

ACADEMIC RESTRUCTURING AT UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

Why restructure?

Following my visits to Faculties, Departments and campuses, and extensive discussions with staff I am impressed with their dedication and business-like approach, and their determination to ensure the University of Plymouth flourishes. The University has achieved much during its first ten years but now we must decide how to increase the momentum behind its development towards a University of Excellence.

The University is currently configured as 6 Faculties and a joint Peninsula Medical School which may be considered as a joint Faculty. The groupings are historical and appear to be mainly for budgetary control rather than for fostering alliances between cognate disciplines. Two of the Faculty groupings have been formed because of geographical locations. As Vice-Chancellor it sometimes feels as though I am leading a federal dispersed campus University with markedly differing agendas. The University is a multifaculty one in name only but in reality the arts and sciences (both staff and students) never meet nor benefit from any interaction with one another. Apart from the academic sterility that such separation engenders, it also means that there is very large potential for duplication of scarce resources which could be better redeployed to create more academic positions and provide better facilities to improve our research and teaching – the true core activities of any university.

Proposed restructure

I am not in favour of restructuring the University in a way that teaching is divorced from research. The one informs the other and no member of staff should be exempt from teaching, nor from research activity if they have that ability. I therefore favour the Faculty model where the Dean is an executive, appointed academic leader on 5 year, renewable contracts, is the budget holder and as such determines space and resources for the Faculty. I consider the Dean's job to be a 50% job and expect him/her to lead a substantial research group in their own right. The appropriate administrative support will be attached to the Dean's office and will not be duplicated at Heads of Department/School/Centre/Institute level. The Faculty will promote cross faculty generic teaching (across disciplines if possible) for year 0 and 1, with subject - specific teaching in year 2, and the final undergraduate year teaching would become more project and research based, thereby leading naturally into the development of more research based masters courses. The Heads of Departments/Schools/Centres/Institutes will be appointed by the Dean in consultation with the Vice-Chancellor for 5 year, renewable periods. These positions would become that of the academic leaders of their discipline, and as part of their remit they would provide the support, encouragement and career progression for their junior staff. The job should involve no more than 20-25% of time spent on administration.

New thinking will be required within Faculties to achieve this. There will need to be significant changes in the way they work, but as a first step we must agree on the optimum grouping for the future of disciplines and departments within Faculties.

Geographical separation of our campuses is still a factor to contend with but I feel that we should develop cross campus Faculties thereby signaling some of the moves which will be necessary to achieve a predominantly Plymouth based multi faculty University of excellence for the future. It could be that our restructure is seen as a two phase operation with the second phase only becoming operational when relocation has occurred. This particularly applies to Education where I do not have any foreseeable plans for relocation as I am acutely aware of the geographical location of student placements.

I have thought hard about Seale-Hayne. I am impressed at their diversification into areas beyond agriculture in order to keep student numbers up. However, it is this very diversification that renders the campus academically unviable since no single area is capable of achieving critical mass. Tourism and Hospitality (this will include land use and rural management) belong with Social Sciences and Business whereas Food Science and Agriculture belong in the Science Faculty. It would not make academic or economic sense to upgrade expensive laboratories on two sites.

The new Faculties

1. Arts, Architecture and Humanities

I have made no secret of our wish to link with the City in developing a cultural quarter based on the North Hill section of our campus and linking in with the Museum, Library and PCAD. This can only be achieved if we relocate the Exeter based School of Art and Design and the School of Arts and Humanities and build a flagship building to house art and design and the School of Architecture together and provide some of the cultural activities so lacking on our campus. Drama would benefit from links with the Plymouth theatres and we could display some of the excellent art we produce in order to open up the University to the City to the mutual benefit of both. Hopefully in time arts based businesses will develop in the cultural quarter.

2. Education

This would remain based at Exmouth but we need to think creatively how education, teaching and research is delivered to the whole region and this will require partnership. The concept of an Institute of Education needs exploring, especially one that achieves a leading national position in an agreed timescale.

3. Technology

This will comprise the three current engineering departments, maths and statistics and computer science. My preferred option at the present is to form two Schools:

- (1) Engineering and Mathematics
- (2) Computing, Electronics and Communications

The media component of computing may realign itself with the arts school in time. Clearly prior to appointment of a new Dean nothing should be decided.

4. **Health**

This will comprise Nursing, Professions Allied to Medicine and Social Work. Nursing will continue to operate on multiple sites as before.

5. **Medicine**

The Peninsula Medical School will remain unchanged as a joint partnership with University of Exeter.

6. **Science**

This will comprise:

Biological Sciences - currently Marine Biology and Biomedical Sciences. If we align ourselves closer to the Marine Biological Association and the biomedical science grows with the clinical science growth of the Peninsula Medical School, the Biology group may split at a later stage.

Environmental Sciences)
) it may be logical to merge this into
Geology) one School

Food Science and Agriculture

Marine Sciences (minus Maritime Law and Transport which moves to the Social Sciences and Business Faculty, and English as a Foreign Language which should be seen as a cross University facility rather than a departmental one.)

