

Information Services

IT Strategy 2014 to 2018

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1. Purpose of our IT Strategy

The core purpose for developing an IT Strategy is to ensure there is a clear relationship between investment decisions in Information Technology and the University's overall strategy, goals and objectives.

Both City Vision and the Strategic Plan for the University state, we will *"bring our information systems and services provision for education, research and academic administration to 'sector leading' in critical areas of our provision and 'sector average' in the remaining areas"*.

After extensive consultation we have determined that the 'sector leading' focus for Information Systems should be on the student experience and our research activity and that we should seek to provide 'sector average' systems in our administrative areas.

2. Drivers for Change

A number of drivers have led to a need for Information Services to review the services they currently offer, the quality of service and the methods of delivery. These are:

- A newly established Directorate eager to professionalise the service and who are fully aware of the need to continually review service demands and their capacity to deliver.
- The University Strategic Plan which is changing priorities and focus for improving the quality of education, research and enterprise.
- Current trends across the sector for using technologies to extend the reach of HE, to personalise education and to engender the community spirit.
- Funding pressures requiring Professional Service departments to do more with less.

- Emerging technology innovations, many of which are potentially disruptive, such as cloud sourcing.
- The increasingly competitive nature of the Higher Education landscape

These drivers combined indicate a need to revisit the organisation structure, stakeholder, engagement, staff roles and responsibilities, skills and capabilities, processes, and the methods of service delivery.

3. IT Strategy Guiding Principles

In order to deliver sector leading IT provision for the critical areas of research and education, a number of guiding principles have been established as follows:

- Information Services must refocus its efforts from operational commodity IT to strategic value-adding IT.
- This entails reducing the complexity in our technological infrastructure and implementing a homogeneous "core" of enterprise systems that support standardised business processes with "sector average" investment.
- This will enable the support of a heterogeneous "edge", where users will be able to access our services from a wide range of end user devices.



- We must fully exploit our investment in the existing infrastructure and applications.
- We must “buy” rather than “build” wherever practically possible by fully exploiting the functionality of our packaged applications.
- Where appropriate we will implement a sourcing strategy using 3rd parties to deliver our IT services where such an approach can optimise factors such as educational and research excellence, cost and quality of service, resource availability, system reliability, business continuity, security and functionality.

4. IT Service Delivery

Information Services is committed to providing a level of service that is considered “excellent” by its customers. To meet this aspiration, our services will be delivered as follows:

- **Unambiguously:** Clearly publicised services which have been articulated, defined and agreed with our customers.
- **On demand:** All business, education and research services will be appropriately accessible by authenticated University customers.
- **Ubiquitously:** Appropriate services will be available from any internet connected device, mobile or otherwise.
- **Consistently:** Processes will become efficient and standardised with alignment to best practice frameworks. Regardless of location or affiliation, customers will undertake the same (minimally obtrusive) steps to receive services.
- **Customer Driven:** Services must always be aligned to the needs of the institution.
- **Securely:** Data will be securely archived and managed. It will be accessible and restorable on demand.
- **Inconspicuously:** IT will deliver services that are inconspicuous to the customer. Technology incidents should not impact service delivery.

- **Innovatively:** IT will deliver innovative services to support education, research and enterprise activities

The following guidelines inform our management decisions:

- **Customer Focus:** We will acknowledge at all times that our primary objective is to service the needs and exceed the expectations of our customers.
- **Best Value:** We should aim to be the best value provider of information systems within our sector.
- **Mainstream Products:** We will endeavour wherever possible to utilise mainstream, non-customised products.
- **Simplicity:** Wherever possible we should reduce technical complexity and therefore cost by reducing the portfolio of technologies utilised within the organisation.
- **Practicality:** Our IT base must never block a practical and important business initiative.
- **Obsolescence:** We should avoid the false economy of allowing infrastructure components to fall into obsolescence by taking account of the total cost of ownership of technological items.
- **Lockout:** We must not find ourselves technically barred from adopting new initiatives.
- **Electronic Alliances:** We should be able to form alliances, create value added partnerships, or enter consortia in inter-organisational electronic operations.
- **Reorganisation:** In the event of reorganisation, our core operations, information systems, and communications will be able to adapt to the changes quickly and simply.
- **Competitive Advantage:** We aim to maintain our lead in technologies which provide us with a position of strength in the sector.

