KNOWLEDGE STRATEGY COMMITTEE

25 January 2024, Raeburn Room, Old College/Microsoft Teams

Web Version   **Minute**

Present: Siân Bayne, Senate appointee (by videocall)
                     Richard Blythe, Court appointee
                     Colm Harmon, Interim Convener
                     Tina Harrison, Senate appointee (by videocall)
                     Melissa Highton, Senate appointee (by videocall)
                     Sarah McAllister, Court appointee
                     Gavin McLachlan, Vice-Principal, Chief Information Officer and
                     Librarian to the University

In attendance: Rick Arnautovic, CAHSS representative (by videocall)
                     Ken Brooker, Senior Internal Auditor (by videocall)
                     Jo Craiglee, Head of Knowledge Management & IS Planning (by
                     videocall)
                     Barry Neilson, Director of Strategic Change
                     Rona Smith, Deputy Secretary Governance & Strategic Planning
                     Jamie Tait, Governance Manager
                     Alma Kalina Rießler, Student member
                     Anne Robertson, Interim Director, EDINA (for agenda items 3 and 4)
                     Michael Rovatsos, Professor of Artificial Intelligence
                     Gail Redford, Project Manager (for agenda item 7) (by videocall)
                     Damien Toner, Director of Estates (for agenda item 8)

Apologies: Shereen Benjamin, Court appointee
                     Anne-Marie Coriat, CMVM representative
                     Lisa Dawson, Academic Registrar
                     Patrick Hadoke, Senate appointee
                     Lee Hamill, Director of Finance
                     Carl Harper, Student member
                     Lisa Kendall, CAHSS representative
                     Catherine Martin, Vice-Principal Corporate Services
                     Bryne Ngwenya, CSE representative

1   Minute   **Paper A**

Members and attendees were welcomed to the meeting. It was noted that Lisa
Dawson had replaced Nichola Kett as the representative from Registry Services.

The minute of the meeting held on 24 October 2023 was approved.

2   Matters Arising   **Verbal**

There was a discussion on the relationship between the Knowledge Strategy
Committee (KSC) and the Information Technology Committee (ITC). It was noted
that KSC was the only joint standing committee of Senate and Court, and that ITC

was one of three committees reporting into KSC (the others being the Library Committee and the University Collections Advisory Committee). It was recognised that whilst there were overlaps between KSC and ITC, KSC had strategic oversight and a higher level of financial approval as set out in the Delegated Authority Schedule. It was however agreed that it would be helpful to have a more detailed discussion on KSC's terms of reference and its relationship with ITC, with a section of the agenda at the next KSC meeting set aside for this.

SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS

3   Internal Adoption of Artificial Intelligence   Verbal

Michael Rovatsos, Professor of Artificial Intelligence, gave a presentation on the internal adoption of artificial intelligence (AI). It was noted a short-life working group had been convened in September 2023, and had been asked for recommendations to address risks and opportunities in AI covering all areas of University activity. The following was covered in the presentation:

- An overview of AI and the University, noting that whilst there are areas that require more immediate attention, a strategic approach is needed to address longer-term issues;
- A summary of AI in the sector, noting we can be sector leading in our approach;
- The use of AI across thematic areas, including teaching and learning (particularly around assessment and concerns of plagiarism), research, operations and governance; and
- The initial 13 recommendations, structured around three areas: managing risks, developing capabilities and creating opportunities.

It was concluded that the rise of AI creates both challenges and opportunities for the University, and there was a need to enhance our capability and adapt our ways of working if we want to maximise benefits and minimise risks. How our approach is communicated to staff and students, and how they can engage with AI-related activities, was considered essential.

The Committee welcomed the presentation and the following points were raised in discussion:

- The importance of AI training being available for staff and students;
- Access to AI being fair and equal across the staff and student populations;
- The need to work differently across business units dependant on requirements;
- The successful adoption of some AI tools already, for example in improving captioning, the process of converting the audio content of media to text;
- The pace of AI cannot be dictated by the University, so we have to innovate and adapt in an agile way; and
- Additional resources are critical so the University has the ability to react and plan accordingly.

The Convener thanked Professor Rovatsos for his presentation and noted the Committee's strong endorsement of and support for the draft recommendations.

4 Information Services Group Artificial Intelligence Products   Verbal

Anne Robertson, Interim Director, EDINA, gave a presentation on the internal use of AI. She highlighted three areas where this is being taken forward:

- **EdHelp ChatBot.** This is an automated chat service for EdHelp, accessed behind EASE authentication (the University's sign-on service). It has the aim of increasing self-service resolutions at first line with a virtual assistant, with a 20% deflection from the existing helpdesk. It uses EdHelps's frequently asked questions as its knowledge base, and will be piloted from the start of February 2024.
- **Extreme Learning Machines.** This is a web user interface, which provides free-at-the-point-of-use access to OpenAI's large language models (LLMs). It uses OpenAI's Application Programming Interface (API), paid for centrally, and is also accessed via EASE authentication.
- **Automated Systematic Reviews.** It was noted that systematic literature reviews are a significant element of research in terms of cost and time, and that large studies can fail to progress because of the volume of papers that need to be evaluated. Two examples were given in how AI has helped in this area.

The Committee welcomed the presentation and the advances the University was making in this area. On the EdHelp ChatBot, it was confirmed that there would be an option to speak to a member of staff between 09:30 and 16:30, Monday – Friday, using a "Live Chat" button, and that information would be consumed to the knowledge base to assist with future questions. It was noted that communication around the ChatBot and the services it can assist with would be key.

The Convener thanked Anne for her presentation, and noted it would be helpful for a similar update to be provided to the Student Lifecycle Management Group, convened by Lucy Evans, Deputy Secretary Students.

