

College of Science and Engineering

Schools' IT Strategic Planning Process

10 October 2007

Introduction

The College report to the IT Review Phase 2 recommends (section 5.3):

CC&ITC should institute an annual, light-weight and forward-looking School reporting process, tied in with the annual College planning round, to ensure that information on significant strategic and planning decisions for IT, including significant new IT services and procurements, should rise to College and University levels in order to identify common themes and general concerns, consider opportunities for efficiency gains and policy implications.

It is proposed that Schools will produce annually, around October, a **short IT Strategic Plan** comprising the following sections:

1. A long-term vision and strategic objectives statement (1 page), which will remain largely unchanged from year to year.
2. A brief report on IT developments of particular interest over the preceding academic year (1 page).
3. *If necessary*, a revised IT plan for the academic year just started (1 page).
4. A draft IT plan for the AY starting the following September (1 page).

This is intended as a light-touch planning process, which should be relatively straightforward for Schools to engage in without consuming too much time.

While the process of developing the IT Strategic Plan is in itself likely to be of benefit to Schools, the intention is that the plans will promote coherence of developments, harmonization and efficiency by improving information flow across the College and beyond.

Specific audiences for the plans will include College committees such as CCPAG and CC&ITC, and the plans will be part of the School input to the College planning process.

Influences

Schools will wish to take into account a variety of influences when preparing their IT plan, including:

- Expected changes in the demands of the School community (arising from factors such as new research directions, innovation in learning and teaching methods, changes in student needs and expectations, partnerships with other institutions *etc*) which will influence the future shape of IT services.

- Factors arising within the University (for instance, central service developments, partnerships with other Schools, HR initiatives, etc) which will influence the future of the IT team and its services.
- Industry, technology, legislative and cultural trends which will influence IT in the School.

Although the plan will be driven by School needs, other planning papers may be useful, including the College ten-year vision and five-year plan for 2004-2009; the University strategic plan for 2004-2008 or its replacement; and the IS strategy for 2008-2013.

Template

A template to guide Schools in developing their IT Strategic Plan is provided below. Roughly one A4 page per major section is envisaged, so the whole thing should be only around four pages long.

School of XXX

IT Strategic Plan

Date of this version

1. Long-term Vision and Strategic Objectives

Vision

The IT vision for the School will be a long-term, aspirational statement which describes the place the School wants to be in a future which is up to five years ahead. The vision statement needs to answer questions about why the IT team exists.

It is expected that the vision statement will rarely change.

Strategic Objectives

A list of up to 10 long-term objectives which contribute to the School's overall long-term strategic goals. They might identify areas of new IT provision or expected changes to current services, and describe the reasoning behind them. For instance:

- “The School will gradually migrate its existing websites to use the new University Website look and feel, in order to support student recruitment objectives.”
- “The School will seek to reduce the vulnerability of key IT services through risk analysis, identifying and implementing mitigating actions.”
- “The School will move towards implementing relevant parts of ITIL, and will develop its IT staff accordingly, in order to further improve service quality.”

These strategic objectives will change more often than the Vision – as the objectives are achieved (or become irrelevant) they drop off and are replaced by new ones. However, most such objectives will persist for more than one year.

Strategic Assumptions

A list of key assumptions on which the long-term strategy is based. These should include any critical assumptions about the IT and academic environment, including any assumptions about IS-provided services. Example assumptions might be:

- “The research pooling initiative will continue beyond its expiry date next year.”
- “IS will continue to provide a first-line IT support service through the College IT Support Team on behalf of the School.”

2. Report on plan for 2006/7

This is a brief report on what happened in the academic year just past, referring to the plan for that year, and indicating in particular any developments, services or outcomes which may be of wider interest.

3. Revised plan for 2007/8

If required, a revised version of the current academic year's IT plan should be provided, indicating what changes were made since the original plan was produced, and why.

4. IT plan for 2008/9

This is a brief description of the IT plans for the following academic year, in three sub-sections:

Projects

A list of significant projects or activities which contribute to the long-term strategic objectives. These bullet points might cover enhancing specific locally-provided IT services, development of new services, expected major procurements, or set goals for ongoing multi-year developments. For instance:

- “The School intends to provide laptops with specialist software for use by students during tutorials, and to reduce School-provided student computing lab seats to 50, in order to facilitate new teaching methods.”
- “The remaining RM PCs in the postgraduate offices (which will then be five years old) will be replaced with SelectPC hardware, and will have Scientific Linux installed. We will be experimenting with using LCFG to install and configure these machines, to determine whether it is suitable for wider deployment in the School.”

Deprioritised areas

A list of areas where the School IT team provides services but which are expected to decrease in importance or cease over the planning period. For instance:

- “We will decommission three servers in research groups; live data will be migrated to the ECDF SAN.”

Relationship with Information Services

This section describes expected changes to the relationship with IS. For instance, what areas of IS services does the School expect to rely on more, what areas does it expect to rely on less, and what changes to IS services would benefit the School?