UNIVERSITY OF KENT
Information Services Committee
Minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2009

Present: Professor J Baldock (Chairman), 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 A Chadwick, Professor MD Fischer.

22/08-09 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2009 were approved.

23/08-09 MATTERS ARISING

New Email and Calendaring System for Staff (Minute 14/08-09)

It was noted that representatives from Canterbury Christchurch University had pointed out that CCCU had not in fact been blacklisted by Google, as reported at the last meeting. The Committee were grateful for this correction.

The risk assessment in relation to out of office messages promised at the last meeting has been undertaken and implemented. Staff can now specify in their user settings whether they want to send out of office messages to internal addresses, external ones, or both.

Reading List (Minute 14/08-09)

It was noted that Reading Lists have rolled over into the 2009-2010 session, and at present are mostly blank. The Library continues to encourage all academic staff to ensure that their reading lists are complete and up to date, and awaits the outcome of discussion at the Learning and Teaching Board on this key issue for student satisfaction.

Library Space and Services Review (Minute 19/08-09(iii))

The Chairman reported that the proposals for the Library discussed in detail at the last meeting, were well received by Executive Group, and had favourably influenced the Estates Strategy, which is expected to be approved by Council during the summer. The Estates Strategy, while not specifying particular projects, will set out a set of principles and drivers for the University, against which capital projects such as the Library will be measured. However, while the proposals were viewed as a desirable in the long term, in the short to medium term, it is expected that there will be pressure for limiting budgets, given the general economic climate. There are also competing concerns about the need for more teaching and academic space which are also high priority, although these and the rebuilding of the Library need not be mutually exclusive projects.

The Chairman reported that he had recently visited the new Library development at CCCU, which was a very impressive space, and built with flexibility of purpose in mind. He encouraged other members of the committee to visit when the opportunity arises.
24/08-09 COMPUTER USER PANEL

Minutes of the meeting held on 13 May 2009 were received (ISC 28/08-09). The Committee noted the retirement of Professor Alan Chadwick, after 19 years as Chairman of the panel, and recorded their warm thanks to him for serving this panel so well for such a long time, and wished him a very happy retirement.

It falls to the Committee to appoint a new Chairman to succeed Professor Chadwick, and members were invited to send nominations or suggestions of suitable candidates for this post, to the Secretary.

25/08-09 LIBRARY USER PANEL

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2009 were received (ISC 29/08-09).

Minute 12/10 Current Journal Display Update, was drawn to the Committee’s attention, where it was noted that the decision to reinstate the periodicals display had been deferred for a year.

26/08-09 DRILL HALL LIBRARY USER GROUP

The Committee received minutes of the meeting held on 27 May 2009 (ISC 30/08-09)

27/08-09 WEB STRATEGY AND STEERING GROUP

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2009 (ISC 31/08-09). The request for ISC endorsement of proposals for the blogging service is the subject of a separate paper later in these minutes.

28/08-09 REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS & DEVELOPMENT

The Director of Communications and Development spoke to her Spring report ISC 27/08-09, highlighting in particular progress made towards improving data capture for alumni, and the new Scholarships Finder page, which brings all scholarship information into a single, searchable page, so that applicants can find quickly and easily those scholarships for which they are eligible.

Work is also ongoing in redesigning the Kent website and there has been very positive feedback to the draft pages from the Web Strategy and Steering Group.

29/08-09 REPORTS FROM THE DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION SERVICES

(i) Director’s Report March 2009-May 2009

Paper ISC 33/08-09, the Director of Information Services’ Report was received. The Director of Information Services spoke to the report and highlighted the following issues in particular:

A1 Service Interruptions
The Student Data System’s server, Cressida, had suffered a hardware failure on 9 June, which had caused the SDS to be unavailable on telnet and the web, for a full working day. This was especially worrisome as this is the most intensive period for users as they process results and classifications for finalists for examining boards. The system failure had already resulted in the postponement of one exam board, and the potential postponement of others.
The problem, which had not occurred before in working memory, had been identified and engineers on callout to fix it with extreme urgency.

**Post meeting update: the system was restored at approximately 3pm on 10 June.**

**B2 Staff Email Infrastructure**
There is a relatively small group of non-standard staff who remain to be migrated to the new email system, and an issue has come to light, whereby mail from internal senders may be bounced back in the first 24 hours after migration. Those being migrated will not be able therefore to receive such mail if they use Outlook to read mail, for that period. However, this only affects internal senders and if staff being migrated use Outlook Web Access, this does not occur.

Rather than make an institutional wide announcement about this issue, which affects small numbers and is surmountable, it was agreed that this would be managed by migrating staff late on Fridays, thereby minimising the amount of mail they would receive from internal senders in the following 24 hours, and advising them to use OWA in the interim.

**Management of SPAM (not in report)**
It is currently possible for malicious hackers to impersonate @kent email accounts, and it is not possible at present for IS to distinguish between these impersonated mails and genuine kent mail, since authentication is not currently switched on as standard. This may result in some genuine kent email being caught up in spam filters. Requiring authentication will involve users changing a setting on their account, a process which can be assisted by the helpdesk where necessary.

The Committee agreed that this was a sensible way forward, which can be implemented quickly and should be in place by the end of June 2009.

**ACTION: INFORMATION SERVICES**

**B3 UKBA Requirements**
The Academic Registrar expressed thanks for Business Systems’ work with Academic Division Staff in implementing changes to the Admissions and Student Data System to be able to meet the new, stringent requirements of the UK Borders Agency in relation to students admitted under Tier 4 regulations.

