

ABERDEEN COLLEGE

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY STRATEGY

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The College is best seen not as a collection of buildings but as an organisational and support construct; implicit in this is the concept of distributed information – information which is not tied to a particular physical place but can be accessed regardless of location.
- 1.2 Aberdeen College is committed to the use of Information Technology (IT) – Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) and Information and Learning Technologies (ILT) – to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of learning and prepare learners for a world in which IT is all-pervasive, and to improve the efficiency of its business processes.
- 1.3 Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and Information and Learning Technologies (ILT) have the potential to enhance learning substantially, allowing the development of customised services which meet the needs and aspirations of individual learners in new and exciting ways.
- 1.4 The College acknowledges that demographic and other factors will see a shift towards a more diverse client group where learning will have to fit into a complex pattern of life, work, childcare and other demands. To accommodate these demands learning must be more flexible, more accessible, more portable and more tailored to individual need. The College also recognises that it will be the ability to change and adapt with confidence, rather than being equipped with a static skillset, that will be crucial in learner success.
- 1.5 The College acknowledges that the resources available for investment in ICT over the coming years will be more constrained and that developments must be evaluated carefully to ensure they promote effectiveness, efficiency and economy.

2.0 The Strategy

- 2.1 The College has an established and very visible commitment to the use of IT in all it does. It is committed not only to the provision of hardware and software, but to equipping learners and staff with the relevant IT knowledge, skills and qualifications needed to ensure that they can contribute productively to their personal and career development, to the progress and prosperity of the organisations for which they work, and for the betterment of their local communities and the national economy.
- 2.2 The College is also committed to the development of a culture in which staff and learners embrace the opportunities provided by new technologies: a culture of innovation, opportunity and openness to change. The following broad aims are pivotal to the strategy:
 - Innovative use and enhancement of IT and multi-media technologies in both learning and teaching, and business processes
 - Increasing flexibility and responsiveness to learner needs
 - Widening access throughout the College's service area
 - Preparing learners with the ICT skills required for successful involvement in education, work, leisure, community and active citizenship
 - Establishing, where appropriate, effective and integrated information systems
 - Moving, where appropriate, from paper-based to electronic information and record systems
 - Increasing online services that promote effective communication of information, interaction and business development to stakeholders.
- 2.3 The College's approach to IT and learning will be characterised by the following key principles:
 - 2.3.1 Enhancing access to learning through:
 - flexibility of learning delivery in terms of pace, place and time
 - accessibility of learning systems and materials
 - development of learning materials for multiple modes of delivery
 - alternative modes of study allowing choices between full-time, part-time and flexible learning.

- 2.3.2 Catering for a diverse range of learners through:
- developing learning which accommodates different lifestyles and work patterns
 - learning materials which take account of the range of learning styles and media preferences
 - blended learning approaches which are matched to the needs of learners
 - allowing for a degree of independence in their learning
 - catering for a range of ability levels and starting points
 - providing appropriate support for all learners including fragile learners
 - the provision of enabling and assistive technologies.
- 2.3.3 An approach to ICT and ILT in learning which is characterised by:
- the use of ICT and ILT in all appropriate aspects of the curriculum, including assessment
 - the development of learner information literacy
 - a focus on transferable ICT skills rather than mere facility with particular software packages
 - developing skills for the future (in so far as these can be anticipated)
 - the integration of ICT with other Core and Soft Skills
 - the development of ICT within a vocational context, rather than as a "bolt-on"
 - approaches to learning which are informed by current knowledge of the learning process.
- 2.4 The introduction of new IT systems and the enhancement of existing IT systems has enabled the College to re-engineer key business processes to improve efficiency and responsiveness. The College has developed a series of computer-based management systems to effect improvements in quality and efficiency in its management and administrative services.
- 2.4.1 The College's approach to IT and business processes will be characterised by the following key principles:
- interlinking of systems, where appropriate and feasible, to ensure that once captured, data can be accessed and reused effectively and efficiently
 - use of automated online workflows to improve communication and tracking, and reduce the use of traditional paper-based approaches.
- 2.5 Effective management of implementation of ICT and ILT will be characterised by:
- coherent approach to ICT and ILT in learning which is learning (rather than technology) driven
 - co-ordination of different strands of strategic development so that these are well integrated and mutually supportive
 - effective project planning with defined milestones to achieve the above
 - integration of strategy and budget
 - focus on learner outcomes
 - integration of ICT and ILT as a matter of course design (not individual lecturer discretion)
 - evaluation to ensure that objectives are achieved
 - development of learning materials as key College assets, centrally stored, and available for sharing and reuse
 - make use of existing materials which are either commercially or freely available
 - integration of College systems in pursuit of efficiency, learner benefits and the more effective management of learning.
 - ensure interoperability and compatibility with the systems of key partners (schools, universities, employers).

3.0 Implementation and Management of the Strategy

- 3.1 Overall responsibility for the implementation of the College's Information Strategy will rest with the Senior Management Team of the College.
- 3.2 In implementing this Strategy the key elements are:
- Achievement of the College's IT service strategic objectives
 - Allocation of adequate financial resources to provide the level of IT resource necessary
 - Effective IT support to maintain a highly available and stable infrastructure across all College sites
 - Clear planning of IT developments and upgrading, in terms of hardware, connectivity and applications
 - Clear planning of the continued development of online support services for students and teaching staff

- Continued development of integrated e-enabled administration functions that promote efficient business processes
- Effective evaluation of new technology before implementation, including structured processes for trialling new devices
- Further development of the ICT skills of teaching staff and support staff to ensure that they can make effective use of appropriate technologies to support the learner
- Monitor the impact of ICT and ILT on the learning and teaching process (through surveys, audits, focus groups)
- Consider the requirements of 'Curriculum for Excellence' in the selection and deployment of ICT and ILT resources in support of learning and teaching
- Effective networking with other organisations to allow the sharing of good practice
- Disseminate good practice through online showcases, competitions and structured good-practice display events.
- Promote sustainability in the use and application of IT.

