

GAP/2008/0122

THE UNIVERSITY OF LANCASTER

University Management Advisory Group

A meeting of the group took place on 21 January 2008 at which the following persons were present:

Trevor McMillan (in the chair)
Fiona Aiken
Sue Cox
Mandy Chetwynd
Tony Gatrell
Paul Graves
Andrew Neal
Roderick O'Brien
Mary Smyth

Val Walshe was in attendance for UMAG/08/016 and UMAG/08/017
Gavin Brown was in attendance for UMAG/08/023

Apologies for absence were received from the Vice-Chancellor, Cary Cooper and Bob McKinlay.

UMAG/08/014 Minutes

Document: GAP/2008/0089

The record of the meeting held on 14 January 2008 was approved for posting on the web subject to some amendments.

Action: PMG

UMAG/08/015 Forward timetable of business

Document: GAP/2008/0001

The group noted the forward schedule of business and made some amendments.

Action: PMG

UMAG/08/016 Staff Survey

Document: GAP/2008/0098

The Director of Human Resources, Val Walshe, introduced a document setting out proposals for the 2008 Staff Survey, and drew attention to the following points:

- proposed changes to the questions asked since the last survey included:
 - additional questions about staff perceptions of the effectiveness of performance review processes (including appraisal);
 - an additional question about how well staff felt informed about plans and strategy (at university, faculty and departmental level);
 - a reduction in the number of supplementary questions;
- it was proposed that each participating member of staff would be allowed to nominate a charitable organisation (from a list of options provided) to receive a £1 donation from the University;
- the available benchmarking data would be cited in the survey results, but needed to be treated with caution.
- the document set out a proposed timetable, with the questionnaire launched on 25 February and the results received in April.

In discussion, members welcomed the proposals, whilst making the following suggestions regarding the content of the survey:

- (a) staff should be asked about their participation in events held to disseminate university policy and strategy, and any personal initiatives undertaken in environmental beneficial activities like recycling;
- (b) there should be clarity regarding the assumed definition of 'management' when questions included this term;
- (c) faculties and divisions should be asked to test their staff survey results against their existing action plans.

UMAG agreed to endorse the proposals.

Action: VCW

UMAG/08/017 Professorial Review

Document: GAP/2008/0099

UMAG received a report setting out a timetable for the consideration of cases put forward for the review of individuals' placement within Band 1 of the new professorial new pay framework. It was noted that the framework and processes for determining the pay of non-academic staff on professorial equivalent salaries would be reviewed over the same period.

UMAG/08/018 University Risk Register

Document: GAP/2008/0100

The Director of Finance and Resources presented a draft version of the latest University Risk Register, and drew attention to the following points:

- some suggested changes to the combined probability and impact score of the risks listed;
- the intention to bring a report to a future meeting reviewing the risks listed against the current items on the UMAG forward agenda.

A number of suggestions were made for possible amendments to the register including:

- (a) identifying more explicitly the following risks:
 - failure to maintain and improve the recruitment of PGRs;
 - the risk of losing QR funding because of a shift in HEFCE priorities towards industry-related research;
 - changes in research council priorities;
 - the threat posed by international competition and possible declining market share to the University's future recruitment of PGTs (which was more significant than any possible decline in demand);
- (b) some adjustments to the probability and impact scores given to individual risks;
- (c) separately identifying responsibility for ensuring the co-ordination of regional and national partnerships respectively;
- (d) the inclusion of the faculty deans in the list of those with responsibility for managing the risk associated with the possible loss of key staff;
- (e) referring to the accumulative risk of work on campus causing disruption when many projects were taking place simultaneously.

UMAG agreed:

- (i) to ask that the register be revised in the light of the comments made;
- (ii) to note that it would be presented to the February Council meeting;
- (iii) to note that a paper would be produced by the Director of Governance and Planning reviewing the risk register against the UMAG schedule of business.

Action: ACN (i, ii)
PMG (iii)

UMAG/08/019 Resources Division Risk Register

Document: GAP/2008/0105

UMAG received an updated version of the risk register for the Resources Division.

