KNOWLEDGE STRATEGY COMMITTEE

25 May 2021 (Videoconference)

Web Version

Minute

Present:	Doreen Davidson, Court appointee (Convener)
	Siân Bayne, Senate appointee
	Sue Currie, Court appointee
	Tina Harrison, Senate appointee
	Fizzy Aboah Jawad, Student representative
	Sarah McAllister, Court appointee
	Gavin McLachlan, Vice-Principal, Chief Information Officer and Librarian to the University
	Claire Phillips, Court appointee
In attendance:	Lewis Allan, Head of Court Services
	Leigh Chalmers, Deputy Secretary Governance & Legal
	Jo Craiglee, Head of Knowledge Management & Planning
	Sheila Fraser, CMVM representative (for Catherine Elliott)
	Iain Gordon, CSE representative
	Lee Hamill, Director of Finance
	Barry Neilson, Director of Strategic Change
	Nikki Stuart, Digital Programme Manager (for Item 3)
	Daryl Green, Head of Special Collections (for Item 6)
	Tim Gray, Information Services Applications (for Item 7)
	Alastair Fenemore, Chief Information Security Officer (for Item 9 and 10)
	Tony Weir, Director, IT Infrastructure (for Items 10 and 11)
Apologies:	Colm Harmon, Senate appointee
	Melissa Highton, Senate appointee
	Alan Murray, Senate appointee
	Sue MacGregor, Director of Academic Services
	Catherine Martin, Vice-Principal (Interim) Corporate Services
	Melissa Terras, CAHSS representative

1   Minute   **Paper A**

The Minute of the meeting held on 22 March 2021 was approved.

2   Matters Arising   **Verbal**

There were no matters arising.

SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS

**3   Distance Learning at Scale: Lessons Learned and   Paper B
        Recommendations**

A presentation on the lessons learned and recommendations from the three year research and development programme to design, create and test the University's ability to produce and support sustainable, at-scale online courses was received. An element of the programme, the creation of 'An Edinburgh Model for Online Teaching' course has played a key role in enabling the rapid pivot to remote learning from March 2020, having been studied by 700 staff and will be updated for the coming academic year. In response to the pandemic a Covid-19 Critical Care Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) was developed at pace and has now been studied by over 40,000 learners, including many front line health workers. Reviewing options for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and Executive Education courses with the intention of offering a broader portfolio of income generating online courses was discussed and supported. An overarching theme of dismantling distinctions and obstacles between online and in-person courses to enable a more consistent and coherent approach was welcomed. The direction of travel was supported, with a revised version of the paper to be submitted to the University Executive.

4   Service Prioritisation   Verbal

A summary of work to prioritise the existing suite of University services provided by Information Services Group (ISG) to inform future decision-making was received. All 92 services have been prioritised from 1 (critical, must continue) to 4 (no longer required, could be stopped) by senior staff within ISG. IT Committee will review these in detail as part of a first round of consultation, with the prioritisation level of each service to kept under regular review, anticipating that some services will increase or decrease in priority over time.

5   Chief Information Officer Update   Verbal

The Chief Information Officer noted that this is the last meeting for the Convener, Doreen Davidson, and thanked Doreen on behalf of the Committee for her service to Knowledge Strategy Committee and for her valued advice and guidance within the Committee and beyond.

Key activities and events since the last meeting were reported on, including: a planned freeze on changes to software at the start of the next semester to avoid the risk of disruption to any online/hybrid teaching or other essential services; the continuing global shortage of laptops and computer chips, expected to last at least another 6 to 12 months – advance orders for laptops have been placed to build a buffer stock; preparations for hybrid teaching next semester – teaching rooms are being upgraded for hybrid learning and a Scottish Funding Council grant has also enabled some rooms to be upgraded for hybrid research meetings; and, the growth of many different educational technology applications during the pandemic, with this to be considered at the next meeting in the context of whether any new applications should be considered for campus licences.

6   Diversifying the University Collections / University Histories   Paper C

Activities which Library & University Collections staff are currently undertaking, or wish to undertake in the near future, in order to ensure that collections, services and staff reflect the University's diverse student and staff communities, as well as external researchers and community groups wishing to engage with the collections were reviewed along with outline plans for a major project working towards a "University Histories" resource for 2032/33 (the University's 450th anniversary). Activities include diversifying the library holdings and collections via acquisitions, resource creation (the University Histories project), an improved range of subject guides, internships and a BAME graduate trainee librarian post, two annual research fellowships on the University's institutional history and archives, training on bias in professional practices and the establishment of an Academic Support Librarians Equality, Diversity & Inclusion group.

The paper was welcomed and members discussed resourcing many of the activities on a longer term basis, noting the opportunity for philanthropic fundraising and the importance of continuing these activities into the future. Noting that the paper has been presented to the College of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences' Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee, it was requested that it be presented to the equivalent committees in the College of Medicine & Veterinary Medicine and the College of Science & Engineering and this is planned for next semester.

7   ISG IT and Business Readiness for Start of Term 2021/22   Paper D

An overview of the project preparing IT and Library support for new students at the start of the next academic year was considered. As with the current academic year, it is planned to deliver University cards to students by mail rather than requiring collection at the Main Library as occurred pre-Covid. The rollout of the University network to halls of residence should aid new students in registering in advance for many of the online services they may wish to use on campus. The following points were raised in discussion:
- If student feedback is sought to help planning – student interns work in the project team and are a valued source of feedback, including checking communications to students before they issue;
- Liaison with the Students' Association – the team liaises with the Students' Association, particularly on communications;
- Supporting those students with non-standard start dates, such as veterinary medicine students – the Head of IT for the College of Medicine & Veterinary Medicine provides information to the project team for this cohort. A software change freeze begins in late August, before the standard start of term date to avoid any risk of disruption of services for as many students as possible.