3.3 The following meetings support the effective implementation and management of this strategy:

3.3.1 Strategic Programme Board

The Strategic Programme Board (SPB) is held twice a year and comprises both College and RM staff to review and College's IT Service Strategic Objectives and evaluate the progress and outcomes achieved.

3.3.2 Programme Board

The Programme Board (PB) considers proposed IT development projects in two stages – as an initial idea from which the development of a Project Initiation Document (PID) is authorised, and the consideration of the PID. Following consideration of the PID the PB makes a recommendation regarding the viability, worth and priority of the project. Projects are also evaluated in terms of costs and savings of the development and the number of days of development time which are required. A costed 3 year development plan of approved projects is maintained and monitored by the PB.

3.3.2 Innovation Forum

The Innovation Forum is held once per year. The Forum provides an opportunity for College staff and other relevant parties to demonstrate, discuss and evaluate new and upcoming technologies that offer the potential to bring new dimensions to the learning experience, and College business processes.

3.3.3 ICT Resources Group

The ICT Resources Group meets weekly to consider requests for the purchase of IT hardware, software and online learning materials; change requests that may impact on previously approved projects and hardware warranties.

3.3.4 IT in the Curriculum Group

The IT in the Curriculum Group is a sub-committee of the Academic Board, and meets once per Block to advise on the development of the use of IT in the delivery of College programmes.

3.4 Named managers will have specific responsibility for various aspects of the Strategy and, for ensuring compatibility with other College activities.

4.0 Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 All members of the *Senior Management Team* will ensure investment in IT delivers efficiencies and quality improvements, and will promote the use of IT and online business processes in their areas of responsibility.

4.2 The *Principal* will be responsible for providing strategic direction and leadership and for reporting on progress regularly to the Board of Management.

4.3 The *Vice Principal and Director of Finance and Administration* will ensure that adequate budget is allocated to support the implementation of the strategy.

4.4 The *Vice Principal and Director of Human Resource Management and Development* will ensure that staff recruitment and staff development plans support the implementation of the strategy.

- 4.5 The *Director (Curriculum and Learning)* will ensure that ICT and ILT are integrated into learning and teaching.
- 4.6 The *Associate Principal (Student Support Services), Sector and Departmental Managers* will ensure appropriate progress in their own areas of responsibility.
- 4.7 The *Associate Principal (Student Support Services), and Vice Principal (Director of Finance and Administration)* will ensure that College student administration systems are managed in such a way as to allow integration, where this is feasible, with other College systems as outlined in this strategy.
- 4.8 The IT Service Support Officer will:
- ensure staff are supported in identifying and trialling new technologies for implementation
 - review and monitor the College's IT estate to ensure changing learning and teaching IT requirements are met appropriately
 - monitor the Managed Service Provider to ensure compliance with service level standard agreements
 - maintain a programme of meetings with service users, in conjunction with the Managed Service Provider.
- 4.9 The Business Process Improvement Manager will:
- provide current, accurate, consistent and well-organised information online which meets the information needs of staff and students
 - rationalise through the use of technology key College processes through the development and maintenance of online management systems, tools and related software.
- 4.10 The *Learning Technologies (ILT) Manager* will:
- manage VLE and CMS development and use across the College
 - Provide guidance and training to staff in the appropriate use of new technologies.
- 4.11 The *RM Service Delivery Manager* will
- meet services standards as stated in the Managed Service Provider's contract
 - ensure that College systems provide the level of functionality and reliability which is needed.-
 - provide IT support to College staff and students
 - promote innovation in the use of IT in both teaching and support functions
 - monitor College staff and student satisfaction in terms of IT facilities and support.
- 4.12 The *Quality Manager* will ensure that ICT developments are implemented in ways that are consistent with effective quality management.
- 4.13 The *Technical Manager* will ensure that multi-media technologies are implemented in ways that support the development, transmission and display of high quality learning materials.
- 4.14 As professionals, *teaching staff* will be responsible for undertaking appropriate staff development to enable them to use the technological resources available to them, and for applying the skills acquired in ways which enhance the quality of learning and teaching.

5.0 Additional Information

The following complementary documents have been established:

- 5.1 *Learning and Teaching Strategy* – identifies the College's approach to effective curriculum delivery, including the role of ILT within it.
- 5.2 *Assessment Strategy* – identifies the way in which the College will promote use of computer-marked assessment and other aspects of online assessment.
- 5.3 *Green ICT Strategy* – identifies the ways in which the College will promote environmental sustainability within its use of ICT.
- 5.4 *Core Skills Policy, and Core Skills and Soft Skills Strategy* – defines the College's commitment to the delivery of Core Skills, including the Core Skill of IT.

- 5.5 *Web Guidelines* – commits the College to the use of a web interface both as a public face of the College (through its website) and for simplifying access to internal information, systems and processes (through AbNet and other College Systems).
- 5.6 *Acceptable Use Policy: Electronic Communication Systems* – outlines how College ICT equipment should be used.
- 5.7 *Data Retention Policy* – identifies the quantity of data that should be retained and how quickly that data should be accessible.