THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

KNOWLEDGE STRATEGY COMMITTEE

24 May 2022, Brenda Moon Boardroom, Argyle House/Videoconference

Web Version

Minute

Present:	Colm Harmon, Senate appointee (Interim Convener) (by videocall)
	Sue Currie, Court appointee
	Tina Harrison, Senate appointee (by videocall)
	Sarah McAllister, Court appointee
	Gavin McLachlan, Vice-Principal, Chief Information Officer and Librarian to the University
	Kathryn Nash, Court appointee (by videocall)
	Paul Norris, Senate appointee
	Claire Phillips, Court appointee (by videocall)
In attendance:	Lewis Allan, Head of Court Services
	Anne-Marie Coriat, CMVM representative
	Leigh Chalmers, Deputy Secretary Governance & Legal
	Jo Craiglee, Head of Knowledge Management & Planning
	Barry Neilson, Director of Strategic Change
	Melissa Terras, CAHSS representative (by videocall)
	Gosia Such, Director of User Services, Information Services Group (by videocall) (for Item 4)
	Janet Roberts, Director, EDINA (by videocall) (for Item 6)
Apologies:	Siân Bayne, Senate appointee
	Tara Gold, Student member
	Iain Gordon, CSE representative
	Lee Hamill, Director of Finance
	Melissa Highton, Senate appointee
	Sue MacGregor, Director of Academic Services
	Catherine Martin, Vice-Principal Corporate Services

1   Minute   Paper A

Members and attendees were welcomed to the meeting and apologies noted. Claire Phillips and Tara Gold (in absentia) were thanked on the occasion of their last meeting for their contributions to the work of the Committee.

The Minute of the meeting held on 22 March 2022 was approved.

2   Matters Arising   Verbal

There were no matters arising.

SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS

3   Chief Information Officer Update   Verbal

Key activities and updates since the last meeting were reported, including:
- New and emerging software platforms that have proved popular with staff and students have been reviewed to determine their suitability for the purchase of institution-wide licences. Miro, a visual collaboration platform popular in the arts and humanities, is currently being considered for an institutional licence, with work to consider accessibility elements ongoing;
- The owner of Collaborate, a virtual classroom software package used by the University, has announced its sale to another company. The University uses Microsoft Teams and Zoom in addition to Collaborate and is also upgrading the Learn virtual learning environment to Learn Ultra, which includes integration with Microsoft Teams for videoconferencing/virtual classrooms, which should provide suitable alternatives in case required;
- The global shortage of computer chips is continuing and is affecting the supply of laptops and networking equipment. A buffer stock of laptops continues to be held and a sizeable advance purchase of networking equipment has been made, which will provide the great majority of the equipment needed for the network replacement project. Until the remaining equipment arrives equipping new buildings will be prioritised as existing buildings are already networked and can continue to operate with the current equipment;
- The Elsevier journals licence renewal (see Item 8 below) was welcomed as a significant development for the UK higher education sector, with a price decrease and other improvements requested by the sector agreed to.

The Elsevier journals licence renewal was discussed, noting the positive impact of decisions made by many funding bodies to ensure that the outputs of research they have funded be made available on an open access basis.

4   EdHelp Future Plans   Verbal

Gosia Such, Director of User Services, presented an update on the EdHelp service. The service was first planned in 2018 and launched in 2020 as part of the on-going student experience programme with the objective of providing a "one stop shop" hosted in some of the University's libraries for student enquiries relating to Library, IT, student finance and student administration. Following a successful launch and positive feedback from students (with an 88% student satisfaction level) the service is now planned for expansion. Since the launch in 2020, service performance has improved from 53% of queries being resolved first time in the 2020/21 academic year to 72% in 2021/22 as staff become more experienced and the knowledge base drawn upon has improved, a trend which should continue to improve. The following points were raised in discussion:
- Interaction with the student information points in Old College and Charles Stewart House – these continue to provide a valuable service in resolving more complicated or confidential queries that cannot be resolved by the EdHelp service, as well as requirements for printed documents, e.g. many international students require printed letters from the University to visit the EU

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given visa conditions but there is scope for further co-ordination and this will considered further;
- Communicating to students in advance where their queries can best be resolved to continue to increase the first time resolution rate;
- Providing laptops loans to students at all EdHelp service desks; and,
- Improving access levels to various University systems could further increase the proportion of queries resolved first time and will be explored, noting that EdHelp staff are trained in data protection requirements and in handling sensitive financial data.

