

Higher Education Information Directors in Scotland (HEIDS)

Approved Minutes

Thursday 29th May 2008
University of Stirling

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
Stuart Brough	University of Strathclyde	SB
Paul Dean	Napier University	PD
Gerry Dougan	SFEU	GD
Heidi Fraser-Krauss	University of St Andrews	HFK
Brian Gilmore	University of Edinburgh	BG
Peter Kemp	University of Stirling	PK
Sandy MacDonald	University of Glasgow	SMacD
Margaret Macleod	Universities Scotland	MM
Sean McDonald	Heriot-Watt University	SMcD
Catherine McMillan	University of Strathclyde	CM
Graham Millar	University of Stirling	GM
Fraser Muir	Queen Margaret University	FM
Brian Mullins	University of the West of Scotland	BM
Moriamo Oduyemi	University of Abertay Dundee	MO
Alan Richardson	University of Stirling	AR
Colin Watson	Glasgow School of Art	CW

1. Apologies were received from the following:

Karen Anderson	APUC	KA
Caroline Cochrane	RSAMD	CC
Simon Marsden	University of Edinburgh	SM
Tom Mortimer	University of Dundee	TM
Gordon Neill	Procurement Scotland	GN
David Rundell	Heriot-Watt University	DR

AM welcomed Gerry Dougan to his first HEIDS meeting.

Action

2. Minutes of the previous meeting:

The minutes of the meeting held at Queen Margaret University were approved, subject to one minor change in item 3. Bob Day works for JANET not JISC. KM

3. Matters arising:

Forensic Investigation Procedures

This task had stalled and it was difficult for the volunteers to find time to address it. It was agreed that it would be dropped.

Public access to JANET

This would be addressed under substantive item 7.

HEIDS website

It was agreed that the two logos should be re-circulated to seek HEIDS opinion. KM

Scottish-based initiative on energy consumption

PD and DB had had a meeting and identified needs. There was now a JISC funded project looking at the same issues and so PD/DB were considering how their findings could add to the JISC project, rather than duplicate effort. PD/DB

Smart card initiative

This would be addressed under substantive item 5.

Framework issues

The status of the work to look at national role descriptions and competencies was unknown. TM

PD agreed to collate a set of statistics over the summer and circulate them to HEIDS. PD

The market analysis exercise at RGU remained work in progress. AM

APUC

There remained a need for volunteers to join various sub-groups. This would be addressed under substantive item 6.

Shared services

This would be addressed under substantive item 5.

ICT Survey

There was nothing to report from the group set up to look at data structures. AM

Guidance on charity number

PK had distributed the OSCR circular as agreed. MM reported that Stirling's document had gone out at the end of April. This was advisory and contained examples of how institutions were taking this forward.

4 Framework issues

There was some discussion about the use of market supplements: some institutions had now introduced them while others still had spent considerable time removing them and consolidating them within the grading structure.

Other institutions were considering other types of flexible remuneration such as vouchers and group bonuses.

There was a lengthy discussion about the varying approaches to and remuneration arrangements for out of hours support. It was considered useful to have a small survey of the various arrangements. PD volunteered to include this in the exercise he was already undertaking. HEIDS were asked to feed in their arrangements to PD. This item would be on the agenda for the next meeting. All HEIDS/
PD
KM

5 Shared services

A small group of HEIDS had met to consider shared services and AM had prepared a paper outlining the ideas which had emerged. The paper had been previously circulated to HEIDS. Subsequently AM and PK had been asked to speak at the forthcoming US/SFC event.

The emergent ideas covered the following topics: telephony, campus networks, data centres, common services (eg citrix, email, storage), open source software and training.

There was a lengthy and lively discussion as the group considered the best definition of a shared service and a number of different models already in existence. The group also identified that there were a number of pitfalls of which to beware.

