# SYSTEM OWNER POLICY

**Contents**

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## Introduction

1      The University needs to ensure that its information systems are fit for purpose and aligned to the business. This includes ensuring that information systems support the University's business priorities and are delivered flexibly in response to any strategic change in direction.

2      System Owners are critical for ensuring business alignment by making sure that investment in information systems is led by real business needs and required to work strategically with the Information Systems and Technology (IS&T) Directorate to ensure that they produce real business benefits.

3      The lack of effective business system ownership can result in poor business process alignment, cost control, data management, information security and end user training, which will all have a detrimental effect on service delivery.

4      This policy makes a distinction between business system ownership and technical system ownership. The technical ownership function will be performed by the IS&T Directorate which will ensure that systems are maintained and supported. In this capacity the Directorate will develop a governance and control framework for the management of information systems and work closely in support of the Business Systems Owner to develop strategies and plans for them.

5      This policy defines the role and responsibility of a System Owner in the management and development of a system on behalf of the business function that uses it. This policy also defines the role of the IS&T Directorate and the wider support network in supporting the System Owner.

## Policy Scope

6      The principles set out in this policy apply to all University information systems listed in the Information Asset Register. Information systems assessed as being of a very high business value/criticality to the University will need to adhere to specific provisions as indicated in this policy.

## Policy Intent

7      This policy is produced to provide clarity on the role performed by a System Owner and the Support Network which is coordinated and supported by the IS&T Directorate. This policy has also been developed to help the University: maximise its investment in information technology; ensure legal and regulatory compliance; and to ensure a good end user experience for students and staff.

## Definitions

8      An **Information System** is the system, people and processes designed to create, store, manipulate, query and disseminate information. For the purposes of this policy an information system is computer based and typically includes hardware, software, databases and networks.

9      A **System Owner** is a person who takes ultimate responsibility for the management of an information system on behalf of the business function that uses it. The System Owner (similar to an Information Asset Owner) is typically a senior manager with responsibility for a business area and/or a set of business processes, data or content that is supported by the information system. A System Owner has responsibility for the development, procurement, integration, modification, operation, maintenance and decommissioning of an information system. Although some key tasks of the role may be delegated to others, like a System Manager, the role should be performed by someone who is a senior level member of staff who is able to provide a senior business user perspective. The System Owner is supported by the IS&T Directorate in carrying out their responsibilities.

10    A **System Manager/Administrator** is someone based in the business area that will manage the system and associated business processes on a day to day basis on behalf of the System Owners. Duties of this role may include general systems administration, ensuring data integrity, end user training and business continuity planning.

11    The System Owner must be familiar with the **Support Network**, which is the virtual team of people made up of people from the IS&T Directorate, the business area and the supplier which support and maintain the system.

12    The **Information Asset Register** is an inventory of information systems (used alongside the IS&T Contracts Database) that helps the University understand the information that it owns and manage the associated risks, thus ensuring compliance with Data Protection regulations.  It will capture the details of the Information System including the System Owner, System Plan and other supporting documents.

13    **Information System User Group** is a forum made up of a selection of end users and support personnel who help the System Owner set the strategic direction of the information system by informing them about practical issues and identifying improvement opportunities.  For example, one key function of the group will be to help prioritise and assess requests for change including system upgrades.

14    System Owners will be encouraged to develop and maintain an **Information System Plan** which provides information about the operating procedures and plans for an information system.  A System Plan should include information about what the information system is used for, risk management, information security, data protection compliance, end user training, business continuity and the development roadmap.

## Policy Provisions and Principles

### Management of Information Systems

15    Every information system owned by the University will be recorded on the Information Asset Register and related commercial information will be recorded in the IS&T Directorate Contract Database.

16    Each information system will have a System Owner assigned to it which will be recorded in the Information Asset Register.

17    Each information system will be risk assessed from both a data protection and business continuity perspective to determine its criticality to the University.

18    Each information system that is defined as being of a 'very high' business value/criticality to the University will be required to have an Information System Plan developed and owned by the System Owner with support from the IS&T Directorate.

19    The System Owner will be required to ensure that the composition and size of the Support Network is adequate for the effective running and maintenance of the information system by considering the business needs.

