

Corporate Information Services Questionnaire

Awareness of Services

Awareness of services offered by CIS is generally very good, with two thirds or more of the interviewees being aware of most of the services. There was little variation in the level of awareness for individual services, although the fact that the Web Development Unit administers websites with no departmental author was least know about.

Individual services were used by up to half of those interviewed, with interfacing between information systems that need to share data, first line user support, training and the design and development of websites being the most used services. The services relating to systems provided by suppliers were the least used.

Most Used Services and Systems

Services singled out by those interviewed included Agresso, QL, web services, Cohort Monitoring, payroll, and the placement database. The Research Degree Awarding Powers questionnaire and partnership data were also mentioned, as well as the alumni database, Marked profile programme and Transcript programme.

The corporate services singled out as being most important in day-to-day work included QL, Agresso, web training, Gold Report, Hercules, SQL and databases, Blackboard, Room Service, Counter Solutions and the Alexis programme.

Support by CIS

Working relationships with named individuals were quoted as being generally very good, sometimes excellent. The team was described as being helpful and supportive, often responding swiftly at short notice and having a 'can do' attitude. Excellent work goes on behind the scenes with lots of information exchange occurring both formally and informally. The department provides very valuable services to the University and staff are consistent in the quality of projects they deliver.

It was noted that support can become less reliable once that strong one-to-one relationship ceases at the end of a project – more CIS systems means less service for individual departments. Some departments feel they have stronger working relationships with CIS than others, for example Finance, External Relations, CLIENT, Hospitality Services, Admissions and the Faculty of Health and Social Care feel they have strong links, while the Planning Office and HR feel they are lower priority. The Registry feels its support level is mixed. A desire was expressed that projects should be prioritized and resources allocated according the business needs of the whole University and its customers ie students, not individual Faculties or departments. Extra staff to allow the department to respond more quickly to short term needs would be welcomed.

Services Customers Would Like to See in the Future

When asked what services CIS should provide that it does not at present, responses ranged from system specific requests, to concrete suggestions for improvements to more general qualitative comments.

Among the system specific responses, a request for using Achieve Forms with Agresso was received, together with an easier to use student attendance system, online access to management information, replacement of any old Access databases with Agresso and a newer version of the Alexis programme. Problems had also been encountered with QLe and

Gold Report and a more practical system was requested, as was placements software for the Faculty of Health and Social Care. Reporting services should be opened up, tracking of validation documents enabled and the programme directors database linked to QL. An integrated system that allowed students to make online bookings and payments would also be extremely useful, as would an experts directory of University staff available to journalists. All services should move to e-applications and e-finance, to include an improved accommodation system accessible to students from overseas.

Concrete suggestions included assigning individual contacts for Faculties or projects, with back ups to cover absences. Projects should have a clear uncomplicated reporting structure and issues should be automatically logged, with email confirmation being sent once the issue is closed.

In addition, websites should be monitored once made live to assess how well they satisfy their target audiences, including tracking customer journeys through the website from first contact to enrolment. It was felt that web projects would be facilitated by better communications between the web team and Web Systems in Computing Services. Proper individual web pages for staff would also be welcomed. There was also a feeling that the website could be used more effectively as a marketing and recruitment tool for the University, if greater direction was given to the web team from other departments, or if a marketing role was established within CIS to counteract its current technical emphasis. Graphic design services should be available to the whole University.

More qualitative remarks were made regarding the promotion of CIS and its services across the University. It was felt that the department would be supported by a more informative website, clearly indicating which member of staff is responsible for what. A more central location for the department on campus would also help enhance the department's visibility. CIS should work hard to ensure that new developments are communicated at lower management levels as well as at Committee level, giving those with a front-line, customer facing perspective opportunity to feedback and comment. CIS could also offer a course similar to 'Finance for non-Finance staff' to raise awareness of what the department does.

It was felt by some that there is the risk of a 'language barrier' arising between technical staff in CIS and the departments they work with. This could be overcome with more layman's guides to services and a proactive approach to understanding the needs and pre-existing work cycles of other departments. Assistance with budgeting for CIS projects and translating business needs into technical requirements would be greatly appreciated. Regular monitoring of projects and systems once delivered would help to identify any issues and future developments needed. CIS should actively play its role as a corporate information system and maintain a reactive response to emerging issues.

Awareness of CIS as an Individual Department

Many of those interviewed have been aware of CIS since its formation due to their length of service, while some only became aware more recently due to their involvement with new projects. Long standing working relationships have been established with CIS staff, often dating from prior to the formation of CIS. Interviewees reported mixed awareness of CIS across their departments, depending on staff members' involvement with the various systems. There is less awareness that the web team is part of CIS and a degree of confusion regarding the relationship between CIS, Computing Services and LTEU.

Generally however, most people were aware that CIS and Computing Services are separate and distinct departments. There were some comments that this is a problem, stretching resources for each department and impacting on effective communication. Others felt that there were blurred lines between the departments, which was a positive thing. Those who were not aware of the distinction between the two tended to see everyone as 'computing services' people and were not aware of individual roles.