



Higher Education Information Directors in Scotland (HEIDS)

Approved Minutes

Wednesday 6th May 2009
University of West of Scotland, Hamilton campus

Present:

Chair

Alun Hughes UHI Millennium Institute AH

Secretary

Kathy McCabe University of Stirling KM

Caroline Cochrane	RSAMD	CC
Brian Gilmore	University of Edinburgh	BG
Bill Harvey	SFC	BH
David Johnson	University of the West of Scotland	DJ
John Maher	UHI Millennium Institute	JM
Catherine McMillan	University of Strathclyde	CM
Elaine Muir	Scottish Agricultural College	EM
Fraser Muir	Queen Margaret University	FM
Brian Mullins	University of the West of Scotland	BM
Moriamo Oduyemi	University of Abertay Dundee	MO
Graeme Orr	University of the West of Scotland	GO
Mark Toole	University of Stirling	MT

1. Apologies were received from the following:

Malcolm Bain	University of St Andrews	MB
David Beards	Scottish Funding Council	DB
Stuart Brough	University of Strathclyde	SB
Gerry Costello	Scottish Agricultural College	GC
Paul Dean	Edinburgh Napier University	PD
Gerry Dougan	SFEU	GD
Paul Haley	University of Aberdeen	PH
Sandy MacDonald	University of Glasgow	SMacD
Margaret Macleod	Universities Scotland	MM
Simon Marsden	University of Edinburgh	SM
Andrew McCreath	Robert Gordon University	AM
Sean McDonald	Heriot-Watt University	SMcD
Stuart McFarlane	Edinburgh College of Art	SMcF
Tom Mortimer	University of Dundee	TM
Ray Murphy	Glasgow Caledonian University	RM
Jeff Murray	Glasgow Caledonian University	JM
Brian Robertson	University of Aberdeen	BR
David Rundell	Heriot-Watt University	DR
Colin Watson	Glasgow School of Art	CW
Steve Watt	University of Abertay Dundee	SW

AH welcomed Mark Toole from University of Stirling and Elaine Muir from Scottish Agricultural College to their first HEIDS meeting.

The group was welcomed to the new Civil Engineering Excellence building by Ian Patrick, Campus Director.

2 South Lanarkshire Council Data Centre

AH welcomed Kay Brown, ICT Director for South Lanarkshire. Kay gave a short presentation on the data centre and its development over the years. The current facility offers high quality accommodation and security for server racks, and currently houses servers for the Scottish Parliament, the University of the West of Scotland, South Lanarkshire Council and other local authorities. The facility was available to any interested organisation, at a highly competitive cost compared with commercial offerings. Further information is contained in the powerpoint presentation, a copy of which will be posted on the HEIDS website.

AH thanked Kay for an interesting presentation, which stimulated much discussion.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting:

The minutes of the meeting held in Edinburgh Napier University on 4th February 2009 were approved.

4. Matters arising:

HEIDS website

Thank you letters had been drafted and sent to the people who had contributed to the logo and website.

Edinburgh Napier University's name had been updated on the website.

Procurement Scotland

The powerpoint presentation had been posted on the HEIDS website and GN had circulated the other information as promised.

All other matters arising had been done or would be covered later in the meeting.

5. Shared services

The current status of the arrangements for the previously proposed special event to consider pooling and sharing of expertise with Scottish HEIs was unknown. BM noted that the presentation from Kay Brown was in response to the earlier set of actions drawn up by AH.

AH reported that he had received an email from Margaret Macleod encouraging HEIDS and SAUDE to discuss further with Martin Fairbairn and Nigel Paul the scope and feasibility of shared services across IT and Estates. BH noted that SFC would be prepared to fund a feasibility study for any good ideas which emerged. AH agreed to try to pull this together.

AH

BG informed the group about the Russell Group Universities collaborative project (SHED) currently underway to establish a purpose-built data centre in England, somewhere within the M25 but outside central London due to the cost of land. Logica had been commissioned to conduct a feasibility study and had

now reported. The project now needed interested parties to invest capital in order to ensure that it could go ahead.

BG reported that Southampton University had planned to build a data centre next year so were likely to invest in the shared project.

The key issue surrounding use of shared data centres was the purpose for which individual organisations wanted to use them. If the key purpose was for disaster recovery then the level of communications infrastructure was less critical. If such a centre would be used for production services, then the communications infrastructure needed to be of a much greater specification.

There followed much discussion about bandwidth and the potential fragmentation of network coverage.

CC requested that when looking at shared services HEIDS ought to include SCURL, as there was significant potential around areas such as library management systems.

FM suggested that SHEDL model for procurement offered potential for further exploration.

AH noted that there were a number of suggestions coming forward (sharing less common expertise, "SHEDL for IT", collaboration with SCURL, Moodle development, SITS support, open source software) and suggested that the HEIDS approach to shared services needed to be focussed and pulled together. AH
MT suggested that we compile a list of areas of general interest and potential, prioritise them and pick a few to investigate in further detail. This could form the basis of a special HEIDS shared services event. MT offered to host such an event at Stirling in the early summer. This was later superseded – see item 7.

6 HEIDS membership

A question over membership numbers had arisen since the previous HEIDS meeting and this had prompted an email survey of HEIDS views. Institutional membership ranged from one to four, although the constitution stated two named members per institution. HEIDS had been asked if they wished to review the membership numbers, and a few options had been proposed. A number of responses had been received and KM had incorporated them into a paper which had been circulated to HEIDS prior to the meeting.

