



**KNOWLEDGE STRATEGY COMMITTEE**

**30 May 2023, Brenda Moon Boardroom, Argyle House/Videoconference**

**Web Version**

**Minute**

**Present:** Richard Blythe, Court appointee  
Sue Currie, Court appointee (by videocall)  
Colm Harmon, Senate appointee (by videocall)  
Tina Harrison, Senate appointee  
Melissa Highton, Senate appointee  
Sam Maccallum, Student member  
Sarah McAllister, Court appointee (by videocall)  
Gavin McLachlan, Vice-Principal, Chief Information Officer and Librarian to the University  
Paul Norris, Senate appointee

**In attendance:** Lewis Allan, Head of Court Services  
Jo Craiglee, Head of Knowledge Management & Planning (by videocall)  
Carl Harper, EUSA Vice-President-elect Education  
Mark Hay, Head of IT, CMVM  
Nichola Kett, Interim Director of Academic Services (by videocall)  
Liz Lovejoy, CAHSS representative  
Barry Neilson, Director of Strategic Change  
Bryne Ngwenya, CSE representative (by videocall)  
Jamie Tait, Governance Manager  
Scott Davidson, Deputy Director for Social Responsibility and Sustainability and Head of Sustainability (for items 3 and 4)  
Tony Weir, Director of IT Infrastructure (for items 3 and 4)  
Scott Rosie, Head of Timetabling & Examination Services (for item 7)  
Jamie Thin, Senior Project Manager & Programme Manager (for item 7)

**Apologies:** Joyce Anderson, Court appointee  
Siân Bayne, Senate appointee  
Shereen Benjamin, Court appointee  
Anne-Marie Coriat, CMVM representative  
Lee Hamill, Director of Finance  
Catherine Martin, Vice-Principal Corporate Services  
Rona Smith, Deputy Secretary Governance & Strategic Planning

**1 Minute**

**Paper A**

Members and attendees were welcomed to the meeting. It was noted this was the final meeting for Senate appointee Paul Norris and student appointee Sam Maccallum. Warm thanks were expressed to Paul and Sam for their contributions to the Committee.

Noting that Paul Norris is anticipated to step down as Convener of Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee, it was agreed to continue with the approach of recommending to Senate that the Senate appointees to the Committee should

include the Conveners of the three Senate committees (Academic Policy and Regulations Committee, Education Committee and Quality Assurance Committee).

The minute of the meeting held on 21 March 2023 was approved.

## **2 Matters Arising**

**Verbal**

There were no matters arising.

## **SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS**

### **3 Beyond Net Zero and Sustainable Development Goals**

**Verbal**

Scott Davidson, Deputy Director for Social Responsibility and Sustainability and Head of Sustainability, provided an overview of the Climate Strategy refresh, with a focus on the role for IT and Data. Three focal areas of the emerging climate strategy refresh were highlighted: a rebalance to emphasise the importance of research, teaching and learning and partnerships; widening the focus to include other planetary crises, such as the biodiversity collapse; and science aligned targets, including the importance of maintaining global temperatures at no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius of pre-industrial levels. While the University has managed to reduce its own carbon emissions by around 8 to 9% over the previous 15 years while growing in size considerably in that period, a step change is required if a 43% carbon reduction by 2030 is to be met. Any underperformance in reducing carbon emissions at present will need to be counterbalanced by overperformance at a later date as carbon reduction is measured against a carbon “budget”. IT-related solutions that might assist were highlighted, including virtual conferencing, electric vehicle charging, facilitating shared or more efficient use of energy intensive research equipment and dynamic energy demand management.

The presentation and the positive work underway in this area was welcomed. It was noted that the Department of Social Responsibility & Sustainability had recently appointed a Senior Implementation Manager, whose role focuses on embedding climate and sustainability into decision-making across the University and it is hoped to see major progress in this area in the next 6-12 months.

