Higher Education Information Directors in Scotland (HEIDS)

Approved Minutes

Wednesday 4th February 2009
Edinburgh Napier University

Present:

Chair

Andrew McCreath	Robert Gordon University	AM

Secretary

Kathy McCabe	University of Stirling	KM
Malcolm Bain	University of St Andrews	MB
David Beards	Scottish Funding Council	DB
Gerry Costello	Scottish Agricultural College	GC
Paul Dean	Edinburgh Napier University	PD
Gerry Dougan	SFEU	GD
Daron Gibb	APUC	DG
Brian Gilmore	University of Edinburgh	BG
Alun Hughes	UHI Millennium Institute	AH
Sandy MacDonald	University of Glasgow	SMacD
Margaret Macleod	Universities Scotland	MM
John Maher	UHI Millennium Institute	JM
Simon Marsden	University of Edinburgh	SM
Stuart McFarlane	Edinburgh College of Art	SMcF
Catherine McMillan	University of Strathclyde	CM
Graham Millar	University of Stirling	GM
John Milner	UKRDS	JM
Fraser Muir	Queen Margaret University	FM
Brian Mullins	University of the West of Scotland	BM
Jeff Murray	Glasgow Caledonian University	JM
Gordon Neill	Procurement Scotland	GN
David Rundell	Heriot-Watt University	DR
Colin Watson	Glasgow School of Art	CW

1.   Apologies were received from the following:

Stuart Brough	University of Strathclyde	SB
Heidi Fraser-Krauss	University of St Andrews	HFK
Frazer Greig	University of Abertay Dundee	FG
Tom Mortimer	University of Dundee	TM
Moriamo Oduyemi	University of Abertay Dundee	MO
Brian Robertson	University of Aberdeen	BR
Mark Toole	University of Stirling	MT

Action

AM welcomed Gerry Costello from Scottish Agricultural College and Jeff Murray from Glasgow Caledonian University to their first HEIDS meeting.

2.   Minutes of the previous meeting:
The minutes of the meeting held in St Andrews on 3rd September 2008 were approved, with thanks to HFK for her contribution.

3.   Matters arising:

HEIDS website
The new logo had been implemented on the website and also incorporated into the formal papers. HEIDS wished to record their thanks to Ray Murphy's sister for her creative work and asked that this should be recorded formally by letter. HEIDS also wished to thank the web team at University of Aberdeen for amending the website to incorporate the logo.   KM

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

5   Procurement Scotland
This item was taken first so that DG and GN need not be detained longer than necessary.

DG reported that he was replacing Karen Anderson at APUC.

GN gave an oral presentation on category A contract. The details of his talk are   GN
contained in the powerpoint presentation subsequently circulated to HEIDS, so will not be replicated here.

One point to note was GN's caution about any offers outside the contracts as they are not likely to match the specification in the contract.

GN noted that the contract pricing was fixed for a whole year which offered institutions better budget planning.

There was a wide-ranging discussion on some of the problems which had arisen in the previous year, which were mostly communications issues.

GN urged institutions to obtain evaluation kit from the new contract suppliers and reassure themselves of the specification and quality. This was a no-cost option for institutions.

GN reported that there had been savings of the order of £7.1 millions across all   GN
six sectors. HEIDS asked if the HE sectoral saving could made available.

(*Secretary's note: this was circulated to HEIDS by email on 5th February.*)

Much of the discussion focussed on the after-sales service provided by contract suppliers, which had fallen short in a number of areas. GN noted that this aspect had been incorporated into the new contract and also that any issues arising in future should be escalated to Procurement Scotland quickly.

There was a question about whether contractors would be prepared to apply contract prices to different flavours of product. This would be down to local arrangements.

There was a question about the timescale for Procurement Scotland looking at Apple Macs. GN noted that this was a question of volume of request and   GN

agreed to provide information on the Apple take-up in Scotland.

AM thanked both GN and DG for their participation in the meeting. GN and DG then left the meeting.

4. Shared services

Regarding the proposals to hold an away day to consider pooling and sharing of expertise with Scottish HEIs, AH reported that he and other colleagues had met to draw up a set of actions. However, due to involvement in other work, progress had since stalled. The planned away day had not yet taken place but was still a desirable event. BM had approached his contact at South Lanarkshire Council to deliver a presentation at the away day and she had indicated that she would be willing to do this. This would be picked up at a future meeting.

MM reported that she had attended a joint UUK and AHUA conference in Loughborough in October where shared services was a topic for discussion. There appeared to be little appetite for it in that forum and MM commended HEIDS as the group most fertile for ideas on shared services.

