

ISC14D029

Title: ISD Programme of Work 2014/15 update
Author: Nick Lewis, Iain Reeman, Mark Jones, Jonathan Richardson, Raymond Scott (ISD)
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Issue

The paper outlines progress on the programme of development activity undertaken by ISD during the academic year 2014/15.

Recommendation

The recipients are asked to note the report.

Risk Implications

Significant developments are managed using a predefined project management methodology which includes an assessment of risk at the development level.

Equality and Diversity

Equality and diversity issues are considered for all aspects of ISD services. Any developments are subject to Equality Impact Assessment when they are implemented.

Timing of decisions

Work in a number of areas has already commenced or concluded. This report provides an update of progress over the course of the year.

Further Information

Raymond Scott, extn 3651, email r.scott@uea.ac.uk

Background

On an annual basis, ISD prepares a programme of development activity for approval by ISSC. The programme has been developed in conjunction with the IT Forum, Library Forum, ISD Education Board and ISD Research Board and is informed by the current ISD strategy. The attached report covers activity in Library, ICT, CIS, FITS and SPC.

Discussion

This paper provides a summary of the progress in the programme of work for ISD during academic year 2014/15. The programme of work is comprised of a number of projects and a number of departmental level developments.

ISD POW 2014-15 – Library

Library activity – key statistics – August to April

- Footfall into the Library building for the period 1 Aug to 30 Apr, has reduced by 1.4% from 1,135,398 in 2013-14 to 1,119,076 in 2014-15. However over the same period there has only been a decrease of 2.5% in the actual occupancy of the Library building, from an average headcount of 701 to 684 based on the sample days. This may be due in part to the 4.7% decrease in overall student headcount figures for the university and also to the increased use of the Union building as a place for social learning. To some extent a slight reduction in occupancy is welcome in terms of reducing complaints about overcrowding.
- Library loans have fallen 14% compared with the same period last year from 424,651 to 362,800 for 1 Aug to 31 Mar. These figures must be considered in the light of greater availability and use of e-books and digitised resources which account for the vast proportion of library expenditure per annum.

Postgraduate study rooms

On the headcount days in semester 2, there were an average of 15 people using the new Postgraduate Research (PGR) study room each afternoon giving an occupancy rate of around 40%. However on other days, the room occupancy has been recorded at up to 75% which is more in line with expectations.

Occupancy of the new PGT study room has been higher with an average of 38 people using the room each afternoon on the sample days – an occupancy rate of 70%. However we have at times had feedback about the space being almost 100% full. On those occasions the 'old' postgraduate study area is used as an overflow as it has become a general Silent Reading Room.

We have generally had very positive feedback about these new rooms but there also remain some misunderstandings around their intended use. To help to address these consistently we have produced a set of FAQs which can be found at <https://portal.uea.ac.uk/library/study-space/pg/faqs> and reproduced as Appendix A to this report.

Library Systems improvements

In summer 2014 the Library launched a revised website as part of the new portal. The library pages are some of the most actively used elements of the portal as the library increasingly offers its services and resources via online formats. In response to feedback, in early 2015 we refined the search box allowing quick selection of books, articles and all types of resource. In April 2015 staff and students were given direct access to their library account information from a new preview box on the library homepage, including a route to quickly renew books on loan.

Further changes planned for the summer include a replacement service for the Metalib system that currently provides access to library databases. This alternative has been developed to provide a modern streamlined means to find and access research databases.

Exams: approaches to food and drink and desk blocking

We have reviewed the feedback that we receive from students about food and drink in the library. Many of the responses are requesting additional areas for eating and being able to have hot drinks in lidded cups. This reflects the current reality - whilst we ask students to only eat snacks on floor 0, in practice many students eat elsewhere.

We have, therefore, decided to trial an expansion of the area where cold snacks can be consumed to include floor 1. This provides a greater variety of study spaces than just floor 0. Importantly, it also allows Library staff to manage “food free” floors more rigorously. We can re-direct students to the additional space when they need to snack.

