ECDF Oversight by Researchers Group (ORG)

Notes of meeting held on Wednesday 11th February 2009

Present:
Peter Clarke (convenor), Jean Ritchie (notes), Terry Fox, Mike Baker, Tony Weir, Orlando Richards, Chris Adie, Brian Gilmore, Rolly Weigand, Alex Weiss, Steve Renals, John Blair-Fish, Juri Rapsillber

Apologies: John Martin, Richard Kenway, Arthur Trew, Jeff haywood

1. Introduction from chair

PC reviewed the role of the ORG, and showed slides from his presentation to the last meeting of ORG on 18 April 2008. Function of ORG was to help ECDF maintain fitness for purpose, so that in turn Schools will want ECDF to be sustained. It had been agreed that ORG would provide oversight and guidance, but IS should own decisions. BACG pointed out that decisions must lie where risk lies. SR suggested that the board should accept ultimate responsibility but day to day decisions should be taken by directorate. It was key to success that users have a feeling of ownership.

2. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes were accepted

3. Directors report

The ECDF Directors Report was presented and noted.

The following items arose during discussion

3.1 Recurrent costs.

PC suggested ORG should meet 3 times per year, to look at ECDF costs. PC suggested a half page case was needed to justify the number of ECDF staff included in the costings. The CSMC meeting might want to know about staffing levels.

SR asked about guaranteed service contribution; the figures presented did not include purchase of guaranteed service. Another table was needed, showing IS contribution and income to date. ACTION JR

3.2 Units by which to measure compute power

It was agreed to drop ksi2k and give costs for Flops, together with latest core year. Costs would be Flops hours.

3.3 SRF costs

Costs for ECDF had been agreed with Finance as a Small Research Facility (SRF) so that these costs would be applied to future grant applications. About half of the SRF cost was capital refresh.

The ORG understood and were comfortable with the charges.

Alex Weiss agreed to discuss the cost with the research secretary in HSS to find out if this level would be appropriate for HSS grants. ACTION AW

Researchers needed to be informed that for research grants they should justify the use of ECDF, but not the cost since ECDF was a SRF and therefore costs had been based upon audited figures and agreed by the University.

It was agreed that costs would reduce with time, 10% overall each year. SRF costs were automatically
reviewed annually, and changed from 1st February each year. It was important to publicise costs for the next 5 years, so that funding proposals could include the correct cost.

It was agreed to charge the SRF rate for all new applications for guaranteed service (grants that had been costed on previous rates would be charged at the rate they had been quoted).

It was suggested that a minimum charge of £100 would be used for storage. Small charges to individuals or groups would be aggregated over the course of a year.


The usage and performance report was presented. Figures showed a spread of usage over schools with CSE still being the majority users.

ECDF users needed to know what their usage had been. JR agreed to discuss with stakeholders whether the metrics given were satisfactory. The web pages with metrics needed to be advertised. ACTION JR

5. Outline of Phase III upgrade plans

A first paper on plans to upgrade the ECDF cluster (Phase III) were presented.

Response to tenders would be needed in Jan 2010. College needed to be consulted before starting the procurement process. TW agreed to develop a schedule for the consultation and procurement process. ACTION TW

It was suggested that old hardware would be retained if appropriate and cost effective – possibly to use for a condor pool.

The ORG accepted the outline plan for hardware replacement and would look at more detailed plans at the next meeting. Plans should include efforts to reduce carbon footprint (eg need we throw away, what is life cycle of kit). It was important to find out whether money could be saved by using Condor pooling for some applications, this would be discussed at ITC level.

6. Service reports

The service development report was presented and noted. Members were asked to send comments by email. ACTION ALL

7. Summary of school bills.

The first attempt at the format for the usage and estimates of costs sent to Heads of Schools was presented. Much discussion followed.

It was agreed to continue moving most users to baseline use once guaranteed time had been used up.

However there will be a class of users for whom this is not appropriate (e.g. GridPP). This class are effectively making a private arrangement with ECDF outside of a School and thus any overuse cannot by default fall to the School. Such users should in general have an MOU with ECDF. Such groups need to receive a separate bill from the main bill for the School.

The share system needed to be explained on the website so that all users could understand it. At present for example Juri Rappsilber did not fully understand the share system.

A better explanation was needed of the information included in School bills. ACTION JR

8. Outstanding actions

The ORG membership will be reviewed to include more School representatives. ACTION PC
A policy was needed on use of ECDF by individuals or organisations not associated with the University. The policy regarding use by pooling initiative collaborators, who already use ECDF, needed to be formalised.

**ACTION PC, JR**

Another table was needed, showing IS contribution and Guaranteed service income to date. **ACTION JR**

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