Higher Education Information Directors in Scotland (HEIDS)

Approved Minutes

Friday 11th January 2008
Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh

Present:

Chair

Andrew McCreath	Robert Gordon University	AM

Secretary

Kathy McCabe	University of Stirling	KM
Karen Anderson	APUC	KA
Malcolm Bain	University of St Andrews	MB
David Beards	Scottish Funding Council	DB
Paul Dean	Napier University	PD
George Farquhar	University of Strathclyde	GF
Heidi Fraser-Krauss	University of St Andrews	HFK
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
Sandy MacDonald	University of Glasgow	SMacD
Margaret Macleod	Universities Scotland	MM
Sean McDonald	Heriot-Watt University	SMcD
Stuart McFarlane	Edinburgh College of Art	SMcF
Catherine McMillan	University of Strathclyde	CM
Graham Millar	University of Stirling	GM
Tom Mortimer	University of Dundee	TM
Fraser Muir	Queen Margaret University	FM
Brian Mullins	University of the West of Scotland	BM
Ray Murphy	Glasgow Caledonian University	RM
Moriamo Oduyemi	University of Abertay Dundee	MO
Brian Robertson	University of Aberdeen	BR
Peter Tinson	UCISA Executive	PT
Colin Watson	Glasgow School of Art	CW

1. Apologies were received from the following:

Stuart Brough	University of Strathclyde	SB
Caroline Cochrane	RSAMD	CC
Simon Marsden	University of Edinburgh	SM
Fraser Ross	RSAMD	FR
David Rundell	Heriot-Watt University	DR

Action

2. Minutes of the previous meeting:
The minutes of the meeting held at The Robert Gordon University were approved.

3. Matters arising:

Forensic Investigation Procedures
This task had stalled. At an earlier stage, a set of guidelines had been produced covering desk-tops but it was felt that there ought to be similar guidelines for servers. RM volunteered to take this forward with AM.   AM/RM

Public access to JANET
There was further discussion about public access to JANET and the general confusion in the sector about acceptable use of JANET, as a private network. AM had clarified the position with Bob Day at JANET and had subsequently circulated the guidance from JANET to HEIDS. It was believed that there remained some contradictions within the guidance documents. AM agreed to seek further clarification from JANET.   AM

HEIDS website
The logo remained work in progress.   SMcF volunteered to pick up on this.   SMcF
(*Secretary's note: RM had identified an opportunity to start the process and had circulated two suggested logos to HEIDS.*)

Scottish-based initiative on energy consumption
This remained work in progress. DB reported that there was a meeting planned to take this forward, with PD representing HE and one other to represent FE.   PD/DB
PK noted that it would be useful to involve estates colleagues in this exercise.

Smart card initiative
MO reported that the local initiative was currently on hold as it was now being discussed by the Scottish Executive. MM noted that this was being seen as a possible shared service and that a Universities Scotland representative was attending the forum on this. MM would liaise with Ivor Lloyd at Abertay. Dundee   MM
had also expressed interest in the initiative.

4   **Framework issues**
The general feeling was that the framework exercise had been costly and had introduced much negativity. CM proposed that there were many similar roles across institutions and that it would be useful to share information on points ranges for roles such as DBA, programmer etc.

PT noted that UCISA often conducts salary surveys across the sector and suggested that it might be worth conducting a further one now that HERA had been implemented. TM expressed interest in looking at national role descriptions and competencies and would liaise with PT regarding the UCISA   PT/TM
survey.

All agreed that this would be useful but would take time. In the meantime, PD agreed to collate a less refined set of statistics and share them with HEIDS. PK   PD
requested that any arrangements for market supplements be included in this early circulation.

AM reported that he was currently involved in a market analysis exercise and would be happy to share the findings with HEIDS.   AM

This item would remain on the agenda.   KM

5   **APUC**
KA presented a paper (previously circulated) seeking HEIDS involvement in the IT User Intelligence Group (IT UIG). The paper set out a proposal of how such involvement might work.

