



KNOWLEDGE STRATEGY COMMITTEE

21 March 2024, Meeting Room 7, Floor E, Argyle House/Microsoft Teams

Web Version

Minute

- Present:** Siân Bayne, Senate appointee (by videocall)
Shereen Benjamin, Court appointee
Richard Blythe, Court appointee (by videocall)
Colm Harmon, Interim Convener (by videocall)
Melissa Highton, Senate appointee
Gavin McLachlan, Vice-Principal, Chief Information Officer and Librarian to the University
- In attendance:** Rick Arnautovic, CAHSS representative
Anne-Marie Coriat, CMVM representative
Jo Craiglee, Head of Knowledge Management & IS Planning (by videocall)
Barry Neilson, Director of Strategic Change
Scott Rosie, Business Lead – Timetabling & Exams Replacement Project (by videocall)
Rona Smith, Deputy Secretary Governance & Strategic Planning
Jamie Tait, Governance Manager
Jeremy Upton, Director of Library and University Collections (for agenda items 3, 9 and 10)
Alistair Fenemore, Chief Information Security Officer (for agenda item 7)
Stefan Kaempf, Director of Operations (Applications) (for agenda item 7)
- Observer:** Veena O'Halloran, External Facilitator, Court Effectiveness Review
- Apologies:** Lisa Dawson, Academic Registrar
Patrick Hadoke, Senate appointee
Lee Hamill, Director of Finance
Carl Harper, Student member
Tina Harrison, Senate appointee
Lisa Kendall, CAHSS representative
Catherine Martin, Vice-Principal Corporate Services
Sarah McAllister, Court appointee
Bryne Ngwenya, CSE representative

1 Minute

Paper A

Members and attendees were welcomed to the meeting. Veena O'Halloran was introduced as the external facilitator for the Court effectiveness review, and would be observing Knowledge Strategy Committee (KSC) along with several other governance committees including University Court.

The minute of the meeting held on 25 January 2024 was approved.

2 Matters Arising

Verbal

It was noted that at the last meeting of KSC, it was agreed it would be helpful to have a more detailed discussion on KSC's terms of reference and its relationship with the Information Technology Committee (ITC). This discussion had been postponed until the KSC meeting on 30 May.

SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS

3 Main Library Design Team

Verbal

Jeremy Upton, Director of Library and University Collections, gave a presentation on a current review of the Main Library. It was noted that a design team (Hawkins\Brown) had been appointed and tasked with rethinking how the Main Library was being used, bringing forward ideas on how to make improvements for students, staff and the wider community.

The following was covered in the presentation to KSC:

- The importance of the vision statement and issues of connectedness, particularly with regards to the Main Library being open for all ("The Library helps people to grow their knowledge and create new connections through open services, collections and environments, sparking ideas that change the world").
- The last major investment programme was completed in 2013, and there is an opportunity for incremental change through regular smaller scale interventions using Small Capital Funds.
- Visitor numbers are up since COVID-19 with a footfall of over 5 million a year, making it not only the busiest building on campus, but the busiest in the city of Edinburgh.
- Whilst there is a need for change to support future learning and teaching, the traditional elements of a library are still highly relevant.

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

- The amount of physical space that would be required for books, journals etc. going forward. It was noted that a comprehensive review of print collections would be taking place, however reducing the amount of print materials was not quick or cheap to do.
- Some collections may be better suited in a storage facility, with a separate library storage strategy being developed.
- Student study spaces are a University challenge, with noted impact of current Teviot closure, and the Main Library wouldn't provide a single solution to the demand required. Campus-wide thinking was the right approach to take, taken forward through a study space review group, including representatives from across the University. The University's Head of Space was also involved in the discussions around the Main Library review.

The Convener thanked Jeremy for his presentation and noted it would be helpful for KSC to receive a further update on progress at a future meeting.

4 Learn Ultra Accessibility Review

Paper B

Melissa Highton, Director of Learning, Teaching and Web Services & Assistant Principal Online Learning, gave a presentation on the 2023 Learn Ultra Accessibility Reviews. It was noted that 20 student interns were employed for 4 months, helping migrate over 5,000 Learn courses and performing accessibility audits on a minimum of 30% of courses for each participating School. Key insights of the review were highlighted, including overall compliance of 77% against the accessibility matrix.

