

LTC12D040

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Author: Dr Andrea Blanchflower, Centre Director
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UEA London Centre Director's Report

The UEA London Study Centre offers a range of courses including:

- a range of English language and university validated courses to prepare international students for entry to degree and masters-level courses offered by City University and the University of East Anglia (UEA) in Norwich and in London;
- UEA BSc in International Business Management;
- UEA masters-level courses in management, marketing and finance , and creative entrepreneurship; and
- London Academy of Diplomacy validated masters-level courses in diplomacy.

The academic performance of the pre-University and validated courses is considered by the relevant JBoS and for UEA courses by the respective School/Faculty. This report will focus on operational matters.

Administrative Staff update

There have been a number of staffing changes over the past few months.

- Centre Director/Chief Operating Officer, Martin Halsall, left on 14.9.12, since when I have taken up the role on a temporary secondment basis until such time as a permanent appointment can be made.
- Matt Cartwright, Head of Student Services has resigned and will leave on 31.12.12. Maddy Parkinson, the substantive post holder, will be returning to work from maternity leave to a new part-time role. A plan is in place for a minor re-organisation in this area and to recruit to these vacancies – see below.
- Lianne Robson has taken up appointment as PA to the Centre Director following Sophie Khan's resignation.
- Dave Amour has moved to a 50% IUP, 25% INTO-UEA JV, 25% INTO-City JV role – Director of Recruitment (London)/Deputy Business Development Director. Helen Hollingworth has been appointed as Head of Recruitment for the pre-University courses offered by INTO-UEA and INTO-City.
- Darren Lamb has been appointed as Facilities Manager following the departure of Peter Bailey.

- Prior to my arrival it had been agreed that the LRC Manager, Margaret Booker, could return from maternity leave to her post on a part-time basis. This decision will necessitate some other staffing changes in this area.
- Geraldine Daly has taken up a one year fixed term post as HR Adviser which will provide cover during the maternity leave being taken by Patricia Travell.
- Simon Green is the new Financial Accountant who commenced in post on 16.7.12.

Centre Director

Discussions within the UEA London INTO-UEA JV are on-going in relation to the job description and appointment process for a new Centre Director. As LTC members may be aware the role currently fulfils a role for both the City and UEA JVs. Whilst this situation has been beneficial to all parties it is timely to review the situation now both businesses are maturing and facing different issues. From my experience in the role to date I am recommending to both JV Boards that this is the opportunity to make appointments to each JV as it is unlikely that a single post holder could satisfactorily serve both JVs during the next phase of development and with the City JV moving to new premises.

Student Services

Within the INTO network the role of the Student Services team has a slightly different remit from that at UEA and covers admissions, student induction, registration activities, visa administration, accommodation, social and events, plus general welfare advice and support: A review of Student Services was prompted by the resignations of two key staff members in this area, both of whom commented that their jobs were unmanageable. Matt Cartwright has been covering the role of Head of Student Services on a maternity cover basis but it was clear in discussions held with the substantive post holder, Maddy Parkinson, that she held the same view and has now returned to a new post. In practice the admissions element of the post combined with induction, registration activities and visa administration has dominated the role.

At the same time discussions were underway to establish a specialist UEA student services team on site for INTO-UEA and UEA students. Previously, specialist student services support was provided by City University Student Services and this arrangement had been approved by LTC as a temporary measure whilst UEA London became established. To date an appointment to the senior management post in the team has been made and Sharon Hocking has now taken up appointment and further part-time specialists will be recruited and relationships developed with other local providers to cover the whole spectrum.

Following discussions with all key players a staffing structure with the following features will be put in place:

- Head of Student Services – this role will be explicitly focussed on admissions, induction, registration, visa administration and accommodation. The leadership of other student services will be picked up by the new UEA specialist team. The staff management responsibilities of the post will remain unchanged: admissions and visa team, accommodation team, and welcome desk team.
- Student Services Adviser – a new part-time student support role with a particular focus on the support for Under 18s, missing students and the relationship with City University Student Services and providing triage for INTO-City students. The post holder, Maddy Parkinson, will be based alongside the UEA Student Advice and Guidance team. A seamless interface will be provided by the combination of UEA and JV staff working together as a team.

