



Higher Education Information Directors in Scotland (HEIDS)

26th September 2025 | Robert Gordon University & Microsoft Teams

Action Items

Chair: Clare Taylor

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| Welcome | | |
| | | Claire Taylor opened the meeting, thanking our hosts TCS for last night's hospitality and thanked Jill Martin for all her help and support of HEIDS over the years and also welcomed those attending for the first time. |
| Tata Consultancy Services – Gopalan Rajagopalan - Head of Scotland Ankur Mathur - Vice President & Head of Education Unit Dibyendu Chakrabarti - Segment Head - Education Unit - UK&I, MEA Lokesh Gupta - Business Relationship Manager - Education Unit – UK Nilesch Patel - Solution Head – Education Unit | | |
| 1 | | <p>Gopalan Rajagopalan thanked HEIDS for the opportunity to present and highlighted that their first CEO received an honorary degree from RGU and went on to provide an overview of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), and its evolution into a global IT services leader with over 4,200 employees within Scotland.</p> <p>Ankur presented TCS's strategic approach to supporting higher education institutions noting Declining enrolments and international student numbers, fixed cost structures and capital-intensive operations and the rising expectations from Gen Z and Gen Alpha for digital-native campuses.</p> <p>TCS cited cost optimisation examples, including the British Council, where streamlining processes, automation, and self-service delivered significant cost savings (30%+) and the creation of Athena, an AI-enabled "Amazon of research" platform for the US Navy Academy helped researchers exchange notes and accelerate their work.</p> <p>A video of Fraser Muir (Heriot-Watt University) highlighted the joint Data and Insights project with TCS, which centralised institutional data from multiple silos into an analytics platform to drive data-driven decision-making, particularly concerning the student experience.</p> <p>Key challenges were discussed at length. There was a strong feeling that large-scale technology projects, particularly Student Information System (SIS) replacements, are change management projects, not IT projects. The real challenge is addressing processes outside the system and managing cultural shifts. It was noted the immense difficulty ensuring buy-in from academic and operational colleagues, who often resist changes to ingrained processes.</p> |



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| | | <p>It was noted that there has been a shift from student experience to cost optimization, efficiency, and Return on Investment (ROI), reflecting the broader sector landscape change. We need small, low-cost, tangible wins that deliver immediate value rather than charging large sums (e.g., £100,000) for roadmaps ("a piece of paper"). This approach is necessary to build trust, momentum, and secure further funding (the "snowball effect").</p> <p>TCS emphasised its commitment to co-creating solutions with universities, leveraging cross-sector expertise and global experience and once again that HEIDS for the opportunity to present at the meeting.</p> |
| Meeting | | |
| 2 | | <p>The minutes of the last meeting were not reviewed, and the following actions remain open.</p> <p>Action: HEFEISTS and APUC to explore coordinated cyber insurance strategy and potential sector engagement with insurers.</p> <p>Action: Institutions to share top licence breakdowns to support sector-wide cost reduction.</p> |
| Scottish Government Cyber Update Paul Chapman | | |
| 3 | | <p>Paul Chapman provided updates on Scottish Government cyber initiatives:</p> <p>Student Training Package: The new free, one-hour Cyber Resilience Student Training Package (developed with students) is fully available on the Cyber Scotland website. UCISA is interested in partnering to help distribute the course across the UK.</p> <p>The Scottish Cyber Coordination Centre is fully operational.</p> <p>The old Public Sector Cyber Resilience Framework (PSCRF) is being replaced by alignment with the NCSC Cyber Assessment Framework (CAF). The new annual assessment will roll out in tranches starting early October 2025.</p> <p>Cyber Observatory: This new facility will be an interactive tool for public bodies to see how they stack up against peer groups (e.g., universities) on cyber resilience metrics.</p> <p>Upskilling Fund: A new upskilling fund for cyber professionals and audit staff is expected to launch in the next couple of months, open to bodies who haven't previously accessed it, including colleges and universities.</p> <p>Action: Invite Paul to future HEIDS meetings.</p> |
| USECEC Update Victoria Dishon | | |
| 4 | | <p>Victoria noted that lobbying continues for the Strategic Investment Fund, which was originally proposed but then had its funding pulled. The aim is to use the fund for test-and-learn pilots and collaborative projects.</p> |



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| | | <p>Concerns were raised regarding the distribution model, specifically the risk that having one host institution lead a project, to realise savings could result in a non-equitable, anti-competitive "centre of excellence" rather than a truly collaborative shared service benefiting the whole sector.</p> <p>The inherent risk in the current shared service model was noted, where institutions must cover costs without making a profit, calling for a new model with commercial protection to avoid disputes, especially during outages.</p> <p>Jason posted link to report - https://www.jisc.ac.uk/news/all/new-report-calls-for-practical-reform-in-higher-education-shared-services Starting point for the discussion on Wednesday – pivotal piece of work.</p> |
| UCISA Strategy Forum Update Victoria Dishon & Deborah Green | | |
| 5 | | <p>Victoria reported on a very useful, intense day and half highlighting the development and growth of UCISA, providing a voice for the sector with other organisations including Jisc.</p> <p>UCISA's 2022–2027 Strategic Plan is already largely delivered, and the current sector pressures necessitate an accelerated review. The consensus is to continue an evolution of the strategy, keeping the broad goals (Representation, Collective Voice, Professional Development) but adding a new, goal around Influence.</p> <p>The Trustees will meet during October to prioritise activity against key themes (e.g., the Common Data Model) to begin delivery immediately in 2026, ahead of the next formal strategy publication.</p> |
| Group updates and Feedback | | |
| 6 | | <p>Jisc – Jason Miles Campbell</p> <p>Jason shared a written report in advance of the meeting, he highlighted the following items.</p> <p>Ensure your institution is represented at the Jisc Scotland engagement forum, taking place on Thursday, 11 December (10-2) at Fife College's new Dunfermline City Campus. Invites have been sent to strategic contacts.</p> <p>Consider who from your institution will get most out of attending Digifest 2026 (Birmingham, 10–11 March).</p> <p>Ensure your cyber security team have their tickets booked to the Jisc Security Conference 2025 (Manchester and online, 25-26 November). Complimentary tickets are available for this event, which includes online participation for some non-secure sessions.</p> |
| 7 | | <p>HEFESTIS – Brian Henderson,</p> <p>Adrian Ellison (PVC Digital and People, University of West London) has taken over as the new Chair of HEFESTIS.</p> |