### **4 ISG Sustainability – Green Data Centres and ISG Plans**

**Verbal**

Tony Weir, Director of IT Infrastructure, provided an overview of Information Services Group (ISG) sustainability, with a focus on Green Data Centres. It was noted that PUE (Power Usage Effectiveness) is the standard measure of data centre efficiency, with the average annual PUE of the University’s three data centres decreasing over the past three years to around 1.2 – with the worldwide average being 1.5 and world leaders around 1.1. There is a continued focus on improving the efficiency of data centres and some IT equipment such as some servers operated by Schools with more data-intensive research areas have been moved to the more energy efficient data centres.

Other areas highlighted for ongoing or potential future improvements in sustainability included: end user devices; open access laboratories, noting that software

applications can be virtually presented to any student device, providing flexibility and reducing the need for open access seats; the new University network, which has a power management capability to reduce power consumption; procurement controls, with the use of national frameworks that promote ethical supply chains; reuse/disposal of equipment for community reuse; and, printer consolidation, with an approximately 35% reduction in the number of printers.

It was noted in discussion that the last University energy audit was undertaken in 2019, with audits paused during the pandemic given the need to access physical spaces and these will now resume.

## 5 Chief Information Officer Update

Verbal

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

- **Sustainable IT Sub-Group:** it was noted the Sub-Group had now formed and is chaired by John Thompson, Professor of Signal Processing and Communications in the School of Engineering. A number of initiatives will come forward and further updates will be provided at future meetings.
- **IT systems outage:** on 5 May the University experienced widespread technical issues which affected multiple services for staff and students. Although there was no data loss during the outage a large number of services were unavailable for the majority of the day. As this incident occurred during the exam period, it was declared a University-level major incident and the University's Incident Management Team was convened to manage continuity arrangements, including those undertaking exams or who required special arrangements. It was noted the root cause of the outage was a failure of older infrastructure for the University network, which is in the process of being replaced, with the new infrastructure possessing greater fail-safes that should avoid any repetition of this magnitude when operational. A full incident report had been completed with lessons learned. Members discussed the problems caused by the usual communications route of University mailing lists failing as a result of the outage and the importance of improving rapid communications and contingency plans for alternative communications channels should a similar incident of this nature occur again.
- **USS and Capita data breach:** it was noted there had been a recent data breach affecting some of the UK-wide Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) data on scheme members hosted by Capita. USS had emailed affected members, where they held email addresses, advising on the nature and extent of the breach. Further advice was available on the USS and Capita websites, and scheme members have been offered free access to a 12-month membership of Identity Plus, a monitoring service provided by Experian. Although it was noted that the University itself is not involved in this incident and that USS members have a direct relationship with USS, it is understandably highly concerning to many staff and a Staff News item has been [published](#) on the University website regarding this issue. Members suggested further communications from the University would be helpful and welcomed, with the Vice-Principal & Chief Information Officer to consider this with senior colleagues. *[Secretary's note: a subsequent update including information security advice was [published](#).]*

- **Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) update:** recent developments were noted, including:
  - Consideration by the European Union of a new legal framework on the development and use of artificial intelligence, with proposed legislation;
  - Draft guidelines for University staff on AI have been developed and will be finalised and circulated [*Secretary's note: guidance for staff on generative AI has since been [published](#)*];
  - Adobe Firefly, a new AI image and text effect software, has now been licensed for use at the University.
- **Supply chain disruption:** global supply chain disruptions reported at previous meetings are slowly improving.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- **Information Security training course:** it was noted this had been made mandatory for all staff and consideration was being given to whether this should also be mandatory for students. It was noted that the course is available on People & Money for staff and on the Learn Virtual Learning Environment for students.
- **Multi-Factor Authentication project.** The project is proceeding and is being piloted with selected staff groups (Information Services Group and Registry) before a wider roll-out.

## 6 University Digital Strategy Update

Paper B

An update on the progress with the development and implementation of the University Digital Strategy was presented. It was noted that the Digital Estate Prioritisation Group (DEP), a subgroup of Estates Committee, will agree a 5-10 year roadmap of the major investments in the Digital Estate. The DEP will meet throughout the summer to agree the roadmap, which will then be taken to the Estates Committee in September 2023. Once the roadmap has been agreed, the University Digital Strategy will be taken through governance committees for approval, including Knowledge Strategy Committee, and it is expected that the Strategy will be launched in late 2023.