20    The System Owner will determine whether a User Group is required and will arrange for it to meet on a regular basis to support the use and development of the information system.

### Responsibilities

21    The IS&T Directorate is not responsible for information systems but is their steward and custodian on behalf of the University. Typically the senior business lead or service owner is the System Owner who

is responsible for the **system use** as the IS&T Director is the Technical System Owner responsible for **system support**.

22      The System Owner is ultimately responsible for securing business value and mitigating key risks with support and guidance from the IS&T Directorate.  This includes:

   a.      Developing the system strategy to provide a high level view of whether to maintain, enhance or decommission a system.

   b.      Setting objectives and plans for the on-going support and maintenance of the information system.

   c.      Identifying opportunities for business process improvements by exploiting the potential and capability of the information system.

   d.      Leading the procurement process and contractual negotiations for new or renewed information systems.

   e.      Developing a relationship with the supplier to ensure that contractual obligations are being met and the information system is being developed to ensure the University is getting the maximum benefits for its investment.

   f.      Representing the system and its stakeholders in business strategy discussions, ensuring long term alignment with the University's business plans.

   g.      Ensuring business alignment of the information system by measuring and delivering business benefits.

   h.      Ensuring that budget and resources are available for the administration and development of the information system e.g. system training, user documentation, data cleansing etc.

   i.      Overseeing a process for reviewing and approving all changes from a business perspective.

   j.      Making sure that the Support Network is fit for purpose and establishing a System User Group if necessary to support the development of the information system.

   k.      Ensuring the availability of the system to end users by agreeing service level goals and developing DR/BC Plans.

   l.      Ensuring that the use of the information system conforms to University policies and standards about data protection and information security.

   m.      Ensuring that information privacy regulations are managed effectively and that data protection tasks are considered when commissioning, purchasing, developing, upgrading and decommissioning an information system.

   n.      Managing business risks associated with the information system, like security, end user access, data integrity, availability and performance.

   o.      Ensuring that the IS&T Directorate understand the business processes supported by the system and helping to identify the criticality of the system functions for incident management prioritisation.

p.    Being the business escalation point for major system issues, ensuring that root-cause analysis of major incidents is undertaken and aiding in the communication of any on-going system disruption.

23    The System User Group is responsible for helping the System Owner to maintain and develop the information system.  This includes:

a    Planning the ongoing management, development and security of the system in compliance with the University's policies and standards.

b    Driving out the business benefits of the system by ensuring that its development is aligned to business requirements.

c    Inputting and influencing the strategic direction of the development of the information system and the support services provided by the IS&T Directorate in alignment with the University's technology roadmap.

d    Devising standards to ensure the effective and compliant use of the information system.

e    Assessing small and major requests for changes with the System Owner before they are passed to the IS&T Directorate for execution.

f    Sharing good practice and knowledge about the information system.

g    Identifying and advising on end user training needs.

24    The Director of IS&T with the IS&T Directorate is responsible for supporting information systems and providing advice to System Owners.  This includes:

a    Providing advice, support and knowledge to the System Owner in the performance of their responsibilities.

b    Providing the technical support for information system maintenance, upgrades, analysis and development of a system.

c    Managing and ensuring the integrity, security and availability of the information technology infrastructure on which the information system operates.

d    Managing the technical risks associated with supporting the University's information systems and services.

e    Providing technical advice and expertise to the System Owner in the procurement of new and renewed information systems.

f    Managing and providing advice about the University's information governance framework as defined by the institution's policies and standards.

g    Providing support to help ensure the System Owner meets their responsibilities for information security and data protection.

h    Administrating information about the institution's information systems on behalf of the University.

i    Administering the contractual agreements with information system and technology vendors and suppliers.

# Compliance

25    Any actual or suspected breach of this policy must be reported to the Director of IS&T via the most suitable channel and will be dealt with in accordance with the University's policies and disciplinary procedures.

**Revision History**

| Version | Status | Name | Reason for change | Date |
|---------|--------|------|-------------------|------|
| 0.1 | Draft | Nicholas R-M | Initial document | 9 Mar 19 |
| 0.2 | Draft | Nicholas R-M | Updated | 15 Mar 19 |
| 1.0 | Final | Nicholas R-M | Updated to reflect comments from ITSC | 14 June 19 |