

GOLDSMITHS
University of London

ACADEMIC BOARD / FINANCE & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND SYSTEMS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 12 May 2009

Present: Mr Hugh Jones (in the Chair), Dr Virginia Brooke, Dr Stephen Cottrell, Dr Basem El-Haddadeh, Dr Richard Grayson, Ms Mary Nixon, Ms Vivienne Rose, Ms Juliet Sprake, Miss Rosemary Harrison (Secretary).

Apologies for absence: Dr Marian Ursu.

In attendance: Mr Duncan Branley (IT Training Officer).

OPEN BUSINESS

23 MINUTES

Resolved:

that the minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2009 be approved.

24 IT STRATEGY

Noted:

that the IT Strategy had been approved by Council on 26 March 2009.

Received:

a summary implementation plan from the Director of IT (09-206).

The Committee noted that the IT User Group would be involved in the compilation of a more detailed implementation plan. Members stressed the importance of planning for the necessary staff time and skills to be available to support the delivery of capially-funded projects at the appropriate time, as implementation progressed.

It was noted that some current IT initiatives - such as the development of the Web Content Management system - might call for a higher level of engagement from departments across the College than equivalent previous elements of the infrastructure. It was important to manage carefully any perceived conflict between this increased departmental autonomy at

operational level and the simultaneous need to emphasise a strategic and legal position in which the institution as a whole was more clearly responsible for information and systems (see also Minute 25 below).

The Committee noted that the planning of overall future capital expenditure for the College would be to a large extent driven by the outcome of the current planning exercise for the Estate. The outcome of this exercise would therefore bring greater clarity to the longer-term prospects for capital expenditure in IT - in terms both of the funding available and of the IT infrastructural needs generated by the context of the future buildings envisaged.

It was reported that funding for the networking of the halls of residence was already approved from the Residences, Catering and Conferences budget.

25 RECORDS MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Received:

- (i) a paper from the Head of Secretariat, outlining some possible components of a Records Management Strategy for Goldsmiths, and some example supporting policies (09-207).
- (ii) as background to paper 09-207, paper 08-329, received by the Committee at its first meeting on 15 October 2009 (recirculated).

The Committee noted that the following high-level desired outcomes had so far been identified for the Strategy, and that paper 09-207 provided outline commentary on the implications of these for the College at the operational level:

- (i) To create a culture which promoted an integrated corporate approach to the acquisition, retention, use and destruction of information, and which proactively discouraged individual and departmentally-focused approaches.
- (ii) To ensure that all decisions made either centrally or at departmental level in relation to changes in the processing of paper-based or electronic information prioritised as far as possible the capacity of the College to achieve maximum integration of networked information in the long term.
- (iii) To create the conditions under which as far as possible documents were held on the College network, with appropriate access controls, rather than in local electronic or paper-based form.
- (iv) To publish, maintain and enforce an appropriate Policy to ensure that all arrangements under which the College allowed its information to be held by another provider on its behalf incorporated appropriate safeguards.
- (v) To maintain an accurate, up-to-date institutional overview of all information and documents held by the College (including through other providers), together with policies on their retention and disposal to which all staff would be required to adhere, and which would be designed to ensure that internal operational requirements and external legal ones were met.

- (vi) To introduce appropriate technical measures and administrative protocols for the security of all information held by the College (including through other providers) at a level appropriate to the importance and confidentiality of the information concerned, based on risk assessments which would be kept up to date.

It was noted that very considerable further work would be needed before the extent of acceptable variation in the way in which information was organised in different departments could be appropriately defined, especially given that the Information Audit project (described at 27 (i)) had so far only involved academic departments on a pilot basis.

The extent of permitted variation should be strongly dependent on the type of document involved. For example, the papers of the central committee system were already to a large extent managed according to a standardised filing structure which prescribed specific protocols for the naming of folders and individual files, and for other parameters influencing the high-level sorting of the material; meanwhile, for some other types of record which were equally important - such as retained student work (which was not a focus of the current Information Audit) - it was likely to be sufficient simply to define in outline what should be held and how it should be capable of being retrieved, as a more detailed specification of an institutional standard would not add value.

It was noted that, while considerable cross-departmental variation in the detailed organisation of records was acceptable in many areas, it was universally important to avoid situations in which an individual member of staff had sole access to records for which corporate access was required for legal or operational purposes. For example, all documents supporting decisions made by Examination Boards must be archived in a location where they could be found by several authorised staff, in order to provide for the need for urgent access in the absence of the Chair, or other person who originally received each document.

It was noted that urgent enquiries in relation to student matters during the main summer holiday period was particularly common. However, in all areas of College activity it was important to plan for staff turnover and for business continuity in the event of sudden illness.

Resolved:

that the outcomes proposed for the future Records Management Strategy be approved in general terms, as a preliminary basis for future policy development and discussions by the Committee and in the College generally.

26 CREATING THE CONTEXT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGY: STAFF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Received:

- (i) a paper from the IT Training Officer on future staff training in IT skills (09-208).
- (ii) the JISC publication *Managing information to make life easier: a practical guide for administrators* (09-209), which had been distributed to Records Management Contacts and Departmental Administrators of academic departments the previous year.

The Committee noted that an area of possible future development was a stronger linkage

between IT training and other structures - such as integrating IT training into the postgraduate certificate in higher education teaching for academic staff, or specifying minimum standards of IT competence for particular posts via the HERA structure.

It was noted that there were new needs similarly emerging in relation to the training and development of students - although this fell strictly outside the scope of the paper.

27 REPORTS ON SPECIFIC PROJECTS

Received:

reports on the following projects:

- (i) Information Audit and development of a Retention Schedule by CIMTECH (09-210);
- (ii) Student Records Project (09-211);
- (iii) Web-based payments in the Finance Department (09-212).
- (iv) Service Level Descriptors in the IT Department (09-213) (this summarised the project to create the currently published Service Level Descriptions);
- (v) Disaster recovery plan for IT (oral report by the Director of IT).

It was suggested that it might be useful to implement a system for deriving useful lessons for the implementation of IT projects, which could be used by those facing similar challenges in future.

28 WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

Resolved:

that the minutes of the IT User Group be received by future meetings of the Committee, it being noted that in some terms it would be impossible to structure the Committee Timetable in such a way as to permit reporting within the same term.

29 RETIRING MEMBER

The Chair thanked Dr Richard Grayson, whose term of office would come to an end on 31 August 2009, for his service on this Committee and on the former IT Strategy Steering Group.

RMH
May 2009