

# Robert Gordon University

## IT Strategy

### **RGU's Strategy**

RGU's revised strategy, "A Clear Future for a Leading University in a New Era", lays out the strategic aims and priorities for the University. It envisages that the University will build significantly on its success to date in the areas of teaching and learning, translational research, and the student experience but also achieve a step change in its ability to commercialise the assets of the University, secure global strategic partnerships and become an active leader in the regional community. It identifies key priorities in the areas of oil and gas, health and well being, big data, the creative industries and the employability of our graduates.

### **RGU's IT Strategy**

RGU's IT strategy responds to these aims by articulating how the deployment of IT will support RGU's strategy, within the context of and leveraging the opportunities presented by major anticipated shifts in technology platforms at consumer and organisational levels. In particular, we anticipate that changes to consumer technology will provide key opportunities for teaching and learning, new communication tools will directly assist across a whole range of priorities, including research and partnerships, and new approaches to IT infrastructure will assist RGU to respond to commercialisation opportunities and other areas of growth. Good governance will also be important to ensure that achieving these aims is not put at risk by a growing spectrum of cyber security risks. The IT strategy also takes into account key legislative and environmental drivers and changing expectations of internal and external stakeholders.

Taking these themes forward, the IT strategy is expressed around 4 strategic priority action areas as follows:

#### **Priority 1 – "The Personal Environment"**

Consumerisation and mobility are driving a major and global change in the way in which technology is used personally – reflected for example in the rapid growth of tablet computing platforms, connectivity and the associated ecosystems of internet based personal applications. These are becoming the platforms of choice, and we anticipate that this will hugely influence the delivery of effective teaching and learning, and will increasingly raise expectations in relation to the student experience and indeed that of staff, partners and other stakeholders. We anticipate that progressively these platforms will gain widespread acceptance and open up new possibilities for novel approaches – for example in creative digital media and remote health. They will influence how we will be expected to communicate and collaborate in research, and in partnerships, and in a competitive marketplace how we can successfully commercialise our intellectual and physical assets.

To support the University's strategic ambitions in these areas we will actively embrace this trend and place it as a key priority in the IT strategy. We will reflect this in the design of our learning and working spaces – allowing the easy connectivity and use of personal platforms. We will reflect this in our policies and guidance so that personal services can be used safely alongside

University provided ones. We will reflect this in the design of new IT services so that they deploy effectively onto new platforms as well as traditional ones.

### **Priority 2 – “The Service Portfolio”**

Like most Universities, staff and students have access to a broad portfolio of IT based services. We have identified the following areas as specifically important to realizing the strategic aims of the University and on which we will give particular focus.

*VLE:* Our Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) lies at the heart of the core business of the University for both on Campus and distance teaching, learning and assessment. We anticipate that our approach to online learning will grow as a distinguishing feature of the University in underpinning our traditional markets, enhancing the student experience and also in providing future commercial opportunities. We will therefore continue to invest in the collection of technologies which together comprise the VLE and support the work of DELTA<sup>1</sup> and Schools to make effective use of these technologies. This will also involve the use of personal technologies and new platforms described in Priority 1. We will position our VLE technologies so that they can be deployed as part of commercialisation opportunities where the scale and nature of the learner population may be quite different from existing use.

*Communication and Collaboration:* RGU's core strategic aims will involve working with learners, partners and stakeholders across many external organisations and geographies. This will be true for research, commercialisation opportunities and partnerships – as well as in the core activities of teaching and learning. We see the effective use of communication and collaborative tools as being an essential enabler for these activities. We will deploy technologies that allow communication and collaboration across multiple channels, make it easy to connect, and support the specific challenges of collaborating with specialist digital content such as is likely to be used in the arts and creative industries, oil and gas, and health.

*Information Management:* The effective management of and access to digital information and documents is essential to support RGU's aims. We will continue to develop online information environments which will help to create the strong and engaged University community and involve staff and students in our decision making. We will address the challenges of managing the growth in and diversity of digital learning content to support our teaching and learning. We will ensure that RGU's research community can meet the demands of long term management of research data – often in partnership with collaborating organisations. Closely linked to the management of information, we will work to e-enable the critical administrative processes of RGU and in particular those which make RGU more efficient, improve decision making, and streamline RGU's interaction with learners and our strategic partners.

