Staff Strategy

2008

Approved by the University Court: 12 February 2008
1. Introduction

The success of the University is based almost entirely on the performance and achievements of its staff at all levels within all staff groups. Accordingly it is most appropriate to have a staff strategy which will focus on achieving an appropriate staffing profile, devising reward/pay and progression systems, providing career and staff development opportunities, and ensuring that there is effective and meaningful staff communication which will promote a positive, collegiate working environment. Equality and diversity as a measure of how we value, treat and progress the careers of staff have been identified as important components of this strategy, and they will be promoted in a proactive manner throughout the University. This Staff Strategy is intended to help support the University in the delivery of the objectives as stated within the 10 year Strategic Plan: 2008 – 2018.

The Staff Strategy has taken cognisance of many internal and external considerations such as :-

- Increasing competitiveness between institutions for staff
- The need for the staff and University to be more ready to grasp new opportunities as they arise, particularly in research
- Effects of the growth of external accreditation, especially the RAE, on individual work loads
- Effects on an individual’s work of changing working practices, job demands and skills requirements (e.g., from increased demands for technology)
- Increasingly important role for middle/senior managers as a consequence of organisational change
- Changing career and recruitment patterns because of changing external markets
- Demands for more collaboration by staff with other institutions
- The need to take account of changes in national arrangements for pay and conditions of employment

The strategy has been developed, in part, with the staff consultation process from which many helpful comments have been received and incorporated as appropriate.

2. Staffing Strategy Statement

Aims of Staff Strategy

The fundamental aims of this Strategy are :-

- To provide a framework within which staffing policy can be developed effectively and with the involvement of all appropriate staff across the staff groups.
- To ensure that this framework reflects the University’s values and supports and progresses its strategic objectives

The Strategy should look towards a ten-year plan. It is estimated that an initial 2-3 year programme of work will be required to develop specific policy and process proposals for the delivery of the Strategy. The overall Strategy will be subject to review at 4 yearly intervals by the Staff Committee. Implementation of the various policy areas and actions arising from the Strategy will be monitored against the HR operational plan on an ongoing basis by the Vice-Principal
Governance and Planning and formally on an annual basis by the senior management team and the Staff Committee.

For this Strategy to succeed it must take account of the overall University environment. The environment is shaped by the set of values espoused in the University’s Strategic Plan and at the core of University operations. These values need to be reflected in the content of any policy initiatives under this Strategy and the process by which they are implemented.

The content of any HR policy initiatives will take account of the following:

- The value placed on individual excellence of performance in any role within the University.
- The concept of “collegiality”, by which is meant the sense of involvement by staff at all levels in working groups or operational units within their own areas of work or the University as a whole. It includes a recognition of their right to contribute to the various processes of governance and an expectation of their contribution to the common good of the University, as well as to their own area of the University. For academic staff, collegiality as thus defined provides the setting within which the principles of academic freedom are to be interpreted within the University.
- For academic staff, the difficult balance that must always be sought between the individual freedom to pursue scholarship, initiative and creativity in their academic activities and the collective needs of the University.
- The principles of justice and fairness.

The process of the implementation of the Strategy will be based on full consultation and, where appropriate, negotiation with recognised trade unions for all staff groups through our established mechanisms. We shall also consult and communicate widely with staff in all areas and have input to groups and committees which have particular interests or responsibilities for activities on which staffing policy may have an input.

3. Key Priorities

The following sets out the key priorities identified for action in the next 2 – 3 years:

