

COU13D038

Title: Proposal for a 'Lessons Learned' Review of strategic projects
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Issue

This report has its origins in a proposal by Vicki Keller Dorsey, Independent Member of Council, and reflects an approach that she has used previously in her professional career for the evaluation of key projects.

Recommendation

It is recommended that those projects outlined in the annual 'strategic stock taking report' to Council undergo an additional review according to the 'lessons learned' methodology outlined below. It is envisaged that:

- each project that features in the annual stock-taking review should be further developed by the inclusion of a 'lessons learned' review led by the relevant member of the Executive Team;
- the enhanced reports should be presented to Council for discussion at the annual Council Strategy Conference;
- that emphasis should be very much on lessons learned for future projects and that ET members should be prepared to be frank in their analyses, focusing on lessons both palatable and unpalatable in their reviews;
- that, in order to permit free and frank consideration of the issues identified, consideration should be given on a case-by-case basis to exemption of relevant information from disclosure under section 36 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.¹

Resource Implications

The main resource implication, should this work proceed, is one of ET members' time to conduct the review(s).

Risk Implications

The intention of this process is to assist the University to prepare for future projects of strategic significance and to minimise the risks of project failure.

Equality and Diversity

N/A

¹ (2) Information to which section 36 of the FOIA applies is exempt information if, in the reasonable opinion of a qualified person (in this case, the Vice-Chancellor), disclosure of the information under the Act—
(b) would, or would be likely to, inhibit—
(i) the free and frank provision of advice, or
(ii) the free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation, or
(c) would otherwise prejudice, or would be likely otherwise to prejudice, the effective conduct of public affairs.

Timing of decisions

A Council decision is required at this meeting in order for work to begin on the enhanced reviews in good time for the November conference.

Background

Vicki Keller Dorsey has recommended a lessons learned methodology be applied to the projects that feature in the current annual stock taking report to Council ('major institutional-level strategic projects'). They are currently:

- UCS
- INTO Norwich
- INTO London
- Fudan Tyndall collaboration
- Biomass Power Station
- NRP

She has outlined a process by which the 'then' is compared to 'now' in each case with a view to analysing mission creep, scrutinising the parameters of the project and how they have changed over time and the resource requirements, both initial projections and actuals for finance and management time/intensity.

We would then seek to analyse the positive and negative lessons learned, discussing what was done well and what should have been done differently at each stage of the project, namely:

- The concept stage
- At assessment, challenge and approval
- At deal-structuring and negotiation
- At implementation and review.

Discussion

ET considered the proposal at its meeting on 17 March 2014 and agreed to recommend to Council that this approach should be taken forward for the projects identified. In particular, it recommended that Council should be the 'client' in such an approach and that a designated ET member should be responsible for leading the review(s).

The University's JV policy could be the basis for the scrutiny and set the standard of expectations against which the success or otherwise of the projects might be measured. In carrying out the work, ET recommended that JV partners such as the BBSRC and Andrew Colin should not be interviewed.

Attachments

University policy on Joint Ventures:

<http://www.uea.ac.uk/committeeoffice/ueacombds/cou/cou1112/020712/dividerfcou11d065>