

8 August 2008
Dr Malcolm Read
Executive Secretary, JISC
Northavon House
Coldharbour lane
Bristol BS16 1QD



Northavon House
Coldharbour Lane
BRISTOL BS16 1QD

Telephone 0117 931 7416

Facsimile 0117 931 7083

www.hefce.ac.uk

Dear Malcolm

JISC Core Funding Partners: Advice Letter 2008/09 AY

1. I am writing on behalf of JISC's core funding partners to set out our strategic priorities for the JISC during the academic year (AY) 2008-09. The following issues, which are common to all of our grant letters, form the basis of our joint steer to the JISC.
2. We also expect this letter to be the basis for JISC budget proposals for AY 2009-10, since if JISC is to retain or increase its current levels of funding, it will need to demonstrate the alignment of its priorities with those of its funders.
3. All our grant letters stress the importance of the strategic plans that are in place across the UK. In this regard, the JISC should ensure that its strategic objectives support the plans laid out in these documents:

England

- The Future of Higher Education
- Investment Framework for Science and Innovation 2004-2014
- HEFCE Strategic Plan 2006-2011, updated May 2008
- HEFCE strategy for e-Learning, 2005 – under review

Scotland

- Framework for Higher Education;
- SFC Corporate Plan 2006-2009: Learning and Innovation: helping to deliver Scotland's strategy for the future;
- Life through Learning: Learning through Life;
- Review of Council Strategy on e-Learning, October 2007;
- Promoting Excellence - the Scottish Government's response to the review of Scotland's colleges, 2007.

Wales

- Reaching Higher;
- HEFCW Corporate Strategy & Plan and Operational Plan 2007-08 to 2009-10;
- Enhancing Learning & Teaching Through Technology: a Strategy for HE in Wales, 2008;
- The Learning Country: Vision into Action;
- E-Wales Strategy and Action Plan;
- One Wales;
- Skills that Work for Wales;

Northern Ireland

- Department for Employment and Learning Strategic Plan;
- Northern Ireland Skills Strategy;
- Further Education Means Business.

4. JISC will also wish to be informed by the needs of its Associate Partners through documents such as 'Innovation Nation (March 2008),' the Leitch Review of Skills: Prosperity for All in the Global Economy (2006) and the governmental responses, and through the 'OSI E-Infrastructure Report;' the 'Research Council UK Delivery Plan' and the 'RCUK Position Statement on Access to Research Outputs.'

5. The JISC Strategy 2007-2009 points to a number of key themes which the funding councils would wish to see addressed. More generally, JISC should continue to help institutions to utilise ICT to support all of their activities. JISC should also look to improve its relevance to, and further engage senior management and policy makers, to ensure key messages and the value and impact of JISC's work are better understood.

i) Research – to improve the sustainability of university research to ensure it remains competitive and provides optimum contribution to economic growth.

- JISC's role to support the research community should focus on delivering the underlying infrastructure, such as SuperJANET5, embedding e-research technologies widely, digitising key content, making institutional content more openly available through digital repositories, and informing the Research Excellence Framework.
- JISC should look to work in collaboration with the Research Councils and the UK Research Information Network in this area.

ii) Learning and Teaching – to continuously improve the quality of teaching and support for learning and to facilitate institutions in developing appropriate teaching provision to respond economically and effectively to the needs of learners and other stakeholders.

- JISC's role to support learning and teaching should focus on the development of infrastructure and applications to support e-learning pedagogies and flexible learning, taking account of lifelong and work-based learning and employer engagement issues. This includes the changing student experience and encouraging institutions to make educational resources more openly available to others.
- JISC should also continue to improve access to online resources through content procurement activities managed by JISC Collections, piloting the use of e-books and the digitisation of content.
- JISC should look to work in collaboration with the HE Academy and Becta in this area.

iii) Widening Participation and Widening Access – widening participation partnerships across the UK designed to improve the life chances of people through access to the most appropriate opportunities.

- JISC should look to support institutions in this area through work on cross-institutional provision, e-portfolios and supporting learners on HE in Further Education in particular and look at ways to support more flexible learning, in the context of work-based learning and employer engagement issues.

- JISC should look to work in partnership with the HE Academy and Becta where appropriate and organisations such as MIAP (Managing Information Across Partners).

iv) Shared Services, Management and Administration – improving the sharing of infrastructure, resources, processes, knowledge and advice and guidance to provide sector-wide efficiencies and reduce administrative burden.

- JISC's work to explore the integration of research, learning and administrative systems is potentially key in this area (the e-Frameworks Programme), together with the SuperJANET network, content procurement, shared infrastructure services and digital repositories infrastructure. It will also be important to continue to share best practice through the JISC's advisory services and the Regional Support Centres which act as a shared service to the FE sector.
- JISC should explore the role of technology in enabling the strategic management of institutions focusing on the development of strategic advice and guidance, and tools that enhance institutional practices, to support this.
- JISC should look to continue its involvement in supporting e-administration activities including minimising the burden of their administrative responsibilities in general and of information and data recording, processing, sharing and storing in particular, thereby enabling more effective exploitation of an institution's information resources.
- JISC should consider future trends and technologies, including user-owned and mobile technologies, that might have an impact on the core activity of institutions and explore the management and staff expertise and organisational structures that might be appropriate for future needs.
- JISC should look to work in collaboration with the Leadership Foundation and the HE Academy in this area where applicable.

v) Sustainable Development – the UK HE sector will be recognised as a major contributor to society's efforts to achieve sustainability, both through the skills and knowledge that its graduates learn and put into practice, and through its own strategies and operations.