3.1 Movement towards a sustainable and flexible staffing profile which matches and responds to University needs. This profile should be based upon a rigorous people planning exercise to quantify the staffing needs now and in the future.
3.2 The further ongoing development of an appropriate, modern pay and conditions framework to meet recruitment, retention and reward needs.
3.3 Revision of employment policies and procedures to ensure that they are up-to-date and appropriate to the needs of the University now and in the future. Thereafter to ensure that their implementation is appropriate and equitable across the University.
3.4 Establishment of clear and fair procedures for ensuring that roles match capabilities and for the regular review of roles and monitoring of staff performance in an equitable manner.
3.5 Strategic support in the area of an effective staff development policy for all staff.
3.6 Promotion of a commitment amongst all staff to provide a high quality of service and proactively to develop the service to meet the changing needs of the University.
3.7 Strategic support in the development of appropriate succession planning.
3.8 Integration of equality and diversity principles in all aspects of the general operation of the University so that it is recognised as an employer of choice for people from all backgrounds and a better place to work for all staff.
3.9 Promotion of enhanced communication amongst staff to achieve effectiveness and efficiency in their roles, to understand their contribution to the mission of the University and to take part in discussion about changes which may affect staff either individually or in groups.

3.10 Enhancement of the usefulness of the staff record, and advancement of the LEAN review of the activities of the Human Resources unit with a view towards the elimination of duplication, enhanced efficiency and greater effectiveness.

4. Points of Focus and Action in relation to the Key Priorities

4.1 Staffing Profile
There must be a clear picture of the current staffing profile of the University and the ability to correlate this with University needs in the longer term. This will take into account: salary costs including the total salary pay bill as a percentage of annual University operational expenditure; staff numbers by contract, grade, School/Unit, age profile, equality categories and turnover; and other measures relevant to particular planning needs. This will enable a proactive and managed approach to deal with recruitment, workforce allocation and opportunities for savings. It will also allow benchmarking against comparable institutions.

Experience in other institutions has shown that where staffing profiles can be drawn up for areas larger than most departments (e.g., Schools or Faculties), greater flexibility in staff profiles, skill mix and opportunities for staff development are realised. Consideration should also be given to the mix of temporary and permanent staff.

Key Actions

4.1.1 Establish accurate and appropriately-defined staffing profiles that allow the University to analyse the profile and cost of staff at a given time and in the future and to compare itself with similar institutions.

4.1.2 Provide semi-annual reports on the staffing profile to the Principal’s Office/Staff Committee and to Heads of Schools and Units.

4.1.3 Develop ways to move staff internally to fill positions (including promotion of staff secondments within the University, alternatives to unit-focused terms of employment, internal advertisement guidelines).

4.1.4 Ensure roles are reviewed and redefined as necessary to meet the changing needs of the University.

4.1.5 Ensure that staffing considerations are included in the business planning process for all units and that a people plan is included in the strategic/operating plans.

4.2 Pay and Conditions Framework to meet recruitment, retention and reward needs
Following the recent implementation of a single pay spine and harmonised conditions of service, the University must review the impact of this and develop, where necessary, mechanisms to ensure it is responsive to the changing needs of the University. Looking ahead this will include establishing clear objectives in terms of employment relations, pay and conditions through pay negotiations and the most suitable route to achieve these objectives.

Key Actions

4.2.1 Develop a transparent, flexible, fair and justifiable approach to reward all staff.

4.2.2 Review the current grading system for non-incremental grades to establish a transparent, flexible, fair and justifiable reward process.
4.2.3 Develop clear priorities for pay and conditions in the longer term to assist local or national bargaining.

4.2.4 Confirm the University’s commitment to local benefits.

A suitable Recruitment policy and procedure needs to be in place to support academic Schools and service Units in their efforts to attract high quality individuals and to make us an employer of choice for all staff groups. This must include a commitment to equality and diversity in all stages of recruitment and to the proper training of appointment panels. It will also require a re-assessment of the support provided to Schools and Units in the early stages of the recruitment process, the University’s presentation of itself in application materials, the optimal forms of advertising, the ease of the application process for candidates (especially from abroad), the support offered during periods of inquiry, the materials provided to successful candidates on appointment and the support offered to newly appointed staff before and immediately after arrival in relation to many practical issues of transition (especially to those coming from abroad).

Recruitment initiatives will be influenced by the staffing profile and staffing needs of the University. Careful consideration of the level and type of posts to be filled will be required, rather than simple replacements of what has gone before. Greater attention must be given to the balance between achieving the requirements of the Unit or School and providing the flexibility in employment practice that may enable the University to respond to changing needs. Related policies should be prepared to encourage some staff to move into academic management roles in order to enhance the supply of potential candidates for senior leadership roles within the University.

