
Technology & Information Services

IT Strategy 2016 - 2020

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1. Purpose of our IT Strategy

The core purpose for developing an IT Strategy is to ensure there is a clear relationship between investment decisions in Information Technology and the University's overall strategy, goals and objectives.

The Digital Strategy for the University states "we will develop a culture where people are empowered and enabled to continually evolve and revolutionise our digital environment" and "ensure digital and non-digital aspects of teaching, learning, research and business processes are complimentary and aligned".

After consultation we have determined that the 'sector leading' focus for Technology & Information Systems should be on the student experience and our research activity and that we should seek to provide systems in our administrative areas which best support their activities.

2. Drivers for Change

A number of drivers have led to a need for Technology & Information Services to review the services they currently offer, the quality of service and the methods of delivery. These are:

- A reinvigorated Directorate eager to professionalise the service and who are fully aware of the need to continually review service demands and their capacity to deliver.
- The University's Strategy 2020 list of ambitions which include "excellent learning in partnership with students" and "world class research and innovation".
- Current trends across the sector for using technologies to extend the reach of Higher Education, to personalise education and to engender the community spirit.
- Funding pressures requiring Professional Service departments to do more with less.

- Emerging technology innovations, many of which are potentially disruptive, such as cloud sourcing.
- The increasingly competitive nature of the Higher Education landscape

These drivers combined indicate a need to revisit the organisation structure, stakeholder, engagement, staff roles and responsibilities, skills and capabilities, processes, and the methods of service delivery.

3. IT Strategy Guiding Principles

In order to deliver sector leading IT provision for the critical areas of research and education, a number of guiding principles have been established as follows:

- Technology & Information Services must refocus its efforts from operational commodity IT to strategic value-adding IT.
- This entails reducing the complexity in our technological infrastructure and implementing a homogeneous "core" of enterprise systems that support standardised business processes with "sector average" investment.
- This will enable the support of a heterogeneous "edge", where users will be able to access our services from a wide range of end user devices.
- We must fully exploit our investment in the existing infrastructure and applications.
- We must "buy" rather than "build" wherever practically possible by fully exploiting the functionality of our packaged applications.
- Where appropriate we will implement a sourcing strategy using 3rd parties to deliver our IT services where such an approach can optimise factors such as educational and research excellence, cost and quality of service, resource availability, system reliability, business continuity, security and functionality.

4. IT Service Delivery

Technology & Information Services is committed to providing a level of service that is considered “excellent” by its customers. To meet this aspiration, our services will be delivered as follows:

- **Unambiguously:** Clearly publicised services which have been articulated, defined and agreed with our customers.
- **On demand:** All business, education and research services will be appropriately accessible by authenticated University customers.
- **Ubiquitously:** Appropriate services will be available from any internet connected device, mobile or otherwise.
- **Consistently:** Processes will become efficient and standardised with alignment to best practice frameworks. Regardless of location or affiliation, customers will undertake the same (minimally obtrusive) steps to receive services.
- **Customer Driven:** Services must always be aligned to the needs of the institution.
- **Securely:** Data will be securely archived and managed. It will be accessible and restorable on demand.
- **Inconspicuously:** IT will deliver services that are inconspicuous to the customer. Technology incidents should not impact service delivery.
- **Innovatively:** IT will deliver innovative services to support education, research and enterprise activities.

The following guidelines inform our management decisions:

- **Customer Focus:** We will acknowledge at all times that our primary objective is to service the needs and exceed the expectations of our customers.

- **Best Value:** We should aim to be the best value provider of information systems within our sector.
- **Mainstream Products:** We will endeavour wherever possible to utilise mainstream, non-customised products.
- **Simplicity:** Wherever possible we should reduce technical complexity and therefore cost by reducing the portfolio of technologies utilised within the organisation.
- **Practicality:** Our IT base must never block a practical and important business initiative.
- **Obsolescence:** We should avoid the false economy of allowing infrastructure components to fall into obsolescence by taking account of the total cost of ownership of technological items.
- **Lockout:** We must not find ourselves technically barred from adopting new initiatives.
- **Electronic Alliances:** We should be able to form alliances, create value added partnerships, or enter consortia in inter-organisational electronic operations.
- **Reorganisation:** In the event of reorganisation, our core operations, information systems, and communications will be able to adapt to the changes quickly and simply.
- **Competitive Advantage:** We aim to maintain our lead in technologies which provide us with a position of strength in the sector.
- **Vendor Dependence:** We should not be dependent on vendors with doubtful financial, technical or managerial resources.
- **Staff Dependence:** We should avoid over-dependence upon the expertise of individuals within the organisation by ensuring that technical knowledge is appropriately spread among Technology & Information Services staff.
- **Innovation:** We must systematically seek and exploit relevant IT trends to gain competitive advantage within a culture of regular experimentation.

5. The Technology Infrastructure

“Sector leading” technologies will be selected to support IT Services delivering Education and Research and provide the foundation for flexible learning and digital literacy as described in the University’s Teaching, Learning and Student Experience Strategy.

These together with the proliferation of high speed broadband, Big Data analytics, MOOCs, Audio Visual and mobile devices have the potential for providing an educational experience which is fully compatible with the modern world of personalisation, ubiquity and self-service.

Technology & Information Services will provide an information technology infrastructure capable of supporting the research activities of the University at both a national and international level.

We will support this research through the provision of:

- Plymouth Electronic Archive and Research Library (PEARL)
- High Performance Computing Environments
- Technical support and advice to our researchers
- Long-term digital preservation

IT services supporting relevant business processes such as website, student records, finance, payroll and human resources will be selected by the business area in consultation with Technology & Information Services, provisioned by a 3rd party and integrated by Technology & Information Services.

The functionality of these systems will be fully exploited. Alternative technologies will only be considered where there is an appropriate business justification.

Our administrative systems will be in-line with the University’s Enterprise Architecture policy of cloud first with particular emphasis on “Software as a

Service” (SaaS); other hosted options being procured with support and sourced through a 3rd party.

6. Authorisation

The University IT & Digital Committee, reporting to the University’s Executive Group (UEG), will oversee the development of the IT Strategy, approve the IT Strategy document and any substantive changes to it.

7. Related Documents

Plymouth University Strategy 2020

University Teaching, Learning and Student Experience Strategy

University Digital Strategy

Document Control

Version	Author	Position	Details	Date/Time	Approved by	Position	Date/Time
<1.0>	Adrian Hollister	Head of Strategy & Architecture	First release	Sept 2016	Paul Westmore	Interim Director of IT	17 Jan 2017