

REGISTRAR AND SECRETARY'S CORE BRIEF: JUNE 2006

FOLLOW UP TO MAY CORE BRIEF

I should like to update colleagues briefly on three matters in last month's Core Brief.

Industrial Action

As you know the industrial action to which I referred last month was suspended at midnight on 6th June. We await the results of the ballots on the pay offer submitted to the trade unions on that day. Meanwhile, intensive efforts are being made by many colleagues to ensure that graduation takes place in the weeks commencing on 3rd July and that other successful students can progress to their next year of study. In short, a complex logistical operation is underway to recover from the inevitable disruption of recent months. This has been an atypical year in the University's examination and progression cycle but I am sure that everyone will want to play their part in trying to make the graduation period, always a showcase for the University, as successful as ever.

Administrative IS

It has been another difficult few weeks on the Administrative IS front. The new Finance System went live on 1st June and, as we all knew, the teething problems emerged, not least in terms of the speed of processing. The problems are being worked through systematically and I know the Finance IS team are doing all they can to remedy the situation as quickly as they can. It is frustrating, of course, when systems do not work perfectly and no one is minimising the operational inconvenience. However, I know from conversations with members of the Board of Governors whose day job is in Information Systems that the University's current experience is comparable to theirs in the private sector when undergoing systems implementation. It is important, therefore, that we all retain this sense of perspective and acknowledge that the introduction of new systems, no matter where you work, is never going to be trouble-free. We must resist the temptation to blame other colleagues. If it was entirely within their control to get everything right from day one they would do so, wouldn't you?

Review of the scope of HR

The report to which I referred last month has now been completed and will be considered by the President's Senior Executive in the first week of July. It will be published on the internal website very shortly thereafter. Alan Ferns, or one of his colleagues, will alert you by email to the publication. Ray Lewis and Andrew Mullen, both members of the Review Group, will brief HR colleagues in advance of the publication. The report's recommendations fall into three parts – structural, developmental and organisational. They were accepted unanimously by the Review Group to whom I am grateful for their contribution to this important exercise. Finally, for those of you who have missed it, Karen Heaton, the new Director of HR, takes up post on 1st September.

Process Reviews

In the course of last year we undertook a review of postgraduate recruitment and admissions which had wide-ranging ramifications for how we deal with this important area of activity at all levels within the University. After consultation with colleagues I have decided that two further process reviews will begin in the autumn. The first will be a complementary review of undergraduate recruitment and admissions which will follow a similar format to that for postgraduate activity. The second will focus on research administration. I have spoken to Delyth Chambers, Tim Westlake, Alan Ferns and Karen Shaw about this as their areas of responsibility will be most directly involved but that extends to Faculties and Schools and so Heads of Faculty Administration have also been consulted. Planning the reviews will commence shortly and, as was the case with postgraduate activity, the process will be transparent and consultative at all three levels within the Administration. The overall purpose is to improve efficiency and effectiveness and to remove unnecessary processes that do not add value. As an Administration this must be seen as an integral part of our work and so other activities will also be reviewed on a systematic basis.

Delyth Chambers will be leaving the University at the end of August to fulfil one of her ambitions which is to work as a consultant. She will continue to work with the University on projects of mutual benefit. The review of undergraduate recruitment and admissions will be timely, therefore, in assisting me and other colleagues decide on any changes to the structure of the Student Recruitment and Admissions Office including Widening Participation. Meanwhile, Paul Govey, Kathy England (in lieu of Claire Mansbridge who is about to take a year's unpaid leave) and Julian Skyrme will continue to manage the office on a day to day basis. At my request, Tim Westlake, who is now located in the same building, will maintain managerial oversight on my behalf until the review is completed which I expect to be in December 2006/January 2007.

Congratulations to colleagues in Estates

The University recently won the prestigious Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors National Property Management Award for Property Strategy and Delivery in 2005. As far as we are aware, we are the first University to do so. Congratulations to Diana Hampson and other colleagues in Estates on this excellent achievement.

Albert McMenemy
Registrar and Secretary

20th JUNE 2006

