THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

KNOWLEDGE STRATEGY COMMITTEE

29 October 2024, Meeting Room 7, Floor E, Argyle House/Microsoft Teams

Web Version   **Minute**

Present:	Richard Blythe, Court appointee (by videocall)
	Patrick Hadoke, Senate appointee (by videocall)
	Colm Harmon, Interim Convener (by videocall)
	Tina Harrison, Senate appointee (by videocall)
	Melissa Highton, Senate appointee
	Sarah McAllister, Court appointee (by videocall)
	Gavin McLachlan, Vice-Principal, Chief Information Officer and Librarian to the University
	Dylan Walch, EUSA Vice-President Education
In attendance:	Philip Best, CSE representative (by videocall)
	Jo Craiglee, Head of Knowledge Management & IS Planning (by videocall)
	Ingrid Fehr, Director of User Services
	Heather Lawrence, CAHSS representative
	Rona Smith, Deputy Secretary Governance & Strategic Planning
	Gosia Such, Director of User Services (by videocall)
	Jamie Tait, Governance Manager
	Michael Rovatsos, Professor of Artificial Intelligence (for agenda item 3) (by videocall)
	Lewis Allan, Senior Governance Advisor to the Vice-Principal & University Secretary (by videocall) (for agenda item 6)
Apologies:	Siân Bayne, Senate appointee
	Shereen Benjamin, Court appointee
	Anne-Marie Coriat, CMVM representative
	Lisa Dawson, Academic Registrar
	Lee Hamill, Director of Finance
	Catherine Martin, Vice-Principal Corporate Services

1   Minute   **Paper A**

Members and attendees were welcomed to the meeting.

Professor Philip Best, Head of School of Physics and Astronomy, and Heather Lawrence, College Registrar in the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS), were welcomed to their first meeting of the Knowledge Strategy Committee (KSC). They have replaced Professor Bryne Ngwenya and Lisa Kendall as the College of Science & Engineering and CAHSS representatives, respectively. This was also the first meeting as a member for Dylan Walch, EUSA Vice-President Education, having observed the May 2024 meeting.

The Convener also noted that Lee Hamill, Director of Finance, would be leaving the University next month and a representative from Finance would be invited to attend future KSC meetings.

The minute of the meeting held on 30 May 2024 was approved.

2   Matters Arising   **Verbal**

The Convener noted that in June 2024, Court approved the University Digital Strategy, and in June 2024, University Executive also approved the Revision to the University Computing Acceptable Use Policy.

Positive feedback was also reported on the refreshed Information Security Essentials training available on People and Money, and the quality of the automated captions that had recently been turned on in Create (with Replay to follow shortly). The Convener noted that an update on automated captioning would be given under Convener's remarks at the upcoming meeting of the Senate Education Committee.

SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS

3   Artificial Intelligence Adoption Task Force Update   **Verbal**

Michael Rovatsos, Professor of Artificial Intelligence, gave a presentation on the work of the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Adoption Task Force. This is an informal grouping overseeing implementation of key recommendations from the previous short-life working group that KSC were updated on in January 2024. The Task Force are navigating the challenges and opportunities around AI, and are working on what a long-term strategy for the University may look like. The following was covered in the presentation:

- Progress to date, such as the development of pilot project ideas, including "AI for Teaching Innovation" led by Professor Sian Bayne, and the potential creation of a ChatBot interface for University policies;
- The launch of a new online hub to help staff explore what AI means for our work at the University;
- Updates to staff and student guidance on Generative AI. It was noted that student guidance had recently been issued and staff guidance was to follow shortly; and
- Challenges faced, including mobilisation of budget, difficulty in coordinating dispersed activities and governance issues including the role of the AI and Data Ethics (AIDE) Advisory Board;

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

- Positive feedback on the recently issued student AI guidance was noted, with some suggestions for improvements already made by students from the Edinburgh Futures Institute. It was confirmed that further student engagement would take place so the guidance can be revised ahead of the 2025/26 academic year. It was also noted that although the guidance applied

to postgraduate research (PGR) students, it would be helpful to revisit this to include some additional more detailed information directed at PGR students. This work would be taken forward by the Deputy Vice-Principal Students (Enhancement).

