Information Services Quality Assurance & Enhancement Report FY10/11

This report summarises some of the enhancements and changes to the services provided by Information Services for students in support of their studies, and to teaching activities in the University, which occurred during 2010/11. Many of these were a direct result of feedback and suggestions from our various user communities. As in previous years, this is not intended to be a general report on all IS services and facilities, which are substantial in number and range. More exactly, this report parallels those from Courses and Programmes in setting out the ways in which feedback about the quality of services is gathered and acted on within a particular financial or academic year. For fuller details of IS services and facilities, please visit the IS website at [http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/information-services](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/information-services) or for more specific information about services to particular Schools, please consult the relevant Head of College Consultancy Team, in User Services Division.

1. Service range and assessment of quality

1.1 IS offers approximately 150 individual services to its user communities, in person at 12 sites and online to any location. Many of these services are ‘invisible’ to the majority of users (eg firewalls, publisher contract negotiations) except when they fail. Although some IS services are uniquely offered in support of research or administration, the majority of our services and facilities are used for teaching and learning in some way and scale. We have introduced a comprehensive Guide to IS Services which includes an A-Z listing [http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/information-services/services/a-z](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/information-services/services/a-z). Our user communities are large - ~12,000 staff; >30,000 students (inc. OLL); 120,000 plus of ‘externals’ of various kinds e.g. alumni, applicants. We have a commensurate range of methods to gather their views – individually through informal or formal comments; in groups through surveys and focus groups; through representatives such as EUSA; from organisational units such as course teams, Schools and Colleges, often through formal consultations. These quality assurance activities take place across the year, sometimes on an IS-wide basis and sometimes in more local and focussed ways.

1.2 In addition to these inward-facing QA activities, we also have long-standing mechanisms for gathering information about what our peers in UK and worldwide HEIs are doing with respect to service enhancement and contraction. Some of this information is drawn from formal mechanisms (e.g. the Libqual survey, the NSS and PGRES); some is semi-formal (eg the Russell Group IT Directors benchmarking meetings, SCONUL\(^1\), various email discussion lists), and some is informal (eg through personal visits to specific peer HEIs, esp in Russell Group, U21, LERU) and via conference attendance. We share this knowledge internally in our various teams and management.

2. Library services

2.1 Use of the several Libraries sites and the digital library materials continued to increase over previous years, and much of this increase is attributable to use by students, partly as numbers rise and particularly as facilities improve. Usage of library facilities increased by 40% overall, with the Main Library seeing an increase of 25% compared with 2009/10. The level of usage meant that, on average, every student visited one of the libraries 117 times per annum.

2.2 The Main Library once again offered extended semester opening hours from the start of FY10/11 (07:30-02:30 every night). We also opened 24*7 for 7 weeks, covering just prior to and during the exam periods. The extended summer vacation opening hours for the Main Library were maintained, including one 24 hour period of opening specifically to support Masters students writing dissertations. Despite some adverse weather conditions in December 2010, the Library maintained its opening hours. Feedback via EUSA has been very positive, both as regards the extended opening and the speed of response to the request. Other library site opening hours have been maintained at the levels of previous years, despite rising costs.

2.3 The Main Library was again opened for two days between Christmas and New Year from 1030-1730hr, self-service only.

2.4 In this period the Third Floor was reopened July with Student Services relocated to this site. There were some initial concerns but this has been a very successful innovation with the user numbers of

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\(^1\) SCONUL – the Society of College, National and University Libraries.
the three services (Careers Service, Student Counselling Service and Student Disability Service) increased in the first semester of 2011/12.

2.5 The Fourth Floor was closed in July. To mitigate some of the problems caused by the popularity of the Main Library as “the place to be”, IS employed student helpers to assist with finding available study spaces/seats. These helpers are empowered to move low value items to one side to create space for others to use. The pressure on space will be helped by the re-opening of the Fourth Floor in March 2012 when 550 additional seats will become available.

2.6 Work on other library redevelopments. The KBLLRC Project, designed to improve study facilities at the King’s Buildings, incorporating lessons learned from the developments at the Main Library. The project nearing completion and the new KB Library will open in summer 2012. The new Lady Smith of Kelvin Veterinary Library at Easter Bush campus opened on time in spring 2011. This facility is located in the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies building and hosts materials from the previous libraries at Summerhall, Roslin and the former Faculty building at Easter Bush. These three libraries closed down in summer 2011.

