Heriot-Watt University

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES LEADERSHIP BOARD (PSLB)

Minutes: 6 April 2017

In the Chair:	Ms Ann Marie Dalton-Pillay, Secretary of the University		
Present also:	Mr Mark Adderley, Director of Human Resource Development (HRD)	Mr Derek Penman, Director of Administration (EPS)	
	Ms Philippa Burrell, Director of Administration (EGIS)	Mr Campbell Powrie, Director of Administration (SoSS)	
	Ms Sue Collier, Director of Governance and Legal Services	Mr Mike Roch, Director of Information Services	
	Mr Darren Cunningham, Director of Administration (MACS)	Mr Martyn Spence, Director of Marketing and Communications	
	Mr Malcolm Deans, Director of Campus Services	Mr Paul Travill, Academic Registrar	
	Dr Alicia Greated, Director of Research and Enterprise Services		
In Attendance:	Mr Gordon Duncan, Project Support Manager	Mr Frank Lopez, Information Governance Co-ordinator	
	Ms Kirsty Hughes, Head of Operational Procurement	Mr Richard McGookin, Director of Planning	
	Ms Helen Hymers, Project Manager	Ms Kate Wright, Clerk	
Apologies:	Mr Mike Bates, Director of Student Recruitment	Ms Vivienne White, Director of Administration (TEX)	
	Ms Sheelagh Wallace, Director of Administration and Registrar (Dubai)	Ms Janice Yew, Chief Operating Officer (Malaysia)	

The Chair welcomed the following to the meeting:

- Mr Richard McGookin, Director of Planning, to present item *M17/40 Update on Student Retention*;
- Ms Kirsty Hughes, Head of Operational Procurement, to present item *M17/43 Travel Hub;* and
- Ms Helen Hymers, Project Manager (Standardising Job Descriptions), to present item M17//42 *Standardising Job Descriptions Project Update*; and
- Frank Lopez, Information Governance Co-ordinator, to present item M17/45 *Annual report on Freedom of Information.*

MINUTE REF		
M17/33	**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 9 MARCH 2017**	

The Board received and approved the minutes of the meeting of 9 March 2017.

M17/34   MATTERS ARISING REPORT FOLLOWING THE MEETING OF 9 MARCH 2017

There were no matters raised by the Chair or members of the Board, which were not already on the current Agenda.

M17/35   BUSINESS REPORTED BY THE CHAIR (ORAL)

35.1   Voluntary Redundancy Scheme
The Chair noted her thanks to all concerned with the effective administration and communications relating to the Voluntary Redundancy Scheme to date.

The Board noted the email sent by the Chair to all staff relating to the Voluntary Redundancy Scheme extending the end date to the offer by two weeks (which had been set following discussion with the Trade Union), to 15 May 2017. To date the Scheme was not over-subscribed; and staff asking for a reduction in hours, might also now be considered.

The Chair explained that those staff who had asked to take voluntary redundancy, and had not yet received their pension information, would still be eligible to be considered despite the delay in receiving their pension paperwork, provided that they had applied in writing before the cut-off date.

35.2   The Chair asked that the eligibility of staff and posts be considered early in the week commencing 10 April 2017, by Heads of School and Heads of Services, so that an informed decision could be made on a timely basis on any formal applications. The route through which the application was processed was noted, and it was anticipated that decisions on formal applications received would start in the week commencing 17 April 2017. Particular items to consider would be succession planning, the workloads within the department, and how and where processes could be changed to allow for the voluntary redundancy to take place.

35.3   The Director of Information Services noted that the financial seminars which had recently taken place were very informative and could be particularly useful for those members of staff who had not considered their financial position earlier; the seminars had highlighted options such as lump sums, deferring retirement payments etc., to avoid penalties. The Chair noted that this was important information, particularly given the changes in the tax reliefs, the complex system, and the mixed economy.

35.4   The Board noted the Trade Unions' request for information on underperforming areas; the Chair explained that the information would be more widely disseminated, first to the University Executive (UE), and would need approval by both the UE and by the Senate prior to any wider circulation due to the highly sensitive nature of the report.

M17/36   PSLB FORWARD AGENDA (PSLB/17/48)

The Board received and noted the PSLB Forward Agenda, presented by the Chair.

