

**University of Cambridge  
University of Cambridge**

**Information Strategy and Services Syndicate**

Unconfirmed Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 17 March 2011 in the Syndicate Room, the Old Schools.

Members present: Professor Littlewood (in the Chair), Dr Alexander, Dr Blackwell, Mr. Du Quesnay, Mr Matheson, Mr Norman, Professor Oliver, Mr Richardson, Sir David Wallace, Mr. Warbrick. Mr Wood and, by standing invitation, Professor Young (Pro-Vice Chancellor for Planning and Resources).

In attendance: Directors of MISD and UCS, University Librarian, Mr. Wilson

Apologies for absence were received from: Dr Carpenter, Professor Howe, Dr Ellington, Mr Reid, Dr Walker and the Registry

Except as noted below there were no declarations of interest relating to matters on the agenda.

The Chairman welcomed Mr Wood to his first meeting.

**239. Membership**

The Vice-Chancellor had appointed Professor Oliver, as his duly appointed deputy, as Chair with effect from 1 April 2011.

**240. Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the ISSS held on 20 January 2011 were circulated and approved subject to an additional minute as follows:

**238. Capital developments**

*In reply to a question the Director of MISD informed the Syndicate that for reasons of resiliency MISD were planning a second server room; the ISSS had not been consulted as this was a sub-strategic minor work dealt with in the usual way by EMBS and the RMC.*

*The Syndicate noted at their meeting on 18 November 2010 (M212) that the PRC would be asked to register under the capital projects process the proposal for a data centre at West Cambridge, and the PRC at their meeting on 24 November had done so (PRC M1289). The proposal included a feasibility study and the ISSS would be invited to consider the conclusions in due course. An application may be made to the TDF to fund the study.*

The Syndicate agreed that they did not need to be consulted about building projects just because they were intended to house IT.

**241. Matters arising and review of action points**

M 212: The PRC at their meeting on 16 February 2011 had approved all the recommendations forwarded by the ISSS from their meeting on 18 November 2010 except that the addition of £102K to the MISD baseline allocation to meet the costs of the CamTools production service had been revised downwards by MISD to £65k.

The regular note of other action points was circulated as ISSS 253, including the annual cycle of business and the programme of work.

M 227: The Syndicate looked forward to the report on progress of the continuing review of guidelines and how they would reflect the decision at the last meeting to discourage the use of applications not covered by suitable contract terms.

M 232: Members agreed that the annual Planning Round provided a suitable vehicle for raising the Syndicate's profile and the ISWG should be invited to consider what might be included in the annual *Guidance*.

M 235: The outbound caller ID confidentiality issue had been referred back to the JNMC.

## **242. Business Committee**

The meeting of the Business Committee scheduled on 21 February 2011 had been cancelled.

## **243. Review of Information Strategy**

The Syndicate were reminded that they had established three working groups to assist with the further development of the Information Strategy (IS), with the Teaching and Learning Services Steering Group acting as the fourth.

The Syndicate received the report of the ISSS Campus Experience and Outreach Working Group, the minutes of the 28 January 2011 meeting of the Teaching and Learning Services Steering Group and the Report of the Research Group (papers ISSS 254, 255 and 260 respectively).

Syndics noted the intention that a single paper would in due course condense all groups' completed work for consultation and the revised strategy would be published in due course. Afterwards, all new major projects would be required to conform to it and all future projects boards would have to explain how. The principles and aims set out in the revised IS should therefore be most carefully drafted and the work should be useful for the IT review (see M245).

The Syndicate had already agreed that systems should be able to rely on a single identifier for people and other identities; the other main common aim identified so far was the need for a high degree of usability of all systems, with the user group being clear from the outset. Systems should ideally be usable without training, especially if casual users were part of the user group, and there should certainly be no need for training on systems announced as for University-wide or public use.

The IS should encourage Innovation; investment in innovative approaches were experiments and it should be clear in any implementation what were the benefits; the extent of the innovation, what outcome was expected and how the results would be measured.

