

RESEARCH INFORMATION & IT SERVICES GOVERNANCE GROUP

MINUTES

Date: Wednesday 12th June 2012

Time: 2.00pm – 3.30pm

Venue: 2 Taviton St, Ground Floor Meeting Room

Chair: David Price (DP)

Present : Paul Ayris (PA), David Balding (DB), Jon Butterworth (JBU), Richard Catlow (RC), Clare Gryce (CG), Graham Hunt (GH), Gavin Mclachlan (GM), Jacky Pallas (JP), Dipak Kalra (DK), Max Wilkinson (MW), Marek Zeibart (MZ), Angelos Michaelides (AM),

Apologies: David Mcalpine (DM), Clare Warwick (CW), John Brodholt (JB), Peter Coveney (PC), Simon Farrell (SF),

1. Introductions

Were done by the chair

2. Previous minutes and Action list

Previous actions were verbally covered.

3. Data policy update (AC & MW)

MAX report on Research Data Policy and associated Roadmap.

Dipak Kalra suggested that as a communication tool the roadmap could benefit from a clear objective statement up front that made clear the reason for undertaking this activity and what it will mean for researchers and UCL. Max Wilkinson agreed and reminded the board this was a first draft and welcomed comments from all members. Max advised that the current focus of the project was on the Pilot users and meeting the immediate expectations of this group before broadcasting more widely.

Jon Butterworth asked about how the roadmap and policy approached the handling of 3rd party data or for example data generated as part of a collaboration, common in STFC funded projects. Max assured the Board that while responsibility for data collection and preservation was in scope for the Research Data Service, specific roles and duties had not been detailed. This is an area of on-going activity and will be further defined as the Service develops.

In a similar question Marek Ziebart asked about the handling of domain specific data where there are existing and well established data holdings in place e.g. NERC. Also notes re response about RD not seeking to duplicate existing facilities. Max added that it was not the intention of the Service to duplicate data assets where community conventions or research council guidelines allowed for 3rd party data repositories, e.g. any of the 9 NERC data centres, the EBI, UKDA, Archeology data service or other similar services. However, it is important that the Research Data Service is able to record any contribution that UCL researchers make in collaborative projects.

In answer to David Prices' inquiry about providing this service to UCL Partners (e.g. UCH NHS trust), Jacky Pallas and Max noted that they were in discussions with Miek Seivwright and the Identifiable Data Project and that Max and Mike had presented at the Clinical Research Governance committee. David encouraged Max to continue these relationships and extend them to other UCL Partners.

4. Updated Strawman for Fiscal year 2012/13

Hazel Crossley (ISD Portfolio Manager) presented an overview of the ISD Portfolio Management process and explained, with Gavin Mclachlan, how it related to the current strawman proposal.

Gavin explained that a new group Information Services Governance Group (ISGC) has been established which includes Rex Knight, Mike Cope, Gavin Mclachlan and the SMT to provide top-level governance of UCL's IT spend and strategy. This group has yet to meet.

Indicative budget of £2.5m has been allocated for Research IT domain.

The total forecast spend on IT projects in the current financial year 2011/12 is £8m. An overall budget allocation of £12m is proposed for 2012/13.

Explained that this sum was purely capital and that staff and other recurrent costs have been accounted for elsewhere in ISD's budget processes.

Discussion on the need for transparency of the staff and recurrent costs associated with the capital spend. Gavin confirmed that he could report on this at the next meeting.

Question was asked about where the 12m figure comes from. The £12m is a planning budget which includes a £6.6m allocation from CSS Finance for 2012/13, remaining funds from previous years and an overbooking allowance of 20% because some projects slip and others spend less. It was noted that this should be considered against a total of £23.6m for all submitted bids, also considering input from RIISG and other domain groups.

Gavin explained that the overall strategy is to shift a greater proportion of total IT spend to Research and Teaching and Learning, over time.

Question from Nik K regarding prioritisation process; current process results in reduction to all bids, compared to process for awarding of research grants which typically involves ranking bids and funding top ranked bids in full until budget is exhausted. Gavin noted that one problem with this approach would be that it doesn't take account of dependencies between bids and also the phased nature of some projects, where one or more phases may be cut without impacting earlier phases (e.g Legion IV) though added that the group may wish to review the prioritisation process in future.

Gavin Mclachlan presented the 'strawman' programme proposal for 2012/13 and explained that this had been brought down to £2.8m from over £4m of bids from the Research IT domain, through internal ISD meetings, with reference to input already provided by the RIISG and Working Groups. Gavin noted that a further £300k reduction was necessary to fit within the indicative budget envelope £2.5 and suggested at least 100k of this should be taken from the Legion IV budget.

Clare Gryce explained that once a final budget for HPC projects has been agreed, the Research Computing Working Group would be charged with approving the final programme of projects to be undertaken, and added that a meeting of the RCWG was being arranged for July.

Gavin Mclachlan explained that Offsite HPC Pilot was dependent on the delivery of the new UCL offsite datacentre, adding that this was a separate project in the Infrastructure domain. It is anticipated that this new facility will be available from early 2013.

Dipak Kalra questioned the value of the RIISG spending time discussing the requested 300k reduction, suggesting that it was unlikely that all projects thus approved would proceed on scheduled and all funds would therefore not necessarily get spent that year.

Jon Butterworth noted that the full costs of staffing and managing proposed projects were not presented and also queried how the benefits arising stated by the bids had been quantified. Gavin explained that staffing capabilities and capacities, as well as the availability of underpinning infrastructure had already been considered as part of the bid process within ISD. Gavin agreed to provide further details on the staff costs associated with capital projects at the next meeting, also information about project delivery records.

The Chair proposed and the Group agreed that the impact of the requested £300k reduction in funding would be 'unacceptable' and the recommendation of the group to the ISGC should be that no further reduction in the Research IT budget should be made.

Dipak Kalra observed that as a newcomer to the Group it was not clear what the 'gameplan' was for Research IT services; what the end user expectations were and what business needs the programme was responding to.

The need for full transparency regarding governance, including the availability of relevant documents including details of the project programme, was suggested and agreed by all.

It was agreed that the next meeting of the group should be held in mid September.