We are also trialling an expansion of the areas where hot drinks in lidded cups can be consumed to include all floors. We launched a new range of signage to alert students to this change at the beginning of the assessment period.

The trial of these changes began at the start of the assessment period and will be reviewed in liaison with the Library Forum.

During the assessment period, there is a significant increase in students needing access to study spaces in the library. We have been working with students in the building to ensure that there is fair access to study spaces. We have been using Twitter to let students know about other study spaces on campus; reminding students who have left belongings to “save spaces” about fair access for other students, and freeing up spaces by moving unattended belongings which have been left for a considerable time. We do this by using flyers to note unattended belongings; where belongings have been unattended for considerable time two members of staff carefully remove them to a box sited next to the desk. This makes the study space available for another student, and ensures that the returning student can easily move their belongings to an alternative desk.

Library unplanned closure – Thursday 9th April

The Library unfortunately had to close at very short notice from 8pm on Thursday 9th April due to unplanned staff absence. The 24/7 opening of the Library building operates on minimal staffing levels with just 2 members of staff being on duty from 7pm to midnight and again from midnight until 8:30am. Until now, the Library has been operating 24/7, 365 for over 3 years, since January 2012, without needing to close at short notice. This has largely been down to the flexibility of the staff concerned and their willingness to volunteer, often at very short notice, to cover any planned or unplanned staff absences. Following this incident we have put in some additional managerial arrangements and we will also be investigating other possible approaches to make the service more robust.

Library building

Lighting in the main stairwell and the stairwell at the western end of the building has been replaced with new energy efficient lighting. We continue to work with Estates to improve the environment in the entrance areas and are working closely with them to resolve ongoing issues with radiators and toilets to ensure these problems are fixed in a timely way and with minimum disruption to Library users.

Times Higher Survey

UEA once again achieved the 2nd highest score for our Library provision, but due to the ‘crowding’ at the top, our ranking has dropped slightly from 3rd to 5th. We will be looking closely at some of our competitor institutions, particularly, Surrey, Bangor, York and Brunel all of whom achieved a significant (>10) increase in their Library rankings. Investigation of initiatives these institutions may have undertaken in the past year will help inform any business cases we might make and also ideas for our Plan of Work for 2015-16.

Appendix A - Postgraduate Study Space FAQs

Q: ENV PGT students really like this study area and prefer to work here than other IT areas in the library as the PCs are faster, keyboards are better and chairs more comfortable! As a result, this space is often full when the PGR space is not- could the Library allow PGT students to use the PGR space when the PGT area gets crowded?

A: When we consulted with the postgraduate community it was acknowledged that PGTs and PGRs often have quite different needs. PGRs asked for undisturbed study space with power for portable devices over and above the provision of fixed PCs. Hence there are only 5 PCs in the PGR room and these are deliberately placed away from the other study desks to minimise disturbance. By contrast, the PGT usage tends to be more intensive, often for writing dissertations or extended essays. Hence we provided as many PCs as we could in that space whilst again providing some balance in terms of quiet space to read. The point about needing more silent spaces for PC use is well made and we will factor it into future redevelopments where possible, perhaps if funding can be found for refurbishing the IT areas.

Q: The new PGT space is very busy but the new PGR space doesn't look like it's being heavily used. Can the space be opened up so PGTs can have more study space?

This is frustrating but often there are other high quality spaces available across the Library. Based on experiences at other universities, we anticipated that usage for the PGR would be less intense than for the PGT side. Though not always the case, PGRs are often working for a sustained period with fewer deadlines, whereas PGTs are often working in more intense bursts. If the PGR room was too crowded we think it would put PGRs off actually using it. If we were to open it to PGTs as well, we think it would again fill up immediately and we would be back to the same space problem but then without any space for PGRs! Such a scenario is not what we were funded to provide nor what the postgraduate community as a whole requested.

Q: I don't like having to renew the locker every 7 days, (even though possible online), and so could you review the need for locker keys to be set to 7 day loan as I am not convinced that they are all being used currently. Q: Every time I need a locker for study room in PGT there are never any available but there are always plenty of lockers available in PGR. I wonder if this supply-demand issue could be rectified somehow?

