

Enhancing our computing and IT-based services

The University's Central Management Group has accepted the following recommendations which arise out of the 'Kenway Review' of computing and IT-based services. These are the priority items which will facilitate implementation of all of the recommendations in due course.

Merger of MIS into Information Services

This is already in progress, under the guidance of a small oversight group.

Vice Principal and Chief Information Officer

The post of Vice-Principal for Knowledge Management (V-P KM) – held by Helen Hayes – should be re-designated as the Vice-Principal & Chief Information Officer (V-P CIO). The revised job description has been developed to include broader and stronger leadership, encompassing the whole of computing and information services in the University.

Knowledge Strategy Committee

The Knowledge Management Committee needs to change to reflect the broader role of the V-P CIO. The IT Committee has therefore been abolished and responsibility for IT strategy added to the remit of the Knowledge Management Committee – which is now renamed the Knowledge Strategy Committee (KSC).

KSC's first role will be to initiate a review of computing and IT in Schools and Colleges.

IT Security Officer

An IT Security Officer (ITSO) is to be appointed in 2007 following planning round application for funding, and will report to the V-P CIO. Until this post is filled, an interim Security Group will address the issues raised in the Kenway Review Report, in particular looking to a University-wide IT security policy based on the University's shared identity management system.

Computing Officers' Forum

The University will encourage the development of a professional body for its computing officers, with a small budget to fund its activities. A small group of College computing officers is currently drafting a remit for discussion.

Vice Principal Helen Hayes

ECDF: the Edinburgh Computing and Data Facility

The goal of the Edinburgh Computing and Data Facility is to provide central computing power and data management to enhance the capabilities of researchers across the University. The system will comprise a compute cluster of at least 500 commodity (X86) processors running Linux, and will incorporate the existing 155 TByte research SAN (Storage Area Network). System and support staff to enable this are in post. The SAN purchased and previously managed by EPCC has been taken over by IS system staff. Procurement of the cluster is nearing completion. Work is also in progress to provide special facilities for job submission using the framework of the Edikt2 portal; see <https://www.edikt.org/edikt2/EdiktPortalActivity/>

The project team involves staff from Information Services, the National e-Science Centre and EPCC. Full details are at <http://www.is.ed.ac.uk/ECDF/>

A meeting for interested parties will take place at 2pm on 17th January in lecture theatre C, JCMB, The King's Buildings. If you have any queries about the Facility or your possible use of it, please email J.Blair-Fish@ed.ac.uk.

John Blair-Fish (Information Services)

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Academic Liaison Directors start work

A key part of the Information Services (IS) realignment is to improve communications, particularly at a strategic level, between IS and the Colleges and their Schools. To this end, three 'Academic Liaison Director' (ALD) half-time posts are being established, one for each College.

The ALDs will act as key strategic links between the Colleges and IS. They will have the explicit purposes of strengthening communications between Colleges and IS, improving mutual understanding of needs and services, and identifying key development areas – including opportunities for partnership and shared services. The ALDs will engage with College, School and IS planning processes, to ensure that IS responds appropriately to planning priorities now and in the future. Rather than supplanting existing liaison activities in particular areas, the ALDs will add value to the relationship between Colleges and IS across all IS business areas. The objective is to align IS support with College and School priorities as closely as possible.

The ALDs are senior members of the realigned IS, and members of the IS Executive Group, thus providing an independent route into the highest level of IS decision-making.

I am pleased to announce that Chris Adie has been appointed as Academic Liaison Director for the College of Science and Engineering, and Abdul Majothi for the College of Humanities and Social Science. We expect to appoint the ALD for the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine in December. These posts represent an important development which will significantly strengthen the support that Information Services delivers to the University.

Helen Hayes (Information Services)

EUCLID Project selects Tribal

The EUCLID Project has selected Tribal Group to provide a new student management and information system for the University of Edinburgh.

Tribal offers the SITS:Vision software, and has over 60% of the UK Higher Education market as customers. The software is highly flexible and all key elements of functionality are provided in the core software, including priority items such as online postgraduate applications. SITS:Vision will integrate with our technology infrastructure and we can influence product development to meet our evolving needs.

