



Having survived the autumn term, where the **SPI team** has been focussed on student number planning and our statutory data returns to HESA and HEFCE (known as HESES), attention is turning in earnest to the main phase of the planning cycle. During this phase faculties and the professional services begin to draw up their plans for 2018/19 onwards. Key dates coming up include:

- **8th March 2018** - University Planning workshop on where University leaders will share early thinking on priorities so that commonalities, dependencies and risks can be explored further
- **28th March** - The University Leadership Team planning day on where initial plans to meet financial and performance targets (including student numbers) will be further scrutinised.
- **Friday 27th April** - The date this quarter which we are working towards; for the submission of plans and budgets.

In **SPBC** the autumn term saw the successful completion of two significant programmes of work – the Assessment Journey Programme and the Enhancing Student and Curriculum Management. These programmes are now in transition to business as usual and the team continues to provide support during this transition. The main focus for the team over the next few months are the strategic initiatives being delivered under the four Pillar Boards. Priorities over the next few months also include: rolling out new and more streamlined reporting processes that feed into our monthly University Performance Reporting to ULT; and work to embed our benefits and impact approach.

Since the approval of our University Equality Objectives in July 2017, the **Equality and Diversity Team** have been working with colleagues across the University to map out the programme of work that will ensure we can deliver these ambitious objectives and targets. The team have also been overseeing the institutional Athena SWAN submission for a bronze award which was made in November 2017. This is a sector recognised benchmark for gender equality and provides a framework for us to assess progress and plan further action. The focus for the team over the first quarter of 2018 is the launch of our Equality Objectives across the University, with an event planned for 13<sup>th</sup> February; the establishment of a Race Equality Steering Group to oversee our work in this area; and ongoing work to co-ordinate and provide specialist advice to work across the University that will support the achievement of our equality targets.

For me personally, the focus over the next few months is on two key initiatives: the PSOM Institutional and Leadership project, for which I am the Project Sponsor; and the University Portfolio Review. The PSOM project is focused on the services that support the provision of Insight, Intelligence and University Performance Information and we are exploring how we can both improve the quality and efficiency of these services across the University. The University Portfolio Review is exploring scenarios for the future size and shape of the University in terms of the subjects we offer, how we offer them (full-time, part-time, distance learning etc.), and at what level (undergraduate, postgraduate etc.). To date we have looked at our current size and shape in comparison to our competitors and explore how the external markets are changing. We are currently drawing up potential scenarios for the future for discussion by ULT on 20<sup>th</sup> February.



The **Financial Services** teams will be focusing on how we continue to develop our offering in line with the University Strategy and the objectives and priorities that we set for 2017/18

**Procurement** are currently working on some major University systems projects including CRM (Customer Relationship Management) which will ensure we have a joined up approach to managing our relationships with all stakeholders. They are also continuing to upskill our colleagues out in the Faculties and Directorates by identifying and training Procurement Champions, providing template guidance and information. They currently have two vacancies in the team which we are actively recruiting for, one of which is live on CORE Portal.

**Service Improvement** are reviewing the Finance and Planning intranet with a view to creating a shared home page for both Finance and Planning. Along with Procurement, they are undertaking a review of E5 in order to assess its ability to deliver future University requirements. They continue to support our users on a daily basis ensuring operational stability and are looking at how we develop interfaces with E5 to support the activities of the Finance and Planning teams.

**Purchase Ledger** continue to work on their student facing processes, in particular bursary and scholarship payments which are now largely being paid by bank transfer as opposed to cheques. This makes it easier for students to interact with the University. Student Success Scholarship bursaries, Go Global payments and internships are three such areas where we are making significant advances. They are also working with Service Improvement to look at how we process high volume supplier invoices onto E5 and have recently gone live with an invoice import process with our Travel Management Company, Clarity.

**Sales ledger** are continuing to adapt to their new location and focusing on cross training across the team. They are also piloting new processes around sales invoicing and credit notes and are implementing new ways of taking payments in accordance with Payment Card Industry regulations. They currently have one vacancy in their team which they are actively recruiting for.

**Financial Accounts** will be working on ensuring that the University is compliant with the recently introduced Criminal Finances Act which requires a significant amount of work around identifying risks across the University. Part of this necessitates the development of a tax strategy and tax risk register. There are a range of requests to update the Financial Regulations and Policies relating to Travel, Procurement and Conflict of Interests which will be completed by the end of March and they continue to support changes resulting from the implementation of the Strategy and PSOM review with regards to accounting, financial and tax implications.

I will be supporting the University Leadership Team with the development and rollout of the University Masterplan for our Estate focusing more closely on what it means longer term for the University's finances. In March I will be hosting a workshop on *Integrated Reporting* for the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education which looks at how we think about, do and report on major activities across the University that deliver the Strategy and how we summarise these in our Annual Report and Financial Statements. We will also be finalising and submitting various efficiency returns to regulating bodies which show that over the 16/17 period we made savings of several million pounds through process improvement and effective procurement strategies.



**Management Accounting** are heading into the what is traditionally a busy time and 2018 looks to be no exception!

In addition to supporting the Estates Master planning work that Deborah has referred to the teams were straight back into reporting period 5 with an update on risks and opportunities ahead of the period 6 reforecast in early February which will be closely followed by the main budget setting period through to April. We have started the preparation for budget setting by presenting an early view of the next 3 years financial forecast to ULT based on work done by local management accounting teams and corporate reporting. This work and the decisions made at ULT will be used to set targets to ensure we achieve the operating surplus forecasts agreed in last year's planning round.

We are also supporting the portfolio review team that Linda is leading and from the initial work the challenge has been set by ULT for finance to provide a consistent course costing model across the university to support the work of the portfolio review team. This isn't an easy task as we don't have consistently used datasets but as always we will rise to the challenge and plan to have a pilot in place by the end of February.

Corporate reporting have a number of external reporting deadlines this month which involve work across Finance & Planning as well as with colleagues across the university. These include the TRAC return (Transparent Approach to Costing) which aims to give transparency of costs across activities (teaching, research and other) in a comparable way across the HE sector. In addition we are also submitting a different costing exercise to OFFA (Office for Fair Access) which demonstrates how we invest an element of our fee income to support access, retention and progression activities across the university, as set out in our Access Agreement.