- **Vendor Dependence:** We should not be dependent on vendors with doubtful financial, technical or managerial resources.
- **Staff Dependence:** We should avoid over-dependence upon the expertise of individuals within the organisation by ensuring that technical knowledge is appropriately spread among IS directorate staff.
- **Innovation:** We must systematically seek and exploit relevant IT trends to gain competitive advantage within a culture of regular experimentation

5. The Evolving Organisation

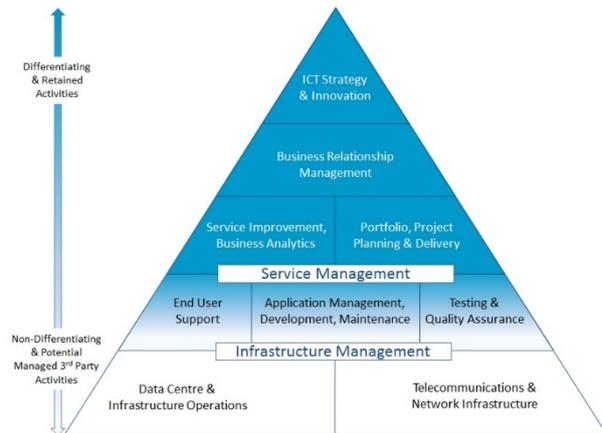
Information Services must evolve from an organisation where services are predominately insourced, to an organisation equipped with the means to focus internal capability on value added activities, such as:

- formulating strategy;
- innovation;
- continuous improvement of service;
- project delivery;

Information Services will also need to further develop their skills to manage third party suppliers delivering IT services in accordance with the sourcing strategy.

A management structure in the form of a three sector Directorate supported by Service Managers and Business Relationship Managers will be established within Information Services. These together with the Project Office function and the Service Improvement Manager form the top three layers from the apex of the triangle.

These roles are the mandatory core activities and will feature as a permanent part of the organisation.



6. The Technology Infrastructure

The “sector leading” technologies selected to support IT Services for Education and Research include:

- *Moodle* to create a learning environment which provides students and lecturers access to content and resources relating to their programmes of study and enables them to participate in online activities.
- *Office365* to build digital communities to support and enhance the collaboration between students, lecturers, researchers, professional staff, student services and people external to the university.
- *SharePoint* to provide an integrated environment with Moodle which can offer a personalised experience for both student and lecturer. The content, resources and features of this environment would change in line with the academic cycle, from Marketing and Recruitment, then through the stages of Induction and Orientation, Education and Assessment and finally Graduation and Lifelong Engagement.

These together with the proliferation of high speed broadband, Big Data analytics, MOOCs, Audio Visual and mobile devices have the potential for providing an educational experience which is fully compatible with the modern world of personalisation, ubiquity and self-service.

Information Services will provide an information technology infrastructure capable of supporting the research activities of the University at both a national and international level.

We will support this research through the provision of:

- City Research Online digital repository
- High Performance Computing Environments
- Technical support and advice to our researchers
- Long-term digital preservation

The “sector average” technologies selected to support IT Services relevant to administrative processes include:

- *Tribal SITS* for student recruitment, progression and awards.
- *Blackbaud Raiser’s Edge* for Alumni and Donor Management.
- *SAP* for Finance, Payroll and Human Resources.
- *Squiz* for the University website and Content Management System.

The functionality of these systems will be fully exploited. Alternative technologies will only be considered where there is an overwhelming business case to do so.

Wherever possible, our administrative systems will either be:

- hosted via a cloud provider with development and support being sourced through a third party
- provided as a complete “Software As A Service (SaaS)” solution

7. Authorisation

The IT Strategy Committee, a subgroup of the University’s Executive Committee (ExCo), oversees the development of the IT Strategy, approve the

IT Strategy document and any substantive changes to it.

The Planning and Resources Committee oversee the delivery of projects which underpin the IT Strategy.

8. Related Documents

[City Vision 2016](#)

[City Strategic Plan 2012-2016](#)

9. Acknowledgements

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