



**KNOWLEDGE STRATEGY COMMITTEE**

**1 February 2022 (Videoconference)**

**Web Version**

**Minute**

- Present:** Colm Harmon, Senate appointee (Interim Convener)  
Siân Bayne, Senate appointee  
Sue Currie, Court appointee  
Tara Gold, Student representative  
Tina Harrison, Senate appointee  
Melissa Highton, Senate appointee  
Sarah McAllister, Court appointee  
Gavin McLachlan, Vice-Principal, Chief Information Officer and Librarian to the University  
Kathryn Nash, Court appointee  
Paul Norris, Senate appointee  
Claire Phillips, Court appointee
- In attendance:** Lewis Allan, Head of Court Services  
Ken Brooker, Internal Audit  
Leigh Chalmers, Deputy Secretary Governance & Legal  
Jo Craiglee, Head of Knowledge Management & Planning  
Sheila Fraser, CMVM representative  
Iain Gordon, CSE representative  
Lee Hamill, Director of Finance  
Catherine Martin, Vice-Principal Corporate Services  
Barry Neilson, Director of Strategic Change  
Dave Berry, Enterprise Architect (for Item 10)
- Apologies:** Anne-Marie Coriat, CMVM representative  
Sue MacGregor, Director of Academic Services  
Melissa Terras, CAHSS representative

**1 Minute**

**Paper A**

New member Paul Norris was welcomed to his first meeting and Ken Brooker was welcomed as an observer for this meeting.

The Minute of the meeting held on 11 October 2021 was approved.

**2 Matters Arising**

**Verbal**

There was a request to discuss the digital disenfranchisement element of the Digital Strategy and it was agreed to discuss this under Item 5.

## **SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS**

### **3 Chief Information Officer Update**

**Verbal**

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

- The consolidation of companies in the educational technology sphere, as raised at previous meetings, has continued. Recent developments have included the purchase by 2U of edX, a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) provider which hosts some of the University's MOOCs and the purchase of plagiarism detection company Ouriginal by Turnitin. A UK higher education sector software negotiation group has been formed in response to this trend, with one aim of the group being to encourage new entrants into educational technology software;
- The global IT supply chain continues to experience disruption, with a shortage of computer chips in particular. The University continues to make advance purchases of equipment where possible to maintain stock levels for users; and,
- Scottish Funding Council support which enabled the purchase of IT equipment to be loaned to students on a needs basis has been very welcome and the University has requested a further tranche of support.

### **4 Information Services Group Planning 2022-23**

**Verbal**

Potential priorities for the Information Services Group's submission to the Planning Round were presented for discussion. Short term areas for consideration include: implementing Multi-Factor Authentication to improve information security; the scan and deliver library service, which was introduced as a temporary measure during the pandemic and has proved popular with users; continuing to provide IT equipment loans for students; and, developing a consistent platform for online examinations. Medium and longer term areas for consideration include: improving IT security in the areas of cyber defences and data resilience; the replacement or upgrade of a number of major services; and, considering whether gaps in the provision of some software services should be filled, in line with many peer institutions.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- The development of any IT platform for online examinations should be considered in tandem with the development of policy on online examinations beyond the period of the pandemic. It was noted that, in addition to online exams taken remotely, online exams in some subjects are taken in computer rooms on campus, which need physical as well as digital infrastructure;
- Better understanding of the different types of services provided to different categories of students (e.g. those studying remotely) and their differing needs – and better catering for these in any upgrades or replacements of systems and removing any rigid distinctions that could hinder innovative approaches;
- Support for a new timetabling system but with concerns over staff workload given the likely involvement of staff who are also working on the curriculum transformation programme in addition to their core duties – a timeline of the key periods of the current strategic change projects is being developed and key periods for the development of any new timetabling system can be cross-referred to this;

- A long-held student request for timetables to be published sooner and whether a new system will enable this – a more detailed proposal on timetabling will be brought to the Committee and will consider this aspect. Student involvement will also likely be sought on the project board;
- The EUCLID student record system will be continued in the short to medium term until sufficiently improved new systems are available. Current issues include integration with the new student support model and difficulty in changing pronouns in the system – this will be explored further; and,
- Considering longer-term technological changes that will impact on teaching and research, such as the impact of the increase in compute power on research – covered in Item 5 below.

## **5 University Digital Strategy**

**Verbal**

An update on the development of a Digital Strategy was presented. Given the rapid changes in the digital environment the strategy is intended for a 3 to 5 year timeframe and to be refreshed as circumstances change. A consultation remains open until the end of February, after which the strategy will be drafted. As well as individual contributions to the consultation, contributions are being sought on behalf of Schools and Departments from Heads of Schools and Departments. Five online focus group sessions will be held in February and it is hoped that some in-person events can also be held. The following points were raised in discussion:

- How feedback from the consultation respondents will be analysed and the respondents updated – a student team is assisting with collating and summarising feedback and explaining how this feeds into the strategy. The focus groups will also receive feedback;
- Whether a longer-term vision beyond a 3 to 5 year timeframe is also needed – as this will be the University’s first digital strategy the focus at present is on developing a 3 to 5 year strategy and updating it as the Curriculum Transformation Programme develops, with the next iteration of the strategy perhaps more suitable for a longer time frame and vision. The Curriculum Transformation Board is also considering the longer term vision for digital education;
- The governance approval route – the strategy will progress from the Digital Strategy Board to IT Committee and then to Knowledge Strategy Committee and the University Executive; and,
- On digital disenfranchisement, whether responses to the consultation are being sought from those without regular access to the SharePoint site hosting the consultation – given the pandemic the consultation has been fully digital to date and Information Services Group are in discussion with Human Resources regarding contacting staff who receive paper rather than electronic payslips as a group who are less likely to engage digitally.

