

## **Progress on Professional Support Services Reviews – October 2010**

### **Introduction**

In April 2010 the Registrar and Secretary, in his monthly Core Brief, indicated that a significant programme of work was underway to ensure that the Professional Support Services met their budget target for 2010/11 and that there were various activities that would be reviewed as part of a drive for continuous improvement and securing better value for money.

This summary document is intended to provide a progress report on the various reviews that were set in train. Some of the reviews are far reaching, others are more narrowly focused. A further update will be provided early in 2011.

### **Student Life Cycle Project**

In May 2010 the Registrar and Secretary asked the University Librarian, Jan Wilkinson, to lead an initial brainstorming exercise on the student life cycle. The objectives were to identify:

- a) aspects of current provision during the student life cycle which colleagues believe are performed well
- b) aspects which could be improved
- c) any omissions from existing provision and
- d) to come forward with ideas on the approach we might take to the student life cycle were the existing structures not in place

The most immediate recommendations of the review group were that consideration should be given to the creation of two senior roles (one academic and one administrative) to work together to provide leadership and overall strategic responsibility of the student experience. These two individuals should be asked to develop and implement a student experience strategy. In addition, there should be a review of the current structure of support for the student experience which would be carried out once the two post holders were in post.

These recommendations have been accepted and internal recruitment processes will be put in place shortly to fill these roles.

### **Student Services Centre (SSC) Review**

The review of the SSC, which began in the autumn of 2009, has been completed. A number of issues emerged, including communication both within the SSC and with Schools, delivery of services, and ownership and standardization of processes. The report set out five broad recommendations supported by a large number of detailed actions, some of which will deliver quick wins, some will be developed over time and some will require further consultation (the latter including the Satellite Centre and the location of aspects of Advice & Guidance). The first set of recommendations related to the internal structure of the SSC which was identified as a barrier to effective communication. Since completion of the Review, there has been consultation on a proposed restructure, the first phase of which has now been completed, resulting in the removal of the internal divisions and replacing the two division manager posts with a post of deputy head of centre. The next phase will focus on the number and activities of the functional teams. In the meantime, progress is also being made on the other main recommendations which are on improving communications, standardising services and facilities, delivering seamless services to students and through partnership working with Schools.

## **Review of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Degree Regulations**

In response to feedback from Faculties, Schools and External Examiners, the Teaching and Learning Group established a working group to review the University's undergraduate and postgraduate taught degree regulations. Issues identified included the use of different weightings across the University to determine final degree classifications, the lack of information in the regulations for part-time and joint honours students, and the inclusion of key information in other policies rather than within the regulations. A plan of work has been developed and initial principles to inform a revised set of degree regulations were considered by Senate in June 2010. An initial report from the working group, including a draft set of revised regulations, will be subject to staff and student consultation this autumn.

## **Review of Arrangements for the Provision of Timetabled Space for Teaching**

A Taskforce was established in the autumn of 2009 to review current arrangements for the provision of timetabled space for teaching purposes across the University. The Taskforce was chaired by the Vice-President (Teaching and Learning), Professor Colin Stirling, and reported to the Senior Executive Team in June 2010. The Review considered current central and local arrangements for the booking of teaching spaces, noting that the annual process of room allocation is a large exercise resulting in significant manual intervention and application of a 'best fit' process, and that there is a perception within Schools that the timetabling process is not sufficiently "customer-oriented". The Taskforce was particularly concerned to receive feedback from students of rooms not being large enough for class sizes, frequent timetable clashes for option units, and the need to travel from one end of the campus to another between lectures.

A Timetabling and Shared Learning Spaces Group has been established to take forward the Taskforce's recommendations for improvement and to make recommendations regarding the allocation of the annual refurbishment budget for teaching spaces. The Group is also overseeing a 'proof of concept' project to explore how the University can get the best out of the *Scientia* software for scheduling teaching activities and booking rooms. This will inform the development of a project plan for the University-wide roll out of *Scientia* software enabling the University to adopt new and best practice in the area of scheduling and room booking.

## **Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Review**

The administrative systems and processes across the University are primarily focussed on handling undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and this can often lead to frustration and inefficiencies and a dampening of enthusiasm to develop CDP provision. Kay Day, Head of Faculty of Administration in Medical and Human Sciences, led a group to identify the issues relating to the administration of CPD and to identify possible solutions. An initial report was made to the Registrar and Secretary during the summer and he asked the group to continue its work for a further six months. The group has supported the development of a quality assurance process for CPD, soon to be rolled out across the University, and the development of the on-line payment system which can now be used for short courses. A template for costing and creating a business plan for CPD is being developed and a small group is considering the registration, enrolment and data collection of CPD activities across the University. There is further work to be undertaken on establishing a database of all CPD activity in the University and creating a web presence for CPD.

