RESEARCH INFORMATION & IT SERVICES GOVERNANCE GROUP (RIISG)

Minutes
Monday 2 June, 12.30-2pm
Rooms 103 & 104 Podium Building

Chair:
Richard Catlow [RC] – Deputing for DP

Present:
Paul Ayris [PA]; Jon Butterworth [JBU]; Andrew Clark [AC]; Anthony Finkelstein [AF]; Sinéad Kennedy [SK]; Samuel Massiah [SM]; Gavin McLachlan [GM]; Jacky Pallas [JP]; Marek Zeibart [MZ]

Apologies:
David Balding [DB]; John Brodholt [JB]; Peter Coveney [PC]; Oliver Duke-Williams [ODW]; Graham Hunt [GH]; Alan Johnston [AJ]; Dipak Kalra [DK]; Nik Kaltsoyannis [NK]; Angelos Michaelides [AM]; David Price [DP]; Andrea Townsend-Nicholson [ATN];

In attendance:
Corrinne Frazzoni [CF] (Minutes); Clare Gryce [CG]; Max Wilkinson [MW]

Minutes

1. Approval of Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising [Chair]

The Chair welcomed the group to the meeting and apologies were noted. The minutes of the previous meeting held on 20th January 2014 were approved. The Action Points from the previous meeting were reviewed and amended as per the attached Action Sheet.

2. IT Governance

GM presented a reminder of the RIISG governance structure.

3. Financial budget review – capital and current

GM presented the Research IT Funding profile for review, including both capital and current in response to previous comments that the capital was only a part of the story.

Issues raised:
- How do the figures match with recurrent spend?
- One problem is that the large grants do not include recurrent or staffing budgets but managing them comes at a significant cost to support systems.
- A challenge for SLMS as support currently lies within ISD.
- Existing staff need to be involved in planning and implementation so case can be made to MRC that infrastructure is more than just IT.
- What is the responsibility of the SLMS Deans?
- What percentage needs to be serviced on the ground?
- How many FTEs will be needed for the FARR grant?
- Possible lessons to be learned from the management of the CfI.
- Current FTEs are 100% occupied.
- Critical to bring visibility to this challenge. These issues could impact on service – important to establish what is needed and then discuss at VP level.
4. Research IT draft proposed programme of work for FY 2014/15

GM presented the list of proposed capital bids, requesting final approval on priorities. The RIISG agreed to prioritise bids as follows, noting the impact if not funded:

- **Minor Works fund**
  - No R&D programme.
  - Unable to respond to emergency projects. No agility in funding.
  
  **Agreed: Priority 1**  £150k

- **IRIS Enhancements (Phase VI)**
  - No further enhancement or refresh.
  - Reduction in engagement – impact on institutional reputation
  
  **Agreed: Priority 1**  £30k  **Priority 2**  £107k

- **LAMIS**
  - Cannot successfully respond to legislative needs.
  - Cannot provide evidence of management to Home Office requirements.
  - Unequal and incomplete rollout and adoption.
  
  £200k will be contributed by Biological services.
  RITE would like to ask Biological services for an additional £100k
  
  **Agreed: Priority 1**  £257k  **Priority 2**  £100k

- **Research Information System (RIM)**
  - Delay to replacement of pFACT – unacceptable risk to UCL
  - Postpones RIM implementation which will begin to impact on REF2020 processes etc
  - Issues raised:
  - How it will be managed and achieved
  - Risk of driving the solution around the requirement
  - An expensive platform to be tied to
  - Potential problem of scope creep
  - A new costing tool is needed by 2015
  - Stakeholders have been consulted to establish requirements
  - Will purchase pre-award model and look at future need in next project phase
  - Benchmarking and post-award tools will be needed
  - Need to make a commitment but with flexibility to respond to new requirements
  - Usability for academics
  
