



KNOWLEDGE STRATEGY COMMITTEE

18 October 2022, Brenda Moon Boardroom, Argyle House/Videoconference

Web Version

Minute

- Present:** Colm Harmon, Senate appointee (Interim Convener)
Joyce Anderson, Court appointee (by videocall)
Sue Currie, Court appointee
Tina Harrison, Senate appointee (by videocall)
Sam Maccallum, Student member
Sarah McAllister, Court appointee
Gavin McLachlan, Vice-Principal, Chief Information Officer and Librarian to the University
Paul Norris, Senate appointee
- In attendance:** Lewis Allan, Head of Court Services
Anne-Marie Coriat, CMVM representative (by videocall)
Jo Craiglee, Head of Knowledge Management & Planning (by videocall)
Lee Hamill, Director of Finance (by videocall)
Barry Neilson, Director of Strategic Change (by videocall)
Bryne Ngwenya, CSE representative
Stuart Nicol, Head of Educational Design and Engagement
Rona Smith, Deputy Secretary Governance & Strategic Planning
Jamie Tait, Governance Manager
Alistair Fenemore, Chief Information Security Officer (by videocall) (for Items 14 and 15)
- Apologies:** Siân Bayne, Senate appointee
Shereen Benjamin, Court appointee
Richard Blythe, Court appointee
Melissa Highton, Senate appointee
Liz Lovejoy, CAHSS representative
Catherine Martin, Vice-Principal Corporate Services
Tom Ward, Director of Academic Services

1 Minute

Papers A1-A2

Members and attendees were welcomed to the meeting and apologies noted.

The minute of the meeting held on 24 May 2022 and the minute of the meeting held by correspondence and concluded on 29 August 2022 were approved.

2 Matters Arising

Verbal

Updates on two matters arising were noted:

- In response to a query raised at the last meeting regarding payments for staff with guaranteed hours contracts undertaking mandatory training such as information security training, Human Resources have confirmed that staff with guaranteed hours contracts must be paid for training designated as

mandatory by the University, as per an agreement reached with the Trade Unions;

- Strategic change projects and staff workloads – the Director of Strategic Change has met with the relevant committee member to discuss this topic. A paper on strategic change projects is planned for the next meeting of the University Executive, and Knowledge Strategy Committee will be updated following this. In discussion, the importance of managing and addressing any potential bottlenecks from multiple projects was raised, noting that offering local flexibility in implementation dates can help with this where possible, as seen in the staged and flexible introduction of the Learn Ultra Virtual Learning Environment covered later in the agenda.

SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS

3 Chief Information Officer Update

Verbal

Key activities and updates since the last meeting were reported, including:

- New ways of working, with Information Services Group supporting hybrid meetings and hybrid working across the University, including standardising technology for hybrid meeting rooms – while there are often delays in receiving hybrid meeting equipment given supply chain shortages these are usually in the order of around two to three months and are manageable;
- Recruitment and retention of certain specialist IT staff is a continuing concern, with an increasing number of IT roles in other organisations in the UK and globally offering fully remote working. This can attract those in the Edinburgh labour market who would not have previously been able to work for these organisations without relocating. An increasing effort is being placed on recruiting to in-demand roles. Offering flexible hybrid working arrangements given the changing nature of work in these specialised fields can assist with this;
- The global shortage of computer chips continues and while the supply of laptops has improved, on-going shortages of networking equipment remain;
- Work is ongoing to finalise a Framework for Clinical Data with NHS Lothian – additional resource is planned to enable adherence to policies and an update could be provided to the Committee on lessons learned when complete;
- An Information Governance short-life working group will shortly be established by the Chief Information Officer and the University Secretary.