## **5 Digital Estates Priorities for 2021/22**

**Paper B**

Proposals for initial investment in three critical areas of the digital estate: Managing User Access (including Multi Factor Authentication); Data Resilience; and, Timetabling, were reviewed. It was noted that initial business cases for Timetabling and Managing User Access had been reviewed at the Committee’s previous meeting, with the Data Resilience business case developed subsequently. It was

noted that the Timetabling project has been prioritised as the company supplying the current timetabling system has entered administration and it is recommended that alternate options be explored giving the importance of the system. The following points were raised in discussion:

- Considering the impact of Multi-Factor Authentication on staff unable (e.g. limited mobile telephone coverage at Easter Bush) or unwilling to use personal devices for authentication and providing an alternative option, as well as any impacts on distance learning students overseas – it is intended that a secure token will be provided to users requiring an alternative authentication method and this will be built into the plans;
- The potential for mixed messaging given encouragement to use University devices for IT security reasons but the expectation that most staff will use personal devices for Multi-Factor Authentication – the Chief Information Security Officer can be invited to a future meeting to discuss this;
- It was confirmed that appropriate role based access will be considered within the Managing User Access project; and,
- Concerns over the impacts on staff workloads from these projects given the number of ongoing major change projects such as the People & Money System and Curriculum Transformation and that these impacts should be assessed before any approval is granted – it was agreed that an estimate of the staff impact of each digital estate project will be developed and that the Committee recommends that estimates of staff impacts should be embedded in all change project proposals as a matter of course, with the impact on staff workloads of change projects recognised as a key concern. The Convener will raise this issue with the Director of Strategic Change, Barry Neilson, with a view to shaping an approach to appropriately addressing these issues of staff impact in institutional proposals and request that the Director of Strategic Change bring options for this through the appropriate discussion and approval channels.
- It was noted that the wider staff impact of the Data Resilience project should be zero and relatively limited for the Managing User Access project and estimates will be developed for the Timetabling project, which will return to the Committee.

Subject to the points above, the business cases were supported and will be further developed.

## **ITEMS FOR NOTING OR FORMAL APPROVAL**

It was noted that Items 7, 9, 10, 13 and 15 below had been selected by members and attendees in advance for discussion and that the other items would be noted or approved without the expectation of discussion.

### **7 People & Money Implementation Update**

**Paper C**

An update on the implementation of the People & Money System was reviewed. Addressing the impact on staff workloads for those contributing towards the development of the new system and preparing to implement it was raised – this is a key topic considered by the Enactment Group in collaboration with each budget area.

**8 Information Security Update** **Paper D**

A regular update on Information Security activities was noted.

**9 MOOCs Overview and Updates** **Paper E**

A summary update on Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) related activities was reviewed. The Committee discussed publicising collectively all short online courses including both MOOCs and other courses and whether all MOOCs are provided without fees. It was noted there are no fees for MOOCs but there is a fee for those who wish purchase certificates of completion.

**10 Core Systems Strategies** **Paper F**

Following recommendation by IT Committee, the following Core Systems Strategies were approved:

- Application Integration;
- Application Rationalisation;
- Data Architecture;
- Identity, Authentication, Authorisation;
- Relationship Management; and,
- Customer Relationship Management Integration.

It was agreed to consider the extent of access to the Identity, Authentication, Authorisation strategy given the IT security elements within the strategy.

**11 Pledging Support for the ‘Connectivity Now’ Campaign** **Paper G**

The Committee agreed to support the proposal that the University makes the ‘Connectivity Now’ pledge at an institutional level and recommended this to the University Executive for approval.

**12 Network Replacement Programme Update** **Paper H**

A progress update on the deployment of the new University data network was noted.

**13 Enterprise Infrastructure Update** **Paper I**

A progress report on the replacement of the University’s Enterprise Infrastructure was noted. It was confirmed that service migrations do not include special data cleansing and that decommissioning costs are included in the programme budget.

**14 Information Services Group Capital Expenditure 2020 - 2026** **Paper J**

An update on the ten-year forecast for the Information Services Group capital plan was noted.

**15 University Collections Advisory Committee Terms of Reference – Proposed changes** **Paper K**

Amendments to the Terms of Reference of the University Collections Advisory Committee to improve consistency with similar committees reporting into Knowledge Strategy Committee were approved.

The appointment of Professor Fiona McLachlan as Convener of the University Collections Advisory Committee for the period February 2022 to May 2024, with the option of reappointment to a second term of three years, was approved.

It was confirmed that the Committee is involved in work on diversifying the University's collections to reflect the University's diverse student and staff communities.

**16 Committee Reports**

- **IT Committee**
- **Library Committee**
- **University Collections Advisory Committee**

**Paper L1**  
**Paper L2**  
**Paper L3**

The reports were noted.

**17 Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

**18 Date of Next Meeting**

Tuesday 22 March 2022, 10.00-12.00