



Promoting excellence in the application of information systems and services in support of teaching, learning, research and administration in higher and further education



Universities and Colleges  
Information Systems Association

## What is UCISA?

UCISA is the Universities and Colleges Information Systems Association, the key membership organisation representing those responsible for delivering information systems and technology services in universities, colleges and related institutions.





## Developing ideas and information to support policy making

Educational institutions are becoming increasingly dependent on information technology systems – in the majority of cases IT is now critical to the successful running of the institution. Consequently information services departments and the infrastructure they support and deliver are key to the success of individual institutions. **UCISA** supports these departments by promoting excellence in the application of information systems and promoting best practice, allowing its members to maximise cost effectiveness, develop ideas and inform and support policy making within their institution, nationally and internationally. As a representative body, **UCISA** acts as a powerful lobbying voice for the sector, responding to consultations and draft legislation. In addition, with membership comprising institutions, related agencies such as the universities admissions service, and IT companies, **UCISA** is in a unique position to raise issues, discuss them openly and move towards their resolution.

**UCISA** is also important to those with a commercial interest in the education sector, especially through the annual conferences, which provide a unique opportunity to meet and communicate with those involved in information systems and technology delivery within universities and colleges. **UCISA** seeks to work in partnership with its corporate members to the benefit of all its members.

## How UCISA can benefit you





**UCISA** is an institutional membership organisation so the benefits of membership are open to everyone in each participating institution. In addition to the Full membership category for universities and colleges, **UCISA** has Affiliate membership for other educational, not for profit organisations, overseas universities and educational bodies, plus a Corporate membership category. **UCISA** membership can benefit you and your organisation in four key areas:

Providing information through four key areas

**UCISA** ▶

**Events** ▶

**Community** ▶

**Best practice** ▶

**Representation** ▶



## A wide range of events accommodating all levels of staff

### Events

UCISA organises a number of events throughout the year. These range from the three day Management Conference and Exhibition through to intensive training and personal development courses and one day seminars and workshops focused on specific topics. The range of events accommodates all levels of staff within information services departments.

The annual UCISA Management Conference and Exhibition is a key point in the year for the managers of information systems in UK member institutions and is increasingly of interest to others in the UK and internationally. For many companies who do business in the sector, it is probably the most important opportunity to meet with customers old and new at one time. In addition to this event, the conferences of UCISA's special interest groups now provide further valuable opportunities to meet and exchange information and ideas. In all, UCISA normally runs 3 multi-day conferences per year.

UCISA also arranges a range of one day events. These include Managers' Forums which are targeted at senior and middle management to discuss the main issues affecting the membership. Recent events have covered topics as diverse as IT procurement, job evaluation and anytime, anywhere computing. The special interest groups also arrange seminars on matters affecting their constituency. Topics covered in 2005 included resilient systems, public relations in IT and the Freedom of Information Act. In addition, UCISA has worked with the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education and other groups on the provision of management and leadership programmes for its membership.

### Community

Membership of UCISA allows individuals at member institutions to build a network of contacts. These networks can be established through a range of UCISA run email lists, through the bi-monthly newsletter and website, or through informal contact at conferences and other events.





## Learn about sector wide issues and keep up to date

The email lists are frequently used by members to conduct surveys amongst their peers and to seek assistance with addressing local issues. Results from surveys are posted on the website to provide a resource for all members.

In addition to informal surveys, UCISA collects statistics on the use of IT in the sector. The statistics have been recognised as a valuable benchmarking tool in a report by the Joint Costing and Pricing Steering Group on Information Services at the University of Reading and have also been recognised as the only collection of statistics on higher education IT by the Office for National Statistics. Additionally, UCISA periodically carries out a survey of IT salaries.

UCISA also surveys its membership to establish the top concerns of the sector. The results from this survey are used to shape UCISA's work and have also influenced the work of the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC). The top concerns, along with the main statistics, have been used by corporate members in the development of their strategies for the sector.

## Best practice

UCISA promotes best practice through its events, through publication of case studies, good practice guides and toolkits and through awards. UCISA seeks to attract leading speakers, exemplars in their fields from home and abroad and from both within and outwith the sector, to present at its events. In addition, members are encouraged to share good practice through presentations and by contributions to specialist sections of the website or by writing up case studies. Where there are major issues that affect the whole community, UCISA will seek to commission authoring of toolkits to allow institutions to build quality policies and procedures and good practice guides. A recent example is the Information Security Toolkit, launched in November 2005.

