

DECEMBER 2015

1. DISCUSSION TOPIC – PSS COMMUNICATIONS AND CORE BRIEF

For this month’s discussion topic, we would like you to look again at the effectiveness of internal communications within the PSS and the wider University.

The recent Staff Survey showed that 63% of University staff and 65% of PSS staff thought that “communication within the University is effective” – not a bad score, but clearly there is room for some improvement. Within the PSS, we scored better than the rest of the University on the effectiveness of line manager communications (77% compared with a University total of 67%), but colleagues across the University indicated that there was room for improvement in terms of the availability of “effective channels to feed my views upwards” (PSS 60%, University 55%) and the ways in which “the Senior Leadership Team listens to and responds to the views of staff” (PSS 57%, University 51%).

We will be taking a look at this issue across the University at a senior level as part of our Staff Survey Action planning, but in the meantime, I would like you all to reflect on these issues in your own area and across the PSS and suggest ways that communications – particularly two-way communications, might be improved.

Some areas of the PSS are already pioneering different approaches, for instance:

- As Director of Faculty Operations in EPS, Rachel Brealey presents her monthly team brief as a video, which is regularly viewed more than 100 times as well as being played in team brief meetings (see an example here <http://www.staffnet.eps.manchester.ac.uk/business-areas/director-of-faculty-operations/team-brief/>).
- All staff in the Division of Communications and Marketing meet together for a ten minute “Huddle” every Wednesday morning for a quick update on news and priorities.
- Earlier this year, staff in the DSE, IT Services and the EPS PSS team took part in a pilot project to evaluate ways in which an online platform using social media tools called “the Hive” could be used to enable staff to feed their views upwards on certain topics, generate ideas, comment and vote on ideas.

At this month’s team brief meeting, I would like you to discuss the effectiveness of communications in your own area, how we could improve team brief and ideas for improving the flow of two-way communications across the PSS. Please send your feedback to coremunicate@manchester.ac.uk

2. PSS ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW

As I indicated in last month’s CoreMunicate, on Wednesday 11 November 2015, the PSS Leadership Team met with Nancy and the University’s Senior Leadership Team for the PSS Annual Performance Review (APR) meeting. This meeting is part of our annual planning and accountability cycle, which gives the senior leadership team an opportunity to review and discuss the performance of the PSS over the past year and to discuss priorities for the future.

I am pleased to say the APR was a positive experience and we covered a wide range of issues including leadership development and succession planning; budgeting and forecasting processes; improvements in research performance; PGT scholarships; widening participation; employability; student satisfaction; teaching excellence framework (TEF); student volunteering; carbon emissions; ethical grand challenges; data protection and FOI requests; Equality and Diversity; Estates Masterplan; information security; data analysis capabilities; research beacons; and overseas recruitment. The PSS raised some key issues, including opportunities for the standardisation of processes and the appetite for change. There was also a discussion about one of the outcomes of the last Staff Survey which suggests

that some of our staff do not feel valued. A key message which came out of the meeting was that PSS staff of all levels are thought of highly, and that our skills and expertise are crucial in supporting the work of the University whether centrally or in the Faculties and Schools. The President noted the progress the PSS has been making and commented that the University was considered to have some of the best PSS staff in the sector.

Along with the four Vice-Presidents and Deans of the Faculties and the Directors of the Library and cultural institutions, I will shortly receive from the President and Vice-Chancellor a formal report of the APR that records our discussion and indicates areas for future action. I will share the detail of this with colleagues in due course.

3. GOVERNMENT FUNDING – COMPREHENSIVE SPENDING REVIEW

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, announced the results of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) on Wednesday 25 November 2015. Overall budget cuts were much less than expected and the outcome for universities was considerably better than had been feared, eg maintenance of funding for research at the current level, but increasing with inflation, a relatively modest cut to the HEFCE teaching budget and some benefits specifically for Greater Manchester. We note, however, that the threshold for repayment of student loans will be capped for several years. We will await further analysis and we recognise that there may be issues and challenges ahead as more of the detail becomes available. HEFCE won't be communicating the impact on universities of the CSR until February 2016 at the earliest and we discover more at that point, particularly whether there might be "in-year" cuts to funding. You can read a summary of the CSR at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/spending-review-and-autumn-statement-2015-key-announcements>

