

Faculty Executive Board
Minutes of Meeting held on 9th March 2011

Present: Mr John Cocking (JAC), Professor Phil Wright (PCW), Professor John David (JPD), Professor Mike Hounslow (MJH), Miss Jenny Miller (JM), Professor Rob Dwyer-Joyce (RDJ), Dr Stephen Beck (SB), Professor Visakan Kadirkamanathan (VK), Dr Malcolm Butler (MAB), Professor Allan Matthews (AM), Professor Geraint Jewell (GWJ), Dr Andrea Bath (AB), Professor Sheila MacNeil (SM), Mrs Janis Webster (JW), Mrs Steph Allen (SA), Dr Jon Barker (JB).

In attendance – Mrs Louise Cowling.

Opening

1. Apologies

Professor John Derrick (JD), Professor Harm Askes (HA).

2. Minutes of FEB meetings held on 9th February 2011 & 23rd February 2011

The minutes were approved.

3. Matters arising/Outstanding actions

The Board considered and reported on all outstanding actions. See action list for details.

A meeting will be arranged between MJH, GWJ, Neil Sims, Steve Billings and Alex Pavic to discuss actions 8, 9 and 10.

4. FPVC Report and UEB Feedback

Fees Discussion

The Engineering fees paper was discussed at UEB on 8/3/11 along with those of the other Faculties. *Rest of item closed – commercially sensitive.*

Also see UEB minutes <http://www.shef.ac.uk/ueb/minutes.html>

5. Report from FDR&I

University Research Infrastructure

A group led by Mark Rainforth has been looking at the University research infrastructure. One of the main issues has been how to reassure research councils that staff are sharing equipment funded by them. Some faculties have already centralised core equipment. A report will be produced shortly outlining the groups observations and recommendations.

University DTA

Confirmation has been received that the University DTA will be preserved. The number of EPSRC students will drop by approximately 3000 in total nationally. Of the students awarded 10% must be used as CASE awards. The number of studentships required to meet this target will be held back and departments will be able to bid for them. This will allow the full number to be reached. DTC studentships will be allocated separately.

Industrial Training Centre (IDC)

No action is currently being taken with the offshore ETI IDC as the University's position is not felt to be strong enough compared with that of other universities.

6. Report from FDL&T

Management Teaching

A letter is being sent to the Management School from MJH which confirms the agreement that all Engineering students will receive 10 or 20 credits on a combination of Management, Accounting and Law. This will involve the hand over of 100FTEs (or more) and will be worth around £1m to Social Sciences.

Annual Reflection

The Annual Reflection process is currently going ahead. A debriefing meeting will take place in a month's time.

7. Report from FDO

Professional Services

An away day with the Admin Team has taken place during which the planning statements of both Professional Services and the faculties were reviewed.

Marketing

The Faculty now has a coordinated core marketing team that also involves PGS, LeTS, SEG and Sue Armstrong. The group is currently focussing on UG and PGT and priorities for resource are set through this group.

Careers

Some departments are currently helping the Careers Service contact graduates in order to complete the first destination survey.

Support Staff Planning

A stream of work is being carried out regarding support staff planning. This involves looking at various issues including succession planning and training and development opportunities for technical and administrative staff.

Sheffield Engineering Gateway (SEG)

SEG recently attended the Southern Manufacturing Show to promote the Composite Systems Innovation Centre, which was done in conjunction with the AMRC.

MJH reported that the University has received a substantial HEIF5 budget and proposed that some of the money be used to extend SEG. In order to do this a full proposal that outlines all of SEG's achievements will need to be produced so that the Board can make an informed decision regarding SEG's future.

Estates

The capital cases for the two new building have now been submitted. They will be considered at the ECSG meeting on 14th March 2011. If approved approximately £1.5m of funding will be released for the next stage of the process.

A proposal to address the short-term space needs of the Faculty has also been submitted requesting 4200m² of space and funds of £2.2m.

The first meeting of the Faculty's Estates and Capital Group (FECG) has taken place. Its main priority in the short-term will be to set up and monitor the smaller design/user groups for new builds. Leaders for each of these groups have already been identified and the names of these and the members of the FECG will be communicated to Board members along with the Terms of Reference – Action.