- Student training had been oversubscribed and very well received.
- The risk and impact of AI tools/extensions being added to products by existing vendors. Whilst there is an ability to turn these extensions on and off, there may be an assumption that these are University-endorsed products therefore the importance of training to support decision making around incorporating and using these extensions was noted.
- The EUSA Vice-President Education would shortly be making a video to provide information to students about ELM (Edinburgh (access to) Language Models), the University's AI innovation platform.
- The importance of clear governance processes, and understanding and clarifying what the University needs AI for. It was noted this is particularly important when moving from the experimental stage of pilot projects demonstrating capability, to a more widespread introduction of AI to areas of identified need, and the subsequent issues around capacity.
- The use of AI for personal productivity, and the opportunities this could create in terms of managing workload. Alongside this, the awareness that opinions on AI vary dramatically and the need to acknowledge there will be different views on its use.
- Further resources available were also flagged:
  - AI Adoption Hub SharePoint
  - AI Adoption Teams Channel
  - AI for Teaching Innovation Project
  - AI Impact Assessment Tool
  - AI in HE educational videos

The Convener thanked Professor Rovatsos for his presentation and noted the Committee's support for the work being taken forward by the AI Adoption Task Force.

4   IT & Library NSS 2024 Results and Draft Action Plan   Verbal

Gosia Such, Director of User Services, gave a presentation on the National Student Survey (NSS) results for the IT and Library questions.

It was noted that scores for both Library satisfaction and Learning resources had decreased since last year, and both sat below the Russell Group and UK averages. Learning Resources did however have the highest score of all themes across the University.

It was highlighted that common themes appeared in both the positive and negative comments, with the lack of study spaces being the main issue. Work was now focussed on the action plan to address the identified issues.

The Convener thanked Gosia for her presentation, and noted the Committee's thanks for her contributions to the University, ahead of her leaving the institution at the end of the year.

5   Chief Information Officer Update   Verbal

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

- **Sustainable IT.** It was noted that the Sustainable IT Group, chaired by Professor John Thompson, was looking at issues such as the environmental impact of ChatGPT, and it would be helpful to update KSC on the emerging work around this at a future meeting.
- **Accessibility.** It was noted that the Cabinet Office continues to expand its audit programme checking digital accessibility of platforms against the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). It was also reported that Oracle (which is used for People and Money) would be moving to its Redwood user interface in the next two and half years. The redesign is intended to modernise the user experience across Oracle's various products and services. This will be both a technology and accessibility improvement project.
- **Technology sector.** It was reported there had been an increasing consolidation of the sector with more monopolies appearing.
- **Long-term revenue costs.** The impact and pressure on ISG's revenue budget in relation to increasing external costs.

6   Knowledge Strategy Committee – Future Governance   Paper B

The Convener introduced a paper which set out a proposal for changes to the committee structure for KSC and its three thematic committees: IT Committee, Library Committee and the University Collections Advisory Committee (UCAC). This included disbanding KSC with a merged Library Committee and UCAC succeeding KSC as the joint standing committee of Court and Senate. It was noted that support was sought to recommend the proposal to both Court and Senate, which would only happen once further work had been undertaken.

The Deputy Secretary Governance and Strategic Planning then provided further context to the proposal. It was noted there were multiple drivers for the recommended changes including the continued rapid development of digital learning, research and administration over the past decade; the findings and recommendations of both the externally-facilitated effectiveness review of Court and its committees and an Internal Audit review of the Estates Committee; and discussions within KSC itself about overlap and duplication with other committees. It was finally noted that, given the multiple drivers for change, maintaining status quo was not an option. The core proposal put to KSC, with effect from the next academic year on 1 August 2025, was for:

- KSC to be disbanded;
- Library Committee and University Collections Advisory Committee to be merged and replace KSC as the joint committee of Court and Senate; and
- IT Committee to return to its historic norm as a management/operational committee, reporting into the University Executive but with digital estates projects above £2m to progress from IT Committee to Estates Committee.