The Committee welcomed the presentation and discussed in detail issues around captioning, including working with artificial intelligence (AI) to develop 'confidence' scores, a reduction of the number of critical errors, the desired level of accuracy, and ensuring the confidence levels of both staff and students. Discussions on improvements to alt text and the involvement of equality, diversity and inclusion colleagues to undertake impact assessments were also noted.

KSC agreed to the following recommendations:

- All Schools should be included in the annual audit of accessibility, subject to clarification as to any reasons that have precluded some Schools from previously doing so.
- Relevant training should be offered to target areas in which scores are low.
- Subtitles should now be switched on by default in the lecture recording system.

The Committee also agreed it would be helpful to have a follow-up item on the ISG Captioning Service at a future KSC meeting.

5 Chief Information Officer Update

Verbal

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

- **Information Security.** Deployment of Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) for Microsoft 365 had continued to progress well, with overall 99% of staff and student accounts on MFA protection for all Microsoft Office platforms and applications. The next stage of development is to expand coverage of MFA on other digital services. In December 2023 a new email security control, Safe Links, was rolled out as part of our Microsoft 365 licence. Unfortunately as a result of an error, there had been a number of unforeseen impacts on some Schools, primarily in the College of Science & Engineering. Work was underway to address the concerns raised, and following a series of consultation meetings, a number of proposals are being worked through to seek a satisfactory outcome and to improve internal ISG processes for future security rollouts.
- **Artificial Intelligence.** The recommendations from the short-life working group convened by Michael Rovatsos, Professor of Artificial Intelligence, would come back to the KSC meeting in May 2023.

- **Digital Communications and Engagements platform strategy.** A group including representations from Communications and Marketing are currently discussing this, noting that similar platform strategies are used by other universities.
- **Digital Estates Project.** The project on room and desk booking has been accelerated, with a full business case in development. Following a technical assessment, the University's new timetabling platform supplier (EventMap) would be used for classroom, meeting room, event space and desk bookings, therefore no additional cost would be incurred. The Committee were supportive of the piloting of this work, but noted that behavioural change should be considered alongside technical change, with learning put in place as this work is progressed.
- **IT vendors and conference.** There has been a large increase in the number and type of Educational Technologies companies, applications and solutions. This is accelerated by the use of AI to help write software faster. However many of these new companies are unproven and there are increasing instances of unstable and poorly written or supported software. The risk of further application proliferation is high. The recent UCISA national HE IT conference had the largest number of vendors ever seen selling to the HE sector.
- **IT Hosting Environment.** Estates and ISG are working on a paper proposing a future University datacentre to host University IT. The paper will come through KSC and Estates Committee.

6 Information Services Group Planning 2024/25 to 2028/2029

Paper C

An Information Services Group (ISG) planning update was presented. It was noted this was a draft plan and would be subject to further refinement following planning round discussions, including the financial implications of the plan. The following was highlighted:

- The financial challenges that lie ahead, with a critical budget gap of £2.2m against year 2 of last year's ISG plan (particularly in relation to licence costs and usage, and the loss of block grant funding for library materials);
- The use of multi-year contract agreements, many of which have been negotiated at a national level, to help mitigate cost increases;
- Match funding from the Scottish Funding Council's Student Digital Poverty Fund. Demand for this service increased significantly and, for the first time, ISG ran out of loan laptops this year. This funding is considered at risk, as with all SFC funding, due to Scottish Government budget reductions.

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

- The importance of student and staff satisfaction in ISG, and the People focus of Strategy 2030;
- Embracing the use of AI internally, noting ISG are fully committed to advancing the internal uptake of AI across the University, with a catalogue of existing internal AI adoption projects across the University to be developed and delivered;

- Underpinning the Research & Innovation Strategy with a University Data Strategy, focussing on University data and data assets;
- The University-wide approach to datacentre strategic planning, working with Colleges, EPCC and Estates.

It was confirmed comments from KSC would be fed back to the ISG Senior Management Team for consideration before the ISG Plan is finalised.