2.7 Usage of Library Materials continues to grow for both print and electronic materials. Loans of print books continues to grow, albeit slowly (up 7.3%). This increase is due mainly to the increase in student numbers, particularly Masters students. The largest growth area is in both the acquisition and usage of electronic materials. During the year we added approx. 350k e-books, often through bundles purchases. There were 1,077,868 uses of the ebooks. Whilst this is not yet as high as the figure for print books, it is increasing fast.

2.8 Use of journals is now almost exclusively electronically. In 2010/11 we received 2,901 journals in print only, and 19,127 in electronic format. There were 3,975,415 full text requests, an increase of 6.5% on the previous year.

3. IT services & facilities

3.1 In response to requests from staff and students to maximise the uptime for our highest priority services we agreed a list of our 11 most important services with the IT Committee in March 2010. We publish both real time status of these services and their availability history on the IS web site at www.ed.ac.uk/is/alerts. We have seen steady improvement in our service availability and over the 2010/11 year all except for two services Library catalogue and MyEd exceeded the 99.9% availability, i.e. less than 9 hours downtime in the year. In the case of MyEd this was due to a single event which happened over a weekend in July when both the bulk of students and staff, including those staff needed to fix the problem, were away, so although there was more downtime than we would have hoped for there was little impact.

3.2 The start of the academic year and the winter closure period are times when system availability is of particular concern. The services have run successfully through both 2010/11 and 2011/12 starts to the academic year and both winter breaks.

3.3 IS agrees with the Internal Audit Unit the annual plan for their audits of our services, and these have been helpful in guiding us to weaknesses but also giving us confidence in what we view as strengths. Generally, the audits have been positive. These sit alongside our own internal reviews, and give us a more rounded picture of the robustness of our services, in terms of day-to-day delivery but vital although less obvious to users, of our business continuity planning for various failure scenarios.

3.4 A mobile app was developed during 2011. U@Ed gives students access to a range of personalised information direct to mobile devices. The service officially launched on 26 August 2011, initial uptake was strong with around 6,000 downloads during the first month. We surveyed students about what kinds of phones they had and what kinds of services they wanted in March 2010 in preparation for the U@Ed service. We are in the process of repeating that survey as further input into the direction for U@Ed

3.5 In partnership with St Andrews University and University of Abertay, Dundee we introduced a new Service Desk product for logging and managing user calls and service requests in November 2010. This has provided users with a single point of contact for all service calls into IS (70% via email, 30% via telephone) and a quantitative mechanism to determine problem areas within our services which require attention – the current top priority is the authentication service for applicants. We are currently
expanding use to incorporate several added-value modules such as user self-service portal, change and release management and user satisfaction surveys. We will have detailed information from these to inform at next annual report.

4. e-Learning & Skills Development

4.1 Use of Blackboard’s WebCT continued to increase with same monthly patterns as the previous four years peaking in October at over 700,000 sessions (550,00 in the same period in 2009/10). Although reliability of service was excellent, we received comments on lack of functionality and usability so we very much look forward to deployment of the new Learn9 product from Blackboard in 2012-13.

4.2 e-assessment – Use of questionmark perception and Grademark products also increased during 2010/11. QMP peaked in March April period with over 600 assessments lodged, a 25% increase on the previous year. Use of Grademark doubled over the year with some 1200 assessments in November compared to 600 in 2009/10

4.3 The IS Skills catalogue is online making the wide range of courses and self-study materials on offer from IS easier to search and book/obtain. This development complements the ISI service of web-based self-help materials for students in WebCT.

4.4 The Lecture Capture Pilot project has moved to service and is now called “capturED”. The service has been extremely well received in the areas that are using it with very positive feedback from students e.g.

“I am absolutely certain that without the benefit of the online lecture recordings, law studies would be significantly more challenging for me, and my performance/ability to follow the course would be much weaker”.

Usage has increased, the number of equipped rooms are up from 11 to 20 and usage figures indicate that around 40 events are being captured per room in the first semester. We have appended a more detailed report based on surveying users.

