UNIVERSITY OF KENT

Information Services Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2007

Present: Professor J Baldock (Chairman), Professor A Chadwick, Ms KM Doyle, Mr NSR Jackson, Dr J Mills, Mrs C Pickaver, Mr J Pink, Mr PV Slater, Mr J Sotillo, Mr S Thornton, Dr AH Ward, Ms G Woodhams, Mrs JC Hornsby (Secretary).

Apologies: Professor D Chadwick.

01/07-08 WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

The Chairman welcomed Dr Jon Mills, as the new Faculty of Humanities representative, and Dr AH Ward, as the new Chair of the Library User Panel, to the Committee.

02/07-08 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 June 2007 were approved.

03/07-08 MATTERS ARISING

(a) Web Strategy & Steering Group Report (Minute 35/06-07)

The report from the WSSG meeting of, was not circulated with the Agenda, but circulated with the minutes, as paper ISC 10/07-08

(b) Information Literacy Strategy 2007-2009 (37/06-07)

To note that this paper will be considered by the Learning and Teaching Board at their meeting on 28 November 2007. A detailed action plan will be presented to the present Committee in due course.

04/07-08 CHAIR’S COMMUNICATIONS

The Chairman noted that despite repeated invitations, the Students’ Union had not sent any representatives to the Committee since 2004, and wondered whether this was because of the managerial nature of the Committee, and the already wide representation of students on more operational committees, such as CUP and LUP; and whether indeed it is still necessary to reserve two places on the committee for students.

It emerged during discussion that there were sometimes handover issues with sabbatical officers, and that they are not always certain about which committees they are expected to attend. The Secretary will contact the current KU Education Officer to discuss student membership, before any decision is made about ending student membership on the Committee.

ACTION: SECRETARY
05/07-08 COMPUTER USER PANEL

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting held on 29 October 2007 for information (paper ISC 01/07-08). It was noted that there are difficulties with getting adequate student representation on this body too.

In relation to minute 14.2, the Director of Information Services confirmed that the establishment of a CUP blog as a means of further engaging members and users is indeed realistic, and that the idea had come about as a result of the lack of debate at the CUP and in consultation with members of the panel.

The Chairman recorded his thanks to the Chair of CUP, Professor Alan Chadwick, and to the membership, for their active engagement on this group.

06/07-08 LIBRARY USER PANEL

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2007 for information (paper ISC 02/07-08).

The Head of Library Services reported that attendance by students on this group is good, but attendance by academics less so. The panel plan to extend open invitations to departmental representatives to attend the meetings, and perhaps to have themed meetings to encourage better attendance.

The Committee recorded their thanks to the outgoing Chairman of LUP, Dr Karl Leydecker, for his chairmanship.

07/07-08 REPORTS FROM THE DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION SERVICES

(i) Director's Report June 2007 – October 2007

The Director of Information Services spoke to his report (ISC 03/07-08), and the following points in were highlighted in particular:

A3 Sentry Entry Gate System

In relation to this item, it was noted that there was some opposition amongst staff to the requirement for Staff ID cards.

A4 WebCT

Attention was drawn to the surge in uptake and use of WebCT in recent months. This had resulted in operational difficulties with the system, which is designed to cope with c.500 concurrent sessions, but has been dealing with 700-800. Support from the external supplier, Blackboard has been less than satisfactory in this period.

B Service Developments

Many of these had been largely driven by the NSS responses and Benchmarking studies,
B12 Texting

There was some discussion about the texting facility which is about to come on stream once a mechanism for charging is agreed. The Committee saw great potential in having the ability to text students, for a number of different purposes. The Director of Information Services agreed with the Committee’s suggestion that he should propose a service arrangement to the Finance Office whereby IS will buy a large text bundle, which can then be recharged to Departments upon use.

**ACTION: DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION SERVICES**

C9 Exchange-based Email for Staff

Staff will be moved to a new exchange-based email system, probably around Easter 2008. Timing is of course critical, but this move will be less significant than the move to Communications Express, and no major disruption is anticipated. Students will not be moved to this system, which is intended to assist staff take better advantage of the calendars, diaries and integrated communications it will offer.

F1 Additional Funding

IS had been unsuccessful in securing funds for some proposals during the most recent budget rounds, partly it is believed because of a new system of ‘supported’ funding bids, which may have diluted the bid in some cases. Unsuccessful bids were made for e-learning software and a content management system, both critical items for IS and strategically for the University, so much so that work has already begun on the CMS. Both bids will be repackaged and re-presented in the next funding round.

(ii) Maintaining Systems during extended university closure

The Committee discussed the proposals for keeping information systems open during periods of University closure contained in paper **ISC 04/07-08**, from the Director of Business Systems.

The background to this is that staff and students have higher expectations of systems than in the past, and do expect functionality to remain fairly constant 24/7. Maintenance of systems during periods of closure has been undertaken in recent years on goodwill and ad hoc payments.

The Committee agreed that it is important for certain systems to remain open, particularly when e-commerce and the Student Portal become fully functional; and that consequently, proposal 5 was the most desirable:
There remain the staffing issues, with staff contracts not permitting payments for unsocial/out of hours working. However, this is an issue for the Personnel Office to resolve following the strong steer from the Committee that maintained systems during closure periods are a University requirement and any attendant difficulties must be addressed in order to allow this to go ahead.

It was agreed that The Director of Information Services should present the details of this recommendation from the Committee to Personnel and to Executive Group.

**ACTION: DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION SERVICES**

(iii) IS Operational Plan

The Committee received ISC 05/07-08, which demonstrated the substantial work and projects being undertaken by the various IS teams.

(iv) Staff Satisfaction Survey 2007

The IS Head of Planning presented paper ISC 06/07-08, detailing the findings of the annual staff survey. In general, satisfaction levels are high, but there are also high levels of ignorance about the services available; however, getting users to appreciate the full range of facilities on offer is a recurrent issue which IS are constantly attempting to resolve.

Since the current survey largely confirmed findings of the previous survey, more granularity will be incorporated into the 2008 version, to provide the ability to drill down into problem areas.

**Action: DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION SERVICES**

(v) IS Disability Support Strategy 2007-2010

The Committee received and endorsed the principles in paper ISC 07/07-08.

(vi) Identities for Life

The Committee received paper ISC 08/07-08 which set out details of the plans to move to permanent contact details for students. Although in the longer term it is envisaged that the University will adopt CRM, the proposals set out here represent work which can be done in the current academic year and which can start the process of assigning students lifelong electronic identities.
08/07-08 Report from the Director of Communications & Marketing

The Director of Communications and Marketing spoke to her paper ISC 09/07-08 which was tabled at the meeting. Points highlighted at the meeting were the extensive use of analytics of web use during clearing, and a reiteration of the importance of the adoption of a Content Management System by the University, echoing the view of the Director of Information Services.

09/07-08 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on 13 March 2008 in Senate Committee Room 1