The usage of lockers in both spaces has been high and we estimated that the 7 day loan would be the best possible balance between supply (duration of loan) and demand. Occasionally there are more available in the PGR room but we would prefer to keep it that way so that PGRs are not put off from using the space. As an alternative, we have since moved all our other locker provision to the same 7 day system to help improve availability although obviously there will never be enough for every PG students. The lockers are primarily for use when studying in the Library, not just a general bookable locker for university-wide use.

Q: In past years you had 16 monthly carrels available for PGRs? Why has this changed?

A: We realise some PGRs preferred individual study rooms but with up to 1,500 PGR students at UEA, in practice only a very few students were actually getting access to these 16 rooms. The new room provides access for 39 people with 60 lockers.

When rooms were bookable for one month, the number of perpetually disappointed PGR students on waiting lists for the study carrels completely outnumbered the number of students who benefitted from them. Our regular checks also recorded that occupancy was actually quite low, with rooms more often than not empty or being used as storage. That is why we have now provided so many new large lockers in the PGR room to meet that known need more effectively.

If you prefer individual study carrels, these can still be booked via the Library Helpdesk, albeit only on a part-day basis (with options to book consecutively).

Q: Why could you not have increased the number of individual study rooms?

A: This would have required an extension to the Main Library which is not likely to happen in the foreseeable future. In addition, if we had provided more, we know the same problems would still have emerged concerning under-occupancy and use for storage rather than study. With so many students, we need to make best use of the spaces available.

Q: I don't find the open plan layout as helpful as a single study room.

A: We realise this is a compromise situation. The Library has never been in a position to provide a permanent study space or office for each postgraduate student. What we offer is designed to be just part of a wider university-wide drive to try to meet the needs for high quality study space for PGRs across the university. What is different about our offering is that it is 24/7, with security presence in the building at night, and with convenient access to library stock. The one week duration of our locker loans, with options to renew, reflects the fact that we expect PGRs to use these facilities occasionally, for a few days or weeks, rather than to move in permanently!

Q: Why did you layout the space like this?

A: We consulted with the GSA and Students' Union and other representatives from the PGR community on the layout, as well as the Dean of Students for accessibility options. Based on feedback we have tried to provide a variety of spaces with large desks and sufficient privacy to be able to work without distraction, but also without feeling oppressive. We hope that the open nature of the room and the inspiring views will help create an atmosphere conducive to research. As requested we have provided power and additional lights to each table and provided a minimal number of fixed PCs (which have quiet keyboards) to help keep this space as quiet as possible.

We also visited other universities including Queen Mary (University of London) and Leicester University, both of which had dedicated spaces for PGR students. It is still unusual to find such dedicated provision in universities but you have been telling us for some time that our previous provision was inadequate.

Having said all this, whilst we know many will be happy with the new facilities, we acknowledge they may not suit everyone. Please do feedback any comments you may have and we'll try to take them into account.

ISD POW 2014-15 – ICT Systems

The primary focus for the ICT teams is to monitor and maintain existing services and undertake rolling replacements of equipment that is at the end of life. The key project and Plan of Work (POW) activity is detailed below.

Research storage project

This project is currently on track and progressing as planned. The two key objectives for the project are to upgrade the IT infrastructure and to resume (and complete) the user data migrations. The upgrades to the IT infrastructure have been completed successfully and with minimal disruption to service. The user migrations have resumed and are progressing well.

Cloud Tools (Office365) project

This project is also on track and progressing as planned. The upgrade of MS Office has been completed together with the processes to enable user authentication and provisioning. Before the user migrations started support material was created and ISD support staff trained.

The user migrations have been broken down into four groups: Students, Partners, Academic and Support Staff and Professional Services Staff. Migrations for the first two groups, Students and Partners, have been successfully completed and the migrations of Academic and Support staff are progressing on schedule with minimal disruption to users.

Tenders

A number of critical tenders are being undertaken this year with the main ones being: High Performance Computing, Data Storage, Servers, Telephony exchange and bearers and Structured cabling. We have experienced some minor delays with the Telephony and structured cabling tenders. However it is expected that new contracts for all tenders will be in place by the end of the year.

