

9 November 2009

Malcolm Read
JISC Executive Secretary
Northavon House
Coldharbour Lane
Bristol BS16 1QD

Dear Malcolm

JISC core funding partners: advice letter 2009-10 to 2011-12

1. I am writing on behalf of the JISC's core funding partners¹ to set out our strategic priorities for the JISC for the three year-period 2009-10 to 2011-12². The advice in this letter is based on the common policy priorities of the core funders, except where stated. It will be updated annually to recognise changing policy environments and includes advice for work within both the higher education and post-school sectors.

2. While the JISC has very strong support from both Government and the education sectors, it is clear that, in a time of growing pressure on public finances, there will be increased scrutiny of funding. If the JISC is to retain or increase its current level of funding, it will need to demonstrate alignment with the policy context set by each of the national administrations and the relevant national outcomes for learners, society and the economy. In addition, the JISC will need to continue to articulate its value to stakeholders, deliver on key policy priorities and support the above sectors in identifying efficiencies.

3. Broadly, the JISC should continue to help institutions to utilise ICT to support all of their activities. This includes ensuring that its products and services are embedded and taken up, that effective measures for monitoring and evaluation of its work are in place and that key messages on the benefits of using technology are shared more widely, for example, with institutional senior managers and stakeholders beyond the JISC community. The JISC should also continue to work closely with other key agencies (the Higher Education Academy, the British Library, UCISA, The Leadership Foundation and the Research Councils, among others) to increase the impact of its work.

¹ HEFCE, SFC, DCELLs, HEFCW, DEL Northern Ireland.

² Based on the academic year (AY).

Innovative and sustainable ICT infrastructure, services and practice that support institutions in meeting their mission

4. Universities and colleges make a major contribution to the UK economy and its global competitiveness. The JISC therefore should continue to provide world-class infrastructure, innovation programmes and services so that institutions can fully exploit the potential of ICT to meet their own unique missions for research and education. This will include, for example:

- a. supporting more users across research and education through high performance computing and faster network speeds;
- b. achieving efficiencies of scale and coherence in the delivery of provision and the procurement of advice and content services;
- c. creating an integrated information environment supporting online resources of all types (including e-Books) and providing common solutions for research, learning and teaching, and digital libraries;
- d. providing effective services via, for example, Regional Support Centres, that are responsive to local needs, and that support co-operation across higher education and other post-school education providers.

Promoting the development, uptake and effective use of ICT to support learning and teaching

5. High quality learning and teaching (including assessment and feedback) are essential to achieving student and employer satisfaction, national skills and science outcomes, and supporting the broader social and cultural role of education in a modern society. Technology-enhanced learning has been shown to improve recruitment and retention³ and, applied strategically, can lead to transformational institutional change. The JISC's work in this area should explore how ICT contributes to the following outcomes:

- a. improved systems and processes to keep pace with the demand for flexible forms of study (part time study, accelerated degrees, work-based learning, continuing professional development and, short unaccredited courses), and that respond to the changing needs and expectations of learners, teachers and employers;
- b. improved access to online resources for students and access to free, open educational content;
- c. good practice regarding staff and students' ICT skills.

6. Technology can help widen participation in education, particularly for lifelong learners, under-represented groups and for those with specific aptitudes and needs. The JISC should work with national and local partners as requested, offering advice on how

³ The Tangible Benefits of e-Learning project. See:

http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/programme_elearning_capital/camelbelt.aspx.

technology can:

- a. improve interoperability between institutional, cross-institutional, cross-sector and employer information systems;
- b. improve admissions processes so that they are efficient and remain fair;
- c. improve the coherence and consistency of information, advice and guidance for learners;
- d. offer support for personal development planning and continuing professional development.

Promoting the development, uptake and effective use of ICT to support research

7. The UK needs to continue to improve the quality of its research in order to maintain and enhance its already high international standing and competitive advantage. Technology can change the way in which research is done, improving its effectiveness, availability and impact. In addition to maintaining the infrastructure in which research is carried out, the JISC has a role to play in supporting research excellence through:

- a. the creation and population of repositories to create a wide range of scholarly resources available for the widest possible dissemination;
- b. the creation of online tools for storing, finding and accessing research outputs, as well as tools aimed at researchers (including young career researchers);
- c. enabling effective research collaborations across institutions and internationally;
- d. adaptations to institutional processes and systems for the Research Excellence Framework.

Promoting the development, uptake and effective use of ICT to support institutions in addressing broader strategic objectives

8. To meet the needs of diverse (and growing) stakeholder groups, institutions increasingly need to consider their information and administrative systems (e.g. finance, estates and HR), how they connect, and the business processes which they support. A more visionary and innovative use of ICT in management and administration is called for and the JISC should look to facilitate synergy between institutional strategies, processes and systems. In addition, the JISC should contribute to the work being done to:

- a. meet the need for shared administrative services;
- b. ensure higher quality data;
- c. counter climate change through institutional sustainability, particularly by reducing energy consumption;
- d. improve security, privacy, the interoperability and resilience of ICT systems, as well as the management, transfer and recovery of data;
- e. monitor trends and technologies that may have an impact on core institutional business, management and staff expertise in future.

Developing and implementing a programme to support institutions' engagement with business and the wider community

9. To enhance national economic development, universities and colleges are looking to increase the impact of the HE knowledge base through innovation, enterprise and improved interactions with business and community groups. The JISC's role in respect of business and community engagement (BCE) should be to enhance and empower institutional BCE activity through support for strategic information management, including for example:

- a. the management and exploitation of knowledge assets through integrated information systems;
- b. online collaboration and provision of service across, and between, institutions;
- c. process and technological change to sustain and integrate effective relationships;
- d. richer, more productive knowledge and learning partnerships between institutions and BCE partners.

Continue to improve JISC's own working practices

10. The JISC itself will be expected to:

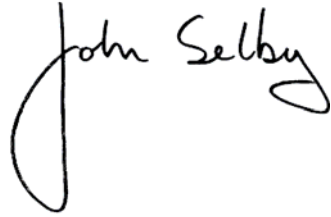
- a. streamline its own operations, achieving efficiency savings where possible;
- b. consider sustainability, equality and diversity across all of its work;
- c. minimise the burden for institutions in relation to JISC work and accessing JISC funds;
- d. contribute to the relevant devolved agreements/concordats on data collections and quality assurance;
- e. ensure the effective gathering and communicating of evidence to support the needs of individual core funders, and more generally, improve relationships with them.

11. Education is a devolved responsibility in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and there are important areas of policy divergence across the UK⁴. We look to the JISC to fully inform itself of the policy context in each UK country: to set up appropriate liaison mechanisms with the education sectors and funding bodies in each country; to ensure that in its publications and activities it clearly distinguishes UK-wide from country-specific issues; and that its UK-wide activities are tailored appropriately to reflect the distinctive context of higher and post-school education in each country. Each country retains the right to offer extra funding to JISC to provide additional services in that country.

12. I hope you will find this guidance letter valuable in setting the JISC's strategic priorities for the coming three year period.

⁴ Full details of all national priorities and documentation are held by the JISC Secretariat, based at Northavon House, Coldharbour Lane, Bristol BS16 1QD

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Selby". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial 'J'.

John Selby
(on behalf of JISC's core funders)

Cc: Brian Baverstock (SFC), David Blaney (HEFCW), Christine Major (DCELLS), Sheila Rodgers (DEL)