For Decision

8. External Affairs T&F Group findings and recommendations

The Task and Finish Group have now concluded their line of work and have looked at a number of issues with a fine level of granularity. The Group recommended that an individual be appointed (at

G6) to work in the Faculty team on internal communications. It also recommended that 5 or 6 champions be appointed from among Faculty staff to coordinate activity and that these champions take their lead from the FPVC and FDO.

In the time since the review was commissioned it has become apparent that a number of activities previously seen as being central or departmental responsibilities are now discharged at Faculty level. As a consequence MJH felt a greater need for executive control and decision making in addition to coordination and clearer reporting lines to FEB. He identified the two following recommendations:

The first is that each Head takes responsibility for coordinating one designated theme of activity allowing each HoD to contribute to faculty affairs. It has the disadvantages of HoDs being already hard pressed, it is hard to see how synergies across the external affairs domain will emerge, and it will be difficult for a HoD to demonstrate impartiality when individual departmental interests conflict.

The second option involves the creation of a Faculty Director of Communications and External Affairs on a comparable level and commitment to the current FDR&I and FDL&T (0.4 FTE with departmental recompense at G7.1).

The Board approved the recommendation to appoint a Faculty Director of Communications and External Affairs. There was outline agreement regarding the appointment of a G6 member of staff to work in the Faculty team on internal communications. It was felt that the final decision for this appointment should be made by the Director once appointed and only after a full job description has been approved by FAST.

9. Postgraduate cohort recruitment in ACSE

The Board received a paper outlining ACSE's plans to implement a pilot postgraduate research cohort recruitment scheme linked to 10 scholarships to attract excellent PhD applicants and give them an excellent DTC like training experience. If successful, the scheme will act as a useful template for other departments wishing to provide a similar offering. The paper outlined the costs of providing such a scheme and highlighted ACSE's intention to provide the necessary resource through increased contract income and by reducing costs elsewhere. FEB were asked to underwrite the risk of these costs to the value of £216.6k in the event that the costs cannot be met within the Department budget allocation for 2012. MJH felt that it was important for FEB to agree to share some of the risk in order to encourage the Department to move towards a cohort recruitment model.

The Board discussed the proposed timeline for completion of a PhD under the cohort recruitment scheme. It was noted that the overall expected completion time would be 36 month in total and that the figure of 39 months quoted in the paper was incorrect. It was also noted that the inclusion of a 3-month induction period would mean dislocation with normal University guidelines on project selection (including project description) for Scholarship applications, but the Department has shown flexibility where students have asked to change projects within the three month induction period.

The Board agreed that the Faculty would agree to carry the risk associated with the cohort recruitment scheme in ACSE.

For Discussion

10. Impact, Innovation & Knowledge Exchange UEB paper

The Board considered the paper on Impact, Innovation & Knowledge Exchange that has been produced by a group put together by Richard Jones in response to the belief that at an institutional level the University should aspire to do better. The paper has been to UEB and is now going through a period of consultation within faculties. Following consultation an implementation plan will be produced.

There was concern that there should be support structures to encourage and empower individuals to be more entrepreneurial in the broadest sense. By entrepreneurial the Board agreed a meaning in its fullest sense; by raising both research contract income and in commercialisation.

Regarding point 10, the Board felt this point was unclear as it relates to responsibility 'for all of those aspects of developing company partnerships'. The Board agreed that recommendation 16 should refer to recognition for KE when it has been done well, not just broad recognition.

There was discussion regarding the role of FusionIP and the interaction with R&IS as well as what happens when FusionIP don't proceed with an idea. It was felt that the University does not currently make a big enough splash with regard to the commercial impact of research.

The overall recommendations were welcomed by the Board who now look forward to working with the wider University to develop plans to implement them, which will be key to their success.

11. Faculty Risk Register

The Board reviewed all opportunities/risks.

Item 5 – The failure of the trial last year means that the opportunity to achieve this is imperilled. A report on the current situation should be produced for FEB.

Item 6 – There is a further implementation risk associated with this, in particular how the Faculty carries out its current business whilst this is implemented (e.g. maintenance of current buildings).