8   Microsoft Teams for Teaching   Paper E

A summary of a project to consider the feasibility and desirability of integrating the Microsoft Teams business communication platform within University systems such as Learn, EUCLID and Timetabling to aid its use as a teaching tool was reviewed. The project was undertaken following requests from some staff who have begun using Microsoft Teams for teaching, with similar requests from those who have begun

using Zoom for teaching. The University has in place a fully integrated Virtual Learning Environment (Learn) with videoconferencing ability (Collaborate), and this is the recommended platform for teaching but some features of Teams and Zoom have been attractive for staff trialling different remote teaching tools. The Zoom project has found that it can be integrated into University systems in an effective way and this will be undertaken. However, the Teams project has found that it would take a number of years at a high cost given the complexity of Teams, which is itself integrated into a wide array of other Microsoft applications. The following points were raised in discussion:

- The Edinburgh Futures Institute intends to use Teams as its features suit the hybrid and collaborative teaching model planned;
- There were requests to set out a roadmap for Teams integration, particularly to show the feasibility of a lighter touch/lower cost integration;
- While there are many advantages in having only one Virtual Learning Environment this may not suit the diverse teaching needs across the University;
- Collaborate has greatly improved but initial negative experiences may have made some staff reluctant to use it and there could more communication of its improvements to reassure staff;
- Feedback from students in the School of Mathematics has been that they find Teams and Zoom more engaging to use than Collaborate;
- The next upgrade of the University's Virtual Learning Environment will make integration of Teams easier but any integration of Teams will incur greater costs at a time when budgets are under pressure.

It was agreed that a wider discussion about the use of different software for online learning was needed.

ITEMS FOR NOTING OR FORMAL APPROVAL

9   University Computing Regulations   **Paper F**

Proposed minor updates to the University Computing Regulations were reviewed prior to submission to Court. A query was raised over the reference added to the existing Social Media Policy, which applies to staff, and whether there is a student equivalent. It was noted that the addition of the reference had been requested by staff trade unions and it would be checked whether there is a student equivalent. *[Secretary's note: it was subsequently confirmed that the Code of Student Conduct, which is already referenced in the Computing Regulations, includes student behaviour on social media.]* It was agreed to recommend the revisions to Court for approval.

10   Information Security Update   **Paper G**

A regular update from the Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) was reviewed, including a refreshed Bring Your Own Device Standard to better reflect hybrid working. Members supported the pilot of Multi-Factor Authentication and the connected Identity & Access Management work and encouraged prioritisation of this area, noting feedback from some areas that there may be a reluctance to use personal mobile devices for authentication, including unreliable reception in places.

The Director of Finance agreed with the importance of Multi-Factor Authentication in improving security and considered this a high priority issue as a result of which he agreed to actively consider funding options from existing resources and will discuss this further with the CISO. The views of the CISO were sought on the use of University-supplied laptops versus personal devices. The CISO noted that University-supplied laptops are preferred given their automatic updating of anti-virus software and other safety features but noted that there can be good reasons for the use of personal devices for University work and these will be continue to be accommodated within the University network. The refreshed Bring Your Own Device Standard was endorsed subject to minor amendment.

11 Network Replacement Programme Update   Paper H

A regular update on the deployment of the new University data network, approved by Court in December 2018, was reviewed. It was noted that the technical issue raised in the paper has not delayed the rollout of the new network to halls of residence (now 90% complete) and has now been resolved by the supplier, with the rollout to other areas to resume.

12 Enterprise Infrastructure Procurement Update   Paper I

A regular update on the procurement of new enterprise infrastructure, approved by Court in November 2020, was reviewed. Initial engagement with potential suppliers has found that while the budget will be challenging for suppliers, it is feasible and there is confidence that the full procurement can be made within budget. The pandemic's impact on the supply chain for the equipment required was queried and whether penalty clauses could be included in the contract as mitigation. All bids will be required to submit a detailed implementation plan and will be scored against this. While there are significant supply chain delays with the purchase of some IT equipment, particularly laptops, the specialised equipment sought in this case has not been subject to the same disruption. The standard procurement framework to be used does not have provision for penalty clauses but discussions will take place with any supplier before a contract award to ensure that the implementation plan is robust.

13 People & Money Update   Paper J

An update on the implementation of the People & Money System was reviewed.

14 Hybrid Working Programme Update   Paper K

The key principles of the approach to hybrid working and the scope and purpose of the feasibility study were noted.

15 Digital Strategy Update   Paper L

A progress update on the development of a new Digital Strategy was noted,

16   Core Systems Strategies   **Paper M**

A summary of the Core Systems Strategies presented to IT Committee on 12 May was reviewed. Members commented that a statement on governance and control was absent from the Data Architecture strategy and that the fifth and sixth strategies should return to IT Committee as there had been insufficient time to consider them at the meeting.

17   Committee Reports
- **Library Committee**   **Paper N1**
- **Digital Research Services Steering Group**   **Paper N2**

The reports were noted.

18   Any Other Business

There was no other business.

19   Date of Next Meeting

Monday 11 October 2021, 14.00-16.00