

Minutes of the IT Advisory Committee  
28<sup>th</sup> October 2011

Present: David Greaves (chairman), Martyn Johnson, Markus Kuhn, Ian Lewis, Andrew Moore, Steven Murdoch, Dinah Pounds, Peter Sewell, Lech Swirski, Graham Titmus (secretary).

1. Mandate

Taking into account that final decisions will be made outside the IT advisory panel, the following mandate statement for the IT advisory panel was agreed:

The IT Advisory Panel should help determine and collate the needs of all members of the department, promulgate examples of best practise and to co-ordinate between working groups tasked with individual projects. Working groups would typically hold two or three one-hour meetings.

2. Report from IT manager (Martyn Johnson)

The workload of the computer officers is mainly composed of ensuring routine updates to systems are carried out. The long term goal is to move to supporting services rather than systems to permit a greater diversity of user-maintained systems.

Major area to explore are the migration to VM usage, the rollout of IPv6, remote access facilities, ACS support, additional low cost bulk file store and what tasks currently undertaken are no longer needed.

3. A small number of topics were discussed in detail

Documentation: the support wiki was primarily an internal resource for the computer officers. Web page documentation is preferred and should not refer to it. It would be most helpful for someone to again be tasked with maintenance of the support web pages. This could lead to an annual 'User Manual' being issued. A page about connecting Linux laptops to Lab services is needed.

Virtual Machines: the VM infrastructure is indeed using latest version of Xen from Citrix but there have been problems and dynamic creation of machines requires too much skill. Continuing with our own VMs seems the correct way forward, despite past problems. SWM has obtained three years of free license for which will be evaluated, taking into account that a budget might be needed to maintain offerings based on this after the free period. The facilities offered by the licensed version may address some of the shortcomings of the existing service.

Departmental wiki: the computer service offering is to be used from now on.

DS (previously PWF) and teaching machines: Information flows between parties are not working. Performance metrics are not available. Problems are reported but those relating to Netware have been solved. Ian Lewis will follow up.

Drop-in training sessions: Optional once-a-term training sessions, especially aimed at admin staff, explaining use of IT infrastructure will be arranged.

Man management: Support ticket system: the panel requested rate statistics. The panel requested a matrix presenting the percentage of time each CO typically dedicated to each type of activity. Also, documentation would be better if those installing and operating a service were not those who responded to user's questions and the matrix might help establish this practice.

Survey: The survey from 2009 produced a useful paper. It might be very easy to re-run this survey, including all members of the department. This would provide a firmer evaluation of IT provision than is presented by, say, the ad-hoc emails being received by DJG.

Wish list: new services offered: Trac and HotCRP are on the wish list.

4. A working party chaired by someone to be found by DJG is to be formed to review and recommend changes. Mandate of working party "To review practice in other departments."

A working party chaired by Markus Kuhn is to be formed to review and recommend changes with respect to Filespace provision.

5. Date of next meeting: fourth week of Lent term. Date to be decided in January 2012.