The SunGard SCT sponsored UCISA Award for Excellence aims to recognise and highlight levels of excellence and best practice that currently exist and are demonstrated by UCISA members. In addition, the specialist groups sponsor awards within their own areas.

## Representation

UCISA represents its membership in a number of ways. In addition to responding to consultations and meetings with government departments, funding councils and other agencies, UCISA has built bridges with sister organisations within the sector, particularly SCONUL, representing the library community and ALT, representing the learning technologists. In providing a forum to ascertain the views of its members, UCISA both responds in its own right to issues and provides members with the background knowledge to tackle those issues in their respective organisations. UCISA also has links with similar organisations in the Irish Republic, Europe as a whole, Australia and the United States.

The special interest groups also have links with groups specific to their areas of interest. Examples of these include UKERNA who provide the Joint Academic Network and the Higher Education Statistics Agency. UCISA also works with its corporate members to ensure that the needs of institutions are understood and represented within those companies.

# How you can get involved



## Involvement with the group activities contributes to self development

Many UCISA events are interactive with participants encouraged to contribute through discussion sessions or more practical workshops. The email lists also allow individuals to contribute to the sharing of best practice and surveys.

However, one of the ways you can get further involved in the work of UCISA is to join one of the Groups. Membership of one of the Group committees puts you in touch with your peers at other institutions who share your interests and gives you the opportunity to develop other skills through liaison with other groups and through the work of the group itself.

As Kay Mills-Hicks, a former CISG Committee member, explains “I joined the CISG committee not long after taking on the role of Head of MIS at the University of York and found it very beneficial both for my personal development and for my institution. It was an easy way to learn about sector wide issues and keep up to date. I was also able to influence the planning and organisation of events so that they tied in closely with areas of interest in my own institution.

By meeting colleagues regularly at the committee meetings I learnt a great deal from others and developed a wider network of contacts.”

Allowing your staff time to take part in the UCISA Groups can also benefit your department. As Jean Sykes, Librarian and Director of IT Services, London School of Economics states, “Having staff who participate in UCISA groups brings real benefits to your home organisation.

They bring back good ideas, best practice from other organisations, news of leading edge developments. This allows us to keep improving our own services and stay up to date with developments. It also allows us to demonstrate to our users and the committees we serve that we are professionally aware and alert and know what is happening out there in our comparator institutions. And it also helps to get our IT services known more widely in the UK and hopefully respected for the things that we do well”.

It should be noted that membership of the Groups does require some commitment from your institution; UCISA will seek permission for individuals to become involved with a Group.



# About the Groups ▶

Annual Conference  
Organising Group

Corporate Information  
Systems Group

Infrastructure Group

Networking Group

Procurement Group

Staff Development Group

Teaching, Learning and  
Information Group



# Support Groups



## The Executive Committee

The Executive Committee oversees the Association's activities and is responsible for occasional workshops, the website, mailing lists, and the annual Management Conference. It organises responses to consultations, and maintains relations with other relevant organisations in the UK and abroad. The Committee also collects and analyses statistical information relevant to provision of information systems and technology services.

The Executive Committee comprises the four elected officers, the chairs of the special interest Groups and three elected members. UCISA's Groups carry out more detailed work in specific areas. The Groups meet regularly to organise seminars, courses, conferences and to publish examples of best practice. Details of the Groups are as follows.

### Annual Conference Organising Group (ACOG) ▼

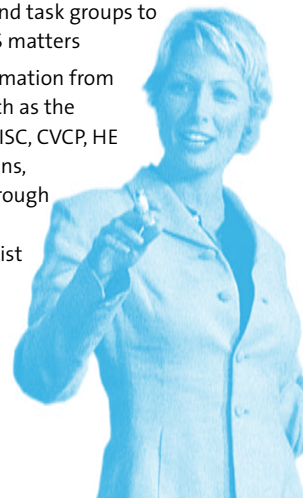
ACOG organises the Annual Management Conference and Exhibition.

