

Higher Education Information Directors in Scotland (HEIDS)

Approved Minutes

Monday 23rd April 2007
Cochno Farm & Research Centre
University of Glasgow

Present:

Chair

Andrew McCreath Robert Gordon University AM

Secretary

Kathy McCabe University of Stirling KMcC

Malcolm Bain	University of St Andrews	MB
David Beards	Scottish Funding Council	DB
Caroline Cochrane	RSAMD	CC
Paul Dean	Napier University	PD
Rolly Gilmour	University of Glasgow	RG
Frazer Greig	University of Abertay Dundee	FG
Alun Hughes	UHI Millennium Institute	AH
Peter Kemp	University of Stirling	PK
Sandy Macdonald	University of Glasgow	SMcD
Catherine McMillan	Napier University	CM
Tom Mortimer	University of Dundee	TM
Brian Mullins	University of Paisley	BM
Raymonde Murphy	Glasgow Caledonian University	RM
Moriama Oduyemi	University of Abertay Dundee	MO

1. Apologies were received from the following:

Stuart Brough	University of Strathclyde	
Louise Garden	Glasgow Caledonian University	LG
Bill Harvey	Scottish Funding Council	BH
Simon Marsden	University of Edinburgh	SM
Brian Robertson	University of Aberdeen	BR
David Rundell	Heriot-Watt University	DR

Action

2. Minutes of the previous meeting:

The minutes of the meeting held at Heriot-Watt University were approved.

3. Matters arising:

Forensic Investigation Procedures

The issue had been passed to Richard Lynch. HEIDS was seeking clarification on the position of Scottish Police.

AM/LG

Oracle licences

There was an indication that the Scottish Executive wishes to work with both Oracle and Microsoft to create Category A licences for the public sector. AM had been trying to renew his licence but Oracle had been pricing based on

headcount rather than FTE. BM noted that he had recently renewed his licence based on combined FTE for both staff & students. There was a general feeling expressed by most parties that Oracle should base their licences on student FTE as opposed to headcount.

HEIDS website

The logo remained work in progress.

TM

Framework agreement

PK noted that Stirling was due to implement this in June. Napier was also still pending. A view was expressed by several parties that the grades allocated to posts were heavily dependent on job descriptors. The Framework Agreement in general was noted as a major cause of stress for ICT staff! There was a feeling that the process was skewed in favour of academic staff. SMcD and BM noted that the process was already complete in Glasgow and Paisley respectively and that any changes to salary had been back-dated to 1st Aug 2006. PK felt the process gave insufficient credit for professional skills. In contrast to the general mood, Abertay was quoted as an example where support staff seemed to have been favoured compared to academics.

Review of constitution

The agreed changes were now on the HEIDS website.

Other actions from previous meeting

All other actions had been done.

4 Stress Survey

TM gave a brief overview of the recent exercise to review the causes of stress within the IT areas at his institution and develop a program of initiatives to remove or reduce the impact of key stressors. The review had been prompted through feedback from staff that they felt stressed in their work and a small but significant number of cases of long term sickness that were associated with stress. The resultant survey, based on the tools available through the Health and Safety Executive and carried out in consultation with staff and unions, produced figures which showed the stress levels within the IT department to be slightly higher than the figures for the university as a whole in almost every category tested. IT departments are generally recognised as being areas of higher stress levels however there were areas where the difference between the normal level and those of the department were significant and the underlying causes needed to be examined.

The results could be banded into the following categories:

- Personal relationships issues including misinterpretation of or poor communication (mostly of emails); lack of mutual respect and openness
- Frustration around insufficient resources and work pressure to get things done ('tyranny of the urgent')
- Lack of understanding of roles and responsibilities; no staff review process and frustration of staff not understanding their contribution to the University
- Negativity culture and no recognition of a job well done or acceptance of progress made
- Consultation and communication issues; up and down the structure and also cross units within the department

In order to tackle all of the above, a Stress Working Group had been set up to look at generic issues. This in turn had led to the establishment of a number of sub-groups to look at specific points such as putting proper structures in place, ground rules for conducting meetings, lists of wellbeing/bullying and harassment

contacts etc. The working group had also developed a code of conduct and behaviour based on the institutional code of behaviour. Other actions had been the review of the IS staff handbook to include more targeted information and the development of properly defined services.