DB provided an update from JISC who had commissioned Duke and Jordan to report on shared services. The findings of the report were that the sector was a few years off shared services being feasible on a large scale, as much depended on a move to Service Oriented Architecture. DB noted that there was further funding available to follow up on some JISC projects to see if they could be leveraged to achieve some of the aims.

DB also mentioned that there is a JISC info kit on shared services, available from the JISC website.

DR reported on a new example of shared services at Heriot-Watt University. IT services for the Heriot-Watt School of Textile and Design were now being provided through Borders College. Staff had been transferred as part of this arrangement. The whole process has been subject to some complex legal issues and consequently had taken around two and a half years to achieve. DR reported an interesting symmetry in that Heriot-Watt library provides services to Border College.

AH reported on a major shared services programme at UHI Millennium Institute looking at all collective back office services. IT was not high on the list. The first priority was library services, with a number of roadshows round the colleges to check understanding of the requirements of libraries. It was anticipated that this would be the pilot and pathfinder project.

AH noted that shared services happen where there is a real need for them, otherwise there is no business case for change.

6 Out of Hours Survey and Edinburgh Napier update

PD announced that Napier University had officially become Edinburgh Napier University as of 25th January 2009, with a marketing launch planned from 25th February. KM will arrange for the HEIDS website to be updated to reflect this.   KM

PD reported that IS at Edinburgh Napier University had put in place a new formal Out of Hours scheme in November 2008. This was formed from a mixture of HR policy and local departmental policy and covered the definition of when it can be used, what it can be used for, payment rates and health & safety issues.

PD noted that standby time did not count towards the 48 hours in the working time directive. Staff may not return to work within 11 hours of a call-out.

This new policy had provided a framework for Christmas and New Year, which had previously been variable. The coverage included DBA services, network and telephones, servers and the web team. There was also a manager on standby.

People on regular standby were provided with a laptop, vodaphone network access, mobile phone and hands-off unit.

The arrangements were seen as an insurance policy – callout was not actively encouraged.

PD also gave a brief presentation on some of the planned projects at Edinburgh Napier University, namely: new facilities management system, replacement HR/payroll system, data definitions project to underpin management information, university-wide formal change management process, moving student email to Exchange Labs Live@EDU and last, but not least, a new building at Sighthill at an estimated cost of £60 millions.

There was some discussion on the provision of and use of student lap-tops. JM noted that there needed to be an academic reason to use them ie that their use needed to be embedded in academic programmes. He shared his experience of a project running at his former institution in Australia. The project focused on the business programmes and programmes for primary school teachers. IS there had to re-engineer the teaching facilities to enable this. The approach had proven to be highly successful.

AM informed the group of the work currently being done at Islay High School where every pupil has been issued with an ultra mobile/tablet. The entire curriculum has been changed to incorporate use of the technology, with a strong focus on group work. The batteries can last a full day if charged, and pupils can add a screen and keyboard if necessary.

7   **UK Research Data Service (UKRDS)**

AM welcomed John Milner, Project Manager for the UKRDS feasibility study, and thanked him for attending the HEIDS meeting, especially in the challenging weather and travel circumstances.

John gave a presentation on the project, stressing that the key message was one of service delivery. The accompanying powerpoint presentation will be posted on the HEIDS website so will not be replicated here.

John's talk initiated much discussion. A question was asked about whether we should be piggybacking on other overseas projects. JM considered that the project was already doing this to some extent and good relationships had been developed with USA and Australian initiatives in particular. The US and UK were probably best equipped with existing infrastructure to go forward. There was also a question about where UKRDS sat alongside other repository projects such as IRIS. JM explained that repository projects were focused on back office systems whereas UKRDS concerned data management plans for storage and curation, which would use a range of potential services of which IRIS might be one. The two approaches do not compete with each other – UKRDS would add value and coherence through its front office services engaged directly with researchers.

JM described the twin approach as a model of delivering service locally with support, development and central advocacy delivered nationally, rather like a franchising model.

JM noted that HEIDS could find out more information on the UKRDS website at http://www.ukrds.ac.uk.

He also asked HEIDS to raise awareness of the project among research staff at institutions.   All HEIDS

8.   Reports

8.1   SFC (DB)

DB referred to a recent email inviting HEIDS members to a Sustainable ICT workshop on 12th February. He noted that two universities and two colleges were being sought to take part in a green pilot project. SFC had contributed some funding to this and so support would be available.

8.2   Universities Scotland (MM)

MM reported that David Caldwell of Universities Scotland would be retiring in July. The new appointment would be announced soon. MM also noted that Diana Warwick would be leaving Universities UK in July also.

MM referring to item 4, Shared Services, reiterated her view that HEIDS seemed the most likely sectoral senior group to identify potential opportunities in respect of shared services.

