

## IT Governance

### Minimum Standards of IT Provision and Integration

#### 1 Introduction

For its March 2015 meeting, the ISC has scheduled a discussion concerning clause 5(h) of the Committee's Terms of Reference, including IT provision by bodies outside the UIS and approaches to integration.

This paper sets out to present some of the issues involved and suggests possible ways these might be addressed through its existing governance structures, or possible extensions thereof.

#### 2 Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference for the Information Services Committee, as set out in Ordinances, specify that one of its duties is:

*“5(h) to set, consulting the Councils of the Schools, Colleges and other institutions as necessary, minimum standards of service to be provided;”*

However, it was left to the Committee to establish appropriate governance processes to enable it to carry out this remit.

#### 3 IT Review Principles

Following the Review of IT Infrastructure and Support, the final report of which was published in February 2013, and the subsequent exploration of its expressed principles and aims through the Workstrands initiated by the UIS, in consultation with the Schools and Colleges academic and IT communities, a list of five principles for service provision university-wide have been established.

- i. Institutions should remain empowered to fulfil local needs. Any changes made to IT governance should be a move towards creating a more enabling environment within which this can happen.
- ii. Individuals should be freed from repetitive tasks. Common needs should be met by services provided from the centre/cloud/other institutions to enable focus upon delivering tools for local need where there is domain expertise.
- iii. Via a central IT service portfolio/catalogue, to provide a common university mechanism for discovery. A tool to facilitate the review of duplications and determination of gaps from the perspective of individual institutions; to help those in similar areas to collaborate and communicate.
- iv. To join up, within the areas of expertise of build/development, architecture and service operations, communities of practice. The UIS should lead on the definition of appropriate policy and establishment of principles in key areas.

- v. To establish a principle of service re-use, rather than re-invention, through the use of the portfolio/catalogue model. Where an institution identifies a gap in service provision, that it should have the responsibility to seek to develop new, reusable, service to be added to the portfolio for the benefit of all.

#### **4 Way Forward**

The introduction of a university-wide IT Service Catalogue would clearly foster more structured ways of allowing for the discovery of services available to end user communities, be it staff members, students or visitors. Sections within the catalogue might then be used to identify the different classes of service: core versus local versus experimental; school, departmental or college-based; or particular constituency targets such as staff or students.

Different policies and standards might apply to how services and offerings gain entry into the different sections of the catalogue, and depending on their status, different governance procedures might be necessary to regulate what is and is not included in each. The assurance of minimum standards of functionality and quality being indicated by their position in the Catalogue. Entry into the Catalogue would act as a level of approval, a kind of 'kite-mark' showing adherence to a particular standard.

Core services, available to all, would typically be provided by the UIS or other major IT service providers across the University, and would represent a minimum guarantee of reliability and service level delivery. Such services would have to have a level of commitment, management, design quality and secured funding to a specified minimum standard.

Local services might only be available to a more restricted community, such as within a College, department or for a particular course. Service levels for these offerings might be appropriate for the context within which they are provided, but not supported for more widespread usage.

Community offerings, representing experimental, pilot or casual offerings might be listed in a 'pot luck' section of the Catalogue, where service levels and quality might be *ad hoc*. Whilst some control over what is listed here might need to be exercised, offerings here would be used at the users own risk. However, this would be the ideal place for sharing developing and innovative ideas with the community, and might foster collaborative development of new facilities and tools which might be worked up into core or local services in time.

#### **5 Governance**

As part of its engagement with the IT, academic and administrative communities across the Schools and Colleges, the UIS has established and will continue to hold regular Engagement Meetings with representative groups across these communities to engender consultation, collaboration, consensus on IT issues and future developments within the IT sphere. Whilst the initial Engagement Meetings were somewhat informal, it has now been agreed that these should be run on more formal lines, with structured agendas and formal published minutes. It is proposed that copies of the minutes of all such meetings should be submitted to the ISC for its review.

Clearly the need to set standards, accredit service offerings and monitor/enforce compliance will need to have governance mechanisms underpinning the regulation of the IT Catalogue.

The UIS proposes the following governance mechanism:

- i. The User Needs Committee of the ISC would be responsible for setting the minimum standards of service to be achieved, and ensuring that these are addressed by core services within the catalogue. It would also authorise additions to the catalogue and monitor and enforce compliance, under delegated authority from the ISC. Day-to-day operation of its policies would be delegated to the Director of UIS for expediency.

The ISC might also wish to consider the following alternative options instead of the proposed arrangement above.

- ii. All service offering standards and submissions should be agreed by the Director of UIS, acting as the Executive Officer of the ISC, under its delegated authority, following consultation with the Schools and Colleges Engagement Groups. The Director of UIS would be responsible for monitoring and enforcing day-to-day compliance with standards.
- iii. The Schools and Colleges Engagement Groups should formally be responsible for authorising additions to the catalogue, for setting its standards of service and monitoring compliance, under delegated authority from the ISC. All authorisations would be reported to the ISC through the formal minutes of these groups. Day-to-day enforcement of its policies might rest with the Director of UIS, who would be accountable to the Engagement Groups for actions taken.
- iv. The ISC would formally be responsible for authorising additions to the catalogue, setting its standards of service and monitoring compliance, following recommendations made by any of the above mechanisms.

## 6 Proposal

It is proposed that the UIS IT Service Catalogue is used as an instrument to promulgate and guarantee minimum standards for the IT services available throughout the University. Sections for at least the following would be included:

- **Core Services** – available university-wide, with guaranteed minimum standards
- **Local Services** – available to local communities or specific constituencies, with specified local standards. Institutions would be able to substitute core University-wide services with local services provided these at least meet the minimum standards
- **Community Offerings** – available university-wide, but used at the user's own risk

The ISC is invited to determine the appropriate governance mechanisms by which the IT Catalogue will be regulated.

## 7 Policies, Rules and Guidelines

The proposal above does not regulate for the drafting and promotion of general IT Policies, Rules and Guidelines as covered under clause 5(i) of the Terms of Reference of the ISC. The Committee might wish to consider at a future date how governance concerning this aspect of their remit should be established.

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