Some overlap was expected between the findings of the research and administrative systems groups. Berkley's strategy had provided some pointers to the research paper but the University environment had changed with the recent creation of the Research Systems Committee. The delivery of management information would be an important aim.

On detailed drafting, it was agreed that workflow was a factor for mention, but vulnerability to FOI requests needed to be assumed in building systems. It was important to be clear that systems might help administer funding but they did not manage research and the fact that a particular tool was available did not necessarily mandate its use.

The Teaching and Learning Services Steering Group had a wider remit but S4 of ISSS 254 corresponded to the other Groups' work. The Syndicate agreed it was now reasonable to assume students' ownership of a personal computer, and that assistance should be available for those without by reason of hardship. Both sides had obligations – students should not expect a specification lower than the University could reasonably require, and the common minimum specification should be no higher than that.

The Syndicate noted that a donation would be enabling the UL to make collections of examination papers available, and some tools around them, except re-usable multiple choice questions. VLE's were of growing importance but not yet for the strategy. The availability of some teaching material raised significant IP issues; identity management – of courses – was an issue here as well.

The Syndicate broadly agreed the "campus" group's principles and strategic aims, but agreed the question of access needed to be broadened to include selective access from outside and by alumni; the multi-lingual question was more relevant to external than internal access.

**Action: Working Groups that had not yet reported.**

**244. X5 project**

A project "Charter" was about to be agreed setting out how the construction of the new system would be progressed. The final form of this Charter depended on a meeting with Unit 4's usability experts; the Project Board was anxious to ensure the usability of the system by a wide range of individuals in different roles.

The University did not yet have a project manager but the project was on time. Oxford's imperative was the imminent retirement of support staff, while that of Cambridge was the withdrawal of support for pFact but support was now to be continued following its acquisition by Unit 4. The Project Board would therefore allow some slippage in the timetable if it ensured further improvement to the final product.

(Post meeting note - a project manager had been appointed and would start on April 18 2011)

**245. Review of IT**

The Syndicate at their January meeting had noted (M 231) that the PRC in November 2010 had agreed to establish a review of IT; the paper circulated as ISSS 256 was on the PRC agenda for its meeting on 16 March. The Syndicate noted that their Chairman would represent them on the Review Committee, but there was still a risk of duplication between this proposed review and the reviews set in train by the Syndicate.

Professor Young reported that the review was a response to a number of issues identified by the PRC working parties, many of which were caused by the failure of business processes to match the systems. It was more likely the review would report in the Lent or Easter Term 2012, and he was open to suggestions for membership, in particular the chair. There would be a Notice in due course.

**Action: Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor**

**246. CamGrid**

The Chairman declared an interest on the grounds that CamGrid was currently based in the Department of Physics; other members declared an interest as users.

Paper ISSS 257 set out proposals for the development of the CamGrid "federation" by basing management in UCS. That stability should ensure CamGrid's continued success and enable the benefits to be extended more widely.

Syndics agreed it was vital to secure CamGrid's funding but it was unlikely that central funds would be provided. The service should be an element of the costs of research supported by it, and a contribution should be made from those grants, or by a fixed levy – or a combination.

The IT review might consider how support services like this should operate. Professor Young noted that SRF's provided a useful framework.

**Action: Director, Computing Services**

**247. Review of JISC**

HEFCE had announced the outcome of the review of the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) at <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/news/hefce/2011/jisc.htm> . The review report was at <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/aboutus/aboutjisc/JISCReview.pdf>

**248. Information Strategy Working Group**

The minutes of the ISWG's meeting on 11 January 2011 were received (ISSS 258).

**249. Service reports**

MISD's service reports were received as ISSS 259

**250. Envoi**

Members noted that this was the last meeting chaired by Professor Littlewood; they thanked him for his chairmanship and wished him well for the future.

**251. Meeting dates**

To note the schedules of meetings for 2010-11.

BC	Monday 18 April 2011	11.00am	Treasurer's Room
ISSS	Thursday 19 May 2011	2.15pm	Syndicate Room
BC	Monday 13 June 2011	11.00am	Treasurer's Room
ISSS	Tuesday 5 July 2011	2.15pm	Syndicate Room

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