TRANSFORMATIONAL INITIATIVES (TIs)

M17/37   RESEARCH SUPPORT AND INNOVATION AND RESEARCH FINANCES (PSLB/17/49)

37.1   The Board received, discussed and noted a report on the Research Support and Innovation and Research Finances provided by the Director of Research and Enterprise Services.

The paper included three sections:
- a RAG-rated update on each stream of the Project;
- an outline of research support and the relevant department responsibilities; and
- a summary of ongoing action relating to research finance.

The majority of the project workstreams are amber or green, with Post-Award Finance remaining red on the log.

37.2   **Project Lifetime: Post-award finance**: The Chair noted that it was important to be aware of, and act on, the three different support streams – Research and Enterprise Services, the Research Grants Office and the Schools. She explained the need to spread all responsibilities, and asked that a report clarifying respective responsibilities is considered further after the Easter 2017 break.

| 37.3 | The Chair asked that discussions be tailored to ensure that the remit does not increase beyond the budget available. The Deputy Principal (Research and Innovation) had been asked to provide an extensive written strategy, with accountability, relating to the administration of the project. |

| 37.4 | The Director of HRD would liaise with the Director of Research and Enterprise Services, to agree the staff FTE data of the RGOs (in Finance) for inclusion in the Research Funding Lifecycle Staff FTE analysis, so that a more complete proposal could be considered. |

M17/38   MARKETING AND RECRUITMENT (Oral)

38.1   The Director of Marketing and Communications presented an oral update on the Marketing and Recruitment TI, explaining that it was divided into three elements, and would be completed with colleagues within the Student Administration Revitalisation Programme (SARP) to:

- maximise applicant data conversion;
- improve working with agents; and
- work with marketing teams within Schools: this phase would be subject to discussions with the business administration teams within the School, testing consistency of approach and a cohesive way forward.

38.2   The Director of Marketing and Communications explained that the change in the recruitment environment – Skype interviews, digital assessment etc. – is being considered within the wider academic community (e.g. Glasgow, Dundee, Warwick Universities etc.), and that this area has been identified as an area for development.

He added that candidate expectations and their increased demands will also impact on recruitment; it has been noted that students are more frequently negotiating on their offer, and any financial or other incentives that might be available. Conversely, at the other end of the supply chain, schools and other feeder institutions are also interested in what benefits a link with the University can provide to them. Some universities (e.g. Coventry) are re-engineering the product they offer to reflect the changing student wants and needs.

The Director of Marketing and Communications noted that the whole lifecycle of the student should be considered from school through to mid-career former alumni being involved in work placements and beyond. The Chair noted that this was a matter to be considered from Autumn 2017, and that student number trends and conversion rates (across the whole market) should come to a future meeting for discussion in anticipation of the subject being considered again in Autumn 2017.

M17/39   STUDENT ADMINISTRATION REVITALISATION PROGRAMME (SARP) (PSLB/17/51)

39.1   The Board received and noted an update on the SARP, presented by the Academic Registrar. The Director of Information Services noted that the SARP system would be automating a number of tasks during 2018/19 and 2019/20 which would streamline some iHR and Finance processes. He also noted that Information Services had not historically managed the HR and Finance functions; both he and the auditors considered that this could become a serious risk as the functions are completed in isolation. He recommended that from both a strategic and political perspective the relationship between the Finance/HR/Payroll functions should be reviewed.

The Director of Information Services explained that the information between the HR and the Finance systems could be reconciled easily, however this was done infrequently. He recommended that procedures be agreed on a data model (which is possible even with two systems running) using a stepped process, and that the reconciliation take place on a regular basis. He added that a reporting tool was also available to produce reports for the academic staff.

39.2   The Academic Registrar noted that the majority of projects are on track:

- the PGR student portal pilot is now live;

- the Admissions, Recruitment and Marketing (ARM) project team are on a very tight schedule for the UK and Dubai go-live of CRM Recruit. A wide range of users have now been trained with more to follow;

  the Academic Registrar noted that this project was at amber level due to the CRM Recruit project which was due to go live at the end of April 2017, including turning off the old admissions system. If this timescale was not kept to plan, there would be a licence fee payable to Hobsons in May of £50,000, hence the amber warning level;

- the Data Privacy and Reporting (DPR) board has identified the need to initiate a short-life working group to agree how the University will identify and track standard and non-standard cohorts through their student lifecycle;

- members of the SARP team, IT and other stakeholders are being trained in the use of the new reporting tool, Argos from eVisions;

- work-flow training is due to take place in April – this is a major tool in the development of improved processes for student and academic administration;

- meetings with Directors of Administration and Professional Services are scheduled with the SARP team to discuss the priorities for development based on projected levels of staffing which result from the redundancy process; and

- funding for the next year of SARP was discussed and agreed at the Strategic Information Services Committee (SISC).