Replacement Firewall implementation

Work is complete on procuring and implementation of the replacement firewalls and the replacement equipment is performing as expected. The changeover was completed without significant disruption. Changes to the network design to facilitate increased security will be included within the scope of the IT security project.

High Performance Computing (HPC) refresh

Work to upgrade the HPC infrastructure has been planned in two phases, which are being implemented this year and next. The tender process is progressing as planned and the contract is about to be awarded. Initially only the management nodes and a single processing node will be purchased to establish a Proof of Concept (POC). The aim of the POC is to enable a rapid service deployment following the main purchase, which is planned towards the end of the year.

ISD POW 2014-15 – Corporate information services

Business as Usual Work

The following pieces of technical work, which are required every year to keep normal business process running, were completed in the last 3 months:

- 1 Online Module Enrolment Setup
- 2 Timetabling Rollover
- 3 SITS Upgrade
- 4 Registration
- 5 Hobsons
- 6 Course Catalogue Rollover
- 7 Security Audit
- 8 Liferay security and functionality patches
- 9 Polopoly Migration support
- 10 Additional single sign-on services (Moodle, Liferay, Talis)
- 11 Support for cPanel based websites.
- 12 Branding packs for WPM, Pure Portal, Myview (Employee self-service), Web Recruitment (online job applications).

As well as supporting and managing most of the institution's corporate applications, the following pieces of technical work, which are required every year to keep normal business processes running, have been completed during the last 3 months:

a. Application Upgrades

The following applications have been upgraded since January 2015:

- MYIP - Patent management
- Raisers Edge - Customer relationship management
- Netcommunity - Alumni portal
- Payroll and Personnel
- Tharstens - Print Unit management
- Linux server infrastructure
- Rota Horizon - Estates time and attendance management

Application upgrades in progress:

- Aleph - Library management
- ABW - Finance system
- Pure - Research administration
- Kinetix - Student accommodation

b. Data Interfaces Review

Colleagues in CIS Operations reviewed and improved data interfaces between the following applications:

- SITS and Kinetix Accommodation

- ABW Finance and Tharstens print management
- Stratocore research equipment booking system and ABW finance
- ARCP research finance and Pure Research administration
- Blackboard module and enrolment feeds have been rationalised to enable new 'Terms' and automatic rollover functionality.

Assessment and Feedback

Colleagues across ISD and LTS have been planning and defining the new work to allow summative assessments to be marked in Blackboard.

Postgraduate Research Students

Changes have been made to the existing annual progress meetings functionality, which among other things, now allows files to be uploaded to the meeting records, to provide a richer record of progress to be recorded.

Additionally, new functionality has been developed on top of the same framework as the annual progress meetings, to allow monthly supervisory meetings to be recorded in SITS. In the first instance, this will just be used for Tier 4 students and certain CHASE students. It is expected to be fully rolled out in October 2015.

Non-Module Events

A large piece of work has been completed to change the way in which non-module events (e.g. induction talks and non-module teaching events, such as supplementary language courses) are stored in the system. This change continues to allow them to be roomed successfully and to show all relevant staff and students' timetables, but also will bring efficiencies in terms of the administration of these records by LTS colleagues. This change will also allow the new Tribal timetabling scheduler to be implemented, should we wish to.

WPM

The specification and definition work required to implement the new payment gateway service the University has purchased, to be live by August 2015, has been completed. We anticipate the first live usage being in July 2015.

Placements

We have worked with Tribal and LTS colleagues to start the phased rollout of wider user and re-development of the SITS Placements component. This is on track to go live for the first group of courses (selected HSC courses) in September 2015.

Paperless Improvements

A raft of small improvements to make the system more user friendly and efficient to use.

MED Absence

A number of improvements and bug fixes have been made to the standalone MED Absence system which had to be re-written and re-deployed as a result of the cpanel breach.

Events Database

Created central events database for Events team. Includes workflow and approval functionality, allowing local administrators to add events to central events listings without rekeying and ensuring central listing are most complete view. To be rolled out across departments over the next few months.