**C1 Admissions System**
Progress towards full commercial procurement for a badly needed new Admissions system is in train; it is expected that the project, which had been held up partly by its being tied to the parallel requirement for a CRM system, can now proceed without further undue delay.

The Project Group had looked at the admissions systems and CRM systems on the market and a detailed specification of requirements of a new system has been drawn up which incorporates those elements of CRM which had been clearly defined. There were some CRM requirements that had not been clearly defined, but the project group were confident that a product could be found which addressed all current specifications. Any CRM specifications which come later will be handled either by the new system, or a separate CRM sub system or bolt-on.

Following the procurement exercise, there will need to be established a more focussed project team for implementation of the system. This implementation will of course need to be placed in the context of the wider Kent IS environment. The establishment of this second phase will be agreed by the Academic Registrar and the Director of Information Services in due course. In the meantime, it was agreed that the Director of Communications & Development should be sent a copy of the final specification for the Admissions system.
It was noted during discussion that Business Systems staff will be undertaking training in order to 
redevelop the current SDS from the INGRES platform to the more up to date ORACLE. If no 
commercial product can be identified which meets Kent’s needs for Admissions, then the University 
will use the expertise in ORACLE acquired in Business Systems to build an Admissions extension to 
the current Student Data System.

**ACTION: DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS SYSTEMS, DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION 
SERVICES, ACADEMIC REGISTRAR**

*C11 Storage Area Network (SAN)*

Installation of the new SAN will inevitably interrupt certain services, but IS will be negotiating with 
Departments on the critical dates to avoid.

*C13 Data Hosting*

The levels of data storage offered by the University to students (typically 20MB for email) cannot 
compare to the virtually limitless capacity offered by external email providers such as Google and 
Microsoft; it is likely therefore that the University will take advantage of the cloud based hosting on 
offer in the future.

*D1 Pharmacy*

A great deal of work is going into the smooth transfer of PAU (Primary Administering University) 
status from Greenwich to Kent in 2009/2010, both in IS and in Academic Division.

*E1 Information Strategy*

This, as discussed in an earlier meeting (minute 23/07-08(v)), will be taken forward very soon.

(ii) IS Budget Bids 2009-2010

The Committee received **ISC 34/08-09** the IS Budget Bids for 2009-10. It was noted that these 
proposals had already been formally submitted, and decisions are awaited. A report will be made at 
the next meeting on the outcome of the bids.

(iii) Student Satisfaction Survey (Canterbury) 2008-2009

(a) Report and Analysis

Paper **ISC 35/08-09** was received. Two items were highlighted specifically:

- Students are generally complaining about different issues than they were a couple of years 
  ago, suggesting that improvements have been made in those areas; the exception to this is 
  the continuing dissatisfaction with the ambience of the library, where there is limited scope 
  for improvement owing to the constraints of the current building.
- Pages 6&7 of the analysis show that in all cases bar one, the scores are improving. It is hoped 
  that this increasing level of satisfaction will be reflected in higher scores in the National 
  Student Survey (which closed this year with a response rate of 77%).

(b) Support and Services Action Plan

Paper **ISC 36/08-09** was received.

The Action Plan has emerged from the 4000+ individual comments received via the survey. 
While it was acknowledged that the improvements are small and incremental, the 
Committee recognised that such small improvements involve a lot of work collectively, 
endorsed the action plan and commended those involved in drawing it up.

The Library Action Plan following the survey will be brought to the next meeting.

Paper **ISC 37/08-09** was received and noted.

(v) IT Security Review

The Committee received Paper **ISC 38/08-09** which looks at password policy options for the Kent network password. This paper has not been made available on the web for security reasons.

The current conditions, whereby a user can have 50 attempts at their password before being locked out of the system for a short period, is felt to be too lax, and the proposals contained on page 2 of the paper were considered to add greater security, while not burdening users unduly. The Committee agreed with this view and that the changes to password security should be implemented as soon as possible.

**ACTION: INFORMATION SERVICES**

(vi) Identities for Life

Paper **ISC 37/08-09** *A Strategy for Implementing Identities for Life in the Context of IT Services* was tabled at the meeting. Discussion centred on the need for policies to manage the contacts in their various groupings. Committee members are invited to submit any further views or comments on this paper to the Secretary.

**ACTION: ALL MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE**

30/08-09   BLOGGING GUIDELINES

The Committee received Paper **ISC 39/08-09** from the Web Strategy and Steering Group. The paper is a progress report on the start up phase of the blogs.kent service. The takeup of the service was slow at first, but is starting to gather momentum. Fears about abuse of the service have not materialised so far, but several unforeseen issues had cropped up, which have been incorporated into these revised blogging guidelines, which the ISC were asked to approve. The issues were:

- The potential to import material from external blogs into blogskent
- The identity of the author of the blog in question should be clear
- There should be the facility for Departments to run unofficial as well as official blogs.

The Committee approved all these suggestions and the guidelines; in discussion it was felt that the unofficial blog was more suited to this format and should be encouraged as the primary blog. An official blog is likely to be little more than a departmental noticeboard. ‘Official’ and ‘unofficial’ should be replaced with better nomenclature.

**ACTION: WSSG**

31/08-09   DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To be arranged for Autumn Term 2009