The Academic Registrar noted that, if it were possible to bring projects to completion at an earlier date, they would be finished within a shorter timeframe.

39.3   **Programme Approval Management System (PAMS)**: A key issue noted by the Board - work is continuing with stakeholders and the suppliers to identify ways to simplify the functionality of PAMS and increase its usability. In the meantime possible future replacements for PAMS, including demonstrations from a new supplier were being considered. Ellucian, the suppliers of PAMS will be commissioned to deliver a number of enhancement to PAMS to simplify and stabilise the system, the costs for which have been factored into the SARP budget.

39.4   The Chair noted that the completion of SARP projects was reliant on a variety of other initiatives, and that if those projects had not been delivered, the SARP TI would not be considered completed. She asked the Academic Registrar to revisit the timelines and clarify which items had not been completed, so that she could report back to the UE.

M17/40   UPDATE ON STUDENT RETENTION (Presentation)

40.1   The Director of Planning presented an update on student retention for the Board's information and discussion. **XXX [Reserved Section – Ref. FOI(S)A, s.33]**

40.2   **XXX [Reserved Section – Ref. FOI(S)A, s.33]**

40.3   It was agreed that an increase in focus was required on retention and the topic fed in to the 'Golden Measures' noted by the Principal as University-wide priorities, which have been promoted by the University Executive and are feeding through to the Heads of School/Services.   The Clerk was asked to circulate the 'Golden Measures' to the Board.

40.4   The Board noted the variations that the home-domicile of students made to retention and year-to-year progression, as did criteria such as wider-access, age and other student characteristics.

40.5   The Director of Planning explained that the Schools were given retention data sets 2-3 times a year, and encouraged to interrogate the data to predict where areas of concern might arise. The system itself was not predictive, and the Board considered that training staff to identify risk factors earlier would be a high priority, so that a problem area could be addressed before students leave.

The Director of Planning described a learning analytical system which could predict, with an 80% success rate, the characteristics of those students likely to leave. This would require a review of the data the University currently holds, and would take approximately two years to fully implement.

The Board noted that the Learning and Teaching Board were involved in discussions on Student Retention and they had received two recent reports.

40.6   The Academic Registrar outlined the 'Thinking of Leaving' service, which was available at the University, which has had a 70-80% success rate in retaining potential leavers who usually confirm their departure within 48 hours of indicating their intent. He explained that retaining a small number of learners each year would ensure the service was also cost-effective.

The Academic Registrar intended to coordinate the 'Thinking of Leaving' service, giving it a higher profile than currently, with the personal tutor service starting in September 2017. The personal tutor service would include compulsory training for all personal tutors, and give the Schools a more localised set of data, improving information for 2017-18 onwards.

The Chair noted that there was a growing trend reflected in the statistics of leavers departing due to health/mental health or caring considerations, and this should be addressed at a future date. The Academic Registrar commented that there were funds which were available for students requiring help for hardship or disability support.

40.7   The Director of Information Services noted that IT support for effective learning was an ongoing challenge for all universities and required further attention. The design and provision of the resources should interact with the Academic Registry and the Schools.

M17/41   **QUARTERLY COMPLAINTS REPORT (PSLB17/52)**

The Academic Registrar presented a report of all recent complaints received by the University for information. **XXX Reserved Section – Ref. FOI(S)A, s.30 and s.36]**

M17/42   **STANDARDISING JOB DESCRIPTIONS PROJECT – UPDATE (PSLB17/53)**

42.1   The Project Manager (Standardising Job Descriptions) presented an update report on the project to develop generic templates, for a number of grades. The PSLB approved the Project Board's recommendation to extend the pilot to create (70% complete) Job Description templates for the Administration and Technician clusters, a total of ten templates across the two clusters. It is anticipated that the unique sections of the Job Description would not be kept within the templates. The Board agreed that the final 30% of the Job Description should be kept as consistent as possible, and unique or job specific detail noted where required during the annual review of an individual's Forward Job Plan.

