

## **Finance and Planning Team Brief Questions & Answers**

**Q1 - What are the expected benefits of merging Finance and Planning and who does it impact on most? I imagine it might be different for all of the different teams?**

**A1** - There are several benefits to Finance and Planning working as one Directorate:

- Further development of the Integrated Planning process to build upon the work already carried out
- Joint projects allow a more consistent approach and sharing of knowledge around Business cases and Benefits Realisation, Value for Money Reporting, revision of the Annual Report and Financial Statements, Tableau Reporting and a joint approach to student number planning.
- Sharing of best practice around continuous improvement and employee engagement
- Use of shared resource across Finance, Planning, BIS and E&D to ensure a consistent approach to processes such as absence reporting, training and general administration

**Q2 - We have seen a lot of documentation about the new strategy and the pillars. It would be useful to have clarity on the agreed justifications of this chosen strategy. What is the ULT's understanding of how this strategy addresses financial sustainability amidst the challenges and opportunities SHU expects in the coming years?**

**A2** - The ULT have agreed the strategy and creation of the pillar boards by identifying themes and supporting objectives to achieve the University's Vision and Mission, to be the world's leading applied University and to transform lives. The 4 pillar boards have been created to support this by identifying strategic investments that help achieve the University's goals and help drive efficiencies.

Alongside the strategic investments, a long term financial plan has been developed which track the University's financial journey, ensuring that the investments deliver longer term benefits that maintain financial sustainability in the future. As the environment in which the University currently operates and changes in the future, the creation of a more agile, dynamic and responsive organisation will consequently be reflected in the long term plan updates.

**Q3 - When will a decision on strategic investment bids be made, and how will the projects be accounted for in practice?**

**A3** - Initial allocations of overall budgets to Pillar Boards have been proposed and will be agreed in the coming weeks. In the meantime, Pillar Boards are receiving business cases bidding for allocations from those budgets. The Pillar Boards will consider the business cases and approve or reject them based on the justifications both financial and non-financial contained within those cases.

The requirement to complete mandates and business cases will allow benefits to be tracked by the pillar boards with the support of BIS and Finance teams. In future years the benefits realised from strategic investment will be incorporated into BAU and encompassed within the Performance Review Group process that monitors achievement against budgets.

The process for the transactional accounting will be developed and agreed by the Management Accounting Executive.

**Q4 - Have we seen any decline in student applications as a result of the increase in FT UG fee from £9,000 to £9,250 (and also future increases for RPI)?**

**A4** - It is challenging to identify the impact of increasing tuition fees against a backdrop of a reducing demographic of University age members of the population. When fees were increased from £3,000 to £9,000 in 2012 there was an initial drop in the number of students recruited into UK Universities but this

number has since recovered. This would imply that a considerably smaller increase such as those driven by the TEF may not have such a significant impact. Given the long term prospects in regards to repayment of tuition fee loans, this may also lessen the impact of rising fees.

What is highly likely however is that as tuition fees continue to rise, students will become even more focused on ensuring that they obtain value for money for their £9k+ per year and as an organisation we need to respond to this to make sure that our offer remains competitive in comparison to other Universities. The University also needs to demonstrate that the potential outcomes for students in relation to employability are clearly focused upon and strengthened in future years.

#### ***Q5 - Design principles for the operating model***

**A5** - We have a set of overarching Design Principles which have had review and input from members of ULT, the University Leadership Forum and senior staff from across professional services. These are discussed, along with 'what is an operating model' in a video blog which should be released at the end of this week / start of next week.

#### ***Q6 - Referring to 'agility, performance and a trusting culture' I would be interested to understand how 'Having clear roles and reporting lines and single points of accountability' will be blended with 'a dynamic environment promoting collaboration'***

**A6** - One of the important things is that we enable decision making further down the organisation – this is more efficient as it removes waiting times for decisions to be made, which in turn enables us to be more agile and dynamic. It also empowers staff, which is important for improving trust and enabling collaborative activity. It is difficult to do this without clear roles and responsibilities – authority cannot easily be delegated if there isn't clarity about responsibility.

#### ***Q7 - Are we exploring matrix management, is this more about having a multi-skilled workforce able to work across multiple disciplines, is it both or something else?***

**A7** - We will be looking at a number of possible models and thinking about the requirements of our different services. It is important that we understand the skills and capability needed to deliver our services, and that we look for opportunities to develop staff. Our expectation is that we will want to look at how we improve opportunities for horizontal movement to expand experience, skills and capability as a part of staff development, as well as from the perspective of wanting to develop a more agile workforce.

#### ***Q8 - Anything coming out of the Operating Model work that will immediately affect us? Will the consultants from Deloitte be coming round to talk to us "ordinary" members of staff?***

**A8** - We have been running a number of workshops as a part of understanding how we currently operate and what opportunities there are for improvement. These have focused particularly on the services or functions that are co-delivered across a number of organisational areas. Invitees have covered the full range of grades and have included colleagues from Finance where appropriate. Communication and engagement activities will continue throughout the project and we welcome feedback via our email address: [Prof\\_Serv\\_Op\\_Model](mailto:Prof_Serv_Op_Model). In addition to workshops, we have also been undertaking desk-based analysis of process maps, service plans etc. and meeting with the senior teams from each area of professional services.