### Corporate Information Systems Group (CISG) ▼

The UCISA Corporate Information Systems Group (UCISA-CISG) considers issues related to the wide ranges of systems that are key to institutions' business processes. These may include student records systems, finance systems etc as well as related services such as document management systems. The CISG Committee organises and promotes a number of activities in order to address these issues. Specifically, the Committee:

- Organises an annual conference which allows delegates to meet and discuss CIS issues raised through presentations at the conference and to meet suppliers of CIS systems and hardware
- Promotes liaison and cooperation between member CIS departments via the ucisa-cisg mailing list and the CISG Directory

- Liaises with external bodies to ensure that the views and needs of the CIS community are known and represented within those organisations and to work with those organisations on matters of common interest. In particular, UCISA-CISG works closely with JISC, UCAS and HESA
- Promotes best practice through workshops, meetings and sponsorship of initiatives through a development fund
- Represents CIS interests on cross community working parties
- Provides a mechanism for its members to contribute to UCISA responses on draft legislation and other consultative documents
- Organises liaison and task groups to address specific CIS matters
- Disseminates information from external bodies such as the Funding Councils, JISC, CVCP, HE Quality organisations, UCAS and HESA through seminars and the ucisa-cisg mailing list



# Promoting best practice through events, publications and awards



## Infrastructure Group (IG)

The Infrastructure Group (UCISA-IG) is the focal point within UCISA for activities related to:

- Operating systems (desktop and server systems)
- Desktop management – SMS, NAL etc
- File storage and data management (but not database systems)
- Directories and directory services (including LDAP, Novell's E-Directory, Microsoft Active Directory)
- Authentication and authorisation systems (including the replacement for ATHENS)
- Electronic Messaging/Groupware - the areas not covered by the Network Group
- High Performance Computing Technologies including cluster computing and grid
- System monitoring and management tools (including SNMP processing and reporting systems)

- Licensing – System's Software, Application license enforcement
- J2EE Frameworks/Middleware/Web Content Mgt/Web Services
- 24\*7 operations, environments and operational security
- Disaster Recovery/Business Continuity
- Other elements that sit between the hardware and application programs

The Group will establish effect liaison with the suppliers of these technologies to the sector.

Where these areas overlap (and interface) with activities of other UCISA Groups

and committees, UCISA-IG will work with these other Groups to provide more effective support for the UCISA membership.



## Networking Group (NG)

The UCISA Networking Group (UCISA-NG) is the special interest Group of UCISA responsible for tracking developments in electronic networking and information security and for providing advice to UCISA members on such matters. It is concerned with the monitoring and promotion of all academic and research communications networks and the networking and security services provided over them.

The primary roles of the Group are:

- To provide advice and information to members of UCISA on all aspects of electronic communications including data, voice and video
- To provide advice and information to members of UCISA on all aspects of network security with due regard for the activities of JANET CERT and relevant JISC committees
- To act as a forum for the discussion of networking and security matters within the community represented by UCISA

## Specialist groups bring expertise to the field



- To represent the UCISA community on appropriate external bodies and to establish and foster links with related groups such as JCN, JCSR, SCONUL and JNUG
- To act as a liaison between members of UCISA and UKERNA, the UK MAN Managers group, the JANET National Users Group (JNUG) and other appropriate bodies. UCISA-NG will supply representatives on these groups who will be charged with responsibility for reporting back to UCISA through UCISA-NG
- To establish working parties to investigate specific issues identified by UCISA-NG and the UCISA Executive. Wherever appropriate, these working parties will collaborate with other appropriate bodies
- To organise workshops within the UCISA framework and timetable for the purposes of communication, education and debate on networking and security related topics
- To track and advise on developments in new networking areas such as Internet 2, the new library network and the Network for Learning

### Procurement Group (PG)

The UCISA Procurement Group (UCISA-PG) exists to promote and develop value for money in the procurement and maintenance of computing hardware, software, services and associated products in the higher education community and to track technological developments in the ICT marketplace.

The main functions of the Group are:

- To coordinate the development, implementation and management of national agreements for OCT related purchasing in higher education
- To liaise with the regional purchasing consortia and Proc-HE
- To liaise with university/higher education organisations and with other external bodies as appropriate for the development of negotiations towards improved purchasing arrangements for the HE community
- To organise negotiating teams, discussion groups and suppliers workshops
- To maximise the use of electronic communications to disseminate purchasing information

- To liaise with other higher education organisations and with external bodies as might be appropriate for the development of negotiations towards improved purchasing arrangements for the higher education community
- To make suppliers better aware of the sales potential of the higher education market and to encourage them to address the particular needs of the market through improved and appropriate trading agreements

UCISA-PG has a sub-group for the purchase of computer software which works closely with Eduserv Chest. Other working groups exist from time to time to manage input to deals under negotiation or to organise events.



