

# Temporary Solutions

This policy sets out the School's position on the use of temporary technology solutions. It affects anyone considering implementing a temporary solution and provides clarity and consistency about how to approach temporary solutions.

## Purpose

Temporary technology solutions at LSE are sometimes used to meet short term requirements. However, if not approached appropriately, they can bring challenges and generate long-term problems. On occasion, when LSE has introduced temporary solutions, we have bypassed normal process and good practice as the solution is seen as having a very limited lifespan. This has resulted in short term solutions in use far longer than they were intended to be, with resultant risks and service problems.

This policy does not seek to stop people using temporary solutions, but it lays out the School's policy on those circumstances and specific actions that need to be taken before, during and after their use. The aim is to provide clarity and consistency so that we approach the use of temporary solutions knowingly and in a consistent way.

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If you need to discuss this policy or how to use it for a new solution, please contact the Director of Strategy and Architecture in DTS, who will be able to help you with it, or refer you to the appropriate person.

# Use of Temporary Technology Solutions

## 1. Background

Over recent years, LSE has implemented solutions, often for the best of reasons, in the expectation that they would be temporary. Based on the expectation of limited usage:

- The solution may have been a poor fit, in functional or technical terms.
- The solution has not been implemented properly, e.g.:
  - Service transition has not been done.
  - Long term licencing has not been agreed.
  - The solution has been implemented in a way that is not technically robust.
  - Data was not properly migrated into or out of the solution.
  - People have got used to using the temporary solution and are reluctant to move to the full or strategic solution.

Use of temporary solutions in this way has caused operational and strategic problems, sometimes many years later. It has resulted in rework, patching and workarounds, often at short notice.

This policy does not take the perspective that all temporary solutions are 'wrong' or 'bad'. It is recognised that in some situations temporary solutions are very useful, even essential. However, it is important that when we use a temporary solution:

- We recognise that it is temporary.
- We know how we will stop the temporary solution sprawling out into wider use, making it very hard to remove. This has been a problem previously.
- We are clear when it will be removed.
- We have defined how the solution will be removed.
- We know how its removal will be funded and resourced.

Implementing a temporary solution is effectively technical debt. It is something that we know is not a strategic solution and that we will have to spend money and time implementing and then removing. We want to avoid temporary solutions, unless there are specific circumstances which justify them.

## 2. Scope

### 2.1 In Scope

This policy covers:

- All areas of the School: DTS, BLTs, PSS, academic departments.
- Data and information technology
- Packaged software
- Software as a Service
- Bespoke code

- Databases and operating systems
- Servers and other hardware, whether physical, virtual or cloud deployments
- A/V technology
- Any 'internet of things' type devices that connect to our networks or the internet.

## 2.2 Out of Scope

This policy does not apply to:

- Areas of technology that are not data or information related, for example building technology, such as boilers or electrical infrastructure.
- Research purposes, i.e. for conducting academic research. (The management of research is in scope.)
- Proof of concepts, prototypes and pilots are done with aim of learning or testing something, whereas temporary solutions provide 'live' service for a limited duration. Proof of concepts, prototypes and pilots will be covered in a separate policy.
- Transitional solutions. Where a project or programme is moving towards a target architecture and needs to move in stages via transitional solutions, these are not considered temporary, although they have a temporary lifespan.

This policy does not replace or change the scope of the project approval process via the Portfolio Board. Temporary solutions go through this process, i.e. NPR, Stage Zero etc, if they are in scope for it by the standard definition, eg budget required, strategic importance etc.

## 3. Definition

While every piece of electronic technology has a limited life, in this context a temporary solution is one that will be in use for a short and defined period of time, before being replaced. It is not a long term solution. It is something that we implement in the knowledge or expectation that it will be replaced expediently.

In the context of technology solutions, this is likely to range from a few weeks, up to a year. It is something that we implement with a short lifespan. For example:

- We implemented OneFinance with no end date. We expect to use it for many years to come. The business case for it costed it over a full five year period. This is a long term strategic solution.
- We implemented a temporary solution for the Future Ways of Working project for a small number of departments ahead of the strategic solution, as that was not available yet. Those departments had an immediate need for a solution and the cost of waiting for the strategic solution would have outweighed the effect and cost involved in a temporary solution.

We know broadly what will replace the temporary solution, although we may not know the exact product or cost.

## 4. Temporary Solutions

Temporary solutions are managed as Architecture Exceptions and follow that process. This ensures that temporary solutions are visible and managed. The high level process for Architecture Exceptions is included in the Appendices of this document.

