

**HEIDS Meeting at Glasgow Caledonian
23rd February 2006**

Minutes

Present:

Chair		
Andrew McCreath	The Robert Gordon University	AM
Secretary		
Heidi Fraser-Krauss	University of St. Andrews	HFK
Brain Mullins	University of Paisley	BM
Malcolm Bain	University of St. Andrews	MB
David Beards	SFC	DB
Paul Dean	Napier University	PD
George Farquhar	University of Strathclyde	GF
Louise Garden	Glasgow Caledonian	LG
Frazer Greig	University of Abertay	FG
Garry Main	UHI Millennium Institute	GM
Simon Marsden	University of Edinburgh	SM
Kathy McCabe	Stirling University	KM
Stuart McFarlane	Edinburgh College of Art	SM
Catherine McMillan	Napier University	CM
Tom Mortimer	University of Dundee	TM
Fraser Muir	Queen Margaret University College	FM
Moriama Oduyami	University of Abertay	MO
Brian Robertson	University of Aberdeen	BR
Jem Taylor	UHI Millenium Institute	JT
Colin Watson	Glasgow School of Art	CW

1. Apologies were received from the following:

Stuart Brough	University of Strathclyde	SB
Jerome Perera	University of Aberdeen	JP
Peter Kemp	University of Stirling	PK
David Rundell	Heriot Watt University	DR
Caroline Cochrane	RSAMD	CC

AM welcomed new members to HEIDS

- ❖ Colin Watson from Glasgow School of Art
- ❖ Brain Mullins from University of Paisley

2. Minutes of previous meeting:

The minutes of the meeting held at UHI on Sept 14th 2005 were approved with minor corrections.

3. Matters arising:

AM informed the meeting that because of recently acquired responsibilities HFK was stepping down as HEIDS secretary after this meeting. KM had agreed to take over the role and AM thanked her for this.

HFK reported that the UCISA CISG systems directory is now live and encouraged members to add their own systems to it and pass any feed back about the directory on to UCISA.

Action ALL

AM and LG are to develop a document re Forensic Investigation Procedures as guidelines for HEIDS members.

Action AM/LG

AM noted that DB was now representing the SFC.

FM reported that the Citrix users group had met in Nov 05. No other representatives from Scotland were present but there was wide participation from the rest of the UK. Members were encouraged to contact FM should they want further information about the group.

Those interested in ubiquitous computing were encouraged to contact AM.

PM reported that Cisco were pushing 3G and not wifi at the UCISA management conference. LG reported that a wireless town for Glasgow was currently under discussion, Aberdeen and St Andrews, also had similar discussions on the go. FG reported that Abertay was investigating 'smart lamp posts' with wireless and free VOIP, adverts would be included with calls. FG agreed to report back on progress with this initiative.

4. MAN Issues – SuperJANET V

MB reported that SJ5 was underway with MCI. The provision would be universal with dual connections to each MAN. The target date for completion was August 06. Scottish MANs were taking advantage of the money from the SFC to develop resilient links. AM will be representing Scottish MAN's in discussions with UKERNA re the future of MAN's and their relationship to UKERNA.

MB advised MAN's to chase suppliers for invoices asap.

PD reported that Napier now have circuits from which with run through sewers!

5. Knowledge Bases in Support

BR gave an interesting and discussion provoking presentation about knowledge bases in support. BR gave an overview of the set up in Aberdeen which is now based on a product called Supportworks from Hornbill which BR recommended as being affordable, manageable and configurable. Discussion focussed around how resource intensive it was to keep knowledge bases accurate and up to date but that he did have considerable pay off for users as responses were consistent and up to date, immediate and available 24x7. Support staff also benefited as if the knowledge base was useful to users they received less direct queries.

BR commented that knowledge bases were not a substitute for a 'real person' and that to be effective there needed to be a critical mass of useful standard resolutions.

TM commented that Dundee were currently tendering for a new helpline system that was ITIL compliant. Members expressed interested in this and TM promised to keep members informed of the outcome of this exercise.

6. Report from meeting with Oracle (this item was discussed later on in the agenda but is noted here for simplicity)

SM reported that this meeting, which took place in January 06, had had wide representation from HE across the UK and that over all the discussion had been a positive one. The aim of the meeting had been to investigate a single agreement between Oracle and the HE community based, if possible, on a simple metric.

It was obvious, however, that a wide variety of agreements were already in place and that the difficulty would be to develop a migration path between these existing deals and any new one Oracle may offer. It was noted by SM that it was unlikely that members would be willing to accept a worse deal from Oracle than the one they currently had in interests of uniformity! Oracle agreed to benchmark and model different deals and this outcome had been reported at the Oracle user group. Since then no further progress had been made.

SM's view was that no major changes were likely in the short term as one metric needs to be agreed by all, as well as which bundle of products offered in the deal. As there is a lack of clarity as on what the Oracle stack is or should be there is no guarantee that anything will change.

