

Report on the Review of the Restructuring Process

Executive Summary

The following are a list of the key findings from the Review of the Restructuring Process. Further detail can be found in the rest of the report.

- Broad recognition that change needed to happen
- Relief that the University went through with making changes
- The restructuring has been a significant move to creating structures that enable a more strategic approach
- There was considerable unhappiness about the process of restructuring itself. The change process had not been properly managed. Staff worked very hard to try to implement change without appropriate project management from the 'Centre' of the University.
- The Head of Department role is overloaded and needs adjustment
- In some Schools the role of Directors was seen as unclear
- Consideration is needed regarding the career development and future direction for Heads and Directors
- There are too many meetings at all levels
- The Annual Planning Round needs major improvements
- Communication from the Centre is uncoordinated and there is too much of it
- The budgetary mechanisms need greater transparency
- The Administrative and Academic structures are somewhat divorced from each other to the detriment of both
- The role of the Student Advisers is viewed positively, but can be disconnected from academic management at school/departmental level
- The career path for administrative staff is clear
- School Management Committees/Groups are working well
- There is a high level of commitment to the new Schools
- Cross-University rules are enabling the more effective sharing of good practice
- Increased local autonomy in curriculum development is beneficial
- The provision of a School-based Finance Officer is welcomed
- Further work on providing space in crowded Schools, especially for PGs was necessary.

In addition to the above pros and cons, there were broadly consistent views on the following operational aspects:

- Departments are the primary operational units
- Schools are responsible for strategy, the budget and have an academic regulatory function

Therefore the balance of administrative support needs to be re-focused towards departments within Schools. Each School and each School Administrative Manager

should be able to take their own approach in implementing this re-focusing to suit the needs of the departments within the different Schools.

- On top of there being too many meetings overall, many meetings engage in too fine a degree of detail and the level of such meetings are wrongly pitched.

This is a particular concern with Committees focusing on curriculum matters at School and Central level. There is a wish for the School level committee to take a more strategic overview of the School's development, with detail being resolved at Departmental level. In particular, if HoDs are to be involved in the work of School curriculum committees, the committees must be linked into the management of the School. SCCs should both feed into and work out of the APR of the School, with annual monitoring of programmes and periodic reviews feeding into the APR and curriculum development feeding out of the APR.

- The level of support for Departmental meetings needs to be increased. Currently many of these meetings lack administrative support in most instances.

The relative lack of administrative support would be even more pressing were curriculum work to be devolved further.

Senior Management Group Action Points arising from the Report:

The Report was discussed at a Senior Management Group Awayday and the following significant points were raised, and action agreed:

- The clear distinction between the Schools as strategic units and the Departments as operational units was disputed. Some Schools were happy for this to be the case, whereas, others were uncomfortable with the notion of such a clear split feeling that the Schools had an important role in operating cross-school activity for example School lectures. The Schools needed to be flexible in their approach to this issue.
- It was recognised that a great deal of time had been taken in determining the committee structures at School level, however, little or no time had been spent in considering the necessary structures at Departmental level. As a result, work that should be undertaken at Departmental level had been passed to the School Committees causing an overload. There was clearly room for the operation of School level Committees to be reviewed to ensure the correct balance was achieved. However, Departments needed to be careful not to reduce workload at School level by creating new Committees within Departments. Where possible work should be undertaken by individual officers/member of faculty in consultation with the HoDs. It was agreed that an external efficiency expert should be contracted to assist in developing and revising systems and process to reduce the level of bureaucracy;
- It was noted that the relationship between the SMG and the Heads of Department needed further thought;
- There was a general acceptance that University had to take a flexible approach towards the allocation of support staff resource. Given the wide variation in the size of departments, it was not appropriate for there to be a centrally agreed system of resource distribution. It was recognised that Schools containing a number of small Departments gained efficiency by offering cross-school centralisation of services. However, those with large Departments benefited from devolving some School level activity down to the Departments. It was for Deans to determine how best to allocation the

resources within their Schools. It was recognised that where devolution was to take place this had to be achieved from within existing resources;

- There was concern that Deans and Heads of Department were being used as email post-boxes. It was agreed that the Admin Team should consider how best to distribute information to ensure that it was directed to the appropriate School or Departmental Officer. It was recognised that there was a general problem with the use of email for communication. The appointment of an external consultant to advise on this would be considered; and
- It was recognised by all those involved in the Annual Planning Round that it had to work better than it had in the past.



University of Sussex

A first year report on the restructuring of the University Full Report

The University's School structure was radically revised with effect from 1st August 2003. This report reviews the restructuring after the first year of operation. The review was led by Pro-Vice-Chancellor Stuart and involved meetings with academic managers (Deans, Directors, Heads), and with wider groups of faculty and staff who wished to contribute to the review. Additionally, the Head of the Academic Office interviewed a range of School administrative staff. The Vice-Chancellor and Registrar & Secretary attended feedback meetings with each School. The Registrar was unable to attend the Sussex Institute meeting but was kept apprised of issues in the School. The School Administrative Managers conducted a series of consultation events with administrative and clerical staff and their proposals are attached in an appendix at the end of this document.

