

# Case Study: Heriot-Watt University

## The Current Service

The print service sits within Media Services alongside design and audio visual. Graphics and print are co-located which is very important for the success of the service.

The print service offers both digital copying and litho facilities. The service is a cost recovery one. Some areas of the graphics service are considered to be core services for which the University makes a small financial recognition.

The service undertakes up to four-colour litho work (on a two-colour press). Corporate stationery is handled in-house. The service has high-volume digital production facilities both for monochrome and colour. Variable data services are offered. Océ DocWorks job submission software is used.

The print service is responsible for all copiers on campus and, over the last twelve months, there has been a migration to networked multi-function devices. The Director of Media Services is responsible for developing institutional policy for photocopy/digital print and is a member of the University's Cost Savings Working Group.

A framework agreement for outsourced print was developed (in conjunction with Napier University and Queen Margaret University College) for overflow print work which cannot be produced internally due to time constraints, workloads, pricing or type of product. Proprietary software is used to manage this process with suppliers required to respond using a web-based interface. The service is expected to be cost-recovery with a small management fee charged.

The University is a recognised leader in e-learning. These programmes have large print fulfilment requirements and the print service is increasingly involved in delivering these. Publishing and fulfilment services are popular and the print service holds files for customers who can call off work and have it printed, packaged and shipped as required. Publications are produced in English, Hebrew, Chinese and Spanish.

All services are offered to staff, students, inter-group companies and external customers. The unit undertakes direct cash or credit card sales to students.

In 2004-05 an audit highlighted that the level of external income being generated by Media Services – primarily through print activities – was threatening the charitable status of the University. As a result, in 2005-06, trading company status was established for external activities – in all other respects Media Services continues to provide services to the University as before. Trading company status has certain benefits in terms of VAT recovery which will be maximised in future years as recovery mechanisms become more sophisticated.

## The Journey to the Current Service

The University has taken a coordinated view of output management for longer than most institutions – about 15 years). At that time volumes were low relative to the machine capacity and there was a move to using more expensive local copiers in departments. It has taken a long time to claw this back. People felt they were being overcharged (because they were being charged at all), yet they were often paying three times more to copy locally or to use their favourite outside printer. As in other institutions there seemed to be a view that going outside was somehow better.

There was a move in the University to downsize and reorganise central services. The close working relationship between the print service and the University's procurement service has helped move things forward. The print service returns a significant operating surplus to the University each year.

The McClelland Report for the Scottish Executive, "The Review of Public Procurement in Scotland", has resulted in national developments and there is to be a National Centre of Expertise for Procurement. It remains to be seen if this will impact upon print procurement.

## Positive Messages from this Case Study

A clear message is that change is possible but takes time. Heriot-Watt University has been moving back from de-centralised to centralised output management for some years (certainly longer than many others) and, as in many institutions, winning hearts and minds is not easy. The HE environment with less managerial control (particularly in the pre-1992 sector) did lead to something of a free-for-all and there was a failure to achieve value for money for print.

Having a good understanding of purchasing practices locally and nationally is important and will help in moving towards value for money in balancing in-house and out-sourced services. In recent years the University has increasingly recognised the value, particularly in respect of financial economies, that the print service can achieve. This recognition is important.

## Some Issues

The uncertainty caused by national level discussions on framework agreements for a wide range of procurement including print is an issue.

## Acknowledgement

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