  **Agreed: Priority 1**  £757k  
  **Action:** GM to revise scope of description

- **Research Equipment Catalogue**
  - Lack of integration with UCL systems
  - Degradation of quality of data within system over time
  - No booking system to allow easier booking of equipment for use
  
  **Agreed: Priority 2**  £55k

- **Open Access Support**
  - Need to react to HEFCE requirements for REF2020.
  - May impact long term REF2020
  - Move of infrastructure to more supportable versions including EPRINTS upgrade
  
  **Agreed: Priority 1**  £34k
- **Research Impact Curation Support**
  - Lack of easily searchable solution.
  - Lack of integration with IRIS etc. for visualisation outside of UCL
  - May impact long term REF2020 success.
  - First and foremost, the RIC team’s posts are currently only funded to July 2015; as such, it’s imperative to maximise, as soon as possible, the progress we make with developing and populating a database to the point where it can be useful to and continued by colleagues in other departments.
  - The two biggest challenges in developing impact-related components of UCL’s REF2014 submission were poor staff engagement and a frequent lack, in the absence of a systematic method of or resource for collating and storing it, of evidence to support impact claims.
  - Delaying the development of the RIC database would mean failing to capitalise on momentum built up during REF2014 preparations to redress these issues, entrenching disengagement with impact across the College. This is at odds with UCL’s emphasis on the importance of research impact and on facilitating more timely and efficient preparations for REF2020 - which will determine mainstream ‘quality-related’ research income (currently £71m annually or c.15% of research income).
  - In addition, one of the outcomes of this project is to support major, complex bid submissions by providing evidence of research impact and collaboration e.g. NIHR Comprehensive biomedical research centres which provide £160m of funding and are due for submission end 2015. A delay in the Impact curation database would not enable us to support this and other similar major bids.
  - A delay would also affect the timeline for integration of the impact case studies with IRIS which is currently scoped within Phase 6, and also subsequently with RIM.

  Agreed: Priority 1  £37k

- **Research Professional Integration**
  - Lack of integration with UCL systems

  Agreed: Priority 3  £26k

- **Research Staff Log**
  - Unable to improve post Doc management of projects and reporting to research councils etc.

  Agreed: Priority 3  £34k

- **Centrally provided iPython notebook service**
  - The existing iPython notebook code currently being provided by ISD ELE, and used by the Dept. of Physics and Astronomy, will not be updated.
  - The existing service will not be expanded to deliver additional services to support researchers and students in other disciplines in learning new numerical and computational methods, and conducting exploratory software development and data analysis, will not be delivered.

  Agreed: Priority 3  £16k

- **Major UCL HPC Refresh and Expansion**
  - As the number of service users continues to rise, researchers will experience increasing wait times for jobs to run – in this important respect service levels will fall.
  - Additionally, there will be no replacement for the compute capacity that will be lost when the CfI Iridis service is terminated in summer 2015.
  - Very old technology will not get replaced and an increasing number of user codes will be hard or impossible to compile to run on this platform.
  - Increasing amounts of staff time will be spent assisting users in helping them run code on legacy hardware, and managing equipment that is more prone to failures.

  Agreed: Priority 1  £525k  Priority 2  £200k

- **Unix-like Desktop Computing Environment**
  - UCL will remain without a central Linux and Unix-based desktop such as is available in other leading UK Universities institutions (e.g. Cambridge, Imperial, Edinburgh)
  - It will remain challenging for the large number of UCL Departments that rely heavily on the use of Linux and other Unix-like desktop environments for research and teaching to use many central and local services in an efficient and coordinated way.

  Agreed: Priority 3  £19k
• Data Safe Haven (IDHS) Phase 4
  - Key project to expand Data Safe Haven beyond storage. Critical to maintain UCL's grant and security obligations.
  - Key to UCL maintaining its dominance in the safekeeping and use of sensitive data.
  - Issues raised:
    - Need to look at detail and priority
    - Should reproduce functionality and use institutional facilities where available

  Agreed: Priority 1 £300k Priority 2 £281k

• Distributed Data resilience infrastructure
  - Users are unable to bridge the proximity change that is required to take advantage of centralised services: users prefer to have local control over data storage for performance and security.
  - Data safety not provided as value added incentive.