## 7 Timetabling and Exams replacement project – Update on Progress

Paper C

An update on the progress of the project to replace the teaching timetabling, room booking and exam scheduling systems was discussed. It was noted this is a three year programme of work and was approved by the Estates Committee in May 2022.

A short presentation was given, which summarised the project timeline and teaching timetabling business processes and links to other services. Key dates highlighted included June 2023 (the first go-live for the Optime Exam application to enable the scheduling of the August re-sit exam diet) and February 2024 (when the Optime Timetabler and Booker applications go-live, for the start of the timetabling planning cycle for the 2024-25 academic year). It was also noted that upgrades had recently been undertaken for the existing system, which would operate through to July 2024.

## ITEMS FOR NOTING OR FORMAL APPROVAL

It was noted that Items 10, 11 and 15 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.

### **8 Short Courses Platform Paper D**

A paper updating on the procurement of a Short Courses Platform (previously named a CPD Platform) for the University was noted.

### **9 Learn Ultra Upgrade Paper E**

A paper updating on the Learn Ultra Virtual Learning Environment upgrade was noted.

### **10 University Firewall Website Controls – Plagiarism Sites Paper F**

A paper considering blocking access to websites hosting plagiarism content and essay mills was considered. It was suggested that it would be helpful to include a message on any website blocked with an explanation of why the site has been blocked and the dangers of interacting with essay mill companies. Any message could also highlight support available to students. It was confirmed that, subject to testing, it was possible to configure a message to be displayed when an individual attempts to access a site that is blocked and it should be possible to display a custom message, with the content of that being agreed and provided when available. It was agreed to make this recommendation in a paper for submission to Senate Education Committee and then University Executive. It was agreed to amend the wording on ResNet (the student residential network, a sub-set of the overall network) in future papers to clarify that any websites blocked would be consistent throughout the University network, including halls of residence.

Problems arising from emails and WhatsApp messages to students from essay mill companies were raised. It was confirmed the University operates a strong email filtering block that filters out many unsolicited emails to University accounts and any that do arrive can be forwarded to the IT helpdesk. Personal email addresses and personal WhatsApp accounts may have protections from the commercial providers of these services but this is outwith the control of the University, unlike access to these sites via the University network.

### **11 Revision to University Computing Regulations and Proposed Change of Title Paper G**

Proposed revisions to the University Computing Regulations, including a renaming to the University Computing Acceptable Use Policy were considered. Subject to an addition to clarify that it has replaced the previous Regulations, it was agreed to recommend these to the University Court for approval. It was confirmed that the website link for the new Policy would not change from the existing [link](#).

**12 Major Library and IT Expenditure Commitments Update** **Paper H**

An update on the latest position of major capital and revenue library and IT expenditure commitments was noted.

**13 Information Services Group Capital Envelope 2022-2028** **Paper I**

An update on the Information Services Group's 5-year capital envelope, 2022-28, was noted.

**14 Network Replacement Programme Update** **Paper J**

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

**15 People and Money Update** **Paper K**

An update on the implementation of the People & Money systems and processes was noted. It was reported that the immediate priorities included the ongoing core stabilisation of research finance processes and activities and preparation for year-end activity. Workload demands for teams and colleagues working on the People & Money implementation were highlighted, with the busy financial and academic year-end period approaching.

**16 Committee Reports**

- **IT Committee** **Paper L1**
- **Library Committee** **Paper L2**
- **University Collections Advisory Committee** **Paper L3**
- **Digital Research Services Steering Group** **Paper L4**
- **Estates Committee** **Paper L5**

The reports were noted.

**17 Meeting Dates for 2023/24 Academic Year**

The meeting dates for 2023/14 academic year were approved.

**18 Any Other Business**

The use of recordings of tutorial sessions by students was raised. It was noted that whilst recordings for personal use are permitted for the most part under the Inclusive Learning Policy, subject to agreement with staff who would be recorded, concerns have been raised about recordings being uploaded to translation applications, with data protection and copyright concerns. The Assistant Principal Online Learning agreed to consider this and to update the Committee.

**19 Date of Next Meeting**

Tuesday 24 October 2023, 10:00 – 12:00