While still very much work in progress, the combination of all of these actions was beginning to have a very positive effect on the staff involved. TM was very happy to share information with HEIDS and pointed that there was an ACAS paper on communications within an organisation, which was a useful resource.

5 Disposal of equipment

PK introduced this item, noting there was a need to decide whether we wished to take action as a group or to address this issue as individual institutions. It was also noted that equipment disposal goes hand in hand with sustainability and energy-saving, although in many institutions this might be divided up and handled as different activities.

There was a round the table summary of the arrangements at each institution, which varied greatly. It was agreed that it would be useful to circulate a simple questionnaire around the sector, in order to gather this information from all institutions and this would inform DB of the sector position. The questionnaire should include information on volumes.

CC noted that she had been contacted by a local company offering a free disposal service which complied with requirements as well as being part of a third world partnership. She agreed to circulate the email to HEIDS.
(Secretary's note: Done)

CC

There followed a discussion on energy. SFC had made available some information on energy consumption and invited HEIDS to provide feedback on how useful the content was. PK considered that the statistics didn't show sufficient variation.

There were two projects in progress currently: the CaSPr (Campus Sustainability Programme) project which was a baseline study on energy consumption but contained few Scottish responses and the HEEPI (Environmental Performance Improvement) project which had no Scottish institutional involvement.
(<http://www.heepi.org.uk/>)

There was some discussion on the relative merits of conducting a Scottish-based initiative ie whether there was any additional factor (other than climate) which would merit such a project, since it would require effort and resource. It was agreed that HEIDS should decide what we wanted to do, thereafter identify the resource required and then make a bid to SFC for funding. PD agreed to discuss this with DB in the first instance. PD noted that he would need to engage support from estates colleagues.

PD/DB

DB noted that there was no pressing deadline for this for SFC.

6 Authentication

7 JANET roaming service

In BG's absence, these items were deferred until the next meeting.

8. Reports

8.1 SFC (DB)

DB reported that there would be a joint EAUC/HE Academy conference on sustainable development on 13th June. It was being jointly supported by HEA and SFC and HEIDS members were encouraged to attend.

<http://www.materials.ac.uk/events/esdscotland.asp>

At the last meeting, HEIDS had asked to see the report on sustainable development that SFC had sent to the Scottish Executive last year. DB noted that it was now on the SFC website:

http://www.sfc.ac.uk/information/information_learning/key_policy_areas/keypolicy_development.htm

DB reported that he and Bill Harvey had met with the Scottish Executive to learn the outcome of the public sector ICT survey by Newell and Budge. The Executive had been able to say more about the kind of areas they are interested in, with a particular focus on sharing data and services, and opportunities for joint procurement. DB and BH had agreed to help compile some information about ICT in Scottish universities and colleges, using data already compiled for UCISA and some new questions on e.g. major corporate systems like payroll, MIS etc. AM agreed to help draw up the list of questions.

(Secretary's note: Done)

AM/DB

The Executive were seeking a representative from Scottish HE to be a member of a working group to look at the results of the survey. It was proposed that AM take this role. AM agreed. DB requested access to UCISA's data on each Scottish HEI. AM agreed to send a note round HEIDS noting this request.

8.2 Universities Scotland (PK)

PK reported that he had recently been in recent contact with Universities Scotland about an FOI issue. Currently all publication schemes were approved until 2008. However in order to manage the renewal workload efficiently, it had been agreed that this would be done on a phased basis. HE schemes had therefore been extended by a year until 2009.

8.3 JISC

DB reported that Scottish institutions would have the opportunity to take part in the forthcoming call for bids for development funding, funded by HEFCE. In the longer term, there would be discussion on the future method of doing this eg perhaps by additional funding for HEFCE to increase initiatives.

8.4 UKERNA/JCN (AM)

AM reported the following key points of note: SuperJanet 5 was now well advanced with the roll out; the main discussion point had been the new contract for RAN3; UKERNA were keen to make their branding more prominent and wanted the MANs to provide resource to promote UKERNA. The MANs were keen to collaborate. There was a discussion about the possible implications for the sector if a major HEI decided to 'walk away' because the RAN3 requirements were too onerous and therefore too costly.

AM also reported on the plans for a new SMS framework contract. JANET Talk had not yet been launched.