Psychology

7. **Social Sciences and Business**

This will comprise:

The Business School

Geography – this is a difficult one as I do not wish Physical Geography to be split from Human Geography, but in many universities geography is located in Social Sciences

Maritime Law and Transport

Politics and International Relations

Sociology

Social Policy

Tourism and Hospitality (including land use and rural management)

Advantages of the restructure

1. **To staff and to the University as a whole.** Ultimately the aims of any restructure are to improve things and it is clear that in order to achieve a University which pursues research and teaching to world-class standards we need to consolidate. Research excellence nowadays is achieved by interaction between cognate disciplines and in the sciences multidisciplinary groupings need to achieve critical mass which we currently do not have in most areas. Resources are scarce and it would be folly to duplicate expensive research facilities on different campuses. If we can achieve a sizeable research income with overheads over the next 5 years, most of the new staff appointed would want to and need to teach for career progression and this would improve staff/student ratios.

Many of our buildings are old and will require substantial investment. We have the opportunity to redesign the Plymouth campus and make it academically and visually attractive and an exciting place to work. We will not have the money to develop all four campuses, nor would it give the University value for money.

However this restructure is not being done for financial reasons but for maximum academic benefit.

2. **To students.** By concentrating on the Plymouth campus, we can invest to improve the things that matter most to students. These are the learning facilities, the library, the Students' Union and the recreational facilities. The University wishes to substantially improve student facilities in the very near future and by concentrating on the Plymouth campus we will be able to do so. The improvements in the University will not be immediate to current students but we must look to the students of tomorrow and these will most definitely benefit.
3. **To the city.** Plymouth as a city has real potential and the University wishes to contribute to its development. The concept of creating a cultural quarter on the North Hill side has excited all concerned and we now want to make it happen. Universities need to be and should be "cultural incubators" and with these plans we can go some way to fulfilling these aims. Furthermore in time such a quarter will generate arts-based business and recreational areas which will make Plymouth an even more attractive city to live in. But this is only one aspect of the relationship between the University and the City. I think that a university should be firmly linked to all aspects of the social, cultural and economic life of a city and we have a unique opportunity to develop a new type of university/city environment given the excellent location of the University within the City.

These proposals should not be seen simply as "centralisation" – certainly they facilitate much needed academic synergies and should release funds for investment in staff and infrastructure, but Plymouth's regional role must not be neglected. This is mainly discharged through its network of Partner Colleges,

which is one of the biggest and best-developed in the country. The Plymouth campus must therefore develop so that it reaches out to the Region and provides facilities and resources that are accessible to the people and institutions of the Region. Let us make it happen.

Timescale

I would like the consultation process to last from mid November to mid December where it will be the sole agenda item for the Academic Board. Once announced in mid November I propose open meetings on all campuses, discussions with the students and the Unions so that all can take part in the debate with final discussion at the Academic Board prior to the proposals going to the Board of Governors meeting on 13 December for discussion and hopefully endorsement.

The new Faculties will become effective from 1 August 2003. The details of implementation and administration would be worked through after Christmas and details released by end of April 2003.

The moves consequent on this restructure would be

1. Architecture to remain at the Hoe Centre until relocated to a new building on the main campus in 2006/7.
2. Exeter School of Art and Design to relocate to same building in 2006/7
3. The two departments at Seale-Hayne to relocate for academic year 2004/5.
4. Arts and Humanities departments at Exeter/Exmouth to relocate for academic year 2004/5

I am sure you will agree that this University must change and evolve to achieve its mission, which is now redefined as

To be a University of excellence, which:

- delivers teaching and research to world-class standards
- fosters scholarship and culture
- serves the region
- develops responsible students capable of critical reasoning and practical action
- is open and accessible
- is an effective community working in partnership with others

Buildings required for relocation

1. Firstly the library facilities need extending. The current library is of a size for a University of 6-8000 students. As a first phase a library extension capable of housing increased book stock by 40% will need to be built by 2004/5. In a second phase we will seek to develop further library facilities jointly with the city.
2. A major investment in Student Union facilities is mandatory.
3. We already have plans to provide improved staff facilities and space for postgraduate students.
4. A new flag-ship building to house the Art and Design School and Architecture together with gallery space and some arts development to link in with the city will be needed by 2006/7. No estimate of costs can be given at this time but it is unlikely that the two major buildings will cost less than £25-30 million together.

In my opinion the status quo is not an option and in this fast moving world of Higher Education and the constraints that the funding regime places upon us, if we do not grasp this challenge, University of Plymouth may never achieve excellence with the very real danger of being below the line if the binary divide in Higher Education is recreated with the current proposals for ensuring maximum support for the internationally research focussed universities.

Most universities are having similar discussions, and mergers and restructuring are becoming commonplace. Plymouth cannot allow itself to be left behind, but must continue its quest towards academic excellence and sustain its unique regional role. From my discussions with staff I am sure our aspirations are achievable if we are single-minded and focused in pursuing them.

PROFESSOR ROLAND LEVINSKY
VICE-CHANCELLOR

30 October 2002