Key Actions:

4.2.5 Devise a recruitment policy which meets the strategic needs of the University.

4.2.6 Enhance the support offered to applicants and new appointees.

4.2.7 Develop a robust induction process for all staff which informs them of the key values of the University, expectations, performance, career development opportunities and the systems in place to monitor progress.

4.2.8 Develop a robust probation programme across the University to ensure consistency in approach in setting performance targets for all staff in line with Q6 (Review and Development Scheme).

As well as developing a recruitment policy to attract new staff to the University we need to pay at least as much attention to the retention of the valued staff who already work for us. We must identify any areas where there is a retention problem and address them as soon as possible. Also we should ensure that there is a congruence between reward factors and institutional needs and objectives, bearing in mind that non-pay as well as pay factors are equally important in attracting people into and retaining them at the University. Non-pay factors can include: work-life balance, esteem, career progression, personal development opportunities, terms and conditions of service, working environment. To ensure we can meet the University’s objectives, it will be essential to create new initiatives that focus in particular on career progression and development opportunities for staff, recognition of their participation in the success and standing of the institution, a clearer correlation between performance and reward for non-academic staff, and transparency and fairness of our means of evaluating jobs and staff.

Key Actions:

4.2.9 Develop and promote work-life balance initiatives.
4.2.10 Review regrading processes to ensure that they are fair and applied equitably across all staff groups.
4.2.11 Develop career development opportunities to meet University and individual objectives.
4.2.12 Ensure terms and conditions of service are reviewed to meet the changing needs of staff and the University.

The performance of staff is key to the success of the University and its strategy. To ensure that performance is rightly assessed and rewarded, it will be essential that the University has a robust process of dealing with performance. Such a process should also seek to aid staff in identifying and achieving career aspirations wherever possible and also must contribute to ensuring that all staff are fully informed of the expectations and goals of the University/School/Unit and are provided with relevant development opportunities. Without a clear sense of priorities, staff cannot know how best to balance their efforts between different areas of work or how these different activities will be treated in promotion and other reward procedures. In addition, in making and implementing promotion decisions, there should be a stronger emphasis on future rather than past activities and on the job enlargement or increased expectations which should follow promotion.

**Key Actions:**

4.2.13 Produce a timeframe for further development of the Q6 process and standardise its use throughout the University to set and review objectives and identify and monitor staff development.
4.2.14 Undertake a review of the impact of Q6 in developing staff and its involvement in Probation, Research Leave and Promotion.
4.2.15 Develop a fair and robust system for rewarding staff who excel in their role either through promotion, performance-related pay or both.

Along with having a robust mechanism to assess and reward performance, it is essential that a proactive approach is taken to deal with underperformance issues. Current practices must be reviewed to ensure that the procedures are clear, fair and effective, so that underperformance can be dealt with in a manageable and timely way. In addition to reviewing procedures, it will be important that managers are given the appropriate training and guidance.

**Key Actions:**

4.2.16 Review current procedures regarding underperformance in light of current legal practice and in discussion with trade unions.
4.2.17 Ensure managers are equipped and trained to manage performance and deal with issues in an appropriate and timely manner.

**4.3. Revision of Employment Policies and Procedures**

It is essential that the University has up-to-date relevant policies and procedures to support managers and staff in the ever changing environment. In addition to the policies specifically mentioned in the other key priorities for this Strategy, in conjunction with trade unions representatives, we shall review and amend as appropriate all staffing related policies by 31 May 2010.

**Key Actions**

4.3.1 Provision of updated HR policy and procedures manual.
4.3.2 Provision of appropriate awareness sessions and training for staff and managers in the operation of the policies and procedures.