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| | | <p>UniDesk/TopDesk - HEFESTIS is finalising licence negotiations to secure higher discounts and a move to an industry-standard operating licence basis. A new strategic relationship with the TopDesk CEO is established to better influence functionality changes.</p> <p>Shared Services Growth - HEFESTIS core services are growing, with new members joining from both HE/FE and the wider Public Sector north and south of the border.</p> |
| 8 | | <p>APUC – Michael McLaughlin</p> <p>APUC shared a written report in advance of the meeting.</p> |
| 9 | | <p>Universities Scotland</p> <p>Lesley shared a report in her absence</p> |
| 10 | | <p>Schoms – Mark Dunlop</p> <p>Schoms are continuing their transition to FES and their management platform along with a new website in the coming weeks</p> <p>Subsidised training is again available providing a significant saving for individuals.</p> <p>ISE hosted buyer scheme – The scheme will be relaunched to provide members with covered hotel costs to attend the Integrated Systems Europe (ISE) trade show to view new technologies. Attendees will only need to cover travel costs.</p> <p>Mark is attending North Carolina State University to present on the holistic framework for learning environments and gather data for ongoing research.</p> <p>Work is progressing to map AV career paths against industry-recognised qualification levels to create a clear career progression route.</p> <p>AV User group – 14 October in Edinburgh, subsidised travel/accommodation available.</p> <p>Mark stepping down from the Chair in January to take on the Vice-Chair role.</p> |
| | | <p>UCISA</p> <p>Deborah Green provided a detailed update on several strategic initiatives and noted that they had launched its thought leadership work in London</p> <p>AI Working Party- A new cross-sector working party has been established to define key AI terms to create a common sector language. Following definitions, the group will develop principles and detailed guidance for ethical AI use. Members interested in joining should email representation@ucisa.ac.uk</p> <p>It was highlighted that Universities Scotland is preparing to present a paper developed by the Scottish AI Tertiary Network (SCAITeN), defining the principles for use of generative AI across the Scottish Tertiary sector, to the next Principals' meeting in October.</p> <p>Action: Catherine/Victoria to share the paper with Deboarh Green and Natalie Lafferty to encourage collaboration and avoid duplicating efforts.</p> |



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| | | <p>Deborah Green announced that UCISA is making headway on a common student data model for the UK and Ireland. They are hoping to adapt a model they have seen on the continent and are aiming to hold a stakeholder workshop in January 2026.</p> <p>Representation – In relation to the challenges with Microsoft storage changes, a tool is now being developed which is in the pilot phase with around 20 UK institutions.</p> <p>The UCISA Academy was highlighted which was launched two years ago with Hayse to address recruitment challenges. This is being relaunched with a new funding model.</p> <p>Deborah also highlighted the upcoming UCISA Leadership Summit.</p> <p>Action – DG and Hays to present to a future HEIDS meeting to promote early adoption and ensure Scottish interests are met.</p> |
| AOCB | | |

The Secretary is still seeking a host for the 5th December meeting.
Stuart Graham offered to host in June.

Future meetings:

- 5 December 2025 – **To be Confirmed**
- 20 February 2026 – University of St Andrews
- 8 May 2026 – AGM – Microsoft Teams
- 19 June 2026 – Glasgow Caledonian University

Attendees in person

| | | |
|-----------|----------------|----------------------------|
| James | Blair | (Stirling) |
| Victoria | Dishon | (Heriot-Watt) Vice Chair |
| Mark | Dunlop | (Aberdeen) |
| James | Gillanders | (Jisc) |
| Richard | Lynch | (RGU) |
| Iain | Macpherson | (Fife) |
| John | Maher | (UHI) |
| Catherine | McMillan | (Strathclyde) |
| Jason | Miles Campbell | (Jisc) |
| Ian | Robotham | (Aberdeen) |
| Claire | Taylor | (Napier) Chair |
| David | Telford | (Stirling) |
| Kim | Walsh | (RGU) |
| Mike | Whyment | (Aberdeen) Secretary |



Attendees Online

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| Allan | Cameron | (Royal Conservatoire) |
| Paul | Chapman | (Scot Gov) |
| Stuart | Graham | (Glasgow Caledonian) |
| Deborah | Green | (UCISA) |
| Frazer | Grieg | (Abertay) |
| Brian | Henderson | (HEFEITIS) |
| Kenji | Lamb | (College Development Network) |
| Mark | Lloyd | (Dundee) |
| Gordon | McLoughlin | (Glasgow Art(|
| Fraser | Muir | (Heriot-Watt) |
| David | Smyth | (Queens) |