

**UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE****SCHOOL OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES IT COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the Meeting held on the 28 September 2017

**Present:**

Abbi Abbioui (Pharmacology)	Paul Judge (Genetics)
Jenny Barna (SBS/UIS)	Graham Ladds (Pharmacology)
Ian Clark (Genetics)	Elizabeth MacRae (Zoology)
Alistair Downie (Gurdon Institute)	Christof Schwiening (PDN)
Mark Holmes (Chair, Vet Medicine)	Wentao Song (PDN)
Henrik Jönsson (Sainsbury Laboratory)	
Andrew Judd (UIS/Vet Medicine)	

**In attendance:** Judith Drinkwater (Minutes)  
Professor Graham Virgo, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education - item 4

**1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Paul Bays (Psychology), Phil Brereton (Pathology), Richard Farndale (Biochemistry), Richard Fieldsend (Psych/Plant Sci), Marko Hyvonen (Biochemistry), Gos Micklem, Gabriella Rustici (Genetics), Alwyn Scally (Genetics), Mark Sharpley (CSCR), Paul Sumption (UIS)

**2. Declaration of Interests**

No declarations of interest were received.

**3. Minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2017**

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record.

**4. Matters arising****4.1 Review of remit of SBS IT Committee**

The updated remit was approved as circulated.

**5. Digital Strategy for Education**

Professor Virgo presented an overview of the Digital Education Strategy (DES) from an academic perspective. The DES had been circulated with the agenda of the meeting. There had been recognition three years previously that the University's learning and teaching programme would benefit from participation in digital learning initiatives. In particular, digital technologies would enhance the ability of students to access teaching

and learning information via centrally supported systems, and would enhance the experience of disabled students in the University. The DES was approved by the General Board in 2016-17 and would be refreshed continuously to meet new requirements.

There were four key elements in the DES:

- i) Lecture capture pilot; lecture capture was common across Higher Education but new to Cambridge. Lecture capture was piloted in 2016-17, and a review in summer 2017 had provided positive feedback, especially from students. Lecture capture had the advantages of assisting in student management of workload and promoting inclusive education. The pilot would become a permanent service rolled out across all institutions, which would be launched in Lent Term 2018, once a provider had been identified. Lecture capture would be on an opt-in basis, and lecturers could adopt it as they saw fit. Lectures would be made available to students on Moodle. Students would be asked to sign an agreement relating to use of the material. There were complexities in implementing this, as the rights of lecturers and intellectual property considerations had to be taken into account.
- ii) Computer-based examinations pilot: computer-based exams had been piloted in Classics and History in April 2017. The Law Faculty had run computer-based exams for several years. The pilot would be extended in 2017-18, and any Departments interested in participating should contact Professor Virgo to discuss.
- iii) Use and quality of teaching space; a Programme Board had been set up to identify availability of educational space (including space for exams) and to set minimum standards (IT, audiovisual) for lecture spaces. This would guarantee a minimum level of equipment and facilities to meet the needs of students, lecturers, administrators and IT officers.
- iv) Digital advocates: a Digital Advocate would be identified in each Faculty, with a remit to support and develop digital learning and teaching technology in their subject area. This scheme was proving complicated to set up and wider consultation was underway.

There had been a significant change in attitude and that it was clear that there was a will in the University to embrace on-line teaching tools and facilities. An advisory group had been set up to gather the experience of staff across the University with a view to enhancing the University's on-line learning provision.

Dr Holmes thanked Professor Virgo for his presentation. It was essential that the DES was driven by the needs of academic teaching staff, and helpful for computer officers to be knowledgeable about these needs in order better to support academic staff who approached their local IT staff with technical needs to support the DES initiatives.

A wide-ranging discussion followed, and the following observations made:

- There was a balance to be struck between a student-led agenda in the delivery of the DES, and managing student expectations and ensuring student participation in initiatives
- Lecturers should have the freedom to adopt the modes of educational delivery that work for them
- Systems need to be flexible to accommodate needs and change

- The introduction of digital technologies will drive reflection about educational objectives, and provide opportunities to reflect on the delivery of teaching and learning
- DES is an opportunity to incentivise technological innovation in teaching and learning, and to pursue excellence in teaching

## **6. Governance of Research Computing**

There had been some progress in the area of research computing. It would be useful to have feedback from Departments where academic staff were not receiving the service that they required. A powerful way of communicating experiences of inadequate service provision was required, such as the continued lack of a virtual server service.

ACTION: Dr Holmes, Dr Micklem and Dr Barna to meet to discuss further.

## **7. General UIS update**

Dr Barna continued to distribute the monthly School IT newsletter, which contained a valuable range of information, updates, and prompts for IT staff to take action as required.

Of recent note was the re-launch of the Institutional (formerly research) storage strategy. A project board had been set up to define the roles and responsibilities of those involved.

The encouragement of installation of firewalls was positive, but Departments were free to select those that met their needs.

The introduction of MS Exchange On-line was noted. It was not clear whether external Fellows would be eligible to sign up for this.

ACTION: Dr Holmes and Dr Barna to make enquiries

## **8. Dates and venue of future meetings**

Meetings would continue to take place in the Department of Pathology.

Michaelmas Term 2017: [agreed by doodle poll following this meeting] 19 December

Lent Term 2018: 22 March

Easter Term 2018: 21 June