There was much discussion about the proposal and clarification sought about

how the Scottish arrangements would articulate with the existing UK arrangements which were seen to work well for the sector. It was noted that the UCISA group which considers UK contracts had Scottish representation on it. KA explained that the aim was to strengthen communications with UK contract mechanisms.

KA outlined the process noting that most UIGs had a flat structure but that the complexity and range of IT procurement meant that the IT UIG needed to be tiered. The plan was to have a number of sub-groups, with each sub-group having a joint leadership to cover both HE and FE.

Two members of the IT UIG would attend the National Forum ie Karen plus the head of the appropriate sub-group.

There was some discussion about the sub-groups and whether the groupings were right. It was agreed that a new sub-group should be added to cover data networking equipment and that the e-content sub-group should move to another UIG. It was also noted that it was not apparent where computer consumables would reside.

PK noted that the test of the proposed structure would be how well the various UIGs would communicate with each other, recognising the overlaps. BR expressed concern that the telecoms UIG were not engaging with HEIDS in the same way but KA pointed out that there was no obvious group with which to engage due to the variation in where the responsibility lay within institutions.

PD requested that KA would copy HEIDS into any telecoms UIG correspondence due to the significant interdependencies between IT and telecoms.

KA

MO raised a question about where library systems would reside ie library group or IT. It was believed that this issue would be addressed once the sector had a specific need to consider this.

Following a wide ranging and lengthy discussion of the details of the proposal, HEIDS was broadly happy with it.

KA noted that the desk-top sub-group was the most urgent. KA would now write out to HEIDS members and to the FE sector, copied to the procurement network, seeking nominations for each sub-group. This would include a brief description of the requirements of the role to ensure that there was full understanding of the commitment required. Each sub-group needed approximately eight people, covering both HE and FE. Once the sub-group was convened they could appoint a leader. HFK pointed out that there also needed to sufficient coverage of type of institution.

KA

In order to make sufficient progress in a short timescale, it was agreed that a small appointing panel of KA, SM, PK and AM would take this forward.

KA/SM/ PK/AM

KA agreed to copy HEIDS into any correspondence with the communications network.

KA

6   Shared services

Peter Tinson of UCISA was welcomed to the group.

It was noted that there had been a number of exercises to gather information about shared services in the sector, both north and south of the border. The driver was the comprehensive spending review and the assumption that HEIs would make year on year efficiencies by sharing services.

Following the KPMG survey and report, which highlighted the scale of existing collaboration eg JANET, UCAS, HEFCE took a bottom up approach and made a call in March 2007 for expressions of interest in conducting feasibility studies on shared services. Over 50 expressions of interest were received, of which approximately 20% were IT-based. It was agreed that over 40 of these studies should be funded. Agreement for seven in the IT area has been reached; final details regarding a number of the others are still being agreed.

However HEFCE didn't believe that there was sufficient appetite for more collaboration and shared services given that HEIs are in competition with each other. However, when asked if they would consider further shared services, 79 out of 83 VCs said that they would. So HEFCE is now re-visiting this from the top-down. There are two approaches to this:
1) feasibility studies
2) consideration of a managed service approach for key business systems

HEFCE have been talking to a number of suppliers to gauge interest in this, and encouraging suppliers to think of more flexible licence arrangements. Suppliers are now starting to talk to each other and looking at 'preferred partner' arrangements. It is believed however that there is still much to do to win hearts and minds.

HEFCE have also engaged representative bodies. UCISA responded with suggestions around systems monitoring, emergency server provision, extended support, back-up resources, email scanning, user support and supplier engagement.

UCISA has been tasked with working up more detailed proposals based on the above list and then take these back to HEFCE for further discussion.