1 Remit

- 1.1 The purpose of the review was to identify areas of success as well as those aspects of the new structures which would benefit from further modification or clarification. A particular concern was whether the new structures were delivering the intended benefits of streamlined administration, improved academic organization, and improved arrangements for students. The relationship between the new Schools and their constituent departments was a consistent theme during the review.

2 General Principles for Restructuring

- 2.1 The main purpose of the restructuring exercise was to enable the University to manage its academic development in a more responsive and coherent way, with improved and more transparent management structures. A primary goal is to enable the University – at all levels – to function with greater strategic purpose. One of the main aims of the restructuring, as set out by the Vice-Chancellor, was to create 'an organisation that is inherently flexible and continuously adaptable' (Nevis, Lancourt, and Vassallo, 1996:192, see also Morgan, 1986). To this end, the complex relationship between Subject Groups and Schools (with split management responsibilities at staffing and academic management level) were re-organized into a system of singly-located Departments within a smaller number of Schools. At postgraduate level, the former structure of free-floating Graduate Research Centres was replaced by introducing new Graduate Centres, again singly located within a School.
- 2.2 Programme management was now located clearly at Departmental level. To help secure local ownership of the academic endeavour, quality assurance for course and programme approval was largely devolved from the centre to the new Schools, with oversight responsibility for managing academic matters being placed on the new Directors of Studies.

- 2.3 In order to retain the principles of interdisciplinarity, Interdisciplinary Programme Groups (IDP groups) were created under the leadership of an IDP Director. Additionally, a common academic framework was introduced to encourage cross-discipline programme development.
- 2.4 Administrative support for the new Schools and Departments was managed and largely provided at School level in order to secure: more consistent arrangements across departments; a more effective flow of information from Centre to School to Department level; better career paths for administrative and clerical graded staff. Management of the administration at school level was placed under the single leadership of a School Administrative Manager who is a member of the school senior management group. Technical Services Managers, in the science Schools manage technical support in each School and are members of the senior management group of each of the science Schools.

3 A staged process

- 3.1 The University recognized at the outset of the restructuring process that the changes were significant and would take time to become fully embedded in the working life of the University. Intentionally, the new structures are designed to enable further change to happen and to avoid overly constraining new developments and new directions. One of the purposes of the current review is to identify those areas where further adjustment can be made. Accordingly, a principle of the review is that it is reviewing the re-structuring 'in-process' rather than auditing the impact of a definitive and static system. Management theory highlights that, 'while restructural arrangements may constitute a revolutionary change...the rearrangement process...frequently unfolds in an evolutionary fashion' (Nevis, Lancourt, and Vassallo, 1996:192). Peters (1988) also highlights that the idea of a so-called steady state is no-longer possible in organisations and what is required is to enable staff to feel comfortable with change by creating structures that facilitate change without bureaucracy.
- 3.2 Key areas where further work is already under consideration include:
- School committee structures
 - Departmental organization and committee structures
 - Science curriculum re-organization
 - Postgraduate programme and framework alignment

During the autumn term, 2004 there will be a further evaluation of the new examination board structures and an update on progress from this report.

4 Key areas for action / recommendations

- 4.1 The following areas for action and consideration are highlighted as likely to produce the most immediate positive impact without jeopardizing the broader purpose of the restructuring.
- Given the initial objective of the restructuring to make the University more flexible and more responsive to change, further work needs to be undertaken to meet this objective. There is too much bureaucracy, too much paperwork, too many emails and too many priorities. All staff are working very hard but it is not clear that we are always working on projects or issues that best serve our needs. While there are

increasing demands from external forces such as HEFCE, the QAA and others, we need to find simple ways of assuring quality, monitoring progress and development and recording activity. An efficiency expert, brought in as an external consultant, could assist the University in developing and revising systems and process to reduce the burden of bureaucracy.

