UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES MANAGEMENT TEAM

Minutes of a meeting held on
Tuesday 14 February 2012

Present:

Dave Hall (Chair)
Paul Goffin           Geoff Green
Anne Hall            Louise Jones
Dawn Kemp            Susan Lapworth
Alun Reynolds        Martyn Riddleston
Nigel Siesage        Frances Stone
Richard Taylor       Mary Visser

In attendance Ian Mehrtens, Sally Worth and Andrew Petersen (Secretary)

UNRESERVED (ONLY) BUSINESS

12/M13 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed new members of the Group to the meeting.

12/M14 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Group considered the minutes of a meeting held on 20 January 2012. The Group approved the minutes as a correct record.

12/M15 MATTERS ARISING

Arising from M1 the Group noted that Mike Newton was drafting further guidelines regarding the Bribery Act for dissemination to those staff affected, and was also exploring with the Division of Estates and Facilities Management the development of a single University register for gifts received;

Arising from M3 the Group noted that

a) The review of the implementation of the new staff related Ordinances regarding grievance, disciplinary processes and performance management was underway, Chaired by the ACAS Regional Director;

b) The Leadership Foundation for Higher Education and HEFCE had launched a £1 million fund to support transformational change in higher education. The emphasis of the fund was on supporting developments that were collaborative in nature and would yield benefits that might be applicable across the sector. The Chair reported that the University had received an approach from De Montfort University regarding a potential collaborative bid in the area of shared procurement.

The Group agreed:

a) That details on funding potentially available through the Innovation and Transformation should be circulated to members;  
Action: Secretary

b) That individual members should explore the possibility for collaborative ventures where appropriate.
CHAIR’S BUSINESS

The Chair reported that the Service Improvement Plans discussed at the previous meeting would form the basis of a presentation to the VCAC Away Day on 28 February. The plans should highlight examples illustrating the efforts already underway within the Professional Services to improve service delivery and achieve savings, as well as those developments planned for the future. At the Away Day VCAC would also be considering the theory and practice of Systems-Thinking, and its role in the improvement of service delivery within the University.

The Chair also reported that, through participation in the Graduate Training Scheme the University would be required to allocate two posts within the Professional Services to be occupied by graduate trainees. Participating graduates would be required to spend 9 months in their home institution before undertaking a series of placements in partner institutions.

The Group considered the actions that had taken place as a result of the Registrar’s letter to all Professional Services staff. In each Division or College the letter had been discussed at an appropriate senior management meeting. In the majority of areas this had been followed up by consultation between managers and staff regarding service measurement and improvement. This information would then inform the Service Improvement Plans due to be submitted ahead of the upcoming VCAC Away Day.

The Group noted that the following common themes had arisen from the exercise:

a) In Divisions with a wide variety of staff groups and processes it was clear that it would take time to embed the principles throughout all staff in the division;

b) It was essential to create and manage a positive perception of the process among staff by maintaining regular high profile activity relating to the development of a unified administration, and also delivering a clear and consistent message throughout divisional and college management;

c) It was important to engage the academic community with the process where possible.

The Group agreed:

a) That Service Improvement plans from each Division or College should be forwarded to the Chair by 23 February;  
Action: All PSMT Members

b) That appropriate briefing materials regarding systems-thinking approaches and practices should be developed for members of VCAC before the Away Day, including examples of the outcomes of the existing interventions;  
Action: SL and RT

c) That, following confirmation of the financial arrangements for the scheme, two posts should be identified within the Professional Services to be filled by graduate trainees;  
Action: AR

d) That it was essential to sustain the ongoing drive towards a unified administration by delivering a positive and consistent message to staff;  
Action: All PSMT members

e) That in order to involve academic leaders in the process a special meeting with Heads of Department should be convened at an appropriate point.  
Action: Registrar
TEAM

12/M17 SYSTEMS THINKING INTERVENTIONS

The Group considered a map outlining the projected timescale for completion of the current systems thinking interventions in the areas of admissions and distance learning. The map highlighted broadly where key decision points might arise, and which would involve other divisions such as Human Resources or Finance, or the relevant College administration.

The Group noted that due to the nature of the systems thinking approach it was not possible to predict precisely when such decision points might occur. It was therefore essential to maintain regular communication between members of the intervention teams and the heads of the stakeholder Divisions and Colleges. Where the outcomes of an intervention may result in structural change or the reassessment of job roles it would also be important to involve the relevant campus trade unions.

The Group agreed:

a) That for future meetings it would be helpful to have an update detailing progress with all of the systems-thinking projects currently underway; 
Action: Secretary to co-ordinate

b) That it was essential that all members of the PSMT were familiar with the Systems Thinking approach to inform the decision making process at key points; 
Action: To be addressed by Vanguard ‘3 day fundamentals’ courses

c) That, where it was clear that a decision point was approaching, the senior manager closest to the intervention should convene a formal meeting with the heads of all of the stakeholder Divisions or Colleges, in order to agree the relevant decisions; 
Action: Relevant PSMT members

d) That such meetings should be minuted to provide a clear path for decision making
Action: Relevant PSMT members

12/M18 SHARED IT FACILITIES

The Group considered a paper regarding the potential for expanding the use of existing shared IT facilities, such as the use of Outlook Calendar for scheduling Committee meetings. The Group observed that the facilities were not being consistently utilised to their full potential, and that increasing their use could result in efficiencies across the institution.

The Group agreed:

a) That a group of staff closely involved with scheduling of Committee and other meetings, such as the PAs to members of the PSMT, should be trained in how to make full use of Outlook Calendar 
Action: Sally Worth in liaison with IT Services

DURATION OF MEETING: 1 hour 30 minutes