Website Rebranding and Responsive Design

First phase of project to rebrand the website to the new brand guidelines. Initially applied to 'Study with Us' section, including course catalogue and international pages. Marketing agreeing a schedule for roll out to other sections of the website.

New theme is 'responsive' i.e. is designed to work well on mobile devices, which is now a requirement for ranking well in Google mobile searches.

Liferay Login functionality

Added ability to allow both UEA and non-UEA users to log into Liferay websites, and allows single sign-on for UEA users. Satisfies long-standing requirement for research microsites to allow collaboration partners to contribute to websites and access secured content. Also allows for personalisation of content, e.g. future enhancements to the Portal and library borrowing portlet.

Press Releases Migration (MediaRoom)

Migrated archive of several thousand press releases from Polopoly to Liferay. Creation of associated templates, search and scheduled release functionality. These pages have large numbers of inbound links, so important to migrate to ensure associated search engine positioning benefits are retained.

Library Borrowing

Created a portlet for the Library home page to display library borrowings, holds and fines, and allow for renewal of items.

eResources Database (Metalib Replacement)

Created a searchable database for library eResources to replace the current Metalib system which is being retired.

Refresh of IT Service Status page and Offsite down Page

Updated IT Service status system. Required to support retreat from UEA London data centre, and improve resilience during outages. JANET-hosted down page updated to support SSL (now the default for browsers such as Chrome).

Liferay Portal Homepage

Migrated the Portal Home page to Liferay. The page had previously been a static page while issues with stability were resolved.

Migration of personal web space (~ tilde pages) and flat-file content.

Migration of personal web space pages to new storage, which improves security by removing the connection to central file store. Contacted owners, agreed removal of several hundred legacy accounts, and passed lists of remaining sites to Digital Marketing to work with owners on alternative provisioning.

Worked with Digital Marketing to start planning for migrating 48 legacy accounts of departmental flat file content.

UEA Web Register

Compiled register of 500 UEA web property including www.uea.ac.uk sections, other subdomains of uea.ac.uk and other UEA owned domain names, as proposed in last CIS board.

Identity Management Replacement (FIM)

Initial consultancy completed. Prototype feeds have been established from all authorities systems (HR, SITS etc.) and work has started on the dedupe process and name normalisation. A delivery schedule is being drawn up.

Employee Self Service and Web Recruitment

MyView 2, a prerequisite for the implementation of Staff Leave and Absence management has been installed, configured and will be piloted during May 2015.

Once the pilot of MyView 2 is complete:

- UEA staff will be able to view and edit their personnel records online.
- Job applicants will be able to submit their applications and supporting documentation online.

Enterprise Reporting (Discoverer Replacement)

A new enterprise reporting platform has been installed and configured. The CIS operations team is working with colleagues in the Business Intelligence Unit to migrate the institution's Discoverer reports to this new application. The first group of reports to be migrated will include Assessment Board and Course Review reports.

Pure portal implementation (People pages replacement)

We are working with colleagues in REN to define and deploy the new Pure Enhanced portal as a replacement for the current people pages – with additional functionality to support research discovery, research data sets and open access. The portal will be launched in early June.

ARCP Research Project Finance Management

We have been working with colleagues in REN to identify and correct data errors in ARCP and to define the feeds to PURE – we are currently looking at remaining errors which relate to approx. 500 records from 11,000.

Library Systems Enhancements

We have developed and deployed a new library resource discovery tool to replace the old Metalib service.

We have assisted in the deployment of the new Online Reading Lists tool (Talis).

IT Security Improvements

We have been working with colleagues across ISD to identify issues related to payment cards and to plan activity which will bring the University into a position of being compliant with PCI Standards.

ISD POW 2014-15 – Faculty IT support

Complete:

Desktop, laptop and tablet tender

Following a full tender process the University has awarded a contract to DTP Group who for the supply of HP desktops and laptops. The contract is for two years with an option to extend for a further two years. The contract represents excellent value with the supply of hardware at cheaper unit costs that also include a full managed service with the supplier delivering to desk.