4.2 The Head of Department role is currently too heavily loaded with administrative functions, limiting the scope for academic and strategic leadership at discipline level. Given the priorities of a research intensive university removing HoDs from research activity in order to perform administrative tasks is not sensible. It is proposed that:

- (a) some administrative functions are devolved further and shared between colleagues within departments
- (b) Clearly identified administrative support is provided for the HoD to prevent the administrative load impacting negatively on research and to enable the HoD to develop the academic leadership function.
- (c) A review of administrative tasks to ensure maximum efficiency is obtained

4.3 School Curriculum Committees are currently overwhelmed by detail and are unable to focus on the strategic development of a School's academic portfolio, or on the development of school-based learning and teaching policy. It is proposed that:

- (a) Detailed curriculum scrutiny is devolved to sub-groups of the main committee, but that the formal responsibility of the Committee is retained
- (b) Departments take on greater responsibility for assuring the accuracy of the detail on curriculum proposals

There are two main issues that need to be addressed in taking forward this proposal. Firstly, the external requirements of the Quality Assurance Agency tend to require a level of externality in curriculum approval and this cannot be secured departmentally. Hence the School must continue to take an active and explicit role in formal curriculum approval. This could be secured by developing a system of validation for new programmes once they have been fully developed, removing the burden from the School Curriculum Committee. A validation event need involve a sub-group of the School Curriculum Committee, the proponent of the programmes and a Pro Vice Chancellor as well as an external assessor. There would be no need for any School and its constituent departments to have more than one validation event in a year where all new programmes proposed could be assessed together. Validation events would also secure quality assurance and address the major concern from the recent institutional audit of our new structures. Secondly, if departments are to prepare and review paper-work more effectively, appropriate administrative support must be provided, and some of this is likely to need to come from the Administrative Faculty level (School Administrators Curriculum).

4.4 It is generally agreed that the school administrations need to be more departmentally focused. Suggested ways of achieving this include:

- Closer physical location of administrative and clerical staff to academic faculty in relevant departments
- Better communication to academic faculty of the levels of service that can be provided, and how to access them

- School level administrative faculty to adopt a more departmental-facing role with named primary contacts at that level.
- More strategic use of Departmental Coordinators to forge links between the School and its Departments.

Each School Administrative Manager discussed how best to implement these recommendations in their School and each solution is slightly different, depending on the size of departments, the range of work of departments and the nature of the School itself. Schools will also be mindful of the real benefits of the current administrative system, which allows for the rapid deployment of staff in some cases and a consistency of approach to tasks allowing for learning across the University. Despite these issues each School has looked at how to make their administration 'work' more effectively for the departments within the School.

- 4.5 From a series of focus groups with students, it is clear that they regard the department rather than the School as their primary home. This chimes with the formal responsibility of Departments for their students. This suggests a need for clearly identifiable departmental offices or spaces able to respond effectively to local student needs.
- 4.6 Interdisciplinary Programme Elements (IDPEs) are not being supported as effectively as other discipline-based programme elements under the new arrangements. Consideration, at University level in consultation with Schools, of appropriate mechanisms for securing teaching and development of IDPEs is needed. This relates not only to management structures, but also planning and resource issues. Greater flexibility needs to be built into the system to enable cross-discipline working. A working group, chaired by PVC Stuart has been set up to examine how best to support IDPEs.
- 4.7 A general concern that emerged related to 'communication', in terms of:
- Clarity – too much information is poorly prepared and fails to convey what needs to be done and by whom
 - Coordination – there needs to be better coordination from central offices to reduce the number of conflicting operational deadlines
 - Timeliness – too much information at all levels is conveyed too late. This impacts on operational and committee work
 - Targeting – recipient lists resemble a duck-shoot, aiming widely in the hope of hitting something. Communications need to be more carefully addressed and need to state why the recipient is included (e.g. identify who should take action, and who is receiving a communication for information only).
 - Deans are not post-boxes

The survey of administrative roles revealed that the School Administrator (Systems and Resources) (SASR) plays a key role in managing School/Departmental business and is often the best placed person in the School administration to identify timing/resource clashes. It is recommended that this role is given a higher profile in the centre and that operational deadlines are in future discussed with the SASR.

- 4.8 Related to 4.7 is a widely held concern about the flow of business through the University at all levels. A more coordinated approach is needed with regard to developing and implementing timetables so that reporting and audit requirements align appropriately with the operational needs of academic units. (For further

discussion on these issues see appendix two). The Director of Communications and the Registrar are looking at how best to take these recommendations forward.

- 4.9 The Annual Planning Round needs to be more effectively implemented, with information provided in advance to enable Schools and Departments to plan effectively; and feedback on the plans, separately to the post round, needs to be provided in a more timely way and in greater detail. There was a particular concern that feedback did not address the appropriateness of the broader strategic planning that informed submissions. There was also concern that the planning round should be more holistic in its approach, for example if a School is to be given additional posts this will have knock-on effects for space, tutorial fund requirements and possibly administrative staff. Planning should include all elements of the jigsaw. Finance managers in Schools could be effectively used in the early stages of the APR to support the development of the planning process.
- 4.10 There is a consensus that the budgetary model needs to be more transparent, and that budgets need to be agreed and approved in sufficient time to enable appropriate operational management of the budget to be devolved to Schools and Departments. The aim should be to devolve sufficient budgetary authority to Schools and Departments to enable them to respond more quickly and effectively to local needs and thereby to remove a primary structural constraint on their ability to fulfil their strategic and management role. Again the role of the School finance managers could support the development and implementation of the budgetary system. It is envisaged that School finance managers will be responsible to the deputy director of finance and can use this link to ensure that they are able to influence budgetary modelling.
- 4.11 A key strategic goal is to encourage increased entrepreneurial activity. The current systems and structures, including management and budgetary arrangements, need to be reviewed to remove any structural constraints that limit the development of and within entrepreneurial units. Currently as with most universities, Sussex is overly bureaucratic and this hinders enterprising Units who need greater flexibility than our systems allow. Pro-Vice Chancellor Stuart will meet with relevant Deans and heads of units with a specific entrepreneurial brief to examine, within School budgets and processes the best way forward for each unit.