42.2 Board members were asked to recommend, outwith the meeting, appropriate managers and role-holders working within the two cluster areas to contribute to drafting workshops/focus groups. These templates would also be reviewed by role-holders and trade union representatives in focus groups.

A separate review for Scientific Officer and Technical Support positions was further approved, which aims first for clarification of where these positions fit within the University and the most appropriate career route (Professional Services or Academic/Research) to develop Terms of Reference. After initial reviews, a Focus Group would convene with role-holders in the posts to consider any areas which might be outstanding which should be taken into account.

The Director of HRD noted that if there were standard job descriptions in place, then any new positions would not need full-scale role evaluation using HERA (grading roles against 14 key elements) which would save time and resources after the restructure, although HERA would still have to be used to some extent.

M17/43   TRAVEL HUB (PSLB17/54)

43.1 The Head of Operational Procurement presented a proposal that a centralised Travel Services Hub, based in Procurement, be established. The Board asked the Head of Operational Procurement to:

- articulate the scope of the service including response times (what precisely is included – is it door-to-door, including taxis, hire cars, insurance, travel declarations, conferences and field trips etc.);
- liaise with the Dubai and Malaysia offices to extend the proposal so that their requirements could also be considered;
- consider staffing needs/redeployment options;
- consider which site/venue would be the most cost-effective/practical for the Travel Hub; and
- improve the business case so that the project could be presented for approval to the University Executive, ensuring cost-effectiveness, and that a timely service can be assured.

43.2 During the presentation the Head of Operational Procurement explained that the consultation process had involved key bookers, and other universities with similar requirements (Lancaster and Aberdeen), and a visit to the Lancaster University Travel Hub (set up in 2010). The Board noted that the travel hub could improve or support:

- governance and information gathering on the reasons for travel;
- the duty of care which the University has for its employees, students and others;
- immigration considerations for non-European nationals – applications for settlement/citizenship;
- a more effective, efficient and cost-effective service to those requiring travel arrangements; and
- the University's responses to Freedom of Information requests.

XXX Reserved Section – Ref. FOI(S)A, s.30] The potential cost savings through special deals, block bookings, negotiating power, particularly for travel to the Dubai and Malaysia offices, consolidating payments and reducing time savings could be significant.

43.3 The Board agreed that a managed and phased implementation would be more likely to succeed, particularly if there were a method of sourcing or developing a travel requisitions portal. They also noted that the Travel and Expenses Policy would need to be reviewed, to support and clarify the position on the use of the Travel Hub, and also to clarify authorisation arrangements.

M17/44   **BORDERS CAMPUS MANAGEMENT BOARD ANNUAL REPORT AND TERMS OF REFERENCE (PSLB17/55)**

This item was presented for information by the Director of Information Services. The Annual Report summarised the activity of the Scottish Borders Campus Management Committee in 2015/16, and included a copy of the Terms of Reference and a diagram demonstrating the management and reporting structures for the Campus. The 2016/17 Annual Report would be prepared in Autumn 2017, which should allow for more timely reporting to the PSLB.

The Director of Information Services noted that he had reviewed the service provision provided jointly by the University and the College on Campus, and that all was working smoothly. He noted that the Library provision had been rather expensive, however changes had taken place which should reduce the service cost.

The 10-year joint venture 'Sinking Fund' which had been agreed with the College had been used for agreed works and maintenance.

It was noted that the contract between the University and the Borders College would be due for renewal within 5-10 years, and that the Director of Governance and Legal Services was asked for clarification on this date.

M17/45   **ANNUAL REPORT ON FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (PSLB17/56)**

The Information Governance Co-ordinator presented a thematic report for the Board, summarising Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act (FOISA) request activity in 2016, which he considered a generally quiet year.

During this period the University received 210 FOI requests, a significant proportion of which were from journalists. Journalists mainly focused on student teaching and behaviour issues, while the most common areas for requests overall were finance and procurement.

Further information regarding mental health, Equality and Diversity and animal procedures requests was also provided.