8.5 RSCs (CC)

CC noted that there was not much new to report. The two RSCs were continuing

to work collaboratively, with the next meeting due to take place in early June. The South-west region had just published their strategic plan focusing on support for strategic development and e-accessibility and e-assessment. With regard to support for HE, clarification was being sought with regard to the RSC's role in supporting Bell College once the merger with Paisley had gone ahead. (RSC -SW currently supports the 3 small specialist HEIs: RSAMD, GSA, Bell College). Additional funding for a P/T HE advisor had been accepted, with the post still to be filled. The HE advisor would co-ordinate support within the RSC teams. RSC-SW Manager Charlie Sweeney would retire at Christmas.

8.6 SCURL/SCONUL (PK)

PK stated that there was nothing much to report. The big issue at SCURL was the development of business clients for a national academic store. The collaborative collection management project had started. SCURL was still looking at its constitutional position as the trustees of the National Library of Scotland would have no HE locus. It was likely that SCURL would evolve into a new group of people along the lines of HEIDS.

8.7 UCISA CISG (CM)

CM reported she had attended a meeting of this group the previous week. Andy Yuille from HESA had attended to discuss the re-development of the student record for 2007/08. He had pointed out that institutions should start collecting new data from this year onwards. Andy Yuille had commented that he had not had many enquiries about this from either HEIs or from student system vendors. CM considered that there was perhaps insufficient awareness of these changes within institutions and advised HEIDS to raise awareness within their own organisations.

CM reported on HEIDI (HE Information Database for Institutions). This was a web-based management information tool which allowed access to a range of quantitative data about HEIs. It had just been launched and would be accessible on a subscriptions basis. CM also noted that HESA had now made available an on-line tool for institutions to use in order to capture data for the DLHE (Destination of Leavers in Higher Education) return.

UCISA CISG was interested in ITIL and TM would be presenting to the group in the near future.

8.8 UCISA Executive

TM reported that the UCISA strategy was under development, closely tied in with UUK's top 15 strategic challenges. TM pointed out that the DfES strategy for e-learning 2005-2010 included a move to ensure that institutional leaders are trained in the development of strategy for IT.

Another key issue for the Executive was the development of the MANs to ensure that the JANET network remains leading edge.

TM had a number of useful documents which he would pass to KM to arrange for posting on the HEIDS website.

TM/KM

8.9 APUC (Advanced Procurement Initiative in Universities and Colleges)

PK and AM reported that they had met with Brian Baverstock and Douglas Bell on 23 March 2007 to discuss some of the issues surrounding IT procurement across multiple sectors. The purpose of the meeting had been to try to communicate some understanding of the complexity of IT applications in Higher Education; the huge range of requirements and the need for IT people to be involved in the process. This had been accepted. APUC were very keen to engage HEIDS, recognising the need for IT expertise, and PK had been invited

to join a National Category Forum at the Scottish Executive later that week. There was some discussion about the sorts of issues which would need to be addressed, such as sector differences and existing framework agreements. It had been recognised that it would be difficult to achieve sector wide procurement in all areas and the first set of commodities would be restricted to desk-top PCs and printers and lap-tops. Servers, multi-function devices and consumables had been removed from the scope.

Much of the planning had been based on the results of a survey which had seen responses from fewer than 70 of 133 bodies surveyed. While this was far short of the 600+ bodies in Scotland subject to these procurement policies, it was probably a large enough sample to allow for reliable planning.

HE input to the process would be handled via APUC and the National Category Forums. PK was happy to continue to represent HEIDS for the time being. HEIDS agreed this. TM noted that he had spent five years on ProcSNI and would be happy to contribute where appropriate.

There was some discussion about the PECOS software which appeared to have limited functionality.

The question was raised about whether there was a group which would bring all of the issues together, and whether there were any mechanisms to deal with problems. AM/PK/SM would follow this up and circulate this and any other information to HEIDS as it became available.

AM/PK/SM

9 AOCB
None

10 Date and agenda for next meeting

The next meeting would take place during September in Aberdeen. AM would liaise with BG over the specific venue. KMcC would then circulate some possible dates.

The topics for the next meeting would comprise any deferred items from this or previous meetings, including:

Authentication. BG agreed to give a perspective of the options at a previous meeting.

BG

Janet Roaming Service.

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

11 Presentation

HEIDS attendees were given a presentation on the work of the Cochno Farm & Research Centre, with emphasis on how they used IT.

K McCabe 4th May 2007