UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES MANAGEMENT TEAM

Minutes of a meeting held on
Tuesday 11 December 2012

Present:  
Dave Hall (Chair)  
Trevor Humphreys  
Louise Jones  
Susan Lapworth  
Martyn Riddleston  
Richard Taylor  
Rebecca Johnson  
Dawn Kemp  
Alun Reynolds  
Frances Stone  
Mary Visser

In attendance: Pete Shaw and Andrew Petersen (Secretary)

Apologies for absence were received from Geoff Green and Nigel Siesage

UNRESERVED (ONLY) BUSINESS

12/M94 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Group approved the minutes of a meeting held on 22 November 2012.

12/M95 MATTERS ARISING

Arising from M91 the Group noted that the next Systems Thinking presentation focussing on leadership would be given by the Chair in the New Year. Further arising from M91, the Chair encouraged members to visit intervention teams working in their area.

12/M96 CHAIR’S BUSINESS

The Chair reported that the preparations for the Systems Thinking Conference in January 2013 were underway, and that the conference would be publicised to all Professional Services staff shortly. The Group noted that there would be several breakout sessions to showcase the service improvements achieved to date through the use of systems thinking, and that an external speaker had been invited to highlight how the approach had been successfully applied elsewhere.

The Chair reported that external support for systems thinking interventions had been temporarily suspended pending a review of how service improvement was supported within the institution. Internal support for interventions was however continuing as usual.

The Chair also reported that VCAC had considered a proposal to change the name of the School of Historical Studies to the School of History. The Group noted that this had implications for the administrative support for the School and the underlying student and financial data structures. It would essential to include these considerations when approving and implementing the change of name.

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The Group also noted that similar complexities around the management of student and financial data and infrastructure support existed with relation to research centres, particularly those not affiliated to individual departments. Although a level of independence was desirable in order to ensure academic ownership of such centres, the Group agreed that clarity around their status from an administrative perspective would be welcome.

The Group agreed:

a) That the schedule for the Conference should be circulated to members to disseminate in divisions and colleges;  
   **Action:** Secretary

b) That while attendance at the conference was not compulsory, members should encourage staff to attend;  
   **Action:** All PSMT members

c) That the sessions provisionally booked for PSMT members to receive additional training in systems thinking (M91 refers) would be supported by in-house systems thinking experts;  
   **Action:** DK, MR and TH with support from Staff Development

d) That members should ensure that details of the administrative tasks associated with the change of name for the School of Historical Studies should be communicated to the Chair in advance of the next meeting of VCAC;  
   **Action:** All PSMT members

e) That a colleague should be identified to work with Divisions to compile all of the administrative issues arising from the current classification of research centres, and develop proposals to resolve these;  
   **Action:** Susan Lapworth to take forward with Jan Davies

f) That this should link with work already undertaken in the Division of Finance on this subject.  
   **Action:** To feed into RSO review

**SYSTEMS THINKING: UPDATES**

a) Maintenance
The Group received a progress report. The Group noted that the turnaround times had slowed recently, and this had exposed the fact that the new working practices had not yet become embedded as business as usual. This resulted in part from the rate at which additional buildings in the residential and commercial estate had been rolled in, and also reflected both a lack of clarity surrounding key roles, and the need for an operational leader to be closely engaged with the day-to-day work.

b) Distance Learning: College of Arts, Humanities and Law
The Group received a progress report and reviewed the range of data that the cluster team were regularly analysing. As in other interventions, the team had raised some issues which would require action at University level to resolve. Proposals had been drafted in relation to amending the process for fee setting and the fee payment flow, and these were due to be considered by the Fee Setting and Programme Development Committee and IT Portfolio Board respectively.

The Group agreed:

i) That the team should gather data on student performance and progression rates;  
   **Action:** Secretary to feedback

ii) That the team should compare data from year to year for each value step;  
    **Action:** Secretary to feedback

iii) That an update on progress with the application of systems thinking to non-DL provision in SAAH should be requested;  
    **Action:** DK
c) Distance Learning Administration: College of Science and Engineering  
The Group received a progress report. The Group noted that the cluster was currently 
administering a small number of programmes, however there was scope to roll in 
programmes in the College of Medicine, Biological Sciences and Psychology.

d) Distance Learning Administration: School of Management  
The Group received a progress report. The Group noted that although work was 
progressing, it was essential to keep the academic community engaged with the process 
and understand where service improvements may impact upon the academic structure 
of the curriculum.

The Group agreed:  
i) That a meeting should be held between members of PSMT and senior academics in the relevant departments to discuss and learn from their experience of systems thinking so far;  

Action: Registrar’s Office to co-ordinate

e) Admissions  
The Group received a progress report. A greater proportion of the admissions flow was now being undertaken in the Admissions Office, and this was placing significant pressure on staff resources. However, half of the applications within the University were being successfully handled through the new flow, and the phase two experiment into the joining and registration process would take place for the students joining in January 2013.

f) HR and Research Support Office  
The Group received a progress report. It was noted that a new Head of HR Operations had been recruited and once in post and they would take on the role of operational leader for the intervention. It was also noted that the lift of the recruitment freeze would increase the rate at which the team was able to experiment with recruitment through the new flow.

The Group agreed:  
i) That the new Head of HR Operations should receive some internal 1 on 1 training in systems thinking in order to familiarise themselves with the application of the approach at Leicester.  

Action: Pete Shaw

12/M98 SYSTEMS THINKING: RESOURCES

The Group considered a report on the total cost of the service improvements that had taken place through the application of systems thinking across the institution.

The Group agreed:  
a) That reports on the costs and savings associated with the service improvements should be regularly monitored through the PSMT;  

Action: Chair and Secretary to liaise with Finance

DURATION OF MEETING: 1 hour 40 Minutes