AM summarised the discussion with the following points:

- It was important to recognise the complexity of and issues in relation to shared services, especially given the tensions between collaboration and competition. It was clear from the discussion that many more issues would be raised once looked at in more detail. Shared services must not be seen as a panacea and as such government and senior management expectations needed to be managed.
- HE was already very good at sharing services and, where this was proven to be successful, had usually emerged from a 'bottom up' approach as opposed to a forced 'top down' approach.
- There were a number of potential governance issues surrounding shared service proposals.
- It was agreed that what was more likely to emerge were "hubs" of institutions who had identified a common interest and were willing to work together to pursue shared arrangements. This was viewed as being more likely to succeed rather than large scale, nationally driven initiatives.

AM agreed to convey these messages at the forthcoming presentation.

AM

(Secretary's note: AM has subsequently circulated a report of the meeting to HEIDS.)

AM invited GD to give an FE perspective on the foregoing discussion.

GD noted that there was no FE equivalent to HEIDS with the correct level of seniority. The closest equivalent is the ICT Managers Community of Practice that has a more operational focus. Currently the FE focus was on the efficient government initiative with a working group, chaired by Linda McKay, looking at business process efficiency in colleges.

FE colleges don't have much IT software development capacity and managing MIS systems proved to be an even greater challenge than in HE. Colleges have to manage with more 'vanilla' implementations of third party software and any customisation requires additional financial resources to engage suppliers. A number of colleges were now moving away from proprietary VLEs to Moodle. In this sphere, there was greater opportunity for colleges to share as there was less competitiveness due to common curricula. GD suggested that this might provide the opportunity for a horizontal learning model ie a VLE across subject areas.

GD believed that there was more scope for HE/FE collaboration, especially in the sphere of shared training both pedagogy and technical. He also noted that disaster recovery was a significant issue for FE with a range of solutions across the sector.

MM noted that the forthcoming shared services event aimed to address the perceived need from government for a top-down approach, following a

consultation exercise two years ago on transforming public services. The main focus of the event was to identify if there were opportunities for shared services and to identify any barriers to this. It was important that the initiative addressed the business needs of all institutions. MM said it was important to stress that the University sector had been doing this for years, not just in Scotland, but UK-wide and even internationally. MM noted that SFEU, HEFCE and JISC would all be represented at the event.

DB stated that the question of shared services was a reasonable one to ask, especially in the light of emerging understanding of the needs of the sector such as the restricted FE capacity for development. It was possible that a model of obtaining services from bigger partners might be feasible for FE. DB noted that it was not an issue for small colleges alone but also for bigger colleges with new campuses. He reported that a JISC-funded study had produced three reports on the state of the market and indicated that he would be able to fund some activities (workshops, materials) if they were engaging with the JISC study. HEIDS were asked to consider possible groupings and communicate their ideas and suggestions via the HEIDS mailing list.

All HEIDS

MO referred to the previously circulated briefing paper on the National Entitlement Card pilot project, which would be considered at the forthcoming shared services event. The long term aim of this, if successful, was to expand it to other institutions. This raised the question of how the matriculation card could be used for further external services. It was noted that trust was a key element in the process, due to the sharing of data and associated required consent.

6 IT hardware contract from Procurement Scotland

G Neill was unable to join the meeting. He would be invited to a future HEIDS meeting.

GM outlined some of the University of Stirling's experiences of procurement under the new hardware contract. It had not been a satisfactory experience, leaving much room for improvement.

There was a discussion about procurement and the need to have strong HE representation on the User Intelligence Groups. BG was the representative on the telecoms UIG. SM was currently drawn into the software UIG but did not have sufficient time to dedicate to this. He therefore asked, via BG, for a volunteer to fill this role.

PD noted that he was on the strategic advisory group for APUC, the next level down from Procurement Scotland.

PK noted that he was the representative on the National Category Forum for hardware but would need to be replaced due to his forthcoming retirement. In addition, SM was currently the representative on the National Category Forum for software but could not fulfil this due to other commitments. Therefore two representatives were sought for the National Category Forums. SB and PD were willing to consider this. Any other volunteers for these roles, or the software UIG, should contact AM in the first instance.

All HEIDS

It was stressed that HE had a strong track record in getting good value for money from IT procurement and it was therefore critical that there was strong, active representation from HEIDS within the new procurement arrangements in order to ensure that this continued.