5   University Digital Strategy – Consultation Update   Verbal

Gavin McLachlan, Vice-Principal, Chief Information Officer and Librarian to the University, reported on the outcomes from the first and largest consultation period for a new University digital strategy. Direct engagement has taken place with 450 staff and students in various themed meetings, with 48 online surveys completed and thousands of visits to the consultation's SharePoint site. Key themes/principles emerging from the consultation are:
1. Get the basics right / Simplicity
2. Coherence, consistency & continuity – and standardisation
3. Flexibility/Agility (noting that there may be tensions at times between standardisation and flexibility)

Items raised that will considered in more detail in a second consultation phase include digital skills within the curriculum, the digital offering for non-matriculated students (e.g. those on short courses such as executive education), increasing access by Schools to centrally-held University data and decision-making principles around the use of open source or commercial software. Items raised in relation to equality, diversity, inclusion and digital ethics included countering digital disenfranchisement, the effect of screen time on wellbeing and ensuring digital offerings are accessible. In relation to the digital estate, establishing principles for decision-making on the provision of central systems versus local systems using central data and the join between the physical and digital estate were raised. Gaps in the digital estate that were raised included the absence of an events management system and the lack of an intranet.

The following points were raised in discussion:
- Support for linking digital skills with the curriculum transformation programme;
- Support for improving the digital offering of those on short courses;
- Considering resource needs for Schools and local areas to implement the digital strategy within the second phase of the consultation;
- Upskilling staff in digital skills is necessary but will add to workloads and should be included in workload allocations – noting that a collective agreement exists for guaranteed hours to be paid for induction and mandatory training and that this should include information security training. Clarity will be sought on this point with Human Resources, with training needs for major new systems to be considered within the resourcing requirements for the project; and,
- The timing for the second phase of the consultation – this should begin in June/July and run for a three to four month period.

6   EDINA Current and Future Main Products   Verbal

Janet Roberts, Director, EDINA, presented an overview of some of the key services provided by EDINA, a centre of digital expertise for UK higher education within the University of Edinburgh. EDINA hosts 13 authoritative data collections, including the Ordnance Survey master map and provides educational services such as Digimap, which is used by 500,000 school pupils and 80,000 users in higher education, including 2,000 users at the University of Edinburgh. Geospatial consultancy services are also offered and EDINA has produced a digital map of the University's estate to show travel times between buildings by foot, bicycle and public transport with real time information. An increasingly popular resource is Noteable, a cloud based digital resource for computational teaching and learning for those in the early stage of programming/data science learning, which is also becoming popular in other areas.

The potential for Noteable to be used to analyse student survey data such as free text comments using sentiment analysis and other techniques was discussed, with a proof of concept being trialled at present in the Business School using questionnaire data. Encouraging the use of services such as Noteable while being clear about the limitations of the service for those who wish to use it beyond its intended purpose was discussed.

ITEMS FOR NOTING OR FORMAL APPROVAL

It was noted that Items 7 and 11 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 Estates bid – Timetabling Full Business Case   Paper B

The governance route for the project's approval was discussed, with business case approval to be sought at Estates Committee and funding approval from Court on the recommendation of Policy & Resources Committee. Widening the composition of the project board to add user representation was suggested as a learning point from the People & Money programme – the board is intended to widen when the project moves beyond the procurement phase and into the implementation phase but early stage involvement of user representatives drawn from the most complex Schools for timetabling was encouraged.

8   Elsevier Journals Licence Renewal   Paper C

It was agreed to recommend for approval by Court expenditure for a new multi-year renewal agreement for Elsevier Journals.

9   University Computing Regulations   Paper D

It was agreed to recommend for approval by Court minor changes to the University Computing Regulations as set out in the paper.

10   People & Money Implementation Update   **Paper E**

A regular update on the implementation of the People & Money programme was noted.

11   Information Security Update   **Paper F**

A regular update on Information Security was discussed.

12   Library Materials Budget 2021-22   **Paper G**

A report on the current position of the 2021/22 Library Materials Budget was noted.

13   Hybrid Working Programme Update   **Paper H**

An update on the Hybrid Working Programme was noted.

14   Network Replacement Programme Update   **Paper I**

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

15   Enterprise Infrastructure Update   **Paper J**

A progress report on the replacement of the University's Enterprise Infrastructure was noted.

16   Information Services Group Capital Envelope 2021 – 2027   **Paper K**

An update on the Information Services Group's capital envelope to 2027 was noted.

17   Committee Reports
- **University Collections Advisory Committee**   **Paper L1**
- **IT Committee**   **Paper L2**

The reports were noted.

18   Any Other Business

Staff workload in relation to digital activities was raised following discussion earlier in the meeting. It was agreed that an update on strategic change projects will be submitted to the next meeting and the Convener and the Director of Strategic Change will also meet with a Committee member to consider this further.

19   Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that consultation is ongoing on preferred timeslots and dates will be circulated following this, with the expected meeting pattern for next year being:
1. Mid October 2022
2. Late January/early February 2023
3. Mid to late March 2023

4. Late May 2023