4 Supporting the Curriculum

Verbal

An update on the IT and Library work stream of the Curriculum Transformation Programme was presented. Projects to support the work stream have been identified and reviewed to assess whether they are mandatory for the programme or if they can be de-coupled and progressed separately in order to reduce dependencies. Mandatory projects include student record changes, course choices and integration between the student record system and other systems. Work packages that can be progressed separately include a new degree finder system, a new timetabling system and the upgrade of the Learn Virtual Learning Environment. Key risks and issues include staff resourcing given competing priorities and the cost and complexity of running parallel systems, which may run for five or more years. It was

noted that while a small number of students may remain registered on courses for longer than five years, once a new system has been in place for a number of years students who are still registered under the previous system could be transferred to the new system.

5 University Digital Strategy

Verbal

An update on the development of a Digital Strategy to support the overall University Strategy 2030 was presented. The draft strategy has been revised to be presented in the form of the four pillars of Strategy 2030: People, Research, Teaching & Learning, Social & Civic Responsibility plus an underlying enabling pillar of the digital estate and infrastructure.

Topics within the pillars include:

- People: the importance of the digital estate being accessible in its widest sense, e.g. for those with disabilities, for those without familiarity in using IT, for those using different devices; embedding equality, diversity and inclusion and data ethics in all aspects; the importance of human-centred design;
- Research: ensuring digital acts as an enabler for research excellence; ensuring digital research tools are visible and accessible to all researchers; establishing a roadmap for the future of digital research; adopting a strategic and coordinated approach to investment;
- Teaching & Learning: supporting hybrid teaching and learning; the digital transformation of student services; building an online digital community and sense of belonging; improving support for subtitling and other accessibility work;
- Social & Civic Responsibility: contributing to the Net Zero by 2040 goal with a continuous programme of green IT to reduce the impact digital has on the environment; contributing to global leadership in artificial intelligence and data ethics; ensuring the widest possible public global access and engagement through events, open research outputs, open educational materials & heritage collections; and,
- Digital Estate (hardware and software): improving user experience for all; protecting the digital estate from cyber threats and being secure by design; joining governance, strategy and vision for the physical and digital estate; considering Open Source alternatives as part of a programme to make a sustainable estate and support the Open Source community.

Nine projects to improve the digital estate over the next two years have been identified as immediate priorities and are being progressed: replacement of the EASE sign-in system and introducing multi-factor authentication; data resilience; increased cyber protection; a new timetabling system; data centre capacity; online assessment systems; a continuing professional development short courses platform; Programme Course and Information Management & Degree Finder; and, an upgrade of the Learn Virtual Learning Environment.

Five subsequent projects to improve the digital estate in the three to five year period have been identified: estates facilities management; student systems; business intelligence reporting; supporting assessment and feedback; and, review of the MyEd student portal.

A number of items not present in the University's current digital estate that other peers may have will also be explored. These include a student engagement platform, central event management platform, an automated system for hardware and software asset management, and a School-level interface to University core data.

The following points were considered in discussion:

- Accessibility can be impeded by restrictions on certain hardware and software use – work on standard builds for University computing devices will assist with this;
- Timetabling is a key area where improving the links between the physical and digital estate could be of benefit, with a new system being procured at present; and,
- How oversight of the Digital Strategy will take place after its launch – Key Performance Indicators will be developed to monitor progress and the document will be reviewed and refreshed over time.

6 Network Replacement Programme Update and Prioritisation

Paper B

An update on the Network Replacement Programme was reviewed. It was noted that deployment of the central technologies and installation in early adopter buildings has been completed and the majority of the University's WiFi network has been replaced, with ongoing work mainly consisting of replacing the in-building wired network across all buildings. While a large amount of equipment had been purchased in advance in anticipation of potential supply chain problems, and has been received, global shortages of networking equipment are expected to affect the remaining roll-out. In mitigation, the schedule for installing the remaining equipment has been assessed and prioritised, with new buildings that would otherwise not be networked set as a foremost priority, along with areas of high student use.

ITEMS FOR NOTING OR FORMAL APPROVAL

It was noted that Items 7, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16 and 19 below had been selected in advance by members and attendees for discussion and that the other items would be noted or approved without the expectation of discussion.