AM tabled an email from SM regarding the Oracle negotiations over the new campus agreement. It appears that the metrics and discount levels have varied across institutions, offering different contracts of differing value and impact. Each institution would need to do its own calculations and consider the value of changing contract. It was suggested that an Oracle representative be invited to a future HEIDS meeting. Prior to that, it was agreed that it would be useful to get a small group together to consider how best to approach this. SM indicated he would be prepared to assist with this. Anyone interested in being part of the small group should let AM know in the first instance.

SM
All HEIDS

7. Reports

7.1 SFC (DB)

DB reported formally that the Chief Executive of SFC had resigned. He would shortly take up the post of Chair of JANET UK. The new acting Chief Executive was Laurence Howells.

The ICT Survey had been dropped.

7.2 Universities Scotland (MM)

MM raised an issue which had come to Universities Scotland from Careers Scotland, who were required to track the destinations of and follow up approximately 58,000 school leavers. One subset which was difficult for them to track was the group of school leavers who started a University course but then dropped out within nine months of starting. The request therefore was for Universities to pass data to Careers Scotland. However, Universities Scotland recognised that this would place an additional burden on already hard pressed HEIs. MM asked if it would be possible to estimate the cost of this to the sector, but it was agreed that this would be difficult to do in the absence of a clear specification. MM noted that an alternative solution would be for Careers Scotland to get the required data from SAAS, since there were already processes in place to pass the data there.

MM also reported that a further group within APUC, led by Helen Foster, was currently producing a sector procurement manual including templates, guidance and procedures for below EJ procurements. It was likely that this would be sent to procurement specialists within institutions.

7.3 JISC (DB)

DB noted a call for bids from the e-Learning capital programme advisory board but reminded HEIDS that these were not open to Scottish HEIs. This was because these particular calls are funded with additional funding provided by HEFCE, which SFC had not matched. There was currently no appetite from Scottish Principals to increase the level of the core JISC budget.

7.4 JCN/JANET UK (AM)

AM reported that a review of portfolios was currently taking place.

The issue of guest access to JANET remained ambiguous although there was a good booklet on services which might be a useful reference.

(Secretary's note: There has been some further HEIDS email exchange on this topic.)

7.5 RSCs (DB)

In CC's absence, DB reported that he would be meeting both RSCs during the following week and would email any issues to HEIDS.

7.6 SCURL/SCONUL (PK)

PK reported that SCURL was now talking to SLIC and the National Library about collecting policies, specifically about the balance of print vs electronic access.

PK reminded the group that his role in reporting on SCURL/SCONUL issues to HEIDS needed to be replaced in light of his forthcoming retirement. FM volunteered. HEIDS was happy to approve this.

7.7 UCISA CISG (HFK)

HFK reported that the conference would take place in Manchester from 19th – 21st November and planning the programme was well advanced. The main topics would be shared services; engagement with web 2.0 for business application; scenario planning; UK PASS and institutional showcases. This final item intended to provide institutions with the opportunity to showcase something of interest in a five minute slot at conference. There would be six sessions. Volunteers were sought. Anyone interested should email HFK direct.

(Secretary's Note: There was subsequently an email call from UCISA on this topic. The deadline has now passed.)

7.8 UCISA Executive

There was no report on this as TM was attending the UCISA Executive meeting that day.

8 AOCB

CM reported that there had recently been a demonstration of the latest PECOS software and it had become apparent that the data was real data from an HEI. This posed some questions over the access and security of live data and CM encouraged HEIs to check their contractual arrangements in regard to this, and to data access post-implementation.

(Secretary's note: CM subsequently circulated an email regarding these issues, APUC had stated that the data was test data from another institution and that any consultant's access to test and real data would be withdrawn after go live.)

10 Date and agenda for next meeting

AM expressed the group's thanks to the University of Stirling for hosting the visit, for lunch, for the facilities and for the subsequent social event to mark PK's forthcoming retirement.

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

11 Tour

PK gave an entertaining and nostalgic talk on the changes he has witnessed in IT over his long career in HE.

K McCabe 24th June 2008