The selection of Tribal is the successful outcome of a year's work by the team, Project Board and colleagues in Procurement and MIS. Staff and students from Schools, Colleges and Support Services have also provided invaluable input to the assessment of suppliers. The EUCLID Project thanks everyone involved for their engagement with the rigorous evaluation process.

EUCLID has now obtained the go-ahead from the University Court to move to Phase 3, the change management and software implementation phase. We need to take this opportunity to take a fresh view of how things are done in student administration to enhance the support for our teaching, our research and our students. This will involve maximising the use of the SITS:Vision software to our best advantage, and also being prepared to radically review our own processes and procedures.

The EUCLID Team will be working with colleagues across the University, EUSA and students in Phase 3. If you would like to express an interest in being involved, please contact the team at euclid@ed.ac.uk. For information about EUCLID and provisional timescales please visit <http://www.projects.ed.ac.uk/euclid/>

There is an overview of EUCLID and change management at http://www.projects.ed.ac.uk/euclid/PROJECT_Docs/Comms/ChangeApproach.pdf

Veena O'Halloran (EUCLID Project Director)

"I welcome the opportunity for the University to work with Tribal Group on the EUCLID Project. Our vision for the project is to transform student administration and the implementation of the SITS:Vision software is a very important part of achieving this."

The Principal



Anthony Benton, Tribal Group PLC, and Melvyn Cornish, University Secretary

Website Development Project update

The Project continues to work towards the delivery of its initial phase – publishing student recruitment-related content – in late Spring 2007. The key activity at the moment is consultation with University staff.

Consultation

Our user research sessions, which took place over the Summer, provided a great deal of focused feedback from external users of the University website. The Project is now engaged in a round of consultation involving University staff with responsibility for communicating with these external audiences.

Initial small group sessions are under way, facilitating development of the provisional website content structure. Once these representatives of core activities and external audiences have provided input, a series of larger scale events are planned.

The larger scale events are aimed at Heads of Schools and Colleges, and their web publishers and student recruitment representatives, and will take place before the end of the year.

As a final step, we will arrange an open invitation event early in 2007. Our aim will be to share the Project's vision for the new University website and to provide an overview of progress to date.

Website survey

We have recently set up an online survey form, at <http://www.ed.ac.uk/webpub/survey.html>

The purpose of the survey is to collect basic statistical data about how users perceive our website. This survey is part of a long term study of website use.

We want to collect feedback from internal and external users of all parts of the University website, so we would appreciate it if web managers would provide links to the survey from the areas they manage.

Please contact Bryan Martin (email web-comment@ed.ac.uk) if you intend to link from your area of the website, as it's important for the Project Team to maintain a record of who is linking to the survey.

More information

For the latest news on the Website Development Project, see <http://www.ed.ac.uk/websiteproject/>

Contact

If you'd like to discuss any issues regarding the development of the University website, or contribute your views, please contact Dawn Ellis (tel 506379, email website.project@ed.ac.uk).

Dawn Ellis (CAM)

MyEd: next steps

Since launching the MyEd portal in 2004 we have concentrated on integrating existing and new University content (as 'channels' in MyEd), and building up the user base.

MyEd is now firmly established in the University, with 200+ channels, and over 670,000 individual logins producing a new usage peak in October 2006. Meanwhile the uPortal community has enhanced the core portal software, and we now need to move MyEd to this new version to gain some essential functionality and service benefits. These include:

- more configurable and personalised content;
- targeting specific channels from websites outwith MyEd;
- scalable and easier system integration;
- latest supported versions of technology components.

The upgrade is particularly timely as it enables us to link MyEd more closely to the new University Website. The new version will align the look-and-feel of the portal and the Website, and will allow specific channels in MyEd to be targeted from any web page – to provide a more consistent and transparent experience for users.

MyEd is a personalisable environment, so the option to customise content and change its look-and-feel will be retained, albeit refreshed and updated. We are keen to ensure that MyEd remains your MyEd, so welcome feedback about changes you would like (ideas, favourite websites *etc*); there is a feedback link at the bottom of all MyEd pages.

The new version supports technical specifications that have evolved over recent years (JSR168, WSRP). This should enable easier integration of compliant third-party applications.

The planned release date for the new MyEd is late Spring, aligned with the launch of the new University Website.

