UNIVERSITY OF KENT

Information Services Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2008

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

Apologies: Professor D Chadwick, Ms KM Doyle, Mr PV Slater.

18/07-08 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 March were approved.

19/07-08 COMPUTER USER PANEL

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 June 2008 (Paper ISC 26/07-08) were tabled.

It was noted that Microsoft Office 2007 would be rolled out in seminar rooms from Autumn Term 2008. As the interface is so different from Office 2003, training and familiarisation sessions will be offered to staff during the summer.

There was discussion of the apparent underuse of AV equipment in seminar rooms; while seminar rooms were perhaps not the most appropriate setting for lecturers to use such facilities, many modules require students to demonstrate or present in the small group setting. It was felt also that perhaps academic staff may be more comfortable with more traditional equipment, such as slides, and that facilities for utilising these should not be put entirely beyond use, until such time as slide archives had been digitised.

The Committee noted that from 2008-2009, CUP would have a new format, with an interactive website, with agenda, papers and space for members to discuss current issues.

20/07-08 LIBRARY USER PANEL

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2008 (Paper ISC 27/07-08). Under item 09/09, relating to Endnote: the proposal is to discontinue the purchase of the Endnote licence from the Core Software budget, and for the Library service to discontinue its support for it, and move to a different product, Refworks as the University standard. It was noted that the University had for a limited time, licences for both products, but a decision needs to be made about whether to support the adoption of Refworks. It was agreed that IS would investigate Refworks to ensure that there are no issues with the University moving across to this product before ending the licence agreement for Endnote. Departments will of course be free to continue to use Endnote on an individual licence basis.

Also received was paper ISC 35/07-08, a proposal to amend the membership of the LUP, to include the IS Head of Planning and Administration, and to formalise the representation from the Students’ Union.
The Committee endorsed the proposal.

**ACTION: DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION SERVICES**

**21/07-08 WEB STRATEGY AND STEERING GROUP**

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting held on 13 June (Paper **ISC 28/07-08**).

The Committee discussed at some length the WSSG’s proposal for a pilot staff blogging service for the University, as detailed under minute 5. During discussion, the following points were made:

- The WSSG believe that a University blogging service is overdue, hence the proposal to move quickly to a pilot. Other Universities have established blogs already.
- An official University blog, as opposed to individual blogs hosted elsewhere allows for some branding., as well as raising the University’s profile and allowing academics to develop ideas online.
- The software to be used is open source and free. There are resource implications in managing the blog, but that is all.
- In terms of blog behaviour, current computing regulations will take precedence and any complaints will be dealt with via established routes.
- A blog for students is also desirable, but plans for this should not hold up the development of a staff blog.
- Guidelines for blog use should come first and from Executive Group, with the Chairman as champion for the proposal.

After the discussion it was agreed to endorse the WSSG’s proposals to move ahead with the staff blog pilot, and that the Chairman should seek the approval of Executive Group at their next meeting.

**ACTION: WSSG and CHAIRMAN**

**22/07-08 REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING**

The Committee received and noted paper **ISC 29/07-08**.

**23/07-08 REPORTS FROM THE DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION SERVICES**

(i) Director’s Report, March 2008- May 2008

The Director of Information Services spoke to his report (**ISC 30/07-08**) and drew the following points particularly to the attention of the Committee:

*B4 SDS Web Accounts*
Business Systems together with the Student Records Office have developed processes for the automatic creation of SDS web accounts to new academic staff. There are still delays however, as the process depends on there being a record on the HR system. Where this is held up for any reason, the automation cannot take place.

C2 Core Text Collection

There was some concern expressed that the definition of ‘core text’ was not sufficiently clear, such that students may believe that they are required to buy books that in fact they are not required to buy; this was also discussed at LUP. However, it was noted that on the electronic reading lists being issued, there is a very clear flag indicating where the item is a ‘recommended buy’.

C5 MSExchange Email Service

Although IS had previously considered a June start for the staged rollout to staff of the new MSExchange email service, it has since been agreed that November would be more appropriate. It was emphasised that the email service is one element of the system of support technology for collaborative working provided by and planned for by the University. Other elements are telephony, sharepoint etc.

IS recognises that a small number of users still use POP, and are working to see whether POP users’ needs can be met via MSExchange, or whether a residual maintenance service for POP can be retained.

C6 Moodle VLE

A pilot version of Moodle is expected to roll out in the Autumn Term 2008.

C10 Kent Academic Repository

Work is moving ahead slowly with this project. IS staff are checking entries on the KAR, but the volume of work and technical difficulties with the KAR itself may mean that some entries may be unchecked this year. The Academic Registrar raised the possibility of supplying some resources from the Academic Division to help.

Update: Student Records Office staff have received training on KAR and will be assisting in the verification of entries.

D2 Drill Hall Library

There has been good feedback on the DHL, and student satisfaction levels remain high, but it is felt that the facilities on offer there are not sufficiently varied, so some work is being undertaken to investigate what changes can be made to the Library. It should be noted that there is little enthusiasm for change from the partner institutions at Medway.

E3 Information Services Strategy

The Director of IS sought the Committee’s approval for a delay in the production of the next IS Strategy, in order that the timescale can be brought into line with the next University
Plan, scheduled for 2009-2010. The Committee considered this a sensible way forward and approved this proposal.

**ACTION: DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION SERVICES**

(ii) Value for Money Review: Academic Liaison & Research Services (ALRS)

The Committee received the report on Value for Money Review (Paper ISC 31/07-08), and thanked the ALRS team on whom it reflected well. The next step after this is the drafting of an action plan based on the findings of the review.

**ACTION: HEAD OF LIBRARY SERVICES**

(iii) Templeman Library Space and Services Review - interim report

The Committee received paper ISC 32/07-08 an update on the Templeman Library space and services review.

The Committee were firmly of the view that the opportunity to undertake this major work on the University's Library should not be squandered, either by failing to root it in the University's Estates Strategy, or by spending capital piecemeal on smaller maintenance projects. The capital needed is very substantial, but the work is inspiring and exciting, for staff, students and alumni, and this in itself presents an excellent basis for fundraising.

(iv) IS Budget Bids 2008/2009

The Committee received Paper ISC 33/07-08. The Director of IS spoke to the paper and explained that the Budget Bids were based on the objectives of the Operational Plan as presented to the Committee’s last meeting; and that some of the work contained in the paper has already gone ahead on the expectation that funding will be forthcoming.

(v) Information Strategy

Paper ISC 34/07-08 was received. It was acknowledged that the Information Strategy had been on the University’s agenda for some time, without any significant movement or action. There are risks inherent in not adopting a coherent Information Strategy; the paper presented the history and the current position, and detailed some of the risks involved.

While there was some scepticism expressed about the need for such a strategy, generally, it was agreed after some discussion, that in order for this project to get going, there needs to be some senior management level buy in; and so the Chairman should be the champion of the formulation of an Information Strategy in Executive Group. Outside the ISC, the Chairman, the Director of IS and the IS head of Planning and Administration should meet to reflect on the scope and scale of what is required, and consider policy, strategy, risk avoidance and information management. This should be done in consultation with the current Data Protection/Freedom of Information personnel/practitioners within the University.

**ACTION: DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION SERVICES, CHAIRMAN**
24/07-08 Date of Next Meeting

To be arranged