Membership was clarified as being eligible to be included in the email distribution list and therefore invited to meetings, and also to be listed on the HEIDS Representatives section of the website.

Following a brief discussion, it was agreed that each institution would be eligible to have up to three named representatives, with two votes per institution, ie the UCISA model, should such a situation arise in the future.

It was agreed that institutions should be asked review its representatives and to name up to three representatives. The website and distribution list would subsequently be updated to reflect this. KM

7 HEIDS Residential Event

There was some discussion about both the feasibility and desirability of holding such an event. It was envisaged as taking the form of a lunch-time to lunch-

time event, with a formal agenda for the first afternoon and following morning, with dinner and a less formal agenda in the evening. There was support for this provided that the topic and location were both suitable and relevant. The key would be having sufficient material to justify the two half days plus the expense of an overnight stay. This, in turn, depended on sufficient advance planning to ensure that the agenda was relevant and interesting.

BH suggested that we should seek to involve colleagues from other parts of the UK. Colleagues in Wales and N. Ireland were considered to have similar issues but did not have a forum such as HEIDS. Involving colleagues from further afield would necessarily require the venue to be easily accessible for travellers, thus pointing to Edinburgh or Glasgow. AH/KM

It was thought that the autumn HEIDS meeting would be too soon to organise this. The Jan 2010 or April 2010 HEIDS meeting times would be suitable. KM agreed to seek possible dates from HEIDS and to investigate possible venues, provided it was not too time-consuming. KM

BG considered that such an event would cost in the region of £140 per head, which was considered reasonable. However, a word of caution was added that hotels offering this sort of business would expect a deposit in advance, which would complicate the administration of the event. KM would seek advice from HFK and Sue Fells at UCISA. KM

This item led to discussion about the next HEIDS meeting, which Abertay had volunteered to host. It was agreed that this meeting should be scheduled for late August and should be combined with the shared services event. The outcome of the shared services event should provide the material for the residential.

8. Reports

8.1 SFC (BH)

BH reported that the SFC had a new corporate plan which had been agreed by the ministers and was about to be published.

The New Horizons initiative means that the Council is reviewing its current funding arrangements for national initiatives, in order to decide whether to reallocate any of that funding to new priorities. Among the funds being reviewed this year are those for JISC, QAA and HEA and these organisations have been informed that funding beyond AY 2009-10 was not guaranteed. BH was confident that the process would recognise the good work being done by these organisations but at this stage it was too early to predict the final outcome.

BH reported that he would be leaving SFC to take up the post of Director of QAA Scotland, with effect from 1 September. There would follow some internal restructuring within SFC.

There had been a recent green ICT event focussing on reducing energy use. FE colleagues were beginning to report some savings.

The report of the review of the current RSCs was about to be published and the planned procurement would go ahead.

AH recorded HEIDS appreciation for BH's contribution over the years and wished him well in his new post.

8.2 Universities Scotland (MM)

MM was not present but had sent the Chair information which had been addressed under the shared services item.

8.3 JISC (AH)

AH noted that the first board meeting under Tim O'Shea's stewardship had now taken place.

The main focus continued to be the reworking of the committee structure. The new Infrastructure and Resources Committee now included two HEIDS members, Andy McCreath and Mark Toole but had yet to meet, so there was nothing yet to report.

The new JISC Strategy review process was now underway. It was proposed that this should be a substantive agenda item at the next HEIDS meeting. KM

It was noted that the JISC conference in Edinburgh had been a very good event.

8.4 JCN/JANET UK (AM)

In the absence of AM there was no report on this item.

8.5 RSCs (CC)

CC echoed BH's comments that the RSC round three reviews were about to report.

For round four, the focus would be on sustaining the core remit. Regionality was seen as important in Scotland.

CC reminded the group that RSC events were open to all institutions.

8.6 SCURL/SCONUL (FM)

SCONUL

FM noted the continued interest in UKRDS and that Jean Sykes had recently circulated more information on its next steps. He added that this was an issue for everyone, in terms of data storage.

MT reported that one of SCONUL's priorities was a shared technical infrastructure, possibly encompassing repositories, open access software, digital archives and content.

SCURL

At the last meeting, there had been much discussion about the impact of exchange rate fluctuations on journals budgets.

SHEDL

FM reported that the next sets of suppliers had been selected. FM had a flier, for any interested parties at the meeting.

8.7 UCISA CISG (CM)

CM reminded the group that the next conference would be in St Andrews at the end of the year and the CISG committee were currently looking for a keynote speaker.

CISG were running seminars on points-based immigration and research information system requirements.

8.8 UCISA Executive

In TM's absence there was nothing to report under this item.

9 AOCB

There were no items of AOCB.

10 Date and agenda for next meeting

AH noted that Abertay had volunteered to host the next HEIDS meeting. This would be planned for late August. KM will circulate dates. KM

Future topics

The group requested a round-up session of the effects of current economic circumstances. KM

Given that the meeting would be at Abertay, it was suggested that there was an item on the national entitlement card. KM would liaise with Abertay. KM

AH thanked the University of the West of Scotland for hosting the meeting and for providing the catering and facilities.

Tours

UWS gave a tour of the new Civil Engineering Excellence building. This was most informative, especially the way in which IT was used for a variety of purposes. For example, gaming technology was used to simulate and optimise racing car performance.

There followed a tour of South Lanarkshire Council's data centre. This was an equally interesting tour, demonstrating the scale and quality of the facility.

All participants of the tours expressed their thanks to UWS and SLC.

K McCabe
19/05/09