- JISC's role in this area should focus on the development of technology and practices that recognise, and attempt to offset, the environmental impact of institutions in conducting their business, and support sustainable solutions for doing so where possible and economically viable.
- JISC should explore the practical measures the sector can take to build ICT services that counter climate change, and mitigate the effects of higher energy prices and share practice across the sector accordingly.
- JISC should work with bodies such as the Universities and Colleges Information Systems Association (UCISA) in this area.

vi) Business and Community Engagement (BCE) – whilst noting that this is defined and addressed in different ways across the UK, to enable HE and FE institutions to engage in a wide variety of ways with business and the community, in order to enhance the contribution of higher education to the economy and society.

- JISC should look to facilitate synergy between strategies, processes and systems in institutions, to enable BCE functions to be better connected to other key internal functions such as information management and administration.

- JISC should support institutions in opening up institutional assets and knowledge for wider benefit, whilst managing risks and securing controls to create internal benefit.
- JISC should look to tailor appropriate publications and advice to support this diverse community.
- JISC should work closely with the Institute of Knowledge Transfer (IKT), the Association for University Research and Industry Links (AURIL), and other relevant organisations as appropriate.

vii) Efficiency and Reducing Burdens – reducing the administrative burden on institutions whilst maintaining proper accountability for the use of public funds.

- JISC should ensure it is as efficient as possible in its operations, making efficiency gains where possible, and in minimising bureaucracy for and within institutions.
- The JISC's Market Research and Evaluation unit within the Executive should continue to co-ordinate survey work to minimise duplication and to work with other relevant organisations on surveys.
- JISC should continue to contribute to the Higher Education Regulation Review Group's concordat on data collection and quality assurance and contribute to other equivalent exercises in the devolved countries where requested.

viii) Full Economic Costs – the Transparency Review and the Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) methodology for institutions to establish the full costs of the research they undertake, taking into account the need for sensible investment to renew and update the research infrastructure.

- The recent audit on how JISC has implemented full economic costs has demonstrated good progress and JISC should continue to seek institutional contributions towards innovation projects and JISC services where host institutions benefit from activities;
- JISC should now concentrate on providing further guidance to executive staff, an FAQ document for the JISC website and a policy document for institutions that host JISC services.

6. There are also a number of priorities that are specific to particular funding bodies where we would expect the JISC to contribute where appropriate. These are detailed in the annex to this letter.

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

Yours sincerely



John Selby
(on behalf of JISC's Core Funders)

Cc Bill Harvey, SFC; David Blaney, HEFCW; Christine Major, DCELLS;
Marian Cree, DEL

Annex

There are a number of priorities that are specific to particular funding bodies where the JISC should contribute where appropriate. These are detailed below.

a. Higher Education Funding Council for England

- Lifelong Learning Networks;
- Student retention;
- Foundation degrees;
- European Research Area;
- Efficiency gains.

b. Scottish Funding Council

- Develop national, international collaborations and global connections to raise Scotland's international profile;
- Develop cultural activity in Scotland and use cultural activities to boost achievement by building confidence, self-esteem, teamwork and commitment;
- Participate in the Council's national enhancement themes, particularly those (such as assessment and flexible delivery) where there is greatest scope for the development of e-learning applications;
- Maintain close liaison with the Council's activities to promote transformational change through e-learning, to ensure appropriate synergies with other JISC activities;
- Improve coherence and consistency of information, advice and guidance for learners.

c. Higher Education Funding Council for Wales

- Promoting institutional reconfiguration and collaboration to create clusters and networks of excellence;
- Delivering the HEIs' contribution to the Welsh Assembly Government's objectives for the economy, society and the community;
- Supporting institutions in developing and implementing technology to enhance learning in accordance with their learning and teaching strategies;
- Growing the amount of provision through the medium of Welsh;
- Contributing to the development of the Public Sector Broadband Aggregation Project for Wales.

d. Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (FE Wales)

- Support increased confidence in using technology for learning and, more generally, support WBL, ACL and Voluntary sectors to enable providers to become confident and effective users of e-learning and ICT for the benefit of learners and Wales;
- Improve intelligence and data available on the impact and value provided by e-learning and ICT, including its impact on participation, attention and progression in learning;
- Support delivery of post 16 learning's contribution to the Assembly objectives for the economy, society and the community.

e. Department for Employment and Learning (HE and FE, Northern Ireland)

- To enhance the universities' research capabilities and research quality;

- To exploit fully the contribution which the universities can make to the economy and to increase their responsiveness to the needs of business and the community;
- To ensure effective governance of all the universities' affairs;
- Test the concept of a Unique Learner Number to improve coherence and consistency of information, advice and guidance for learners;
- To embed the use of ILT in the Curriculum.