5 School issues

5.1 General

A number of themes were common across all Schools. Some of these themes have been addressed in section five and are not therefore included in the summaries below. However of particular note was the consistent support for the core structural arrangement of Departments and Schools, and for the role of the Dean, which was greatly valued. The Departments all felt well supported in this regard and recognized the advantages of this level of leadership.

Equally, there was a general concern that at a finer level of detail the relationship between School Directors and Heads of Department was not always clear. There were also concerns that committee business was overwhelmingly focused at the wrong level and that the strategic concerns of the Schools and Departments were being swamped by matters of operational details, especially in the area of the curriculum (see section 4.3). In all cases, faculty with administrative roles felt overburdened by the quantity and range of material they were expected to manage (see section 4.2).

Consistent criticism related to central communications, and the relative lack of overall management of the process of change (see section 4.7 and appendix two).

Although the focus in this section is on areas that are not yet working well, there was broad support for the fact of change and its direction. The major feeling is that whilst the University has made the right moves it has not yet got all the detail right, and that it is this fine tuning that needs to be done if we are to reap the benefits the new structures offer.

At each of the School Awaydays there was a constructive discussion between members of the senior management of the School. Areas for change were identified and agreed. Particular members of the team were given responsibility for taking the issues raised forward. Timescales for change were also agreed.

5.2 Humanities

The new arrangements are broadly working well at School and Departmental level, and there are no immediate issues relating to the core administrative structure. HoDs and Directors felt that the administration responded quickly and proactively as changes occurred in the development of the School and therefore did not feel there was a need to change the principles of the structure, although more support is now being allocated to departments that had grown considerably over the last year. Further work needs to be done to secure a School identity, which at present is still fragile. The areas of primary concern relate to the following:

- Management of IDPE provision, referred to the working group
- More budgetary authority at School level needs to be negotiated to create the ability to configure resources to meet local needs. Currently the system is constraining and capable of undermining academic development. Further discussions on the development of the APR and the budgetary model are required.
- Lack of appropriate teaching and social space, especially for large groups. Further work on space planning and the development of new spaces such as teaching block is needed.

5.3 Life Sciences

All members of the senior management group expressed a commitment to the School and felt that in different ways each department had gained from the restructure.

The major concern was the need to provide appropriate levels of administrative support to departments of differing size and dispersed location. There is a sense that resources have not followed changes in responsibility. There was also concern that administrative support was focused on the JMS building and that there was a need for more administrative support to be located in Pevensy. There is also a lack of consistency in operational models at departmental level.

Following the discussion the School re-focused its administrative support towards departments and is currently reviewing the following:

- Location of administrative staff to support Psychology: an administrator is being located in Pevensey who will support Psychology alongside other duties by the start of the Autumn term, 2004.

As there are only two administrators in the School, in the current financial climate, this is all that can be allocated. However, this is not the preferred model and Psychology will need additional resource as soon as this is possible.

- Location of postgraduate support staff
- Location of Student Advisers has now been resolved so that they are located close to where the students are.

Consideration is also being given to the role of the School-level administrators (see comments on administrative roles appended).

5.4 Science and Technology

As a school, Science and Technology felt that the importance of departments needed to be further highlighted. A central concern for the Departments within the School relates to administrative and technical support. The relative lack of administrative support for Heads of Department is undermining their academic leadership role (see comments on administrative roles appended).

Technical support has been centralized under the new arrangements and needs to be reviewed to ensure that local technical support is more consistently available. This is both an organizational and resource issue. Technical staff need greater recognition for their contribution to the support of the science curriculum.

The key areas are:

- Need to develop technical support services to departments
- Provide appropriate administrative support to Heads of Department to be in place by the start of the Autumn term.
- Provide mechanisms for improved strategic development at School/Department level
- The loss of contact between Heads of Department and SMG under the new arrangements is regretted

5.5 Social Sciences and Cultural Studies

Although the School/Departmental structure is generally working well, there are a number of significant problems, which need resolution:

- IDPEs are proving extremely difficult to manage under current arrangements and must be regarded as being 'at risk' despite broad faculty support for them. The budgetary model needs to be much clearer for IDPEs (The working group will be looking at all issues relating to IDPEs)
- Teaching space is inadequate and is constraining academic development and moves to new teaching methods. Space planning group to address this issue, and with the new teaching block developed for 2005/6 the problem will be eased.