5 Information Services Group Planning 2024/25   Verbal

An Information Services Group (ISG) planning update was presented, with reflections on 2023/24 along with the challenges, emerging areas and risks from the 5-year plan, 2024-2029. Looking back on the past year, three achievements were highlighted:

- The roll-out of Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA), which had progressed well and had a future focus on EASE protected services and replacement for existing Identity and Access Management (IAM) services;
- The completion of Phase 2 of Learn Ultra, the new and improved version of the University's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), Learn, with all (5,000) 2023/24 courses being delivered using this. Phase 3 was now underway with a project completion date of August 2024; and

- The new Funk Reading Room in New College which had opened earlier this month.

The challenges impacting the plan were summarised, with cyber risk continuing to be the main concern. It was also noted that although curriculum transformation was not a direct part of the ISG plan (due to it being covered elsewhere in the planning process), awareness of the potential implications and impact it could have on the ability to deliver the planned ISG portfolio had been recognised.

Finally a number of emerging areas were highlighted, which illustrated the key areas that are either new, growing or causing concern. The support and licensing impacts of People & Money were noted, along with exploring how the ISG managed desktop service is expanded to include support for Apple, Linux and bring your own device (BYOD).

The Committee welcomed the presentation, and noted that the cyber threat environment remained challenging across the sector.

6   Chief Information Officer Update   Verbal

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

- **Microsoft agreement**. A 3-year sector-negotiated agreement had recently been signed to preserve current pricing.
- **Large scale cyber incidents**. The British Library had been targeted at the end of October 2023 and was still in the initial stages of its recovery, with many of its services and systems still down. There was therefore a need to remain vigilant.
- **Technicians group**. Information Services Group is reviewing how it will work with and potentially join the technicians group. The Director of the User Services Division has been assigned as the ISG representative on the group.
- **Open Research Conference.** The University is hosting this event in May 2024 (https://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/research-support/open-research/edinburgh-open-research-conference).

7   Digital Strategy Implementation Overview   Paper B

A paper describing the key elements of the Digital Strategy Implementation, outlining the links between each element and its purpose within a broader cyclical process, was discussed. The Committee noted a number of points including the proposed key performance indicators and the frequency of their reporting, and the inclusion of tangible benefits to be presented within the paper. Subject to the clarification of these points, the Committee endorsed the implementation approach outlined in the paper.

8   Estates Facilities Management Business Case   Paper C

Damien Toner, Director of Estates, presented a full business case (FBC) requesting approval for the essential upgrade of the University's Facilities Management system.

It was noted the FBC had been supported and recommended for approval to KSC by both the Digital Estates Prioritisation Group and ITC.

It was confirmed this was a priority for Estates which would directly meet the costs from existing budgets and that the upgrade would deliver a number of key benefits. The original estimated project costs were significantly higher, however a lot or work had gone into reducing the cost with a preferred option of a cloud hosted upgrade.

The Committee welcomed the paper and supported the preferred option. Potential issues regarding customisation, integration with existing systems and training were discussed, and it was confirmed that the business needs of users would be met with the new system.

The Committee approved the business case, and noted in line with the Delegated Authority Schedule, the Vice-Principal and Chief Information Officer, and Librarian to the University, would finalise the contract signing. It was also noted that whilst it wasn't anticipated that costs would escalate, if they did a separate business case for any additional spend would be provided.

ITEMS FOR NOTING

It was noted that item 17 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.

9   Information Security Policy Refresh   **Paper D**

The Committee noted the proposed changes to the Information Security Policy, which had been approved by the Chief Information Security Office in his role as Policy Sponsor.

10   Information Security Update   **Paper E**

The regular Information Security update paper, providing a summary of the current external cyber threat environment, together with details of ongoing centrally managed technical control improvements that will further enhance University cyber security controls, was noted.

11   Information Services Group IT Assurance Report   **Paper F**

The Committee noted the report that had been prepared by ISG as part of the assurance process to assist Court in signing off the statements on Risk Management and Internal Control which form part of the 2022/23 Financial Statements. The report had previously been discussed at Risk Management Committee and the Audit & Risk Committee.

12   Library & University Collections Strategy 2020-25 Review   **Paper G**

The Committee noted a progress report on Library & University Collections Strategy 2020-25.

13   Library Materials Budget 2023/24 Update   **Paper H**

The Committee noted the current budget position and the Library's approach to managing spend in the 2023/24 financial year.

14   Heritage Collections Annual Report 2023   **Paper I**

The Committee noted the annual report on the Heritage Collections activities, as well as a separate annual report on acquisitions and collections growth.

15   Information Services Group Capital Envelope 2023-2029   **Paper J**

An update on the Information Services Group's 5-year capital envelope, 2023-29, was noted.

16   Network Replacement Programme Update   **Paper K**

A progress update on the University's Network Replacement Programme was noted.

17   People and Money Systems Update   **Paper L**

An update on the implementation of the People & Money systems and processes was noted. It was noted that communications regarding the governance of the newly formed University Initiatives Portfolio Board and its sub-groups were key, and a communications plan was currently being developed regarding this.

18   Timetabling and Exams replacement project – Update on Progress   **Paper M**

An update on the implementation project to replace the systems to support teaching timetabling, room booking and exam scheduling, was noted.

19   Committee Reports
- **IT Committee**   **Paper N1**
- **Library Committee**   **Paper N2**
- **Digital Research Services Steering Group**   **Paper N3**
- **University Collections Advisory Committee**   **Paper N4**
- **Estates Committee**   **Paper N5**

The reports were noted. It was also agreed to provide KSC members with access to the ITC SharePoint site for access to the full minute of each meeting.

20   Any Other Business

There was no other business.

21   Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 21 March 2024, 14:00 – 16:00 (hybrid meeting)