There was wide ranging discussion of the recommendations from which the following points emerged:

- Recent KSC activity has focussed on operational IT work, which in turn has led to questions around the purpose and value added particularly as this relates to IT Committee. It was queried whether there could be an opportunity to rebalance the focus of KSC activity towards knowledge strategy and interaction with Teaching & Learning and Research Strategies.
- Relatedly, it was felt the paper did not make clear how knowledge management activities would be addressed without KSC.
- Duplication of papers and discussions across the existing committee structure was evident, often with no time for changes to be made between committees.
- There was some inefficiency in governance processes for some digital items, which required a long governance path.
- Membership and leadership of the potential new committee structure would be key, including strong academic and student representation.
- There should not simply be a merger of existing terms of reference, instead a long-term strategic approach should be taken to ensure integration across the wider portfolio, and a key governance role that could be more usefully exercised.
- It would be important to engage fully with the chairs and membership of the three KSC thematic committees. Stating a strategic rationale for merging Library Committee and UCAC would help with onward communications and next steps.
- There was support for IT Committee reporting into the University Executive, also noting that as AIDE has no formal reporting line and the IT Committee has a large number of sub-committees, there was an opportunity to look at this lower-level committee structure.

Taking the above comments into account, it was concluded that:

- The majority of KSC members supported the three recommendations as outlined in the paper and the related timeline, recognising those recommendations as a key first step, and these were therefore agreed for onward transmission;
- It was recommended that further consultation be undertaken on next steps, addressing some of the points raised in this meeting, with relevant groups under both Court and Senate;
- A fuller proposal would then be taken forward to Court and Senate in early 2025.

ITEMS FOR NOTING

It was confirmed that no items had been selected in advance by members and attendees for discussion and that they would be noted without the expectation of discussion. The Convener reported that the College Registrar in the College of Medicine & Veterinary Medicine had provided written comments in advance, and these have been reflected in some of the agenda items below.

7   Digital Estate Capital Envelope 2023-2029   **Paper C**

The Committee noted the update on Digital Estate capital envelope projected for 2023/24 and forecast to 2028/29.

8   Digital Estate Status Update as of the end of September 2024   **Paper D**

The Committee noted a summary of progress on the substantive Digital Estate projects.

It was noted that future planning would require intensified strategic co-creation of priorities and ambitions, including horizon scanning. In the immediate term, a joined-up approach was suggested as each individual budget area considers what is prioritised, with the need to understand the implications of this on others. It was also suggested work was required on how the benefits of differing models of support and coverage across budget areas were understood, seeking to optimise delivery against mission.

9   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.

10   Learning Analytics Policy Review 2024/2025   **Paper F**

The Committee noted the remit and proposed membership for a group to review the University's learning analytics principles, policies and governance arrangements.

11   Digital Accessibility, Legislation and External Audits: **Paper G**
        UK Government Accessibility Audit Overview

The Committee noted the legislative requirements in relation to the testing of University websites/applications and the creation of accessibility statements; and noted the requirement for staff effort to support this work.

It was requested that academic input be sought as part of this process.

12   ELM Roadmap and Next Steps   **Paper H**

The Committee noted the next steps and development roadmap for the ELM (Edinburgh access to Language Models).

13   Library Materials Budget   **Paper I**

The Committee noted the Library Materials Budget spend in 2023/24; and the allocation for 2024/25.

It was noted that it would be interesting to integrate thinking about innovation more generally, and how this feeds into the new proposed committee structure.

14   Committee Reports
- **IT Committee**   **Paper J1**
- **Library Committee**   **Paper J2**
- **University Collections Advisory Committee**   **Paper J3**
- **Estates Committee**   **Paper J4**

The reports were noted.

It was noted that CMVM are engaged in a major piece of working around the 300th anniversary of the Medical School, using this as an opportunity to understand the past and transform the future. Strategic discussions with Collections would be taken forward regarding this.

15   Any Other Business

There was no other business.

16   Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 30 January 2025, 14:00 – 16:00 (hybrid meeting)