UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES MANAGEMENT TEAM

Minutes of a meeting held on
Tuesday 11 October 2011

Present:

Dave Hall (Chair)  
Paul Goffin  Geoff Green  
Anne Hall  James Hunt  
Dawn Kemp  Susan Lapworth  
Nigel Siesage  Richard Taylor  
Mary Visser

In attendance Andrew Petersen (Secretary)

Apologies for absence were received from Alun Reynolds

UNRESERVED (ONLY) BUSINESS

11/M16  MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Group considered the minutes of a meeting held on 14 September 2011. The Group approved the minutes as a correct record, subject to the clarification in M12 that IT Services, in common with all Divisions of Corporate Services was seeking to achieve a holistic and unified approach to the provision of IT across the institution.

11/M17  MATTERS ARISING

The Group noted that the measurement of service performance and enhancement in the divisions of Corporate Services and the colleges would be considered at the November meeting.

The Registrar and Secretary reported that he would contact the Leadership Foundation shortly with reference to supporting the work underway in the University to develop a unified administration.

The Group noted that the schedule of visits to observe administrative developments at other institutions was underway, and that the recent visit to the University of Liverpool would be followed by similar observations of Cardiff and Coventry Universities.

The Group agreed:

a) That the Deputy Director of Finance be invited to provide a report for the November meeting on the outcome of the recent analysis of the total cost of the administration of the University.

b) That each member should provide a report to the Secretary on the methods of measuring service performance and enhancement employed in their division or College by 2 November for consideration at the next meeting.

c) That, once all visits had been completed, a report on the combined observations of Liverpool, Coventry and Cardiff Universities should be drafted for consideration at the February meeting.
CHAIR’S REPORT

The Group considered a paper from the Registrar and Secretary outlining the background behind the drive to achieve a unified administration. The Group discussed the document in detail and concluded that it was a helpful articulation of the current situation which could be used to set the agenda for discussion and implementation of the principles of a unified administration at divisional and college level.

The Group observed that the issue of service improvement might be overshadowed in the short term by the uncertainty regarding student recruitment and HEFCE funding. The Group concluded however that service improvement underpinned the academic mission of the University, could deliver significant efficiency savings and could allow for the redeployment of resources in order to react to changing circumstances, and therefore it was vital to maintain momentum in this regard.

The Group agreed:

a) That the Registrar and Secretary be invited to produce a Frequently Asked Questions document to accompany the paper for dissemination to divisional management groups;

b) That, in line with the goals of a unified administration, the issue of dual reporting within the colleges should be discussed at the Vice Chancellor’s Advisory Committee, informed by a paper from the College Directors of Administration.

DEVELOPING THE PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

The Group considered a further draft of a letter from the Registrar and Secretary to all Professional Services staff. It was noted that the requirement for staff to respond directly to the letter had been removed, to make the approach more consistent with existing processes within divisions and colleges. The Group proposed minor amendments to the letter before final circulation. It was also noted that, in order to facilitate the drive towards a unified administration, the Registrar and Secretary would be hosting a series of workshops for managers to help develop a collective understanding of what the University wished to achieve.

The Group agreed:

a) That the letter should be sent to all Professional Services staff, subject to minor amendment to acknowledge more clearly that plans for service improvement may already exist in some areas, and that the purpose of the letter was to encourage colleagues to consider how the principles of a unified administration could be applied to enhance such plans;

b) That the Registrar and Secretary consult with Heads of Division and College Directors of Administration to identify appropriate managers to attend the United Administration Workshops.

LIVE PROJECTS

The Group considered a report from Geoff Green on individual projects currently underway as part of the overall movement towards a unified administration. Several of the projects addressed the development of HR policy particularly in the context of staff grievances and change management.

The Group discussed how the complexity of individual cases could necessitate the implementation of several different HR processes in order to reach a resolution, and
that this could be both complex and time consuming. It was also important to ensure that the HR advisors assigned to individual cases had an appreciation of the wider context of HR policy in order to assist in managing personnel issues more effectively as they arose.

The Group agreed that as part of the programme of projects underway it would be helpful if a focus could be placed on developing HR policies which allowed managers and HR advisors to cut across existing processes in complex cases.

11/M21 UNIFIED ADMINISTRATION COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

The Group considered a paper from Geoff Green detailing proposals for communicating the aims and principles of a unified administration to a wider audience of staff within the institution. The paper outlined a number of events to be held throughout the year, which focussed primarily on highlighting the range of activities which took place in different areas of the University, with the intention of developing among staff a cross-institutional awareness of processes and service delivery.

The Group agreed:

a) That members would consult with their management teams to identify broad areas for discussion through the programme of events detailed in the Communications Matrix;

b) That these themes would be fed back to the Registrar and Secretary to inform the schedule of events;

c) That it would be helpful for the Unified Administration website to go live before the Professional Services Forum took place.

11/M22 DISTANCE LEARNING ARCHITECTURE PROGRAMME

The Group considered a report from the SUNRISE team on the ongoing Distance Learning Architecture Programme. The Systems-Thinking intervention in conjunction with the School of Archaeology and Ancient History was proceeding well and work was underway to redesign and integrate all student focussed processes, with a view to developing a system which could be rolled out for all Distance Learning provision. A number of other projects were also underway.

The Group agreed that it was essential to clearly articulate the respective roles of BDRA and CDDU in distance learning course design, development and support, and that this discussion should be initiated at the upcoming away day with the Professor of Learning Innovation.

11/M23 IT STRATEGY

The Group received a report from Mary Visser outlining a draft framework under development in IT Services in response to the recommendations of the KPMG Total Cost of Ownership report. The early stage proposals outlined the goal to develop a unified system of IT support and development, however had not yet been subject to consultation beyond IT Services.

11/M24 REPORTS FROM DIVISIONS AND COLLEGES

Geoff Green reported that the Professor Jingzhe Pan had recently been appointed Director of Research for the College of Science and Engineering.
The Group agreed that this issue would be considered outside of the meeting.

DURATION OF MEETING: 1 hour 30 minutes