The funded initiatives are:

Lead Institution	Study
University of Cambridge	University High-End Computing Support Service - Maximising the Scientific Return on HPC Investment
Coventry University	IT Technical support - related to remote desktop management linked to truly Location Independent Working Principles and Practice
University of Nottingham	Shared Service for Information Security and Network Management for East Midlands Universities
University of Salford	Professional Services for Shared Data Centre Initiative
University of York (on behalf of the White Rose Grid)	Developing Service Based Software provision for regional Grid systems
Birkbeck College (for the Bloomsbury Colleges)	Administrative IT Systems and Process Convergence for the Bloomsbury Colleges: Feasibility study for HR/Payroll, Finance, Student Records and online administration
London School of Economics and Political Science	A shared research data service for the UK

As well as these, there is some Russell Group interest in investigating the use of data centres, with a matching exercise in Scotland involving Dundee, Abertay

and St Andrews.

There has been little communication about the funded projects so far; HEFCE are being encouraged to publicise this activity more widely. UCISA has offered to bring all of these initiatives together to run a presentation event. One of the key challenges will be to keep track of all of these initiatives and to keep them aligned.

TM informed the group of an existing financial model for hosting shared services, produced by a third party supplier, with other systems suppliers showing interest. CM urged caution and to ensure that any sharing was driven by the service not the systems. There was much discussion about the pros and cons of such arrangements.

MM informed the group that she was currently in the process of organising an event in the sector to pick up on the HEFCE report and consider how it might apply in Scotland. The event would aim to bring together University Secretaries, Finance, IT, Estates and HR Directors to identify opportunities for shared services.

It was noted that shared services were currently top of the government's agenda but that local authorities were being targeted first. However there had been express interest from colleges, some with existing arrangements around library provision shared with public libraries and others interested in shared learning spaces.

PT observed that shared services should not simply be seen as cost saving but also as service enhancement.

It was the group's view that the HE sector was already fairly lean and good at collaborating appropriately. It was also recognised that it was important not to share a service where the service was core to the business and provided competitive advantage.

AM noted that he had been looking at data centres with local government and was happy to share his experiences of this. There were a number of issues to overcome, the most critical of which was the issue of VAT. It was understood that HEFCE were in discussion with the Treasury about this. Another issue was one of timing in terms of being able to get two HEIs to be able to progress concurrently.

HEIDS made a few suggestions about possible shared services in the sector, such as central data archiving and disaster recovery. MM noted that this was the sort of idea that she hoped to extract from the planned SFC event. It was agreed that a small group of HEIDS, along with PT and KA, would get together to come up with more ideas and bring these to the SFC event.

AM/TM/AH/
SMcD/PD/
KA/PT

7. Reports

7.1 SFC (DB)
<u>e-learning</u>
DB reported that a conference had been held in September 2007 to mark the end of the funded phase of the six e-learning transformation projects. The focus of the projects was on pedagogy, rather than technology, in the context of large scale institutional change. While the projects were currently half way through processes of strategic change which might last up to four or five years, some of the projects had already identified successes in terms of efficiency

gains and improved student achievement. Where problems had arisen, they had been cultural and/or managerial rather than technical. These findings were also reflected in the report of a baseline survey of e-activity in Scotland's colleges, which identified that colleges were strong on operational deployment and support of ICT in learning, but less strong on management, planning and evaluation. The Council had discussed e-learning at its meeting in October and concluded that future support should take place within a broader context of quality and responding to student needs. There would no further project funds specifically for technology, beyond the Council's annual contribution to the JISC.

ICT survey

DB reported that the government had sought data on ICT in Scotland's universities and colleges two years ago; to some extent this work had been overtaken by APUC's survey of forthcoming procurement activities. Recognizing that there was a level of survey fatigue in the sector, it was agreed to propose a smaller set of data to report to the Scottish Government, focusing on e.g. corporate systems, information systems team size and composition, and data structures. Some HEIDS members had agreed to allow access to existing UCISA data to inform this report. MM noted that University Secretaries and Principals were concerned at the request and where it originated. Most of the data sought has little meaning out of context and there was a concern that incomplete data might be used for extrapolation.