4.4. **Establishment of procedures for role matching with capabilities**

It is essential that the University has a robust job evaluation process in place. This will underpin the process of ensuring that staff have the appropriate capabilities to perform the roles. This is a fundamental part of the people planning exercise which will ensure that the University has the right type of staff to fulfil its strategic objectives.

**Key Actions**

4.4.1 Consolidation and mainstreaming of the job evaluation process.
4.4.2 The development of an appropriate process to undertake a skills analysis which looks not only at current skills but future requirements of the University.

4.5. **Staff Development**

Enhancing the skills and competencies of all the University’s staff is part of its responsibility to their career and personal development. Staff should be encouraged to undertake some element of personal and professional development in a planned and targeted manner which will benefit them and the University. There should be consideration by managers at various levels of the University of the mix and kinds of abilities and skills/competencies required for his/her unit to deliver its objectives. This will lead to identifying and encouraging individuals to engage in personal development necessary for the success of their unit or group or the University as a whole. In addition, targeted staff development should be used as a means of reducing the risk of dependency upon a single individual for key activities.

The relationship of personal development and performance review should also be considered. This should take account of differing needs and priorities at different career stages and be more than an appraisal process.

**Key Actions:**

4.5.1 Linked to probation, develop a robust system to identify the training and development needs for all staff.
4.5.2 Develop a comprehensive programme for the development of early career staff, for example by provision of accreditation for academic staff.
4.5.3 Ensure training records for staff are fully maintained and monitored.
4.5.4 Coordinate the activities of the main institutional providers of staff development in order to produce an integrated programme that is fit for purpose.
4.5.5 Develop a suite of training programmes that meet the changing needs of the organisation, provide core training for all managers and allow for the development of staff into future roles.
4.5.6 Develop a suite of training programmes that enhance the day-to-day activities of the organisation in terms of standardising work practices and promoting a service culture amongst staff.
4.5.7 Establish a robust system of moving staff around the University to enhance the experience of staff and develop new skills but also to provide the University with flexibility in terms of its staffing profile.
4.6. Commitment to High Quality Performance and Service

To ensure the continued success of the University it is essential that all staff are fully aware of the contribution they make to the University and the need to sustain a high level of performance throughout their employment. Greater emphasis must be placed on all staff understanding the nature of the service being offered, who the key stakeholders and/or customers are and the expected level of service to be delivered. Going forward, it will be essential for the University to develop a culture that is responsive to stakeholder needs and the evolving service requirements of the University. Standards of service will therefore need to be surveyed, monitored and responded to on a regular basis to meet these goals.

Key Actions:

4.6.1 Develop a clear strategy for ensuring all staff are routinely and regularly made aware of stakeholder and customer needs and the importance their role plays in service delivery and in stakeholder/customer interaction.
4.6.2 Develop and monitor Q6 to ensure these expectations are integral to the process.
4.6.3 Ensure that the expectations that are made of staff are clearly communicated to them during induction, probation and ongoing performance reviews.
4.6.4 Develop focussed training and development courses for staff to meet these needs.
4.6.5 Ensure that managers at all levels understand the importance of giving clear direction and support to staff to ensure service delivery is a priority.
4.6.6 Ensure that all training and development programmes contain strong emphasis on the implementation of achieving equality and diversity.

4.7. Succession planning

Enhancing the skills and competencies of all University staff is part of the University’s responsibility to their career and personal development but also in providing the University with a flexible workforce able to meet changing needs. This results in the need for development plans (Q6) to form the core part of a person’s development needs from the outset of their appointment and for managers to understand that this is a key part of their responsibility. However, care must be taken to manage the expectations of staff in relation to their development and career expectations.

As part of the ongoing development of staff, School/Units will be required actively and appropriately to develop the roles of staff to fill potential vacancies caused by retirements or changing roles such as Heads of School/Directors of Teaching etc. They must also ensure that all key processes undertaken within any School/Unit are not overly reliant on one individual.

