

# Keynotes Extra

May 2003

## Restructuring in the Computing Service

The recent issue of *Keynotes* announced the early retirement of John Illingworth as Head of User Services. In seeking a replacement for this critical senior post, we have reviewed the responsibilities and activities of the Computing Service in the light of emerging requirements and, particularly, the recommendations of the recent Review of the Computing Service. We are implementing some restructuring of the Computing Service to:

- provide a clearer focus for web development and support
- integrate the development and support of critical University information systems
- exploit strategic liaison with departments
- focus on end-to-end service delivery.

### Web development and support

The web has grown considerably in importance in recent years and has become a business-critical information system whose underlying functionality is supported and developed by the Computing Service but whose content is provided by many others throughout the University. It is thus very similar in its role, and presents similar management challenges, to other University information systems eg the student system and the finance system. Moreover, other University information systems are increasingly delivering their information via web front-ends. To achieve an integrated set of information systems and to provide a co-ordinated approach to the introduction of new technologies and systems, it is thus appropriate to bring together information systems development and support activities within the same group.

We have thus created a new group, the Information Systems Group, to reflect both the specific changes associated with the web and the widespread use of information systems throughout the University. This new group, headed by Kay Mills-Hicks, will bring together into a single reporting line the currently separate MIS and Web Services Groups. The web activity will be strengthened by the transfer of the Web/Database Programmer, responsible for the Computing Service's internal information systems, who currently reports to the Head of Systems in the Infrastructure Group.

### Support Services Group

The current User Services Group has extended its remit considerably since it was formed. In particular, it has responsibility for deployment and support of the University's standard desktop on PCs, for the Information Desk, and for the successful ILIAD programme. The recent Review of the Computing Service has identified an important role for proactive departmental liaison to help co-ordinate the IT-related activities of both departments and the Service. In addition, the role of IT training within the University has been highlighted in a recent investigation leading to increased responsibilities for the Service. The critical dependence of the University on IT systems requires robust and predictable IT services with the consequent importance of monitoring end-to-end service delivery.

In recognition of the wider role of the current User Services Group we have renamed it as the Support Services Group with the following major responsibilities:

- provision, development and support of the University's standard desktop
- first-line advice, problem-solving and fault-reporting via the Information Desk
- provision and support of standard Office applications eg Microsoft Office, mail, internet browser etc
- provision and support of academic applications software for both teaching and research
- playing a leading role in the implementation of the University's online learning strategy by the provision, development and support of appropriate software eg VLE
- provision, development and support of computer classrooms and study centres
- tailoring services to reflect the needs of specific constituencies eg racial background or disability
- participating in national initiatives and bodies
- software licence management
- software sales
- information provision eg user guides, Keynotes, Computing Service's web presence
- provision of IT training courses and co-ordination of IT training throughout the University
- ILIAD
- departmental liaison
- supporting the Departmental Computing Officers
- development and monitoring of performance indicators for end-to-end service delivery

We have advertised the post of Head of Support Services and are scheduled to interview candidates on 7 July.

With outstanding holiday, John Illingworth has effectively vacated his post of Head of User Services. Until the new Head of Support Services is in post, Doug Moncur will be Acting Head of Support Services and Rob Fletcher will head the Applications Support Group within the Support Services Group.

We look forward to welcoming the new Head of Support Services in time for the start of the next academic year.