaiting ministerial approval. The e-learning transformation projects were now approximately halfway through, and were generating useful findings on a wide range of topics including pedagogy, e-portfolios, repositories and on-line assessment.

He reported that ICT managers in FE had raised issues such as security, resilience, back-up and data-sharing, and were also interested in exploring shared services. DB noted that HEIDS and UCISA had addressed many of these issues (e.g. joint procurement, directories of specialist staff, joint MoAs for disaster recovery) and that there might be scope for College ICT managers to learn from these approaches.

He proposed to bring a paper to the next HEIDS meeting to explore how the Council, with the support of HEIDS, might be able to respond to the issues raised by college ICT managers.

DB

9.2 Universities Scotland

PK reported that there were no live issues affecting HEIDS at the moment. DB noted that sustainable development was a rising agenda item within Universities Scotland and that this had an IT perspective to be considered. It was agreed that this should be a future HEIDS agenda item.

AM/KMcC

9.3 JISC

No significant updates to report

9.4 UKERNA/JCN

AM reported that the last meeting had been cancelled.

There was some discussion about the JANET roaming service. Some institutions had signed up, while others intended to depending on priorities. BG noted that there was a joint UCISA/UKERNA workshop on this topic on 15th November at which he would be speaking on the user experience. BG asked for any comments on experience of the service to be passed to him ahead of the workshop.

All

9.5 RSCs

In CC's absence, DB reported that both RSCs in Scotland had completed the JISC Round 3 contracting process, which meant they were funded from 2006-2010. Their remit is to support colleges and the small HEIs in Scotland. JISC wishes to increase (from 2007) the support provided by RSCs to support HE delivered by colleges. We will need to work out how to play this in Scotland since we fund by institution - not level of study - and we don't have Foundation Degrees.

SFC had recently hosted a meeting of both RSC Steering Groups to encourage sharing of practice and knowledge across the two RSC regions.

9.6 SCURL/SCONUL

PK reported that SCURL was currently considering its constitutional position as a sub-committee of trustees of the National Library of Scotland. SCURL was also looking at collaborative collection management to build on the current pilot store (CASS) which could increase the amount of electronic information transferred across the sector.

9.7 UCISA CISG

In HFK's absence there was nothing to report. There was a further reminder that the annual CISG conference was scheduled for 8th -10th November in Dunblane.

9.8 Other groups

AH reported that he was now an IMS board member and asked if there were any views from HEIDS on the Blackboard patent. PK questioned whether there was a unique Scottish slant to this or whether we should put our support into a bigger community.

10 AOCB

HEIDS liaison with UCISA

AM reported that there was a vacancy on the UCISA Executive Group for a representative of HEIDS. He nominated Tom Mortimer, and this was seconded by BM. TM was happy to accept.

11 Date and agenda for next meeting

The next meeting would take place at Heriot-Watt University towards the end of January 2007. KMcC would circulate some possible dates.

This meeting would be an AGM with the opportunity to appoint new Chair and Secretary.

The topics put forward for the next meeting were:

Systems integration. This item was BM's presentation on the University of Paisley's approach to this and had been deferred from the current meeting. BM

Framework agreement. It was agreed that this should be re-visited to share any further experience. All HEIDS members to come prepared to discuss this. All

Stress survey. TM agreed to share the experiences of this exercise at University of Dundee. TM

Sustainability. DB would email round a research scoping study before the next HEIDS meeting and would speak about the policy context at the meeting. DB

Authentication. BG agreed to give a perspective of the options.

BG

AM thanked the University of Stirling for hosting the event, for lunch and for the facilities.

12 Tour of facilities

HEIDS attendees were offered the choice of a tour of the new bespoke computer suite or a tour of the new teaching/lab facilities which had been designed in close collaboration with academic staff.

K McCabe 26 September 2006