

REGISTRAR AND SECRETARY'S CORE BRIEF: MAY 2006

Consequences of Industrial Action

Those not directly involved in the examination and assessment process will have little idea how difficult the month of May has been for those colleagues across the University who have had to manage the consequences of the current industrial action being undertaken by AUT members. The President has made clear the University's stance on the current dispute and I do not wish to add to that. Irrespective of one's views on the merits of the action, I must begin this month's Core Brief by thanking warmly all those colleagues at School, Faculty and Centre level who are working so conscientiously to ensure that, barring some unforeseen circumstance, examinations will be held during the months of May and June. There is still a lot to do in the busy period leading up to 7 June but when one realises that 1,507 examinations are taken at this time of year you can begin to appreciate the scale of the task our colleagues have faced.

Administrative IS

The countdown to the "go live" date for the Finance System is well underway. 1 June is only days away. I know from conversations with colleagues that there are worries about the impact of absorbing the new Finance System and then, in September, of the registration components of the Student System. Change is usually difficult rather than easy and not everything goes precisely according to plan. Lessons are often learnt more painfully than if one had the foresight that hindsight often reveals. I know that this is an intensive period for many of you but please try to remember that the University does need these new systems. You may not welcome that comment at this moment but, once the inevitable teething troubles are overcome, we have to be confident that the benefits will come through. We must resist the temptation to re-write history by falsely reminiscing that, across the University as a whole, we had modern, fit for purpose information systems that provided staffing, financial and student data that adequately met our needs. The University had to replace its administrative Information Systems. Let us all trust that the glitches on 1 June, and subsequently, will be minimal.

Review of HR

I am grateful for the speedy and comprehensive responses to the review of the scope of HR. I was struck by the positive way in which constructive advice was offered and the recognition that HR colleagues have been wrestling with a very heavy agenda for some time. The working group is now compiling a report which will make various recommendations for the future. Once decisions have been reached and those most directly affected have been informed, an appropriate communication will be issued to colleagues. I would expect this to take place in late June or July.

I should also add that interviews for the post of Director of HR took place last week and, subject to satisfactory completion of the formalities, an announcement will be made shortly. I will want to brief that individual on the recommendations emanating from the review of the scope of HR in due course.

Budget 2006-07

Budget proposals will be presented to the Planning and Resources Committee on 23 May and to the Finance Committee on 19 June. Budget preparation this year, for reasons I explained in an earlier Core Brief, has been protracted with significant changes to the way in which the budget for non-Faculty areas has been compiled and presented. Considerable effort has been expended in identifying and listing separately what are now referred to as General University Overheads, ie, the range of services and items of expenditure which are incurred for the benefit of the University as a whole. These are now seen as distinct from the pay and non-pay costs of the Directorates. The overall purpose, not yet complete, is to make every effort to identify separately the cost of administration at School, Faculty and Centre level. It will take time to assemble this information but it is essential that we do so.

At a practical level, the budget for the Directorates in 2006-07 has increased to take account of likely pay awards and other inflationary rises. It has not been possible to meet requests for additional funding. In any event, until the Director of Finance reports to me on the work of the Budget Monitoring Group, it would have been inappropriate to add to the baseline of the Administration. Colleagues in Finance will arrange to brief budget-holders over the coming weeks so that each budget-holder understands the basis on which the final figures have been reached. I should like to thank everyone for their cooperation and hard work in preparing this year's budget, especially those colleagues in Finance, whose patience I tried sorely at times.

Albert McMenemy
Registrar and Secretary

22 May 2006