In discussion following SM reported that Oracle did value the UK HE market for reasons of esteem and cross selling and that they would probably continue to offer an agreed discount on their products to HE. SM urged all to consider what their requirements would be from Oracle. **Action All**

AM to write to Peter Tinson at UCISA to reinforce the desire of HEIDS members that discussions with Oracle on this topic continue. **Action AM**

Members agreed that it would be useful to invite representatives from Oracle to HEIDS to allow them to give members an update on their product portfolio and strategy for future developments. **Action KM**

7. Discussion section

7.1. Progress on framework agreement

BR reported that as far as he was aware post 92 University staff have suffered much worse than those IT staff in pre 92 institutions.

TM reported that in Dundee IT staff had been HERA trained and involved in job evaluation and that this had been very useful. GF reported that IT staff had been heavily involved in the process in Strathclyde and he reported that in his view this had been essential to ensure roles of IT staff were understood. BM reported that Paisley had now completed role evaluation using HAYE and that in general there was satisfaction. Nominal grades were soon to be released with appeals process only permitted on grounds of procedure.

KM asked if it would be useful for HEIDS members to share scores. Others noted that scores were not really comparable, but it was agreed that members would never the less like to address this topic at a future date to share experiences and concerns.

7.2. High availability computing

BR outlined Aberdeen's approach to high availability web services which is based on multi-server, multi-tier Linux servers running Apache with hot stand bys. BR noted that the network needs to be architected to be resilient. Upgrades were done a server at a time with Redhat automatic patching no longer in place because of the problems this had caused. BR noted that application layer switching was used to great effect in Aberdeen

PD had looked at incidents in Napier and found that there was a high interaction between staff and equipment failure and stressed that ensuring staff were well trained was a critical and often overlooked component to a high availability service.

LG noted that Intechology offered a SAN backup service over JANET and that as a number of members commented SAN's do fail and this is something we need to be aware of and manage.

7.3. UCISA Security Toolkit

AM asked members what use was being made of this toolkit in their institutions. In general members reported that the toolkit was very useful as a starting point for institutional policy making, although many felt it needed considerable pruning. There was also general consensus around the need for Human Resources 'buy in' as many of the policies suggested by the toolkit required changes in staff contracts. LG commented that sometimes internal processes limited policy development and that the toolkit was useful as an external framework on which to lever policy changes

7.4. IT Approaches to New Estates Developments

DB reported on the SFC/JISC conference on Effective Learning and the Built Environment which had been very well received. The report from the conference will be circulated to members as a url. The discussion which followed noted that there was trade off between 'bums on seats' and added value with the utilisation of space.

FM reported that in the QMUC new build 'flexibility' was the key driver for all their space with flood wiring being used to ensure IT could be used every where. JT reported that UHI had looked at flood wiring and found that the density of wiring needed was pretty standard between buildings regardless of their use.

PD cautioned against assuming that there would be less campus usage with advances in ubiquitous services as new nice buildings tended to be used more.

FG noted that student involvement in the design of learning spaces was very important.

8. Report from other groups

8.1. SFC

DB reported that following the review of e-learning there was no change to current SFC policy. E-learning transformation projects will be on show at ALT-C in Edinburgh in Sept 06. The QAA quality enhancement theme of e-learning is expected to be embedded in all areas of the institution and not just focussed on technology.

SFC is piloting benchmarking between institutions of the services being offered with the aim of developing a methodology to allow comparison between institutions.

8.2. Universities Scotland.

PK had responded to a request for a review of FOI requests.

8.3. JISC

DB reported that a review of RSC's had been completed and SFC had intimated that it was committed to funding Scottish RSC's. Until the results of the review were published it was difficult to predict the implications on the RSC's and what the relationship between JISC and FE would be.

HFK reported that she was now a member of the JISC Organisational Support committee.

8.4. UKERNA/JCN

Already covered under SJ5 discussion above

8.5. RSC's

Covered above

8.6. SCURL/SCONL.

Nothing reported

8.7. UCISA CISG

HFK reported that she was organising speakers for the CISG conference in Dunblane in Nov 06 and invited members to provide ideas for speakers or topics.

9. AOCB

HEIDS website

There was discussion over the format, content and hosting of the HEIDS website. BR offered to take over the hosting and updating of the site. AM expressed his appreciation for this. Members were asked to forward details of HEIDS institutional representatives on to KM for the mailing list who would pass this information on to BR for the website. **Action ALL**

AM asked members if they were happy with the format of the meetings with a mix of MIS and IT topics being discussed. Members expressed their satisfaction with the current arrangement.

LG reported on the outsourcing of student email accounts to MSN at Caledonian. There had been a number of issues with the implementation most of which had now been resolved with 11,000 students registered with hotmail accounts. LG noted that this had not been a zero cost option and the main issues had occurred because there was no defined implementation process from MSN. There was additionally no single sign on and password resetting had been a major issue. Alumni email accounts would contain advertising.

Members discussed agenda items for the next meeting which will be hosted by TM in Dundee on May 25th 06. The following items were chosen :

- ❖ ITIL
- ❖ VOIP
- ❖ Timetabling

With the following as potential agenda items for future meetings

- ❖ Disaster recovery
- ❖ Business Continuity
- ❖ Framework agreement
- ❖ Hand held devices and services
- ❖ On-line enrolment and registration

Heidi Fraser-Krauss March 28th 06