- The organization of postgraduate support and the interface with the Centre needs review. This will form part of the next stage of the review in the Autumn when postgraduate matters and examination board structures will be reviewed
- Entrepreneurial units are constrained by the budgetary model
- The loss of contact between Heads of Department and SMG under the new arrangements is regretted
- There needs to be more support deployed to departments where they are overstretched. The SAM agreed to work with departments to ensure that this was implemented from September, 2004.

5.6 Sussex Institute

The Sussex Institute welcomed the opportunities for interdisciplinary work and the development of a postgraduate and research culture resulting from the restructuring. This was of particular relevance to those units, which previously had been less centrally located within the University.

The main issue affecting the Sussex Institute relates to the organization of administrative support. It is widely felt that the thematic deployment of support staff has resulted in less than optimal support for academic managers and faculty, and that there is insufficient flexibility to allow units to respond effectively to local requirements or enquiries which fall outside the established core operations. Students and externals would also benefit from a more unit-based approach. This is of particular concern given the diversity of students, funding mechanisms and operational forms within the Institute. A timeframe for moving to co-located departmentally structured teams was agreed, with co-location of departmental support staff being in place when the Institute moves into its new Centre in December/January, and each team will also establish an administrative co-ordinating role based in the team to reflect different unit needs by December. These departmental administrative spaces would allow for each department to have a 'front of house' facility and to have dedicated departmental clerical staff working closely with faculty in their department. Further discussions of the different levels and needs of co-ordination will be undertaken by the SAM, the HoDs and the departmental teams.

Further issues include:

- The lack of a transparent budgetary model, and concern that entrepreneurial units fail to benefit from increased income generation. This also needs to take into account the very different funding streams for the different units within the Sussex Institute
- Loss of identity for individual units in the Institute. Further work needs to be developed at departmental level. The Institute is developing its own identity around research interests and interdisciplinary programmes
- The committee structure requires review and the Curriculum Committee needs to be more strategic, with less emphasis on inappropriate detail
- Student Support co-ordination was required and agreed by the SAM and the Dean
- The loss of contact between Heads of Department and SMG under the new arrangements is regretted

5.7 SPRU

While SPRU is an independent academic unit of the University in the restructuring it was regarded as being too small to be able to assure the quality of its programmes in the devolved quality assurance system. SPRU was expected for quality assurance purposes to act within the Sussex Institute. This arrangement has not been satisfactory for either the Institute or for SPRU. It was therefore decided that SPRU should now report directly to TPC and TQEC. These committees would act as School Curriculum committees on behalf of SPRU. However if a validation process is agreed for other parts of the University, this would remove the burden from TPC.

Further issues to be addressed are:

- Once the major programmes are rolled out further thought on the most appropriate quality assurance mechanisms will need to be undertaken
- Greater flexibility for enterprising units to be looked at in the context of working smarter

6 University issues

6.1 There are three main areas of concern for the University centre. These can be categorized as follows but again relate to the concept of smarter working:

- Communications Policy
- Committee flow / business
- Budgetary and planning

6.2 Communications

The central administration needs to think clearly about how it interacts with the new school and departmental structures to ensure the efficient use of everyone's time. Care needs to be taken to protect operational units from externally imposed bureaucratic practice. Units need to get on with their primary function of teaching and research, and the administration should act as a facilitating function. Currently, there is a real sense that the centre doesn't acknowledge the pressures at unit level.

More specifically, while there is broad agreement that staff at the 'centre' are working hard, there is little evidence of coordination across the 'centre', resulting in conflicting and competing information being circulated. There is an urgent need to develop a clear and coherent communications policy encompassing both paper and electronic media.

A policy will need to encompass:

- *Email protocols (identifying who needs to know / why recipients are receiving / who acts)*
- *Timely communication (involving greater awareness of operational pressures at unit level)*
- *Creating a more manageable flow of business, with better and agreed priorities*

- *Developing a joined up strategy for activity and communication. (We may benefit from doing less, but doing it better; getting it right, rather than getting it quick etc.)*

6.3 Committee Business

6.3.1 The University did not specify structures for departments. Whilst this reflects the diverse size of operational unit, it is increasingly clear that more guidance in this area would be useful and would help departments manage their business more efficiently. It would also help to identify points of overload on Heads of Department, and ease delegation.

6.3.2 A particular area of concern is the impact of devolving curriculum responsibilities. This has overloaded curriculum committees at school level. While some of this is due to the extensive curriculum reorganization, it remains the case that committees are bogged down in the detail and unable to think or act strategically. This creates a sense that although on paper Schools and departments have more autonomy in practice there is still a culture of audit and not of enhancement in the University which limits creativity.