## Delivering high quality information



### Staff Development Group (SDG) ▼

The UCISA Staff Development Group (UCISA-SDG) is responsible for facilitating and delivering high quality information services training to enhance the personal development of staff working in IT/IS/Computer Centres. It seeks to achieve this by:

- Providing a forum for the discussion and exchange of information on the provision of IS training and staff development within the UCISA constituency
- Considering the need for and, where appropriate, developing and advising the Executive on common views, approaches and policies on IS related training and staff development issues
- Collaborating and liaising with other bodies involved in staff development and the delivery of training in IS related areas, and with the other UCISA Groups
- Providing a base for further cooperation between HEIs where appropriate, particularly in relation to best practice

There are two Subgroups which focus on Courses and Distributed IT Support Staff.

### Teaching, Learning and Information Group (TLIG) ▼

The aim of the UCISA Teaching, Learning and Information Group (UCISA-TLIG) is to assist UCISA members to gain maximum advantage from information, computer based learning, and computer mediated communication systems. In pursuit of this aim, UCISA-TLIG:

- Provides a forum for the discussion of, and exchange of information on, the research, development and implementation issues of the dissemination of information, computer based learning and computer mediated communication systems
- Advises the Executive on common views, approaches and policies on national issues
- Promotes a dialogue with influential bodies concerning common views, approaches and policies
- Provides a base for further cooperation between higher education institutions, particularly in relation to best practice
- Establishes and fosters links with related groups

The bulk of the Group's work is carried out by the three sub-groups:

The Advisory Services Working Group considers the delivery, management or planning of advisory services in IT departments, libraries and MIS departments and provide help, guidance and information in the areas, particularly on the use of technology which might assist with helpdesk activities.

The Communication, Liaison and Administration Group consider issues around interacting with users, dealing with stakeholders, carrying out service evaluation and promoting and disseminating your service's activities.

The Teaching and Learning Working Group aims to help university support staff to promote and support the use of new technologies in teaching and learning and provides a forum for the discussion of, and the exchange of information on, the development, and integration issues relating to the use of new technologies in teaching and learning.

# How you can get involved



## Membership

UCISA is a registered charity and does not aim to make profits, setting fees only at a level sufficient to carry out its business.

Certain events, such as conferences, carry an additional charge. Membership fees are reviewed annually at the Annual General Meeting, along with the budget and business plan. There are three membership categories:

### Full membership

This category is for universities, colleges and other educational institutions. Full members:

- Have priority booking at all events and training courses
- Pay lower members' rates at events and training courses
- Have access to most protected areas of the UCISA website including detailed statistics
- Have full access to the UCISA Directory
- Have full access to mini surveys
- Receive UCISA Update, other communications and reports
- Are eligible to be Officers, Group Chairs, Elected members of the Executive, and Group members
- Are entitled to vote in elections and at General Meetings (two votes per institution)

- May register the names of up to three people as their UCISA Contacts
- Are entitled to join UCISA mailing lists including Directors, Announce and various Group lists.

### Affiliate membership

This category is for other educational, not for profit organisations, overseas universities and educational bodies. Affiliate members:

- Have access to certain protected areas of the UCISA website including summary statistics
- Have full access to the UCISA Directory
- Have full access to mini surveys
- Receive UCISA Update and other communications
- Are eligible for cooption to the Executive Committee
- Are eligible to be Group members
- May attend General Meetings
- May register the name of one person as their UCISA Contact
- Are entitled to join UCISA mailing lists including Directors, Announce and various Group lists.

## Corporate membership

This category is for commercial organisations. Corporate members:

- Have priority booking for exhibition space and events, paying lower members' rates
- Have full access to the UCISA Directory
- Have the opportunity to speak at UCISA events
- Have the opportunity to publicise a number of activities or case studies via the UCISA website and newsletter
- Have company details displayed on the UCISA website
- Receive UCISA Update and selected other communications and reports
- Have limited access to protected areas including summary statistics
- Have automatic membership of UCISA's Announce mailing list
- Are eligible to be Group members subject to approval by the Executive.

UCISA represents almost all the major UK universities and higher education colleges and has a growing membership among other educational institutions and commercial organisations interested in information systems and technology in UK education.



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