Before implementation of the temporary solution is approved as an exception, several conditions must be met:

1. The budget holder, user managers and users must be aware that it is a temporary solution. This avoids later confusion or reluctance to remove the temporary solution on the basis that people thought it was a permanent solution.
2. We have documented how we will stop the temporary solution sprawling out into wider use.
3. We have documented *when* will the temporary solution be removed. This could be based on:
  - Specific conditions, e.g. a permanent solution is ready to implement.
  - A fixed duration, e.g. 6 months.
4. The relevant budget holder has agreed, by email, that they will fund removal of the temporary solution. This includes the costs to decommission the solution and migrate, archive, or purge data.
5. The system owner can demonstrate that the cost and risks of implementing the temporary are less than the cost and risks involved in waiting for the permanent solution.

Temporary solutions that continue to be extended with no plan for removal or end date, must be raised as a Risk with the Operational Risk Committee.

The Data Technology Management Board will receive regular updates on the number and expected cost of temporary solutions to ensure maximum transparency.

## 4.1 Implementation of a Temporary Solution

Temporary solutions follow the School's standard implementation processes as they bring risks and challenges in supporting live service. If anything, they bring *increased* risks as they are generally less thought through and are more likely to have been rushed.

The standard implementation process includes:

- Solution Design Authority (SDA)
- Definition of service transition
- Change Board
- Decommissioning process

## 4.2 Follow-Up on Use of Temporary Solution

Within 3 months of going live, the system owner will email the Director of Strategy and Architecture team to report back on use of the temporary solution, specifically on whether:

- Its use has expanded in scope.
- It is on target to be decommissioned as originally agreed.

Every six months after going live, the System Owner will attend the SDA to report back on use of the temporary solution and confirm the actions that are in place to remove it as scheduled.

If the use of the temporary solution needs to be extended, it will be treated as an extension of the original architecture exception.

## Appendix A - Flowchart

High level Architecture Exception process:

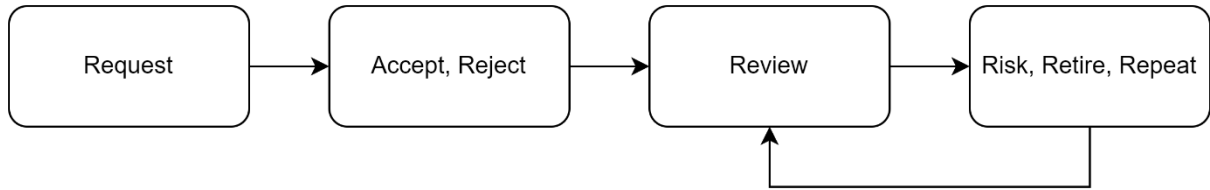


Figure 1 - High Level Architecture Exception process

## Appendix B - Considerations

How does this policy support the LSE EDI approach? Has an equality impact assessment been completed?	Not required for this policy.
How does this policy support LSE's sustainability targets? How will sustainability KPIs be affected by this policy?	This policy does not affect our sustainability KPIs.
How does this policy improve the position on security and privacy? If there is an impact has this policy been reviewed and endorsed by IGMB?	<p>Temporary solutions are often implemented at speed and without risk and decommissioning. This policy ensures that when we implemented temporary solutions they follow due process and are decommissioned in a controlled way.</p> <p>These are things which help to reduce risk and make sure that we manage temporary solutions in a more considered way, which supports better security and privacy controls.</p>
How does this policy improve the operational objectives including service quality?	This policy improves our operational objectives for service quality through the more considered implementation of temporary solutions that follow due process. These processes are aimed at supporting service quality.

## Appendix C - Architecture Exceptions Process



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## Review schedule

Review interval	Next review due by	Next review start
1 year, for first year, then 2 years	Feb, 2026	Jan, 2026

## Version history

Version	Date	Approved by	Notes
1.0a	17 <sup>th</sup> November, 2021	Architecture Board	
1.0b	24 <sup>th</sup> January, 2021	DTDMB	
1.1	06/02/2024		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Removed the need to log as temporary solutions as a risk until they breach their agreement</li><li>• Streamlined exception process to include temporary solutions rather than temporary solutions being an offshoot of an exemption</li><li>• Added transitional architectures as out-of-scope</li><li>• Updated contacts</li></ul>

## Links

Reference	Link

## Contacts

Position	Name	Email	Notes
Director of Strategy and Architecture	Tony Payne	a.payne1@lse.ac.uk	

## Communications and Training

Will this document be publicised through Internal Communications?	Yes/ <b>No</b>
Will training needs arise from this policy	Yes/ <b>No</b>
<p>Communications will be done via:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Notification to DTS via Teams</li><li>2. Communication at DTS Service Leaders' Group</li><li>3. Notification to Business Led Technology Teams via Teams</li><li>4. Notification to the Business Improvement Unit via Teams or email</li><li>5. Communication at the Business Led Technology Teams Ops Forum</li><li>6. Email notification to any other interested parties, not covered by these groups</li><li>7. Updates, eg termly, at DTS All Staff meetings on policy writing, including all new policies</li></ol>	



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