The Centre recognizes and supports moves within Schools to delegate responsibility to sub-groups, allowing the main committee to engage more strategically. This is, however, one area where external constraints do apply and work is being undertaken to identify more effective approvals systems (see section 5.3). Pushing the detailed consideration of programmes down to a sub-group or a validation group, but enhancing the level of scrutiny, both internal and external, at that point, would enable Curriculum Committees (possibly re-named as School Academic Boards) to focus on broader areas of monitoring and feeding such information into a School strategy for academic development and planning. These reconstituted school committees should align closely with school management structures rather than being seen as separate from them.

6.3.3 At central level, APSC needs to be more closely aligned to the University's Senior Management Group structure to enable a greater sense of joined up thinking between curriculum planning and overall University-wide planning.

6.3.4 APSC/TPC/TEQAC need to review their roles in light of increased devolution to ensure that workloads and responsibilities are appropriate. We need to avoid repetition and ensure that committees add value rather than act simply as an auditor ensuring that things have been done.

6.3.5 The Space Planning Group should ensure that APSC receives regular reports on teaching space matters to ensure alignment between physical and academic developments and more generally to SMG.

6.4 Budgetary and Planning

7.4.1 Concerns about the budget were the most consistently expressed and in every case there was a strong desire to see more transparent budgetary mechanisms and more local autonomy in the deployment of the budget. There is a real sense that Schools need to have proper budgetary responsibility in order to respond effectively to local and changing needs, to devolve sub-elements of the budget to departmental level, and to utilize their own judgment in developing new areas.

6.4.2 Currently, Deans are unable to implement development strategies due to budgetary constraints, departments are unable to cost programme delivery effectively, and

seed-corn funding is not always available for initiating new projects. The budgetary model is thought to be inherently conservative in structure in that it lacks responsiveness to increased productivity and allows underperformance to persist over extended periods.

- 6.4.3 Annual planning for both taught provision and courses is felt to be valuable, but its benefits are not fully achieved. In particular there is a concern that feedback from the process is minimal. Nonetheless there is support for the current integration of planning rounds, but this needs to be better supported in terms of information flow, timeliness and clarity of outputs.

7 Conclusion

The restructuring set out to make the University more responsive to change and more adaptable where creativity and imagination in teaching and research could be supported through simple and clear structures. The overall view obtained from the review of the restructuring is a positive one: it needed to be done, and the basic re-shaping of the organization is capable of delivering significant benefits to faculty, administrators and students. While this was not always the view of staff, most now feel that the changes have provided gains. The concerns and problems are mainly specific rather than general, and reflect the feeling that the 'centre' has not responded in its own operational ethos to the changes it has implemented at unit level. At the 'centre' staff worked extremely hard to try to facilitate the restructure in the context of their 'everyday work' continuing. They have therefore not as yet been able to sufficiently address the impact of change on the workings of the University. Thus, Schools and Departments have been given greater operational responsibility and – on paper – greater autonomy, but are being constrained by the conservatism of the culture of the University which is at odds with the principles of flexibility and responsiveness set out by the Vice Chancellor at the beginning of the process.

It is also widely thought that the restructuring has been hampered by a lack of information and support for all concerned. This is apparent in the continuing confusion about roles, the lack of focus in communication, and the administrative overload on committees and key officers. These are all issues that can be addressed, but a consistent and transparent approach is needed to secure the likely benefits.

It was never intended that restructuring would be completed at a single pass, and we are making good progress in many areas. It will be important to maintain the momentum, but there is a real need to provide visible benefits of change. To this end some very clear prioritisation needs to be undertaken and then clearly communicated to the University community as a whole. If people know where they are going they are rather more likely to walk in the right direction.

MS/PC Sept, 2004

REFERENCES

Nevis EC, Lancourt J and Vassallo H (1996) *Intentional Revolutions A Seven Part Strategy for Transforming Organisations* Jossey-Bass Publications: San Francisco

Morgan G (1986) *Images of Organisation* Sage: London

Peters T (1988) *Thriving on the Edge of Chaos: A Handbook for a Management Revolution* Perennial: New York

Appendix One – School Administrative Structures

A1 Principles of School Administrative Structures

The major change from previous administrative structures has been the development of a small core team of School level administrative staff. A broadly similar model has been applied across all the new Schools, although there are some local differences in implementation. The review has highlighted a need for a greater departmental focus while maintaining the widely recognised benefits of the School core administrative team. The following is a brief summary of key administrative roles.

A2 School Administrative Manager (SAM)

The SAM leads the School Administration, and works closely with the Dean to develop and deliver the strategic goals of the School. In the first year of operation much the SAM's time has been devoted to establishing the administrative structure, but longer term the role ought to take on a more explicit planning role, particularly with regard to academic and entrepreneurial developments working with the finance manager, the Dean and in the science Schools, the technical services manager.