UMAG/08/020 Research Excellence Framework

Document: GAP/2008/0101

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research presented a paper which summarised some of the main issues arising from the current HEFCE consultation on a proposed new Research Excellence Framework (to replace the RAE) and set out some initial suggestions for Lancaster's responses to the questions asked in the consultation document. He had invited comments on the HEFCE document from all interested parties in the University, and the RAE Steering Group and the Research Committee was to discuss the issues arising from it.

The following points were amongst those made in discussion:

- (a) the many subject-specific issues arising out of HEFCE's proposals;
- (b) the need to consider the possible implications for Lancaster's internal distribution of QR funding;
- (c) the suggestions being put forward in the sector that the introduction of the new framework for STEM and non-STEM subjects should be brought into line (with STEM being delayed by a year, and non-STEM being brought forward a year);

- (d) the importance of books in research outputs for arts and social science subjects;
- (e) the major role being played by the Leiden University in developing possible bibliometrics;
- (f) the danger that research metrics would influence the way in which citations were made.

UMAG agreed:

- (i) to note the report;
- (ii) to note that a final reply would need to be submitted by 14 February.

Action: TJMcK

UMAG/08/021 Lessons learnt from events at Virginia Tech

Document: GAP/2008/0102

The University Secretary introduced a document reviewing campus security in the light of events at Virginia Tech University, and drew attention to the following points:

- in case of serious incidents, the University would nearly always be acting under the direction of the emergency services;
- the most significant area signalled for further consideration was how best to communicate effectively with staff and students on campus in the case of an emergency.

In discussion, members of UMAG welcomed the document and made the following points:

- (a) the University had the advantage of being sited on a single self-contained campus;
- (b) communicating with students by sending texts to mobile phones was not a realistic option at present;
- (c) the need to maintain a balanced approach in which reasonable precautions were taken without overreacting to the danger of relative unlikely events;
- (d) staff involved in dealing with student welfare issues would welcome more guidance on what to do in the case of mental health difficulties where there could be a possible danger to the University community;
- (e) .

UMAG agreed:

- (i) that the issues concerned should be considered in the context of the proposed Disaster Recovery Plan that would come to a future meeting;
- (ii) the importance of informing the University community of the plans that were in place for dealing with serious security incidents.

Action: FMA/ACN

UMAG/08/022 Thematic report on teaching KPIs

Documents: GAP/2008/0103; GAP/2008/0104

UMAG received a draft thematic report to Council on teaching key performance indicators from the Director of Governance and Planning.

A number of suggestions for amendments were made, including:

- (a) adding a reference to the comparative sector data on PGT student satisfaction available from some externally compiled league tables in the management field (including the Financial Times annual MBA league table);
- (b) giving greater weight to current concerns about the University's postgraduate admissions processes;
- (c) providing more information about Lancaster's comparative position in the sector with regard to A-level entry grades;
- (d) including a reference to the discrepancy between the original projections made for overseas undergraduate recruitment and the final registrations figures;
- (e) using the term 'alternative offers' instead of 'recycling'.

UMAG agreed to endorse the report for submission to Council, subject to the above changes being made.

Action: PMG

UMAG/08/023 Implementation of commitments on academic contact time

UMAG noted that Senate had approved a new set of commitments on academic contact time for undergraduate students, subject to receiving a report on the likely resource implications.

Consideration was given to the next steps that should be taken towards implementing the commitments and providing Senate with the requested report.

UMAG agreed:

- (i) that the faculty deans should be asked to indicate any subject areas in their faculty where significant changes might be needed to ensure compliance with the commitments;
- (ii) that discussions currently taking place about staff-workload modelling should take account of the implications of Senate's decision;
- (iii) that the report to Senate might usefully set out processes for monitoring the impact of the new commitments rather than attempting to quantify all of these immediately;
- (iv) to note that further discussions would take place about the implementation process and the content and timing of the report to Senate.

Action: GB/RDMcK/AGC