7 Digital Research Services Programme Investment

Paper C

Proposed budget allocations for the Digital Research Programme were approved. Members discussed:

- The inclusion of ongoing services within the investment programme, noting that this is in order to assess on an annual basis whether ongoing services might need more or less investment than previously forecast;
- The location of much of the physical equipment at the Advanced Computing Facility and potential space constraints there; and,
- The planned upgrade of Eddie, a research compute cluster.

8 Short Courses Platform Paper D

The proposed budget for procurement and implementation of the Short Courses Platform was approved.

9 Library Committee Convener Paper E

The appointment of Professor Sarah Prescott, Vice-Principal and Head of the College of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences, as the new Convener of Library Committee to end July 2025 in the first instance was approved.

10 Open Monograph Publishing Paper F

Information on the current environment for open monograph publishing and options considered by Library Committee with regard to the response on the future Research Excellence Framework requirement for all eligible monograph outputs to be made accessible Open Access were noted.

11 Data Centre Capacity Paper G

A forward view of data centre capacity was reviewed.

12 Library Access and Facilities for Parents and Carers Accompanied by Children Paper H

A paper updating the Committee on recent negative feedback received from student parents and carers visiting libraries accompanied by children and actions taken in response, was noted. Actions taken include Library Committee approval of a revised Library Policy for Parents and Carers Accompanied by Children and plans to create a Family Room in the Main Library. The importance of undertaking further work to improve accessibility for student parents and carers was highlighted, noting positive examples in peer institutions, which the University should seek to learn from.

13 Enterprise Infrastructure Replacement Programme Update Paper I

A progress update on the Enterprise Infrastructure Replacement Programme was noted.

14 Information Security Update Paper J

The regular Information Security update was noted.

15 Information Security Update – MFA and IDAM Deployment Paper K

An update on ongoing planning and development work to deploy Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) and scope a technical solution to replace and update Identity and Access Management (IDAM) was noted. It was agreed to recommend approval to the University Executive for the core design approach of:

- i. Utilising the existing Microsoft Campus licence which includes Active Directory Conditional Access as the core underlying technology supporting deployment of MFA; and,
- ii. Agreement that access to core University digital services, where technically feasible, will require all users to use MFA (options will be provided) unless, and only by exception, approved conditions cannot be met.

Incorporating role based access within the next phase of work, on IDAM, was encouraged.

16 Information Services Group Capital Envelope 2021-2027 **Paper L**

An update on the Information Services Group capital envelope over the next 5 years was reviewed, noting that projects with funding requests considered at today's meeting are included within the envelope.

17 Learn Ultra Update **Paper M**

A progress report on the Learn Ultra (Virtual Learning Environment) upgrade was noted.

18 Learn Ultra Early Adopter Programme **Paper N**

A progress report on the Learn Ultra Early Adopter Programme was noted.

19 People and Money System Update **Paper O**

An update on the implementation of the People and Money system to underpin the HR and Finance Transformation programmes was noted. Further updates from the Enactment Group following on from the all staff message of 6 October were encouraged, with another communication expected next week. Improving communications with students affected by delays in stipend payments was raised, with some students having to seek emergency loans given the delays. Extending the 'hypercare period' from the implementation partner InoApps was raised, noting that enhanced support from Oracle for an additional six months has been agreed.

20 University Strategic Business Intelligence Update **Paper P**

Proposals for a refreshed approach to University strategic business intelligence, delivered via a 'hub and spoke' model, were endorsed.

21 Estates, Digital & Infrastructure Committee Governance Update **Paper Q**

An update on the establishment of a new Estates, Digital and Infrastructure Committee [*Secretary's note: subsequently renamed as the Estates Committee*], its Terms of Reference and its relationship with Knowledge Strategy Committee, was noted.

22 Committee Reports

- **IT Committee**
- **Library Committee**
- **Digital Research Services Steering Group**

Paper R1
Paper R2
Paper R3

The reports were noted.

23 Any Other Business

There was no other business.

24 Date of Next Meeting

Monday 30 January 2023, 14:00 – 16:00