The Year Ahead

In the course of the first half of this year, Core Briefs have been dominated by budgets, Task Force Reports, progress on ERVS and Administrative IS. The common theme has been significant change management. The academic session just begun will continue in similar vein. Significant change management is never easy. Human beings react to it in different ways. Some are exhilarated by it, others frightened. Whatever the reaction it has to be managed as skilfully as possible. Every manager has a duty to do that to the best of their ability, engaging and communicating effectively with colleagues. The period of adjustment to revised structures, level of resources and key responsibilities will vary from area to area depending upon the scale of the change being introduced. A major determinant of our success will be the effectiveness with which we manage the redeployment of staff over the coming months to fill "mission critical" posts however they arise. I am very aware of the limitations of the current Redeployment Register and of the necessity to introduce changes to make the redeployment process workable. This is a pressing priority for the Redeployment Task Force recently set up to oversee this. We will issue advice and guidance as quickly as we can over the next few weeks.

Teaching and Learning Review

As some of you may be aware, the President is chairing a major Teaching and Learning Review. The overall purpose is to address the need for quality improvement in the undergraduate learning experience in an age of "mass" higher education. The Review is not about reducing costs but is focussed on quality improvement. There are eight separate Task Forces as follows:

- Admissions and Standards
- Appointment, Promotion and Support of Academic Teachers
- Institutional Priorities, Structures and Commitment
- Curriculum Design and Development
- Personalised Learning
- On-line Learning
- Library and Information Services
- Student Support Services.

Overall, if the Review is to meet its objectives, radical thinking will be required which will affect many, if not all, aspects of the teaching and learning experience wherever that is delivered. I have been asked to chair the Student Support Services Task Force and we will have to begin work without delay to report, as required, by the end of December this year. The President will submit his final report to the Senate next February and to the Board of Governors in March.
Research Assessment Exercise (RAE): Registration

Professor Dame Nancy Rothwell has advised me that virtually all of the administrative data (finance, student, HR and so on) required for the University's RAE return has been finalised. This has been a mammoth and complex exercise and, on behalf of not only myself but the whole University, I should like to thank warmly everyone who laboured long and hard to achieve this outcome. Thank you and well done.

Congratulations too to all those who have been involved in the Registration process for 2007-08. This too is a major logistical undertaking requiring careful and detailed preparation and an abundance of energy and hard work to complete it. The long queues of students remain a worry and we must look at every option to tackle that problem. I know this matter is receiving attention.

The Future of the Core Brief

I have asked Alan Ferns and Rachel McGraw to review the effectiveness of the current arrangements for Core Briefs and to report to me by December. An essential part of the Core Brief process is the communication of local news/issues and so it is essential that each line manager, at their respective level of responsibility, takes the time every month to disseminate their local messages. This is as important as (arguably more so than) the written comments from me as Registrar and Secretary. I will share Alan and Rachel's conclusions with you in due course.

Albert McMenemy
Registrar and Secretary

1 October 2007