It was noted that discussions are already taking place with Estates to identify a dedicated Faculty of Engineering Estates person who will take over much of the estates work currently being carried out by MAB. The individual will allow for greater synergy between the Faculty and Estates resulting in improved project management of estates issues.

Item 7 – Overseas student income has grown faster than other income streams, so the risk is higher than it was previously.. The Faculty is working with the wider University to lobby the UK Border Agency and politicians. It was felt that the mitigated risk has increased.

Item 9 – The risk has diminished over the last 6 months.

Risk 12 – The risk was removed from the register.

Risk 13 – The mismanagement of asbestos removal has serious implications for business continuity and the University's reputation. It was agreed that the text in the risk should be changed from 'Asbestos removal' to 'The mismanagement of asbestos removal'.

Risk 14 – The wellbeing of staff was also raised as an issue in association with this risk

Risk 15 - The risk was removed from the register. No longer a risk.

Risk 21 – The risk description should be changed to 'If the Faculty does not **prepare** well for the REF then this will impact adversely on QR funding'

Risk 22 - The risk was removed from the register.

The following new opportunity is to be added to the register – to improve the mechanisms for staff to exploit commercial opportunities.

12. PGT module size/delivery pattern

The Board received a report on the review of current PGT module sizes and teaching patterns. The report concluded that the majority of departments will, from 2011/12, be operating modules of 15 credits or multiples of 15. The current situation appears work well for all departments and between departments. Where mismatches do occur between shared modules remedies are in place to deal with them such as additional work for those students who are required to gain additional credits. It

was also felt that a change in PGT module size could have a negative impact on efficiencies gained from module sharing where a mismatch in unit size occurs.

The Board endorsed the notion that 15 credits is a good size for PGT modules.

13. SRDS/DRP1 and support staff issues

Item postponed.

14. Skills week

Following the removal of the Christmas exam period, two weeks have been made available for value adding activities. The second of these weeks will be retained for departmental use (e.g. projects, skills etc.). It is proposed that the first of these weeks be used for Faculty-wide interdisciplinary projects for Level 1 students (e.g. employability projects). The focus for Level 2 students will be technical skills. This will allow the Faculty the opportunity to better prepare students for professional practice. Postgraduate support will be used to guide the students through the projects, meaning that the use of academic staff time is minimal. There will also be a level of industrial support. A more detailed plan for the week will be submitted at the next formal FEB meeting.

15. Support staff costs

Following a request from CSE to increase its clerical staff by two FTEs analysis was carried out that looked at the support staff levels within each department. It was reported that spending on support staff across the departments was relatively uniform once student load and RNC have been considered. COM appear to spend less on technicians than would be expected. The numbers should be confirmed and if the outcome remains the same then external benchmarking for COM should be undertaken to see if staff are being adequately supported with technical staff. EEE appear to be technician intensive in comparison with the other departments.

CSE currently spend £34k less than the benchmark. Their request for two FTEs would cause them to increase support staff costs by £62 taking them above the benchmark. Therefore they have decided to appoint only 1 FTE at G7.

For Information Only

16. Replacing EPSRC project studentships

Closed item – commercially sensitive.

17. List of 'out of contract' staff

Paper for information and resolution only.

18. Update on Minor Works and Faculty Infrastructure Fund

Paper for information only.

19. Faculty Learning & Teaching Committee report

Under item 7 of the report 'Proposed statement on undergraduate project supervision', the Board felt that the recommendation for project supervisors to engage with students at least every three weeks was insufficient and that meetings between supervisors and students should be more regular. They also felt that the Committee did not necessarily need to be so prescriptive over the issue and that it should be considered a professional duty upon which academic staff place relative importance.

A stream of work should be carried out which looks to establish the frequency of supervisor/student meetings in each department to establish the norm. This should then be communicated to L&TC who should revise their guidance.

20. Research Net Contribution and Research Income

The Faculty position is currently stronger than last year's with awards totaling approximately £28.2m to date. The Faculty total could exceed that of the previous year by March leaving four months for additional growth.

The Faculty's application data is also positive and has increased by around 15-18% on last year.

JAC commented that the continued healthy grant award position was not necessarily being reflected in departmental projections of future research net contribution levels. These departmental projected levels of RNC were collectively based from a more cautious standpoint.

19. A.O.B

None.