7 Identity and Access Management – Draft Business Case Update

Paper D

Alistair Fenemore, Chief Information Security Officer, and Stefan Kaempf, Director of Operations (Applications), presented an update on the ongoing Managing User Access improvement programme, specifically on the draft Identity and Access Management (IDAM) business case. It was noted the draft business case outlined plans to replace the existing Identity Management System (IDM) with a modern, fit-for-purpose IDAM service supported by efficient processes and procedures, underpinned by new tools. This would offer a significant improvement in security, efficiency and convenience whilst improving access to digital services and data based upon sets of defined business driven access rules.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- Although it was a technical project (with a technical Steering Group providing appropriate direction), engagement and communication with the wider University community was key. It was noted both the Programme Board and Project Boards would have broad representation;
- Further information on other system integrations would be helpful, ensuring the requirements and potential risks were fully understood;
- Clarity around what is likely to be centralised and automated.
- Following the recent UCISA national HE IT conference, engagement with other institutions looking at these issues had increased.

The Committee were supportive of the paper, and noted the final version of the business case would be presented to the Capital Projects Group in April before going to Estates Committee in May for final approval.

8 Web Analytics Risks and Strategy

Paper E

The Committee considered a paper highlighting the significant risks associated with the lack of governance and resource in web analytics. It was noted this had previously been discussed by the Web Governance Group and IT Committee. KSC suggested a targeted approach would be beneficial, working with colleagues across the institution to focus on those webpages where analytics would be of most use, also educating site owners on how to use the data. The Committee expressed strong support for the action outlined in the paper to proceed with the delivery of a strategic approach to improving and governing web analytics to mitigate these. It was noted that ISG (in conjunction with College and Professional Groups Heads of IT) would submit options appraisals via the University planning round and bring further information to KSC via ITC.

ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

9 Wiley Jisc Read and Publish Journals Agreement 2024-2025

Paper F

The Committee considered a paper that sought approval for total expenditure of £1.2m over the duration of a new two-year renewal agreement for e-journals, which replaces the recently expired UK-wide Wiley 2020-2023 agreement. It was noted renewal negotiations between Jisc and Wiley had taken place with the aim of implementing a follow-on read and publish agreement for UK higher education institutions in 2024. Following the conclusion of these negotiations, a two-year UK-wide transitional agreement for 2024 and 2025 has been put in place by Jisc. It was confirmed that expenditure on Wiley e-journals is met annually from the Library's Materials budget allocation, with the open access publish fees being funded from research block grants which are also managed by the Library. The new two-year agreement will continue to be funded from these sources, with funding for the 2024 fees already fully allocated in the 2023/24 Materials Budget and included in the 2024/25 Planning Round submission. The Committee approved the expenditure outlined in the paper, and noted the Library would proceed to place a formal order for the new agreement via Jisc Collections ahead of the 31st March deadline.

The Committee also discussed open access and transitional agreements in general, and it was agreed it would be useful to have a full agenda item on this at a future KSC meeting. It was also noted that Jisc had recently published a report on "[A review of transitional agreements in the UK](#)".

10 Revision to University of Edinburgh Library Regulations

Paper G

The Committee considered an additional Library Regulation with wording that had been agreed with the Deputy Secretary Students. KSC approved the additional regulation.

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.

11 Information Security Update

Paper H

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.

12 Library Materials Budget 2024/25

Paper I

The Committee noted the materials budget request submitted by ISG to the University's planning round for 2024/25.

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

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

14 Network Replacement Programme Update **Paper K**

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

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

An update on the implementation of the People & Money systems and processes was noted.

16 Timetabling and Exams replacement project – progress update **Paper M**

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

17 Committee Reports

- IT Committee
- Digital Research Services Steering Group
- University Collections Advisory Committee

Paper N1

Paper N3

Paper N4

The reports were noted.

18 Any Other Business

It was noted that the meeting dates for KSC in 2024/25 had been identified and invites would be sent out shortly. It was confirmed that there would be no clashes with the Academic Policy & Regulations Committee next academic year, and the dates would go for formal approval to KSC at their next meeting. The dates are as follows:

- Thursday 10 October 2024
- Thursday 30 January 2025
- Thursday 27 March 2025
- Thursday 29 May 2025

19 Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 30 May 2024, 14:00 – 16:00 (hybrid meeting)