There are some 20 equipped locations at the close of 2010/11. The service was under development in 2009/10, but early 2010/11 figures show that roughly 40 events per location were captured in the first Semester with 12,000 views or downloads during October 2010. (Alex Carter has the full story)

4.5 Classroom AV services - Teaching rooms continue to have AV upgrades, and, in addition to working with Estates and Buildings on the delivery of a number of new build and refurbishment projects for example the level 2 teaching rooms in Appleton Tower, Information Services delivered a number of projects designed to improve the quality of AV facilities in centrally resourced teaching spaces: an ongoing programme of rolling replacement of end of life equipment, the addition of AV display technology into twenty small teaching rooms, and the introduction of a remote monitoring and control system to improve the reliability of AV systems across the campus. A significant action in response to rising demand for use of Personal Response Systems (‘clickers’) was the replacement of the infra-red System with a radio frequency alternative, enabling clicker to be used in every centrally resourced teaching room equipped with a dedicated PC, and available elsewhere with a portable receiver.

5. Consultations with students

5.1 ASLG – the Academic Services Liaison Group, organised and chaired by EUSA, meets several times each year and promotes discussion of issues of immediate concern to both IS and EUSA, enabling problems to be addressed promptly, and impending or possible service changes to be discussed to avoid misunderstandings. It is a very productive forum, particularly helpful in dealing with building planning related issues

5.2 Strategic planning meeting with EUSA – each year the IS senior management team holds pre-planning round talks with EUSA (comparable to those with the Colleges and Support Groups) to enable EUSA officials to be aware of the likely major developments (positive and negative) that IS will put forward in its plans, and for EUSA to make IS aware of what changes to facilities and services it would
like to see and not see taking place in the coming FY. These are very constructive planning discussions that are of value to both parties.

5.3 EUSA on IS Committees – EUSA have active representation on the Library, IT and e-Learning Committees, and are therefore party to discussions about these areas, in terms of future developments and resolving any problems that have arisen. Where possible we aim to have UG and PG representation, the latter becoming of increasing importance with the steady rise in PGT students. EUSA is also represented on Knowledge Strategy Committee, a Court Committee convened by the Head of IS.

5.4 Other approaches - We have recognised the limitations to the formal approaches to gathering student views, given the problems for representatives of speaking for a diverse student population, and so we gather information directly from samples of the appropriate student communities through surveys, focus groups and interviews. These have proven to be very useful in giving us more robust and in-depth data. We have worked very hard during 2010/11 to improve the ways in which we bring service alerts to the student community, using student email and social networking tools. The MLRP twitter feed has proven particularly useful.

6. Consultations with staff, Colleges, Schools & Support Units (incl those with direct student support activities such as Careers, IO)

6.1 We have formal and informal mechanisms to gather the views of our staff user communities. The formal mechanisms are mainly directly with the Units within which staff work (College, Support Group etc) and or as these are represented to us in Committees.

6.2 Library Committee, IT Committee, e-Learning Committee all have College, representation from student and professional communities, and discuss strategic plus major operational matters. They meet 3 times per annum and report to the Knowledge Strategy Committee and onwards to CMG and Court as appropriate.

6.3 IS staff have membership of several College/School committees, both specific to IS service areas (eg CHSS Library Committee) but also at strategic management level (eg CSE). These enable constant review of major services and facilities; and ensure better alignment between the needs of our main stakeholders and IS activities.

6.4 Outputs from these formal processes are continuous improvement of our services in line with the strategic directions of the Colleges and SGs. The steady increase in PGT students and the changes being made to support these in IS are one example of this joint activity.

6.5 Informal consultation mechanisms are through a combination of: 1:1 conversations with individuals on specific topics; gathering and analysing Helpdesk problems and queries; conversations with convenor/committee or general open meetings of IT Professionals Forum and eLearning Professionals & Practitioners Forum; email & wiki discussions around specific topics, especially projects such as ediary, Next Generation VLE. These ‘streams’ of informal input are acted upon as part of normal business by the IS Divisions and Teams, or if they are of more significant import, will be discussed in management and senior management meetings. We are aware of the need for better communications back to our user communities about the actions we have taken, or propose to take, as a consequence of this flow of information to us and will continue to work to improve this (eg through our re-designed website).

7. Feedback about IS services from national surveys

7.1 IS routinely monitors the results of national surveys which contain questions about services and facilities in the IS domains, although it must be remembered that not all IT is provided by IS, especially for postgraduate students, and ‘library’ also has some degree of ambiguity. The IS Quality Enhancement Group (with representation from all areas of IS) is responsible for keeping a watch on these surveys.