A3 Technical Services Manager (TSM)

This role exists in the two science Schools and is parallel to the SAM. The TSM is responsible for managing the technical support within the School. Closer liaison between the SAM and the TSM is required.

A4 School Administrator (Curriculum) (SAC)

The SAC is responsible within the School for managing the local committee system, curriculum development and approvals, and examinations. These administrators work with the Directors of undergraduate and graduate studies. With a more departmental focus the SAC and their teams will need to work more closely with programme convenors and departments.

A5 School Administrator (Systems and Resources) (SASR)

The SASR is the operations manager within the School, with responsibility for managing staff and workflow at School and departmental level. The SASR is central to the administrative support provided at departmental level, and is well-placed to resolve work-flow issues and to negotiate with the University centre on policy implementation.

Currently this role has not been well recognized by the University centre.

A6 School Finance Managers

The SFM works closely with the senior management teams in the Schools, offering advice and financial forecasting for the departments and the School.

A7 Departmental Co-ordinators (DC)

The Departmental Co-ordinator is responsible for a range of department-focused activity, but is managed by the School. The DC co-ordinates the

administrative work of the department, provides support to Heads of Departments, and has line management responsibility for staff supporting named departments.

Note: the Sussex Institute configures its administrative staff by function rather than department, but has named departmental contacts for key roles. As a result of the review process there will be more departmental focus, including departmental co-ordination of each team.

- B1** The review is proposing that the key School functions of SAM, SAC, SASR remain to ensure consistency across the University and that DCs and departmental support are developed. In each School this will take a slightly different focus depending on the needs of the departments and the School.

C Specific recommendations

C1 School Administrative Manager

In the long term, the SAM could play a more central role in developing and delivering the strategic aims of the School. This requires an explicit planning function, in particular in relation to new academic developments. The SAM is well placed to project manage new developments and is well placed to operate as the interface between the School and the Centre in relation to discussions and decisions about viability and recruitment strategies, delivery costs, physical and human resource requirements and overall benefits of proposals. Formalizing the planning role would provide a professional and focused service to departments and would help secure the kind of effective financial costings the university now requires.

C2 School Administrator (Systems and Resources)

The SASR plays a central role in the School, and is ideally placed to deliver day-to-day management of the school and departmental administration. This role has not been well understood by those outside the Schools, with the result that the SASR is frequently excluded from essential communications. The role should be given higher visibility within the University. As first-year teething problems reduce, the SASR could take on more lead administrative functions from the SAM, allowing the SAM to develop the more strategic function outlined in C1.

C3 School Administrator (Curriculum)

The SAC provides professional support to academic departments in the development and management of the curriculum. The role also entails developing specific knowledge of quality assurance procedures and principles, and delivering effective committee servicing. The scope of the role is appropriate but delivery needs to be embedded more effectively at committee level, with routine tasks being delegated to the support team (but with a retention of management responsibilities for that work). The SAC needs to develop effective and consistent links with departments, particularly with departmental teaching committees, in order to help manage curriculum

development and to maintain a broad overview of core curriculum design and delivery.

The role could focus in the medium term of establishing effective procedures for curriculum management at School/Departmental level in order to secure the underlying curriculum data and secure approvals routes.

C4 School Finance Managers

The SFM could offer greater support to both the University and their Schools and departments if they were able to be more plugged into the planning cycle and budgetary planning of the University.

Appendix Two

The following appendix is taken from a review by the School Admin Managers with colleagues from across the Schools administration teams

School Administration Review

Two awaydays (15th April & 10th June 04) have been held to which all admin and clerical colleagues within Schools (including SPRU) were invited. Colleagues were grouped by the role that they fulfilled (e.g. all Clerical Assistants from each school formed a group). Each group was asked to consider three topics that were important to them, and suggest possible ways of addressing these topics or how best they might be addressed within the University.

The views expressed include many general issues and problems, and the School Administrative Managers felt it was important to allow staff space to express their feelings about the past experience of the restructuring as well as encouraging attempts to identify solutions to the problems experienced.

Summary of Suggested Solutions and Actions

1. Communication

1.1 Between the Centre and Schools

A wide range of issues was raised here, including the need to improve the coordination of work between the 'centre'; the need to improve methods of communication (especially email), the need for the early issue of deadlines and timetables, and the need for more clearly signposted sources of help and advice for staff, students and visitors.

We note that the redesigned website gives staff much clearer information about who does what within the administrative units, and believe that this will answer a general set of confusions within the schools about roles and contact points.