Digital Signage

Working closely with ARM, ISD have invested in, installed and configured a new system to provide a robust and flexible service to deliver digital signage.

Blackboard module rationalisation

A thorough review of all modules within Blackboard has taken place with each categorised accordingly. This work allows modules to be fed by data feeds from SPOT and provides a cornerstone to deliver enhancements on Blackboard.

Blackboard analytics

A reporting mechanism has been created to show the active use of each Blackboard module by students.

Ongoing:

Update of AV equipment in teaching spaces

ISD are working with EST on the provision of AV equipment in teaching spaces for the start of September 2015. Works are complete in Earlham Hall, while new installations are planned in Arts and further refreshes scheduled across the estate where needed.

Refresh of PCs within departments and faculties

Approximately 70% of all desktops and laptops scheduled for replacement in 2014/15 have been ordered and completed. The remainder will be ordered through the new contract that will start in June 2015 and be completed before the end of the financial year.

Update of Active Directory OU for NSC

This work has been superseded by the development of a strategy for managing and securing all objects within Active Directory.

AV integrator tender

Recent focus has been placed on working with the existing integrator to replace hardware with a known fault. A full tender exercise looking at supply and maintenance services will now take place in 2015/16.

ITIL

The project to introduce an ITIL framework for delivering IT services is underway. Consultants have helped us to deliver the basis of a true, user focused Service Catalogue that will accurately describe the services provided by ISD. This work will be introduced alongside a new IT Service Management tool for which ISD will go out to tender in June 2015. ISD expects to launch this new system and implement new processes at the end of 2015.

ISD POW 2014-15 – Strategy, policy and compliance

- New online training courses on information compliance are available covering DPA, FOI, Records Management and Copyright. Details on how to access them are available from <https://intranet.uea.ac.uk/is/strategies/infregs/training>.
- The copyright guidance pages on the ISD website have been reviewed and completely rewritten, and are available from <https://portal.uea.ac.uk/information-services/strategy-planning-and-compliance/regulations-and-policies/information-regulations-and-policies/copyright>.
- During 2015, we looked at a different approach to departmental liaison on information compliance matters. To start off, we have devised a quarterly bulletin on information compliance (including information security) and published the first edition for Spring. It is available from <https://portal.uea.ac.uk/information-services/strategy-planning-and-compliance/news>. Further work will be undertaken through 15/16: revising data sharing templates, publishing guidance on data sharing and PECR, developing skills to conduct data protection audits, and building up a data protection/security network of contacts in collaboration with the IT security project.
- An annual report on information compliance activities in the previous calendar year is offered to ISSC at their February meeting each year. The latest report is available from <https://portal.uea.ac.uk/documents/6207125/8210913/isc14d017.pdf>.
- The Information Security Manager was appointed in May 2014 and undertook a review of the current state of our IT services in the light of recent audits and cybersecurity threats facing organisations and our defences against those threats. A report on his findings and recommendations for change was considered within ISD, ITF and ISSC, and this led to the initiation of a significant project improving IT security, starting with our meeting the Data Security Standard set by the PCI for the processing of cardholder data. A separate update on this project is provided for ISSC at this meeting.
- As a result of the project to address key IT Security issues, in order to keep other projects on track, we appointed an additional project manager, for 8 months until Sept 2015 (increasing the team to three staff) to look after the project management of the assessments and feedback project and bring the Office 365 mailbox migration work to a close.
- The review of our approach to project and programme management will be looked at in 15/16. The level of project activity through 14/15 did not allow for this piece of work to be undertaken.
- The following policies were reviewed, updated and offered for approval through 14/15: Information Classification and Data Management, DPA, FOIA, and EIR. The updated Library Rules are offered for approval at this meeting. COCU was due for a major review in 2015 and a revised version is also offered for approval at this meeting. In the course of conducting the major review, a radically different approach to the form and content of COCU (which is effectively the University's acceptable use policy) was proposed, but a longer consultation period was considered necessary before bringing it forward for approval.
- The University information security policies were due for review during summer 2014, and have since been absorbed into the recently initiated IT security project.