## **Review of Research Finance and Administration**

In the spring the Registrar and Secretary and the current Deputy President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Rod Coombs, sponsored a review of research finance and administration chaired by Professor Chris Taylor. The overriding aim of the review was to undertake a holistic assessment of the financial and general administration of research funding, from application to final report, and to make appropriate recommendations so that there was

- a) effective support for academic staff in obtaining and managing research funding
- b) timely and accurate financial management and planning information for PIs, Schools and Faculties
- c) assurance that the accountability and reporting requirements of funding bodies and the University's auditors are satisfied
- d) clear delegation of authority and responsibility for managing research funding with appropriate arrangements for ensuring that all professional support staff with delegated responsibility have the appropriate skills and receive the appropriate training
- e) coordination with other Professional Support Services, particularly HR, to minimize the barriers to effective and timely pursuit of funded research
- f) cost effective support for the University's research mission

The review is still ongoing but the University Senior Executive has endorsed the following two principles which are that there must be a comprehensive policy framework and standardization of policies, roles and processes across the University and that there must be clear leadership and accountability for the provision of integrated research support services, across all directorates, at University, Faculty and School levels. It is expected that Professor Taylor's more detailed recommendations will be available in November.

In addition, the Registrar and Secretary has asked Professor Alistair Ulph to chair a review of research contracts. The overall aim is to review the operations of the contracts function to ensure that it is as efficient, responsive, professional and cost effective as possible. The group has met on one occasion and aims to complete its work by the end of the calendar year.

## **IT Services**

Across IT Services there have been a number of reviews looking at improving efficiency and effectiveness and feeding into the IT Strategic Plan. These included a review of IT non-pay expenditure which resulted in a range of recommendations which are being implemented. A similar review of IT pay expenditure has identified differences in pay costs across the Faculties and this requires further work. Operationally there has been a review of "desktop" services looking at the requirements for the deployment of the next generation of Windows (version 7) and there is ongoing work identifying more detailed understanding of the IT carbon footprint linked to various energy saving initiatives including automating energy saving on PCs and rationalising or "virtualising" our extensive server estate.

## **Legal Review**

Chris Petty, General Counsel, instituted a review of legal support to the University after he joined in September 2009. This has been wide ranging, including review of the balance of internal versus external resources; cost-effectiveness; and areas where increased legal support is required. Following this review, it has been agreed that the provision of legal support to the University can be managed more effectively and at reduced cost by hiring two lawyers (with one additional lawyer transferring from the Contracts Team). All legal matters can now be handled by the General Counsel or his staff together with the Contracts Team in

the University Research Office. The General Counsel will oversee the provision of legal advice regarding contracts under the recently introduced Contracts Governance Policy, which he sponsors.

The General Counsel's Office now provides legal support on a range of matters (many of which were not previously handled in-house) including: Estates and Procurement; Employment; Information Security; new Policy Framework; new legislation; Freedom of Speech; contingency planning; pensions; endowments; IP; subsidiaries; student/Union matters; contentious issues; compliance; major contractual issues. Any instruction of external lawyers will be handled by the General Counsel, who has refreshed the University's panel after a tender process and achieved substantial fee rate reductions and other benefits.

### **Procurement Review**

Public procurement is subject to EU and UK laws and to increasing litigation owing to recent legislation and incentives for disappointed bidders to make legal challenges. Chris Petty, General Counsel, is sponsoring a review of the University's legal documentation and processes to ensure that these are defensible and up to date and that the organisation has an adequate understanding of these matters. Much work has been done, in conjunction with Procurement and Estates, to revise the University's tender and contractual documentation, which should be completed by end October 2010.

A comprehensive training session for relevant PSS staff has been held and a Guide is being produced ('Introduction to Procurement') to enable PSS and other University staff who are engaged in procurement of University goods and services to gain an understanding of this area and follow due process. This should also be available by end October 2010. The Procurement Office is updating its website, and a new 'Policy on Procurement' is being produced by the Head of Procurement.

### **Review of Marketing**

The Director of Estates, Diana Hampson, was asked by the Registrar and Secretary in March 2010 to examine existing arrangements and resources dedicated to marketing across the University and to consider options for the future in the light of the contingency planning exercise.

The review recommended

- a) a modest investment of additional resource in this area within the Division of Communications, Media and PR, including the replacement of the vacant Marketing Manager post to provide pro-active management of the University brand
- b) a re-focusing of the University's market research effort away from internal surveys to concentrate on exploring external markets and better co-ordination of marketing activities within PSS and between PSS and The Manchester Museum, Whitworth Art Gallery and The Manchester Business School.

These findings have been discussed by the Senior Executive Team and between the President and Vice-Chancellor, Registrar and Secretary and Director of Communications, Media and Public Relations. Arrangements are currently being put in place to re-locate some marketing resource from STARS to the Division of Communications, Media and PR and to establish a project to review the University's brand.

**Albert McMenemy**  
**Registrar and Secretary**  
**October 2010**