4. MAKING A DIFFERENCE AWARDS

Following the success of the inaugural awards last year, the Office for Social Responsibility has launched the **Making a Difference Awards 2016**. The awards recognise and celebrate the many different types of social responsibility achievements of the University's staff and students. Individuals or teams can submit an entry for themselves, or be nominated by a third party. The closing date for entries is 1 February 2016. There are 10 categories for the Awards:

- Outstanding benefit to society through research
- Outstanding teaching innovation in social responsibility
- Outstanding contribution through social enterprise
- Inspiring communities (for University Staff/Students and external partners)
- Outstanding public engagement initiative
- Outstanding contribution to equality and diversity
- Outstanding PSS, library and cultural institutions' contribution to social responsibility
- Outstanding contribution to environmental sustainability
- Outstanding contribution to widening participation
- Staff, Student and Alumni Volunteer of the Year

Further information can be found on the [social responsibility website](#) and this [video](#). Questions about the Awards should be directed to socialresponsibility@manchester.ac.uk

5. AWARDS SUCCESS

The Whitworth has been crowned top large tourist attraction at the Greater Manchester Tourism Awards. Adam Woof, Operations Manager for the Chancellor's Collection in Estates was named Tourism Star of the Year at the same awards. The Whitworth was named "Building of the Year" by the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce, where three University buildings (the Whitworth, Manchester Cancer Research Centre and the National Graphene Institute) contested the top prize out of a total shortlist of six. The University also won the HE Client of the Year Award at the Education Estates 2015 Awards.

6. UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE

The University's new magazine, produced by the Division of Communications and Marketing, is out now, both online and on news stands across campus. *The University of Manchester Magazine* will appear three times a year and is an expression of the spirit of exploration, discovery and innovation that defines our University. Go to www.manchester.ac.uk/magazine to view it online or to find out where you can pick up a copy.

7. FINANCE INTRANET AND HELPDESK

In order to provide a more efficient and consistent finance support service across the University, the finance intranet has been updated and revamped and a central finance helpdesk has been established. The new finance intranet has been fully redeveloped to provide a more user-friendly service and accessible support across key areas of finance (for example buying, selling, finance system access). It can be found on the home page of Staffnet under 'top websites'. The new finance helpdesk will assist with general queries on finance related issues. The contact details for the helpdesk can be found on the intranet, and the email address is finance.helpdesk@manchester.ac.uk.

8. CYBER SECURITY

The University's new Cyber Security Programme is working to deliver the information security governance framework, processes and tools to improve our detection of cyber threats, and manage the way in which we respond to threats. Cyber security is not just a 'technical' problem – our behaviour and actions are just as important as any tools and infrastructure that can be put in place. Getting the basics right, such as running anti-virus software or setting up firewalls to protect company networks, is important, but so too is the need to establish cyber incident management policies, and broad user education and awareness. Find out more at www.manchester.ac.uk/cybersecurity. There will be a HEI seminar on 'Cyber Security: What it means for me' to be held on Thursday 17 December from 12.30 – 1.30pm, at the Kanaris Theatre, Manchester Museum. Details and how to book are available from the Training Catalogue: <https://app.manchester.ac.uk/training/profile.aspx?unitid=2303&parentId=4>

9. CHRISTMAS CLOSURE

The University will close at the end of the working day on Wednesday 23 December 2015 and will re-open on Monday 4 January 2016. Over the 2015 Easter break, a concerted effort was made to save energy, by ensuring that all non-essential appliances and equipment were turned off, or switched to low power states. Ten buildings across campus were closely monitored and some buildings achieved a 50% reduction in energy consumption. Initial calculations suggest that by replicating these reductions over the Christmas break, more than £650,000 could be saved.

Can I also take this opportunity to thank you for all of your efforts over the past year and wish you all a peaceful and relaxing break over the Christmas holiday and best wishes for the New Year.

Will Spinks, Registrar, Secretary and Chief Operating Officer