7.2 National Student Satisfaction (NSS) survey: has 2 questions about IS areas (although analysis is complicated in some due to the provision of some services by Schools as well as by IS) and Edinburgh performs well in comparison to its peers. In January 2009, 84% agreed that the library resources and services were ‘good enough’ for their needs; in 2010 that figure was 85% and remained steady at 85% for January 2011; For IT the percentages were 90% in 2009, dropping slightly to 89% in 2010 and dropping
again in 2011 to 85%. IS has taken note of these changes and is implementing a series of focus groups to understand better the student view of our services.

7.3 Postgraduate Research Experience Survey: has 1 Library and 1 IT question, and again the IT caveat is very significant here. In 2009, 71% of respondents agreed with the ‘adequacy’ of library and 67.8% reporting the same level of agreement with ‘adequacy’ of IT compared to 73% and 72% respectively in 2010. Again we have limited understanding of the scores achieved by our peers but are investigating this. The variation of wording in these different surveys makes comparison difficult.

7.4 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey: also has 1 Library and 1 IT question, and again the IT caveat is very significant here. In 2010/11, 77% of respondents agreed with the ‘adequacy’ of library and 84% reporting the same level of agreement with ‘adequacy’ of IT.

Jeff Haywood
Vice Principal Knowledge Management, CIO and University Librarian
31 January 2012
capturED service report 2011/12

This has been the first year of operation of capturED event recording system. Overall the service has proved very successful, and is growing from 11 rooms in 2010/11 to 19 for 2011/12.

The numbers

- 45 courses
- 793 recordings
- 2453 individual students
- 6862 course enrolments
- 475 GB of recordings
- 11 TB of podcasts downloaded
- over 20,000 hours watched online (over 25 viewing hours per recording)

Service overview

capturED is an automated lecture recording system developed by IS Applications Division for use at The University of Edinburgh. The system operates via centralised scheduling by the Multimedia Team, and all recording, processing and distribution is fully automated from that point.

The system was developed following the Pilot Project that operated using echo360 technology and has proved considerably more cost effective and flexible from a service operation perspective.

Viewing statistics

Below are the graphs showing the viewing statistics across all courses for the academic year 2011/12. Streaming video relates to watching embedded online video (like with iPlayer or YouTube) primarily through the capturED course player which launched in November 2011.

Course player

The course player displays a playlist of recordings for a course on the right, and the video of a recording, with controls on the left of the screen.
New recordings automatically appear in the playlist the day after the recording. By embedding the player once in a website or VLE all episodes can easily be made available. During 2010/11 the player was in Flash only, it is hoped that this can be extended to HTML 5 in 2011/12 to improve compatibility with mobile devices.

### Streaming Video

![Streaming Video](chart.png)

### Podcasting (audio, audio + video)

![Podcasting](chart.png)

### Technical Performance

Technical reliability has been fair to good and improved markedly as the service bedded in.

The main causes of failure have been related to the feeds from the projector and the scheduling system. Service improvements dramatically reduced the incidence of both types of failure during the course of the year. Reductions were offered to service charges for semester one to compensate for lower than desired reliability.

Exact tracking of reliability figures is not possible as cancellations were not consistently handled through the scheduling system. However reliability was at least 97.5% by semester 2. Figures for semester 1 are unreliable due to the high volume of ad-hoc cancellations during the period of bad weather at the end of 2010, but overall reliability was lower.

Potential issues with long recordings with a small gap before the subsequent recording were identified in semester 2. This will need careful monitoring at the start of teaching with the extension of default schedule length in response to student feedback.

Other technical issues were related to poor use of the microphone, recording of redundant feeds (where the projector was not used for instance) and use of blackboard and whiteboards instead of the visualiser. Improved information for lecturers will therefore be produced for 2011/12 academic year.
Output resolution

The use of non-standard screen resolutions in order to present video and screen capture side by side has caused problems with playback on mobile devices. For 2011/12 the system will be configured to output 1080p (Full HD) video output in order to improve compatibility and the production of alternative lower-resolution versions for mobile devices will be piloted.

Student Feedback

A survey of students registered on course with capturED recordings was carried out in April and May 2011. The survey got 208 responses in four weeks, an 8% response rate. It is worth taking some care with the results of the survey as respondents were self-selecting and the very high rate of return from international students (a key demographic for the service) is an indicator that those who found the service most useful may have been more likely to respond.