The Information Governance Co-ordinator expressed his thanks to all those involved in responding to the requests on such a timely basis. To further streamline this process he reported on a future trial giving a draft response to the staff members with blanks to complete and areas to edit/vote, which should hopefully minimise the volume of emails required, which was supported by the Board.

The Director of HRD expressed his support for publishing more information, such as annual statistics, student numbers, etc. on the website so that more FOI requests can be directed to the website rather than receiving personalised responses.

The Chair thanked the Information Governance Co-ordinator for his supportive guidance and for ensuring a cohesive response to requests; he was asked to inform the Board if more support was required to continue this level of service. It was agreed that the report should be forwarded to the University Executive for their information.

M17/46   **REPORTS FROM THE CAMPUSES, SCHOOLS AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES (PSLB/17/57 – PSLB/17/68)**

The Board received and noted the reports from the Campuses, Schools and Professional Services, presented by the Directors of Administration and Directors of Professional Services.

M17/47   **GROUP FINANCIAL DASHBOARD (PSLB17/69)**

The Board received and noted a Group Financial Dashboard report for the period up to 28 February 2017.

M17/48   **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY: MEETING OUR LEGAL REQUIREMENTS (PSLB17/70)**

48.1   This item was presented by the Director of HRD and the Director of Governance and Legal Services, and was endorsed by the Board after a short discussion.

The report gave near final drafts of documentation required by the University to meet legal requirements under the Equality Act 2010. As the Equality Act 2010 placed a number of requirements on the University around setting equality outcomes, by publishing equality pay information and employee data the University is fulfilling its legal obligations through publishing the following documentation:

- **Inclusion for All:** Mainstreaming Equality. Equality Outcomes 2017-21 (updated progress on 2013-17 Equality Outcomes and outlined plans covering 2017-21 including Equality Outcomes action plan);
- **Heriot-Watt University Equal Pay Statement** (building on the last four years the Equal Pay Statement includes pay gap data by gender, ethnicity and race and includes the Equal Pay Action Plan covering 2017-21);
- **Heriot-Watt University Employee Information** (including recruitment, remuneration, training, return to work, appraisal, grievance and disciplinary); and
- **Heriot-Watt University Student Information** (covering enrolment data).

The Board noted that information contained within the Heriot-Watt University Equal Pay Statement and the Heriot-Watt University Employee Information should be treated as confidential and should not be shared outwith the meeting until a full EPIA had been completed.

48.2   It was noted that the Chair and the Director of HRD would meet to discuss options for review regarding the Service elements raised in the report; the Secretary advised that the Board should discuss the staff equality data in the context of Professional Services, what the drivers are, how calculations were arrived at and what the barriers were to further progression.

The Board noted that limited information including protected characteristics would be published to reflect Public Sector Equality Duty requirements, ensuring personal confidentiality would be a high priority.

M17/49   **REPORT FROM THE STRATEGIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS COMMITTEE/TERMS OF REFERENCE (PSLB17/71)**

The Board noted the update by the Director of Information Services regarding SISC, and received the Terms of Reference for approval. Minor updates have been made to the membership in the Terms of Reference; these were approved.

It was noted that the next meeting of SISC would take place on 24 April 2017, where they would discuss the remaining tranche (£250K) of spending priorities for the 2017-18 Information Systems Modernisation Programme, to be brought to the next PSLB meeting on 3 May 2017.

M17/50 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

50.1   The Director of Governance and Legal Services was joined by the Chair in informing the Board of the appointment of Jon Dye, a very experienced professional risk specialist, as Head of Assurance Services, to support and streamline the risk management and lead the University's Projects Office. He would shortly begin a review of the University's insurance arrangements.

50.2   The Director of Information Services noted that there would need to be a review of the Edinburgh Campus telephone system as from 1 April 2017 the maintenance contract by the manufacture had expired. This subject would need to be reviewed and addressed in accordance with the previously scheduled investment plan.

50.3   A job description was being developed for the IT leadership position, with the imminent retiral of the Director of Information Services; this would be further informed by the Directors of Administration and the Schools. Dixon Walter had been recruited to co-ordinate the search for a candidate to fill the position; they have a good understanding of the current market (and filled the current position).

50.4   The forward agenda was discussed by the Board, and it was agreed that pay and equality would be considered at the next meeting.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Date of next meeting: Wednesday 3 May 2017

This will be a paperless meeting.