

ADVISORY BOARD NOTES

The Advisory Board met on 21 October where the purpose of the board was clarified:

'The Advisory Board is an advisory body only, acting as a thoughtful sounding board for the Project Board. It is one of several channels of communication that the Project Board will use when considering feedback.'

This document captures the feedback provided around themes.

Views on moving from a Faculty to a School based structures:

Overall the feedback was extremely positive and there was broad support for a School structure. It was felt to be a good idea for the following reasons:

- The removal of the faculty layer will enable more visibility and communication from senior management.
- Decision making will be quicker and easier resulting in simplification of processes
- There will be clearer lines of ownership, accountability and responsibility
- For externals looking in it would provide a clearer and more streamlined identity (e.g. fewer clicks on website)

It was stated that there was still staff sensitivity following the 2010 restructuring exercise and that any change of structure would inevitably result in changes to roles. In relation to this the following was said:

- That all staff, especially those most affected by the change be handled carefully and sensitively. As, whilst all staff have been advised that there will be no compulsory redundancies as a result of this exercise, we need to be sensitive that some career paths may be changing. Therefore individuals need to feel comfortable with the process and that they are being supported. Therefore there is a requirement to have clear roles, career paths and support available.
- By changing the structure we need to ensure that all the tasks currently undertaken continue to be carried out, and don't get lost in the change process.
- That, if a new matrix management structure is to be put in place (i.e. Assistant Principal's will have University-wide remits) we need to ensure that the new academic structure fully supports this with clear lines of accountability or responsibility, otherwise this could result in frustrations arising, or larger central teams being developed to support the university-wide activity.

Views on the School Options:

The Business School:

- The general view was that there was confusion over the proposal to make the Business School a single entity. It was felt that this is the converse of what is

being proposed for the other two Faculties, and that this would result in a very large School.

- Concern was raised that this could result in new emerging niche areas getting lost because of the size.
- It was suggested that due to the interdisciplinary activity across the Business School, it would be difficult to keep them as three separate entities. However this was countered by view that interdisciplinary activity is encouraged and that people may be discouraged from doing this if an outcome of successfully doing it results in areas merging.
- It was felt that externally the profile is of one Business School and it was suggested that the three Schools remain, with clear lines of accountability, within a unified external presence of a 'virtual' Business School.

School of Humanities and Social Sciences:

Views in relation to this were mixed as follows:

- It was agreed that there was logic for having a School of Humanities and Social Science for externals looking in.
- Social Science believed that since the last restructuring, four years ago, they had worked very hard to build and develop links and interdisciplinary activity with other areas of their School. They advised that this had resulted in three excellent programmes, more research activity and research grants being received and more international activity. That a lot of energy and activity had gone into making this happen and that they were currently focused on working towards achieving the objectives within Strategy 2020. To change this could result in a fall in motivation and energy, where new links would need to be forged with new areas, within a new School, where none currently exist. They would need to be provided with rationale as to why this area should sit better within a new School.
- There was agreement that the research activity within this area was driven by links developed within the School.
- Law advised that there was a general feeling of concern following the restructure four years ago and since then have worked hard to integrate. They were driving research hard and would need to understand the rationale around how they would benefit from being part of a new School, as well as how they would benefit from staying where they are.
- English Literature believed that this was an exciting and good idea. However advised that they would need to remain in the city centre in close proximity to Edinburgh University. English Literature believed they have developed a strong identity and could flourish within a School of Humanities and Social Science, along with Law and Social Science, two other areas with strong identities.
- It was suggested that geographical location should not be an issue and that if the right behaviours around collaboration were in place, existing links could continue across Schools and a new one be formed in addition.

- It was suggested that School structures could be considered around critical areas of mass. For example REF units of assessments could be considered as a key driver for considering the correct structure.

Other School Suggestion:

- The School of Engineering and Built Environment is large, this could become two Schools.

Views on Committee Structures:

It was advised that the committee structures would be considered once the new academic structure had been agreed. Therefore this would be considered after 5 December with a proposal presented to Academic Board on 6 March 2015. It was noted that there is:

- Need to ensure the new committee structure maps onto the new academic structure.
- Need to consider how all committees feed into each other and inform the actual decision making process within the University.

Support Structures:

- Need to ensure that any new academic structure is operationalised properly.
- Important that Central Professional Services work in partnership with all academic areas and provide equity of service.
- Technical Services currently map onto the academic work undertaken in the Schools. Whilst it is a faculty based service, there is collaboration with a cross School focus, therefore moving forward a campus-based Technical Service could be provided.
- It is important to have key support areas with some integrated functions so it is clear who is responsible for what.
- Important to have Central Professional Services support with a clearer visible provision at campus level.

General Comments:

- It was suggested that a strong vision should be created around any new School proposal to foster excitement and energy behind it. Need to encourage staff engagement.
- When developing the rationale, consideration should be made to what collaborations could be made in order to strive for better efficiency. Opportunity to highlight strengths.
- Clarity around change and benefits essential.
- Nice to have this opportunity to feed into the process and not be given a 'fait-au-compli'. It was recognised that this is a journey, and a real opportunity to do things differently as things evolve, develop and emerge. Cycle of change is good, it stimulates activity and if we are looking to meet strategy 2020, we need to remove silos and build up units with greater collaboration.

- Acknowledgement that the right way forward might be considered radical and may not please everyone.
- Need to ensure the focus remains on achieving Strategy 2020 and any changes to structure do not dissipate this.