Demographics

The demographics of the survey respondents was:

- 84.6% Undergraduate, 15.4% postgraduate
- 29.3% International students (not native English speakers)
  - 50% of PG respondents were not native English speakers
  - 25.5% of UG respondents were not native English speakers
- 6.2% of respondents reported that they have additional support needs
- 97% of respondents studied full time

Attitude to lecture capture

- 92% of respondents know that lectures were being recorded
- 89% of respondents had made some use of the recordings
- 52% of respondents made use of the recordings frequently or every week
- 78% of usage was via respondents’ personal desktop or laptop computer
- 90% of respondents reported that it made study somewhat or much more effective
  - Ranking: 1 low, 3 neutral, 5 high. Mean 4.2, standard deviation 0.8

Student comments

The feedback from students had one extremely clear criticism of the system: that recordings were terminating before the end of the lecture. This was the most common negative feedback, often combined with positive statements, and a change to the scheduling will be implemented immediately, however as there is only a 5 minute gap for lunchtime slots this will continue to be an issue at those times.

While I found the service fantastic in general, there were a couple of lectures in which the last 5 minutes or so were cut off which resulted in the conclusions being missed this was most noticeable on recordings of lectures which went ahead during the heavy snow fall. Along with this I believe this system should be utilised in more lecture theatres as it was an enormously helpful tool for both revision and fact checking throughout the year.

(Student comment)
The table below summarises the criticisms and suggestions and indicates the action that will be taken in response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment/Suggestion</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Implementation Timescale</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lecture cuts off before end</td>
<td>Change scheduled stop time from end of lecture to 5 minutes later</td>
<td>Immediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound quality quiet</td>
<td>Provide guidance for lecturers to advise them to use the radio microphone</td>
<td>Make available for start of term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Investigate normalising the audio to raise levels</td>
<td>During 2011/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should be for all courses</td>
<td>Provide information to lecturers and Schools about the service</td>
<td>On going</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decision to use facilities will need to be made by lecturers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downloadable versions</td>
<td>These are available, but course player could be improved to make them more easily accessible</td>
<td>During 2011/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative quality versions</td>
<td>Low-res versions for mobile devices can be produced. This should be trialled</td>
<td>During 2011/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues during playback</td>
<td>Evaluate and upgrade to a more recent version of player, explore HTML5 streaming for mobile devices</td>
<td>During 2011/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't record projector if not used</td>
<td>Option is available, however information on use of projector is rarely available at time of scheduling.</td>
<td>No action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot see writing on white/black boards</td>
<td>Generic camera angle will not be able to capture boards well. Inform lecturers about use of visualiser.</td>
<td>Make available for start of term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter markers, lecture titles and subject details should be added</td>
<td>Would require input from lecturers or departments. Investigate linking recordings with video CMS or youTute.</td>
<td>During 2011/12</td>
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Whilst I’ve appreciated many aspects of my course (...), at times the course has been a challenge for a range of reasons: balancing a heavy work/revision load in the run up to Christmas exams, navigating a tight lecture schedule with extra curriculars such as summer placement interviews, etc, and also balancing my university studies with part time employment (employment can occasionally compete with lecture schedules but regrettably is a necessary sacrifice since without such employment there would be no option of continuing with my law studies). I am absolutely certain that without the benefit of the online lecture recordings, law studies would be significantly more challenging for me, and my performance/ability to follow the course would be much weaker. I remain an enthusiastic and committed Edinburgh law student and to a large extent I credit the online recordings for this.  

**Student Comment**
Information for lecturers

Recording Times
Recordings are recorded automatically according to a pre-programmed schedule. This means that any overruns will not be recorded. Where possible an extra 5 minutes have been added to the scheduled slot to cope with overruns.

The standard recording times are:

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<th>Start Time</th>
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<td>09:00</td>
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During your lecture:

- **Microphone**
  Without audio the recordings are useless so it is important to use the radio microphone.
  - Advice on using the radio microphones is available from Learning and Teaching Spaces Technology Section.

- **Repeat questions**
  Questions from the audience must be repeated by the presenter to be recorded as only the radio mic is captured.

- **Lighting**
  Keep lighting levels up when you can as camera quality will suffer in dark conditions.

- **No boards**
  The video is not of high enough quality to capture things written on the blackboard or whiteboard. Try using the visualiser instead.

- **Use the top projector buttons**
  In dual projection rooms the system records the images from the projector controls at the top of the touch screen. You can switch the projector sources over if you need to.

Accessibility
Please remember that there is a legal responsibility to make media content accessible to disabled users. Ideally, this would mean a written transcript of the contents of your event. If this is not possible a written summary of the content should be provided. This should be available alongside the material.