At the Chair's request, MM reported, in relation to APUC Ltd, that the independent directors on the Board of APUC Ltd had carried out a strategic dialogue and produced a report which was made available at the end of October 2008. The report contained a number of recommendations for moving forward and an action plan had subsequently been drawn up by the Board of APUC Ltd. MM was uncertain as to whether the report had been published on the APUC website. MM noted that there was an APUC workshop running that day at which procurement professionals and APUC officers were looking at how to assess benefits realisation. MM's brief at Universities Scotland is in relation to high level policy in respect of procurement and efficiencies.

MM reported that Audit Scotland is conducting a study into the public procurement reform programme and is due to report in May 2009. This study would concentrate on efficiency, effectiveness and cost benefits across the public sector.

SM suggested that UK-wide collaboration probably delivers better deals in some categories of procurement.

8.3   JISC (AH)

AH noted that there was not much to report as the board had not yet met since the appointment of Tim O'Shea as Chair.

The main focus currently was the reworking of the committee structure. The new Infrastructure and Resources Committee was currently recruiting. The Teaching and Learning committee planned to review its remit later this year, but no major changes were expected.

The next year's budget was not yet known but was likely to be a zero increase. Projections against a number of scenarios had been requested. If pushed, development would be cut first, then services.

It was noted that the JISC conference would be held in Edinburgh this year.

8.4 JCN/JANET UK (AM)

AM reported on the Scottish MANs convenors group meeting, where procurement had been a hot topic. There was a further meeting of the five MANs towards the end of February where the broad agenda was concerned with working better together in order to improve both the service and the return on investment to funding bodies. This would include looking at bringing in more service users. It was noted that the Welsh public sector model was being cited as a good example.

MB

8.5 RSCs (DB)

DB reported that these were going well. There was much interest in green IT collaborations. There was also work underway to set up service agreement arrangements.

8.6 SCURL/SCONUL (FM)

SCONUL

FM noted that there was great interest in UKRDS within the librarian community. Another project of interest was UK Research Reserve, another shared service but for physical research materials.

At the SCONUL autumn conference there had been much discussion about libraries as publishers as well as consumers, in particular around the use of open source Open Journal System.

SCURL

The e-books tender had been impacted by circumstances arising from the current economic climate.

SHEDL

Phase one of this project was now in place, with all Scottish HEIs jointly procuring electronic content from three suppliers. This was considered to be a major success. It was considered that this delivered a model for procurement for other items such as software licences. A key factor in Phase one's success had been the critical mass – every HEI in Scotland had committed to it even if they did not necessarily take content from the three initial suppliers. Phase two was now underway, seeking further suppliers.

AH reported that, in a recent review of priorities for SCURL members, working more closely with HEIDS was high on the list.

8.7 UCISA CISG (CM)

CM reported that HFK was the new Chair of UCISA CISG. The next conference would be in St Andrews at the end of the year.

The main current concern was the impact in the sector of the introduction of points-based immigration. Even at this late stage there was a lack of clarity of requirements and very short timescales for implementation.

8.8 UCISA Executive

There had been a UCISA Executive meeting the previous week but in TM's absence there was nothing to report.

9 AOCB

It was suggested that HEIDS should hold a proper away day including an overnight stay since a much of the value of HEIDS coming together was the opportunity to catch up and share information informally. It was agreed that future HEIDS meetings should build half an hour into the agenda for conversation.

KM

10   Date and agenda for next meeting
AM thanked Edinburgh Napier University for hosting the meeting and providing the catering and facilities.

The next meeting would take place during late April/early May at the University of West of Scotland's Hamilton campus, if appropriate accommodation would be available. BM and KM would liaise over venue and dates and circulate as appropriate.   BM/KM

Future topics
KM reported that she had met some senior technical staff from UCAS who had offered to give a presentation to HEIDS on the extended character set plans for admissions data from summer 2011.

11   AGM
AM confirmed that he had served three years as Chair and so it was time to hand over to someone else. AM proposed that AH take on the role; BG and SMacD seconded it. AH happily accepted this and is therefore the new Chair of HEIDS.

There were no volunteers to take over the role of Secretary so KM agreed to continue for the time being. HEIDS were asked to give some serious consideration to taking over this role from 2010.

HEIDS reviewed the constitution as required. There were a number of small   KM
changes to be made, including formally recording the date of review, which KM would arrange, along with other website changes.

AM thanked HEIDS for their support during his time in office and noted that he had enjoyed it immensely.

AH thanked AM for this excellent chairmanship over the previous three years and looked forward to his continued involvement in the group.

K McCabe
23/02/09