



Higher Education Information Directors in Scotland (HEIDS)

Approved Minutes

Friday 4th September 2009
University of Abertay Dundee

Present:

Chair

Alun Hughes UHI Millennium Institute AH

Minute-taker

Fraser Muir Queen Margaret University FM

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
Brian Gilmore	University of Edinburgh	BG
Frazer Greig	University of Abertay Dundee	FG
Sandy MacDonald	University of Glasgow	SMacD
Simon Marsden	University of Edinburgh	SM
Andrew McCreath	The Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen	AM
Sean McDonald	Heriot-Watt University	SMcD
Catherine McMillan	University of Strathclyde	CM
Moriamo Oduyemi	University of Abertay Dundee	MO
Fraser Ross	RSAMD	FR
David Rundell	Heriot-Watt University	DR
Jem Taylor	UHI Millennium Institute	JT
Mark Toole	University of Stirling	MT
Angus Warren	APUC	AW
Colin Watson	Glasgow School of Art	CW

1. Apologies were received from the following:

Caroline Cochrane	RSAMD	CC
John Maher	UHI Millennium Institute	JM
Elaine Muir	Scottish Agricultural College	EM
David Johnson	University of the West of Scotland	DJ
Paul Haley	University of Aberdeen	PH
Margaret Macleod	Universities Scotland	MM
Kathy McCabe	University of Stirling	KM
Stuart McFarlane	Edinburgh College of Art	SMcF
Tom Mortimer	University of Dundee	TM
Elaine Muir	SAC	EM
Ray Murphy	Glasgow Caledonian University	RM
Jeff Murray	Glasgow Caledonian University	JM
Dean Phillips	University of Aberdeen	DP
Steve Watt	University of Abertay Dundee	SW

The Chair advised the meeting of the revised agenda.

2 APUC

Angus Warren, the new Chief Executive of APUC, gave a presentation on recent developments. He had joined seven weeks previously with the remit to turn around the organisation, accepting the problems and issues that had been present. It had been recognised that there had been problems with recruitment and retention; that the strategy had not been representative of the community and that limited knowledge and understanding of sector had led to widespread dissatisfaction.

It was hoped to increase the membership from the current 58 to all 62 Scottish institutions and to extend the current 41 live installations of PECOS. Also there was an anticipated extension from 20 to 150 managed contracts in the next few weeks. There would be account managers for each institution who would also manage contracts. There were plans to increase links with Welsh and English procurement organisations as well as to re-engineer business processes. APUC would also work with Procurement Scotland to make contracts more applicable to HE and FE. APUC would seek to develop partnerships with institutions accepting that sometimes institutions were better placed to handle procurement. There would be a capability assessment of each procurement function to determine this.

After the PECOS roll-out, the team would shrink and the premises currently used would be reduced in size or an alternative location identified where the use of shared resources could be explored. This would be less costly but would be accompanied by less block grant from central government. This would mean that costs would have to be covered by subscription but it was accepted that institutions must see value for money from this.

SM reported that, from his perspective of sitting on the national category forum for software, there was a need to tease out what differentiates the HE sector from other parts of the public sector. He reported that the PC procurement had been successful. He emphasised that the challenge for APUC would be to develop a sustainable business model.

PD stated that the PC deal had proved to be excellent mainly because of the timing whereby the pricing was agreed just before the dollar exchange rate dropped, resulting in a very competitive price. PD also reported ongoing supply chain problems with HP monitors.

SB stated that APUC did not appear to be listening to its customers. Equipment was not fit for purpose with the sector educating APUC rather than the other way round. Overall, he did not believe that this had been good value for money.

AW offered to contact any member of HEIDS for further discussion, if they wished.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting:

The minutes of the meeting held at the University of the West of Scotland on 6th May 2009 were approved.

4. Matters arising:

All matters arising were handled elsewhere in the meeting.

5. JANET UK changes

AM opened the discussion by summarising the SMCG meeting which had taken place immediately prior to the HEIDS meeting. (*Secretary's note: AM has provided a note of the SMCG meeting, which has been included in an appendix to these minutes.*)

BG stated that it was difficult for the University of Edinburgh to join in the argument as they were the RNO for EastMAN and therefore potentially had a conflict of interest. He stated that it was important for non-RNO institutions to make their voices heard. There had been some discussion on RUGIT list but none on HEIDS or UCISA lists. It was felt that the proposed arguments did not stack up, leading to the question of whether JANET was public network.

MT confirmed that the issue had not been discussed at JIR.

AH confirmed that it had not been discussed at JISC Board or the JISC Chairs sub-committee.

SM asked whether any cost savings would be reflected in a reduction in top-slice.

All

PD advised that all HEIDS members should ensure that their Principals were aware of the issue prior to the JISC dinner for Scottish Principals and Vice-Chancellors on Monday, 7th September.

There was some discussion on resilient connections and on JANET SLAs and it was felt that anything above the JANET SLA currently provided by MANs may well be at risk or might entail extra cost.

AH summarised a potential HEIDS view in terms of lack of consultation, arrogance and loss of local control as well as lack of transparency on potential cost benefits/value.

SB asked that JANET should be required to show value for money from the new proposal.

AH

AH agreed to formulate a position statement from HEIDS with some urgency but would require considerable input from members.

6 Shared Services

AH reported that he had represented HEIDS at a meeting about shared services, where it was noted that library services were the most developed in this area.