For more information about the MyEd upgrade, see <http://www.projects.ed.ac.uk/areas/infservices/portals/DIRO58/>

For more information about uPortal, and other institutions using it, see <http://www.ja-sig.org/>

*Mark Wetton, Anne-Marie Scott
(Management Information Services)*

The Shock of the Social

A Web 2.0 meeting at Oxford

If you enjoyed the University's ITfutures conference on 24th November (<http://www.itfutures.ed.ac.uk/>), you may be interested in a meeting at Oxford on 22nd March.

Shock 6 is the sixth annual one-day conference on educational technologies, and will explore social networking tools, Web 2.0 and related collaborative technologies, and how best to use them in teaching, learning and research.

The deadline for papers is 5th January. For information see <http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ltg/events/shock2007/>

Nick Stroud (Information Services)

Call for proposals to run meetings and workshops at the e-Science Institute

The e-Science Institute in Edinburgh invites proposals for meetings and workshops to be run over the twelve months commencing in February.

The e-Science Institute (eSI) is *the* UK centre for e-Science meetings. Funded by the e-Science Core Programme, it has been operating since August 2001 and in its first five years has run 407 meetings for 12,000 delegates and has hosted 43 visitors who have stayed for periods from a day to a year.

eSI supports activities across all academic disciplines and encourages new communities to take advantage of its significant expertise, in particular in putting people in touch with technical experts already engaged in e-Science. Proposals for meetings need to show a clear link with e-Science – with existing or new communities.

We can provide support in the form of funding, speaker suggestions, advertising, disseminating output, help with organisation, and use of our high-quality conference facilities. We can also support researchers who want to organise a workshop to engage in collaborative work (e.g. ‘hackathons’).

If you are thinking of running a workshop, email an initial enquiry to lee@nesc.ac.uk to check on availability. Proposals will be reviewed by the eSI Programme Committee in late January, so should be submitted no later than 20th January for initial consideration. Further information is available at http://www.nesc.ac.uk/esi/arranging_events.html

If you have any questions, please contact Anna Kenway (email anna@nesc.ac.uk, tel 509818).

Anna Kenway (NeSC)

Digital Libraries for Grid Computing training

The National e-Science Centre (NeSC) and the University Library have developed a range of new digital library services, as part of the e-learning pilot currently undertaken at NeSC for two major European grid computing projects: Enabling Grids for E-sciencE (EGEE) and International Collaboration to Extend and Advance Grid Education (ICEAGE).

The libraries contain materials about grid computing, curated by the NeSC training team and partners from EGEE and ICEAGE, including articles, books, tutorials, video or audio clips, web pages and presentations from training events and summer schools.

You can use the libraries to discover resources, or to share your comments and resources. You do not need to register in any way to browse or search the library and download materials. To create new objects, or to review and edit metadata of existing resources in a wiki-like way, you will need a digital certificate from one of the existing grid computing certification authorities. There are newsfeed (RSS) channels to keep in touch with the latest additions to the libraries. The RSS channels also facilitate a podcasting service.

Access the digital libraries via:
EGEE: <http://egee.lib.ed.ac.uk/>
ICEAGE: <http://baillie.lib.ed.ac.uk/>
Alison McCall (NeSC)

eLearning@Edinburgh 2007

The Fifth eLearning@Edinburgh Conference takes place in Appleton Tower on 29th March 2007. The theme will be embedding activity into eLearning: “Action and e-Action”.

More information about how to register and inviting participation is at <http://www.elearn.malts.ed.ac.uk/events/elearnconf07/>

Nora Mogeý (Information Services)

Leonardo’s drawings spring to life

The Web is altering the ways in which museums and galleries present their collections and exhibitions. For a state-of-the-art example see the animated Leonardo Da Vinci illustrations which were created to accompany a new exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London – at http://www.vam.ac.uk/vastatic/microsites/1384_leonardo/animated_illustrations/

*Caroline Porteous
(JISC Regional Support Centres)*

Christmas–New Year break

The University closes for the Winter vacation at 5pm on Friday 22nd December, and reopens at 9am on Thursday 4th January 2007. All facilities, including the open-access computing labs, will be closed throughout this period.

David Ferro (Information Services)

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Contributions to *BITS* are welcomed.

Copy deadline for January *BITS*:
Monday 11th December