

IT Strategy Committee
8th February 2024 at 2 p.m. via Microsoft Teams

MINUTES

Present:

Professor Simon Moore (SM) – Chair
Dr Stewart Carswell (SC)
Dr Thomas Sauerwald (TS)
Professor Mateja Jamnik (MJ)
Abraham Martin (AM), UIS

Andreas Vlachos (AV)
Malcolm Scott (MS)
Daniel Porter (DP)
Helen Francis (HF)

1. Apologies for absence

None

2. Approval of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Unconfirmed Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd May 2023 were approved. (Document 1).

3. Matters Arising

SWM plans to be on sabbatical for 2024/25 academic year and he will step down as Committee Chair.

ACTION: HOD Team to identify new Chair.

4. Actions from the Previous Meeting

- (a) *GPU Resources for Teaching (Item 4a)*
- There is more budget for ACS HPC work, so can spend more. Typically, 300hrs, but can be flexible.
 - Usage monitoring: manually log in and monitor user hours. This can also be done annually.
 - Some ACS students reported issues with courses that require HPC work but is not their project, especially if that coursework has a deadline due to increasing the queuing in HPC. This requires short burst of GPU power. MS floated the idea of a large pool of low-end GPUs for this.
 - SM suggested some simple getting started-type exercises in the ACS courses that use GPUs to help students figure out the HPC toolchain before coursework starts.
 - AV suggested communicating the 300hr limit to lecturers at start of Michaelmas so lecturers can plan better; MS replied 300hr guide is for project, no set guidelines for ACS courses.
 - SM and MJ suggested exploring use of cloud facilities, as these might be better for short bursts. AM said AWS can add set limits to student accounts, though this is not in place for university accounts.
 - **ACTION**: MS and AM to discuss setting limits on AWS student accounts to restrict cloud GPU hours.
- (b) *GDPR (Item 4b)*
- University drafting new guidelines. SM's draft would need updating if university policy overrules the department one.

- MS discussing with UIS exemptions for computer science research work e.g. web scanners. Likely to be able to get an exemption for types of work, rather than per PI.
- SM suspected that some staff still use Gmail. MS stated Fastmail, which is GDPR compliant even though some data is held in USA and Australia.

5. Standing Items

(a) MS and DP to provide an update on improvements made and current issues.

i. Report from DP:

- Lecture theatre update: Equipment due to be ordered soon, awaiting final quote.
- Hybrid Meeting setup in SW00 to test UIS Cisco equipment.
- Door access: Department chosen for POC from UIS central system. Multiple vendors have done site inspections, and we expect things to move quite quickly.
- Recruitment: anticipate hiring new first line support staff, will tie in with RT revamp. HF asked if this person would handle AV equipment, DP confirmed that the role would involve AV responsibility.
- Intel Lab & ACS Lab equipment refreshed over the summer.
- First phase of DS-Print installed, second phase hopefully to follow this summer.
- Chris Hadley will be retiring. MS acknowledged their significant contribution to the department.

ii. Report from MS:

- Focussing on Windows changes to authentication; we are currently unable to install updates on Windows servers - known breaking changes by Microsoft to Kerberos. Older SMB file servers need software updates to interoperate with current Windows
- Capacity upgrade to Filer, due to running out of archive space.
- Network upgrade: early planning for core network replacement; considering different firewall. Would also need to update wired network access. UIS currently running a centralised project in other departments about this.
- PhD GPU provision: feedback from SSCO - unhappy with HPC queueing and asking for a departmental GPU cluster on a similar scale to HPC; anecdotes of students choosing other Universities (ETHZ) due to GPU provision - no good solution.
- Wifi provision: UniOfCam network being retired by UIS. New guest network will not require tokens. Consider retiring wgb network too. Recent abuse of wifi network to download copyrighted material.
- Emails: UIS retiring central email switch, moving everything into Microsoft domain. Would have an impact on forwarding of @cl and @cst address, and also anti-spam controls. Fastmail not able to handle this, reluctant to handle in-house.
- Recruitment: hiring new sys admin person to replacement Pieter Brooks, Pieter will be retiring or going part time soon.

(b) Report on the School's IT Strategy Committee (AV) and update from UIS (AM).

- Update from School committee: info about new policies including card locks.
- TS noted that there is little uptake in cybersecurity training in this department compared with other departments in the school.

6. Any other business

Recovering of finances: some grants include funding for equipment and part-funding for CO staff time.

ACTION: DP and HF to discuss further with Sarah.

7. Date of next meeting

To be decided by circulation.