AM described an English shared data centre study in relation to work being done at RGU and St Andrews.

GD gave the view of FE sector and advised that HE were well placed to provide shared services to FE.

It was felt that HEIDS should continue to discuss this item. It was therefore agreed to retain the item on the agenda and to report as and when appropriate.

7 Sector approach to pandemic flu

AM proposed that HEIDS would be well placed to provide emergency cover and to support to each other. It was agreed that members should feel that they may contact the group for support if their local teams were incapacitated and that

All

help and support should be given.

8 JISC Draft Strategy

AH asked members if there were any issues which would benefit from a HEIDS response to the strategy consultation. It was felt that HEIDS would only respond on areas of consensus.

PD stated that in light of cost cutting, JANET and content services should be protected at all costs.

AH summarised some of the strategy themes, and noted that the proposition that RSCs would be subsumed by JISC Advance (the new name for JISC Services) with responsibility for strategy as well as delivery. The question of whether Scotland was disadvantaged by lack of access to JISC project funding was discussed. This arose because HEFCE and HEFCW were providing capital funds to JISC not managed by SFC. The view was that this was more of an issue for SFC than JISC, but in addition the question was raised as to whether JISC was placing too much emphasis on its political engagement with Westminster government at the expense of other parts of the UK. The general view was that HEIDS was not sufficiently informed about this issue to be able to comment. AH

AH agreed to inform Universities Scotland on two substantive issues: the services provided (see above) and openness and transparency (with reference to JANET proposals).

9 National entitlement card project

Chris Milne from Abertay gave a presentation to the group on Abertay's experience of the national entitlement card project. A copy of the presentation will be available on the HEIDS website in due course.

10. Reports

10.1 SFC (DB)

DB reported that SFC would be restructuring following Bill Harvey's departure to the QAA in Scotland. The commitment to engage with HEIDS would continue.

10.2 Universities Scotland (MM)

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

10.3 JISC (AH)

This was handled elsewhere in the meeting.

10.4 JCN/JANET UK (AM)

This was handled elsewhere in the meeting

10.5 RSCs (CC)

In the absence of CC there was no report on this item

10.6 SCURL/SCONUL (FM) SCONUL

MT reported on the HEFCE funded SCONUL shared services LMS project with the possibility of a national trial.

SCURL

FM reported that SCURL has been very quiet over summer with only further progress on SHEDL to report.

10.7 UCISA CISG

In the absence of HFK, and in light of CM's early departure, there was no report under this item.

10.8 UCISA Executive

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

(Secretary's note: TM had previously indicated that he would make available a note of the discussions at the UCISA Executive meeting on the 3rd and has since done so in an email to HEIDS on 8th September.)

11 AOCB

AH reported that KM had requested whether there would be any interest in a special interest/HEIDS sub-group meeting to discuss specific MIS issues such as production and distribution of management information, data marts/data warehouses etc. There was some interest in this. SMcD reported interest in the Oracle BI project at Heriot Watt and offered to run either a dedicated session at Heriot Watt or a presentation at next HEIDS. KM
SMcD

HEIDS agreed to accept the secretary's offer of a call for agenda items 2-3 weeks prior to meetings. KM

10 Date and agenda for next meeting

The next meeting would be in January at QMU, Edinburgh.
Agenda items; Janet UK catch up (all), Cloud computing (PD).

The January meeting would also include AGM business and AH reminded the group that they should seek to appoint a new secretary at that time.

AH thanked Abertay for hosting the event, providing the catering and facilities and for providing two presentations to the group.

2.00 Presentation

Moriamo Oduyemi gave a presentation on MIS systems at Abertay. A copy of the presentation will be made available on the HEIDS website in due course.

K McCabe
18/09/09

Appendix – notes from SMCG meeting on 4 September, as provided by A McCreath

- 1) While there were real issues with what JUK are proposing, care must be taken that protestations from the RNO's may be viewed as simply a reaction to protect their own interests. This may obscure the real issues. It was therefore recommended to HEIDS that Institutional Representatives had a key responsibility to articulate their concerns and requirements. Ultimately they represented the community which the JANET network served.
- 2) Notwithstanding (1), the RNO's are in a good position to advise Institutions on the range of services provided and how some of these might be put at risk by the JUK proposals.
- 3) SMCG wished to point out that there had been no objective case published by JUK which clearly articulated the benefits and rationale behind their proposals.
- 4) SMCG wished to point out that as matter of fact, regardless of the pros and cons, the change represented a massive alteration to the delivery mechanism of a critical service to the HE and FE community. The degree of change, and the absence of an objective case, represents a significant potential risk to the Community.
- 5) SMCG recommends to HEIDS that Institutional Directors define their service requirements explicitly. In doing this, they should seek clarification from RNO's on what services are actually delivered in practice as these may be beyond the current formal JANET SLA. Institutional Directors should then take the initiative to request that services that they regard as essential are included in the JANET SLA and that any costs in relation to this were explicitly understood.
- 6) To assist (5), RNO's should collate information on the services that they provide over and above the formal JANET SLA.
- 7) SMCG wished to point out that it was unclear who was ultimately responsible for network strategy nationally – JISC? JIR? It was felt in particular that the role of JIR should be clarified, and it was noted with concern that there had been no mention to JIR of this very significant announcement from JUK.

It was also pointed out, in fairness to JUK, that the transition to the new arrangements was envisaged to take place over a 5 year period and that this would give significant time to understand and resolve any issues arising.