### **Priority 3 – “Infrastructure”**

The core strategic aims around teaching and learning, research, and commercialisation activities are all highly dependent on the underlying IT

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<sup>1</sup> DELTA: The Department for the Enhancement of Learning Teaching and Assessment

Infrastructure. We anticipate that RGU's ambitions in these areas, and the use of specialist digital media in areas such as oil and gas, big data, health and the arts and creative industries will place growing and potentially sudden demands on the capacity of the underlying IT infrastructure. To meet these demands we will plan for and commence a long term shift away from University owned and hosted server infrastructure towards the use of shared and "cloud" based infrastructure. This will provide greater flexibility and scalability as well as providing greater resilience to ensure continuity of RGU's critical IT services. We will also continue to work with regional partners and national bodies to ensure that communications links into RGU have the capacity and resilience required to support RGU's specific strategic aims in addition to the general year on year growth.

#### **Priority 4 – "Governance"**

IT solutions are a specific and significant enabler in all the strategic aims of RGU but are highly complex and expensive to deliver and maintain reliably, and are exposed to growing and rapidly evolving cyber security risks. Universities UK, for example, have recognized the specific threat of cyber security risks to the intellectual property assets held by UK Universities, particularly in relation to research data. There are risks of staff bypassing formal IT structures to take advantage of the increasing availability of external IT services and using these in critical areas with inadequate support arrangements or knowledge and understanding of the risks. Good governance is therefore important to ensure that IT is effectively deployed to support RGU's strategic aims whilst managing risk, security and compliance in a complex and rapidly changing environment.

We will review our arrangements for IT Governance to ensure that IT is effectively deployed as an enabler by:

- Ensuring that significant investments are in support of RGU's strategic aims;
- Driving continuous service improvement on critical services;
- Raising awareness of and effectively managing risks, IT security and compliance to protect the achievement of RGU's strategic aims.

#### **Strategy Map**

The "Strategy Map" on the next page summarises the IT Strategy at a glance.

# Robert Gordon University – IT Strategy

## Vision

That the key information, services, and resources required by our staff and students to work, learn and communicate are seamlessly and coherently accessible online, woven in to users' personal environments and delivered reliably and sustainably.

## Drivers

### University:

- Learning Environments
- Student Experience
- Research & Commercialisation
- Partnerships
- Oil & Gas, Big Data, Health, Arts & Creative Industries

### External:

- Public Sector ICT Strategy Scotland
- Review of post-16 Education
- Public Sector funding Constraints
- Legislation & Environmental targets
- Stakeholder expectations & competition
- Demands for flexible work / study patterns

### Technology:

- Consumerisation
- Tablets, mobility, integrated personal services
- Users at different stages of adoption
- Public and Private Cloud Computing models

## Priorities

### P1 Personal Environment

Embrace the increasingly sophisticated and diverse personal computing environment used by staff and students in their day to day lives.

### P2 Service Portfolio

Enhance the learning & teaching environment, the operational support of the University and provision of management information.

### P3 Infrastructure

Lead the adoption of new models & public sector ICT strategy to increase agility, reduce unnecessary complexity, lifecycle cost & environmental footprint.

### P4 Governance

Strengthen service management, ROI and benefits realisation. Manage risk, security & compliance in a complex & changing environment.

## Actions

- A1.1 Access from anywhere
- A1.2 Welcome personal consumer environments
- A1.3 Maintain currency of University provision
- A1.4 Enhance on /off Campus facilities and support

- A2.1 Enhance VLE technology platforms
- A2.2 Deliver information & document management
- A2.3 E-Enable key internal and external processes
- A2.4 Enhance communication & collaboration tools

- A3.1 Ensure capacity meets anticipated demands
- A3.2 Collaborate & share regionally & nationally
- A3.3 Reduce environmental impact of all our activities
- A3.4 Update DR and business continuity measures

- A4.1 Embed ITIL service management
- A4.2 Make sound investments and realise benefits
- A4.3 Drive continuous service improvement
- A4.4 Proactively manage risk, security & compliance