AM stated that a group had been set up to look at the data structures issue. This had been initiated by the e-government agenda and was intended to look at how data could be shared so that, for example, the public need not repeatedly have to provide the same information when completing forms. The group had not met for some time and AM agreed to make contact.

AM

7.2   Universities Scotland (PK)

MM had been invited to HEIDS in light of the sector response about data security procedures and processes on handling personal data. The response from University Secretaries was that the sector was well aware of the requirements and was not complacent about the issue. The response also expressed a strong interest in hearing the results of the government's own internal review of the data handling issue.

PK reported that there had been a recent circular on the efficient government initiative. He would circulate this to HEIDS.
(*Secretary's note: already done.*)

PK

7.3   JISC (AH)

AH reported that JISC were looking for new committee members and urged HEIDS members to consider putting themselves forward or nominating others. There was special meeting of JISC leaders planned for the following week, the purpose of which was to look forward and consider what needed to be done. HEIDS were invited to submit any ideas to AH and he would pass them on.

AH noted that JISC planned to publish all of its committee papers on the web.

7.4   JANET UK (AM)

AM reported that the JCN met in September 2007. The main items discussed were:
the new JANET contract for the MANs - there had been enough movement on the contentious issues for Scotland (mainly public holiday arrangements around Christmas/New Year and the nature of callout cover required) to allow all the Scottish MAN's and indeed the vast majority of UK MAN's to sign up to the new JPA contract.

JANET TALK service – there remained some uncertainty about the charging mechanism. There would be a trial period to encourage take-up. This would cover up to 100 licences and there would be a deadline. There was some discussion about where this would sit alongside SKYPE and video-conferencing.

AM also noted that there had been a comprehensive review of the SLA to make it easier to understand. This would be published imminently.

AM reported also that there had been much overlap between the membership of the development group (JDAG) and JCN and that these had now been brought together.

HFK reported on the JOSS committee. JISC had been reviewing how it manages its services and a report was now available. JOSS was keen to encourage more business and community engagement, with a possibility of funding to support it. In Scotland, the funding council handled this under the Knowledge Transfer umbrella.

7.5   RSCs (CC)
In CC's absence, DB reported that there had been a change of manager. Fionnula Carmichael had taken over from Charles Sweeney.

7.6   SCURL/SCONUL (PK)
PK reported that SCURL/SCONUL were also looking at the shared services agenda, building on existing services such as the Scottish Digital Library Consortium.

The group was also working with APUC to consider procurement for e-content.

7.7   UCISA CISG (HFK)

HFK noted that the CISG had not met since the conference. Work had now started on putting together next year's conference and the committee was keen to hear of any ideas.

7.8   UCISA Executive (TM)
TM reported that there was currently work being undertaken to look at IP television to identify any issues not already covered by general conditions of use.

He also reported that the Directors Forum on Leadership had gone very well and asked if there was any interest in follow-up sessions.

8   AGM
AM noted that, if HEIDS were in agreement, both the Chair and Secretary were content to continue for a further year, which would constitute a three year tenure as agreed at last year's AGM. This was agreed.

It had also been agreed that the constitution would be reviewed annually. The constitution had been reviewed in depth last year, and HEIDS were asked to look again at the constitution and let AM know if there were any remaining issues.

9   AOCB
In response to the formality of the UCISA conference dinner, PD asked that all (male) HEIDS don kilts.

PK notified the group that the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) had just circulated guidance on the Charter. From 1st April 2008, all documents must contain the charity number. This included emails, invoices etc. It would be considered to be good practice, but not a requirement, to include the information on websites. A sub-group of the University Secretaries Group was looking at consistency across Scotland. PK would email the circular to the group for information.

MO

(Secretary's note: already done)

10   Date and agenda for next meeting

AM expressed the group's thanks to Queen Margaret University for hosting the visit, for lunch and for the facilities.

The next meeting would take place in May at St Andrews. KM will co-ordinate the date by email.

KM

11   Tour

HEIDS attendees were given a tour of the new Queen Margaret University campus.

K McCabe 6th February 2008