Actions

1. We note that a draft set of notes on email etiquette has been developed by Communications, and look forward to its issue. **Action: Director of Communications**
2. Ensure that reviews of the devolution of various tasks to the schools, including the new exams/MEC systems, is carried out in a timely way, so that the resource implications of this can be discussed before the start of the next session. **Action: School Administrative Managers & Heads of units, as appropriate**
3. Consider having more regular meetings between key officers (PGO, UGO and other administrative units) with school staff. . **Action: School Administrative Managers & Heads of units, as appropriate**

4. Consider expanding and developing helpdesk facility for the whole university. **Action: Director of Communications**
5. There needs to be better dissemination of information relating to CMS/Sussex Direct and expert users within each school. **Action: Director of Information and Technology Services**
6. A comprehensive users guide to all areas of the database should be made available. A procedural manual should accompany new systems before being devolved to Schools. **Director of Information and Technology Services and Director of Academic Support Services**

1.2 Between Schools/Within Schools

Actions

- 1 Include an 'Administrative' slot on all School meeting agenda. **Action: Deans and School Administrative Managers**
- 2 Hold school away days (or Department Away Days feeding into the School Open Meetings). **Action: Deans and School Administrative Managers**
- 3 Consider making notes/ minutes from the fortnightly School Management Team available. It was noted that some Schools do already put their SMT minutes on the School web-site, and this practice might be extended across all Schools. **Action: Deans and School Administrative Managers**
- 4 Ensure induction for new administrative and clerical starters on a departmental level. Mentors or buddies should be allocated, and a School supervisor should oversee new starters. **Action: School Administrative Managers.**
- 5 School Administrators (Curriculum) to meet twice per term, linked to timing of curriculum committee meetings (Paul Cecil to facilitate). Meetings to be logged onto all School calendars and suggestion that the first meeting of each term should include their respective key assistants. **Action: School Administrative Managers.**
- 6 School Administrators (Systems/Resources) to meet twice per term. Meetings to be logged onto all School calendars and suggestion that the first meeting of each term should include their respective key assistants. **Action: School Administrative Managers.**
- 7 School Administrative Managers to meet with School Administrators (Curriculum) and School Administrators (Systems/Resources) together once per term. **Action: School Administrative Managers**
- 8 Set up additional focus group meetings to cover e.g. Admissions & Marketing, Graduate Centres/Dept. Co-ordinators and Dean's Co-ordinators (particularly cross School). **Action: School Administrative Managers**
- 9 Hold regular cross school meetings for other similar roles. **Action: School Administrative Managers**

- 10 A range of suggestions and comments was raised, mainly by the Marketing and Admissions Coordinators Groups, for improving arrangements for admissions days. We suggest that a small working group, including these colleagues with staff from Estates and the UGO, be established to review the practical arrangements and make recommendations. **Action: School Administrative Managers**

2 Planning

Clearly 2003-4 has been a difficult year for planning given the range of uncertainties that have affected the whole of Sussex. The failure of effective planning had a major impact on staff morale, with a breakdown of usual timescales. A great deal of new work, with priorities often clashing if not conflicting, led to a sense among many school colleagues that they did not know what to expect when and that planning had broken down. We need urgent action to restore confidence in our planning.

Suggested solutions

1. School Administrative Managers and the Academic Registrar are working on a timetable and work cycle aiming to incorporate both school and university deadlines. It has not been possible to identify a coordinator for this project as yet.
2. We understand that a review of the timing of and responsibility for the financial side of the planning process feeding into the planning process, is under way, and look forward to the outcome of these discussions.
3. Much work has been done to review the process of school five-year planning and we hope that the coordination and integration of this will improve this year.

3. Consistency of Practice

All schools have struggled this year to try to ensure the right balance is achieved between consistency of practice and the specific requirements of individual units. We have aimed to minimise duplication, share good practice, ensure equity of treatment of all staff and students, and improve training across schools.

The School Administrative Managers have pushed forward on this, and in general we think we have made good progress. We believe that much more can be gained by continuing to share good practice, and by developing the working relationship between schools and administrative units – something we believe has dramatically improved with the restructuring. However, much more work needs to be done. There are few actions in this area, since much of the work (handbooks production, admissions processes, student representation) is quite specific.

4. Clarification of Roles & Workloads

This issue was close to the hearts of members of school support staff, many of whom retained a sense of unease about their new roles and expressed doubts about whether their views had been listened to during the restructuring process. While the **School Administrative Managers** believe that much has been done to improve the effective management of school support staff, we need to do more to manage expectations and clarify allocation of individual tasks

Actions

1. Keep job descriptions, gradings and workload under review. **Action: Director of Human Resources with School Administrative Managers**
2. Review of tasks and staffing levels, particularly between curriculum and systems teams. **Action: School Administrative Managers**
3. There should be clarification of key academic roles such as course conveners. **Action Deans with Director of Academic Support Services**
4. Consider whether some training should be made compulsory. **Action: School Administrative Managers & Deputy Director of Human Resources (Staff Development).**

School Administrative Managers
August 2004