Executive Summary

As we enter year 3 of our Information Services Strategic Plan, it is clear that the current financial position will be a significant challenge for us all. Recent consultations with the Colleges, Support Groups and EUSA highlighted the significant and continuing role that IS plays in providing both the infrastructure and services that are vital to these groups for their core businesses.

As we move into the 2010/11 academic year, IS will have explored with colleagues possible opportunities where innovation may prove beneficial in delivering efficiencies for their areas. For example, we expect that relatively small investments in IT, which reduce duplication across University, could save significant sums in the Schools and Support Groups.

During our annual consultations for this plan, the Colleges, EUSA and Support Groups identified additional or extensions of existing IS services which would be required to enable the achievement of their goals over the coming year. Recognising that the University intends to grow its student numbers and increase research activity, IS plans to focus its strategic investment on enhancing the student experience and supporting the University’s research activities. The primary areas for investment in FY2010/11 will be:

- support for research computing and end-to-end research management;
- digital library, in particular enhanced resource discovery and shared services for e-journals;
- improving IT resilience as the dependence on IT-based services increases across the university;
- extension of technology-rich teaching and study spaces, and exam venues;
- continued support for University wide projects:
  - EUCLID Project / Student & Course Administration Systems;
  - University Website Project;
  - Shared Academic Timetabling Project.

Enhancing the Student Experience

Learning and Teaching Technologies

We will expand our capacity for the use of computers in formative and summative assessment through the creation of wireless, laptop-enabled venues for exams; invigilated locations for on-demand assessments; better software for designing tests and self-tests that are appropriate to a wide range of disciplines, and a flexible e-portfolio/PDP system. More educational support for e-assessment will be available.

IS Helpline

From its starting point as a phone and email help service, the IS Helpline will expand the routes through which enquirers may seek assistance. To support increasingly mobile staff and students who work across more hours and days, the range of options on offer will be expanded. The IS website will be further developed to include more self-help materials.

University Website Redevelopment Project

The University’s reliance on the web for strategic areas of its activities (eg PGT recruitment, ELIR evidence, press coverage) is rising steadily. At the same time the range of tools and services available on the internet are changing and expanding rapidly, which presents a real challenge for keeping the website up-to-date.

IS, with the support of the Project Board, proposes a critical review of our options for the University online presence which will determine the required levels of staff and funding for future years. This requires a decision as to the level of resourcing to be available in FY2010/11, to be followed by a decision, informed by the review, in Planning Round 2011/12 for future years. As a consequence, in FY2010-11 we will maintain, but not expand, the majority of the present Polopoly-based corporate website, focussing development on the strategic priority areas.

EUCLID Project / Student & Course Administration

We will continue to work with the EUCLID Team in SASG to bring the current work to a successful conclusion during summer and autumn 2010, and through the transition into a new format for a sustainable Student & Course Administration System from January 2011 onwards.
**Shared Academic Timetabling Project**  
The current limitations on the way the University manages its learning and teaching estate, impact adversely on the quality of the spaces in use. The SUMS Report in 2009 recommended that we adopt new academic business processes and procure suitable software to enable us to overcome these limitations. This was approved by CMG and APC. IS is providing high quality project management and governance input to the Project as the business process changes are agreed and software is procured to support those changes.

**Supporting Research**

*Support for Research Computing*

Information Services will support the University’s research community, ensuring that there is a robust research infrastructure in place that supports the range of users from high-end computing to individual researchers in all disciplines. We will support the ESRC Doctoral Training Programme and assist postgraduates in their use of research computing. The recommendations of our current reviews of data storage and management will be scoped and costed for implementation during FY2011-12 onwards. The hardware for our High Performance Computing Service (ECDF) will continue to be refreshed. Particular attention will be paid to opportunities offered by the closer relationship with Edinburgh College of Art.

**Support for Research Management**

During 2010/11 we will, in partnership with colleagues in the Support Groups and Colleges and with our users, review the need for a light touch end-to-end research management process. Building on the work already underway in CSG, this will focus on the options for aggregating existing systems and exploiting opportunities for interoperability.

**Library Materials**

The cost of Library materials continues to be of major concern to Schools and IS. We will continue to explore the most cost effective means of purchasing materials; and ensure that the purchasing decisions we make are leveraging best value for money. Our active involvement in shared services such as the Scottish Higher Education Digital Library will be maintained. To ensure staff and students make the most of the substantial collections we offer, we will enhance our resource discovery services, including our Research Publications Service.

**The Infrastructure**

Key to the delivery of our services is a resilient IT infrastructure. Information Services will continue to work on removing single points of failure, enhancing the IT infrastructure and applications to improve their fitness for purpose to support the University’s varied and evolving needs more closely. We will pay particular attention to improving availability, capacity, provision for business continuity, usability and integration through our agreed programme for the further development of our heavily-used IT-based services. The programme has a staff input of around £2.5m, of which £1m is funded from income outside of the University’s core grant and benefits are estimated in excess of £23m over 5 years.

**Summary**

Over the next twelve months the key to moving forward will be our ability to increase efficiency, cut waste and to do things in smarter ways. We will continue to develop innovative ways of working that enhance the student experience and support our researchers. IS will work closely with the Colleges and Support Groups to identify ways in which we can help them reduce costs through the use of innovative technologies. We will ensure that we are leveraging value from the ways in which we spend our resources; and are using those resources in ways that promote the key goals of the University.