Key Actions:

4.7.1 Establish a robust mechanism to provide up-to-date information to Heads on the staffing profile for their School/Unit to assist them proactively to undertake succession planning and temporary cover arrangements.
4.7.2 Establish a more planned and phased approach to integrate new Heads of School into the role.
4.7.3 Provide training/development courses to ensure staff are developed appropriately to meet future requirements of the School/Unit/University.
4.7.4 Further encourage the development of management teams in Schools and Units.
4.8. **Equality and Diversity**

All staffing policies and procedures will be reviewed to ensure the best practice in the promotion and maintenance of equal opportunities in all matters relating to staff. Also work will be undertaken to ensure that such best practice is included in all working practices within the University.

**Key Actions:**

4.8.1 Review requirements of Equality legislation and ensure the University is fully aware and committed to these.

4.8.2 Develop adequate resources to facilitate and progress Equality across the University.

4.8.3 Develop a robust system of monitoring actions and reporting impact along with comparability with external benchmarks and KPIs.

4.8.4 Undertake a comprehensive equality review of the staffing profile to ensure there are no barriers to progression or inequitable practices.

4.8.5 Develop, where necessary as a result of 4.8.4, appropriate solutions.

4.8.6 Ensure equality and diversity issues are mainstreamed in all aspects of University life.

4.8.7 As mentioned above in the values section, training will be an integral mechanism to ensure the full and effective implementation of the University’s commitment to equality and diversity.

4.9. **Enhanced communication**

It is essential that the University enables effective and efficient communication amongst its staff on all matters which do or could affect their working lives. A new Communications Strategy is currently being developed and will complement the Staff Strategy.

4.10. **Enhanced effectiveness and efficiency of Human Resources management**

There are many users of the services of Human Resources, and its records are integral to many University processes. Continuing enhancement of the usefulness and accuracy of the staff record, and more effective and efficient HR procedures will benefit the wider University community. The Human Resources unit will utilise LEAN methodology to eliminate areas of duplication, enhance efficiency and achieve greater effectiveness. Particular focus will be on the development of the Staff Record to ensure it is robust and can meet user expectations in terms of information available and management of data.

**Key Actions**

4.10.1 Review the accuracy, efficiency and effectiveness of the Staff Record and ascertain how it can be better utilised across the University to provide management information.

4.10.2 Ensure all aspects of the HR Operational Plan are reviewed using LEAN methodology.

4.10.3 Ensure the LEAN principles are integral to all HR decisions and policy development.

5.0 **Development of KPIs**

As a fundamental part of measuring the success of the Staff Strategy a series of KPIs will be developed. This will allow the University to monitor progress being made and to measure the success of various initiatives. Relevant KPIs are the following (which are derived in part from the
CUC recommendations identified in its November 2006 document on “The Monitoring of Institutional Performance and the Use of Key Performance Indicators”

5.1 Statistics on staff turnover, absence and vacancies against current plans (when defined). This will include benchmarking with other similar organisations.
5.2 A staff profile that provides a comprehensive demographic picture of the organisation.
5.3 Cost of staff as a % of total cost.
5.4 Recruitment profile, posts advertised, internal appointments made, costs etc.
5.5 Staff training courses and number of attendees by contract type and cost.
5.6 Number of disciplinary/grievance issues raised.
5.7 Analysis of exit questionnaires and other staff surveys.

6.0 Risks and Dependencies
The ability successfully to achieve the objectives of the Staff Strategy will be dependent on a number of factors including predictability of events. However, the following outlines some areas which may have a detrimental impact on the strategy or require alterations to be made. Key dependencies include:

6.1 Effective communication to promote staff development activities and initiatives, especially among academic staff.
6.2 Good communication and managerial involvement in promoting efficiency gains within Schools/Units.
6.3 Effective encouragement of staff to take responsibility and ownership for achieving the Staff Strategy in their own School/Unit.
6.4 The ability of BI and IT systems to support the needs of the Staff Strategy.

Additional factors which may substantially affect the ability to achieve the objectives of the strategy are:

6.5 Potential difficulties surrounding Industrial Relations.
6.6 The loss of key staff responsible for the implementation of the Staff Strategy (such as in HR records and data analysis).