  Agreed: Priority 3 £64k

• UCL Research Data Archive Pilot
  - There will be no egress of research data into a preservation environment thus not making efficient use of expensive core infrastructure.
  - Service risks reaching capacity and turning users away. ISD reputation damage.
  - Issues raised:
    - Need to encourage users to archive
    - Scaleability

  Agreed: Priority 1 £231k

• UCL Research Data Management Coordinator
  - Uptake of services will be delayed and miss critical objective of communication.
  - Expectations will be unmet for the third time and ISD reputation further damaged.
  - Unable to spread best practice in RDM. Key to training new and existing staff.
  - Issues raised:
    - Consider re-naming project

  Agreed: Priority 1 £132k

• RITS Authentication Pathfinder
  - Unable to easily offer RITS systems to external collaborators and consortium members. (eMedlab, Farr, SES)
  - Question of governance for non-UCL users
  - Need to bed down UCL requirements and commitments - cost
  - Difficult to incorporate external users into UCL authentication
  - Need for stakeholders to feed into decision

  Agreed: Priority 1 £136k

• Research Software Dashboard
  - Existing services that support best practise research software development will not be integrated; PIs and group leaders will continue to have to refer to several tools to manage, and get reports on, their research software outputs.
  - Additionally, UCL will not be able to readily generate summary information about its research software development activity, and will lose a unique opportunity to further establish itself as a thought leader in this growing area.

  Agreed: Priority 1 £99k

Total budget (cash) £2,376k £2,376k
Variance -£1,413k -£312k

Total budget with 13% overbooking allowance £2,685k £2,685k
Variance -£1,104k -£3k
5. **Datacentre update and governance**

GM presented an update on the Data Centre strategy and governance.

A Data Centre Working Group has been convened.

Members:
- GM (Executive)
- CG (Research Computing)
- D Timm (CS)
- T Crummy (EE)
- Ben Waugh (Physics)
- J Saßmannshausen (Chemistry)
- Rick Passey (SLMS)
- Andrew Dawson
- Simon Marham
- Patrick Malcolm
- JB to join (as agreed at RITE meeting)

Offsite Datacentre preferred supplier and location now confirmed as Infinity in Slough.

- Excellent rates – with further aggregated discounts applied to all the participating HEIs, trusts and research institutes
- Standstill period ends in 10 days
- Operational Sept 2014
- Highly scalable (22,000 SQ meters, 34 MW power)
- JANET brokered and shared with Kings, QMUL, LSE, Crick, Sanger, EBI (already interest from numerous trusts, CRI, and others)
- Second location at Stratford

6. **Update on RITS services (SOP)**

7. **AOB**

There was no other business.

8. **Next meeting**

The next RIISG meeting will be held on Monday 27th October from 11.30am-1pm.
List of Current Actions

Closed (shaded) actions will be deleted after one meeting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Meeting Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>24.01.12</td>
<td>1.5.7</td>
<td>GM</td>
<td>Research Network – Gavin McLachlan to deliver a report on the current and future planning Research Network and Research Network Strategy</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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| 3. | 20.01.14     | 5.2 & 5.3   | GM    | Operational report
  Research Data - simpler diagrams to show data usage across Faculties and a more unified data slide deck as with Research Computing.
  Research Applications – IRIS breakdown by category of staff | Closed |       |
| 4. | 20.01.14     | 7.2         | GM    | Three year strategy plan – Gavin McLachlan to produce a summary paragraph for each major project with a revised Strategy paper to be sent to RIISG & Vice Dean for Research for comment | Ongoing|       |
| 5. | 02.06.14     | 4           | GM    | Research IT draft proposed programme of work for FY 2014/15: GM to revise scope of description | New action|       |