- UEA specialist Student Services team – covering academic learning skills, student finance, international student concerns, mental well-being, disability and specific learning difficulty for INTO UEA and UEA students. The team will formally be part of the Dean of Students Office at UEA.
- The provision of back room hot desks for the Student Services Team Leader to allow a rotation of support on the welcome desk. This will enable the administrative element of roles to be conducted more efficiently and effectively and so improve customer service by staff who are staffing the Welcome desk. Also staff training will be provided to enable the welcome desk team to address academic support questions in addition to all other no-academic queries.

Space management/infrastructure

Space remains an issue in the Centre with many competing needs and expectations requiring careful management. Over the summer St Georges moved out and IUP moved to Brighton so freeing up a number of rooms. IUP continue to occupy one shared office, a small meeting room and have priority booking of a large meeting/conference room. There was much confusion over the summer regarding the implementation of the recommendations made by the UEA London Space Planning Group. The proposals have yet to be agreed and therefore to address some of the immediate concerns a more modest set of minor works alterations has just been completed. These include:

- The sub-division of some larger rooms on Floor 5 to create smaller offices for NBS academic staff;
- The creation of 7 small student/staff counselling rooms in which staff can hold 1-2-1 meetings with students/colleagues;
- The relocation of the London Academy of Diplomacy (LAD) to Floor 4.

Space will remain a severe resource issue for the foreseeable future. Consequently all occupancy must be kept under review and a plan for 2013/14 and 2014/15 developed which meets the business needs of the two Joint Ventures. The potential re-location of the UEA London café could release useful space for conversion to teaching rooms.

Finances

The 2012/13 budget has yet to be agreed. Inevitably this uncertainty is creating some operational difficulty.

Planning for 2013/14 has commenced with consideration of student numbers.

Student Number Planning – January 2013

Some planning issues exist for both the City and UEA JVs for January 2013. Some careful modelling of the timetable and an examination of available teaching accommodation on planned student numbers sees the UEA London Study Centre being used at maximum capacity in the Spring semester with all classrooms being fully booked between 9:30 am and 6:30 pm and at risk of being above teaching capacity. This was working on a planning target of 125 new enrolments for each JV and would take the total student number studying in the Centre during the Spring to above 1,400.

My predecessor had negotiated the use of five classrooms at the Mile End Road Study Centre as a contingency and this will almost certainly be required. The situation is being closely monitored.

To avoid a repetition of this situation student number planning for 2013/14 will commence with a determination of City JV requirements and other student number plans will be worked around these. The current assumption is that City JV recruitment for 2013/14 will have a target of up to 600 enrolments.

As background the building has been given a maximum number for the purposes of fire risk assessment of 1,550 with no more than 310 people per floor. If all teaching rooms are used to maximum capacity then the building can simultaneously teach 980 students which allowing for students in social and study areas gives a student density figure of approximately 1,080. It is anticipated that enrolments will be approximately 1,400 during the Spring semester which would fill all classrooms during the working day. As LTC members may be aware there are some restrictions associated with Tier 4 visas which restrict some flexibility around lengthening the working day.

Governance

To improve the internal workings of the Centre a monthly resources orientated group has been established.

Membership:

Chair – Centre Director – currently Andrea Blanchflower

Space- Facilities Manager – currently Darren Lamb and Academic Support Manager – Kaitlin Waterson (timetabling)

Finance – Finance Manager – Simon Green

HR – HR Adviser – Geraldine Daly

Academic leads- pre-University courses (City & UEA) – Dr Sarah McKenzie, LAD – Professor Nabil Ayad, NBS – Dr Graham Spickett-Jones.

General feedback

The Learning and Teaching Committee may be interested in receiving the following observations.

- The working environment for the majority of administrative and pre-University academic staff is unsatisfactory. The open plan environment is overly cramped and noisy with insufficient storage space for personal belongings and papers generating a generally difficult and unsatisfactory working environment. Elizabeth Webb, the original interior design consultant, has re-visited the Centre and is advising on what can be done to re-establish the original vision. A further visit has been arranged for Elizabeth Webb to be joined on site by the UEA Space Manager, Josie Stevens, to specifically focus and make recommendations on how to improve the open plan office environments.
- The majority of administrative staff are working with quite primitive and rudimentary IT and finance systems which generate much duplication of work and a high risk of error.
- There are a number of management processes which require immediate attention as they are leading to poor morale:
 - the absence of an annual appraisal/performance review mechanism
 - pay rates
 - managing sickness absence
 - staff development
 - investment in academic development

It should be noted that IUP are investing in projects and work streams to address the above IT and HR issues but the situation is so acute that some work will be required locally before these corporate initiatives are rolled out.

Overall, though in spite of these difficulties the atmosphere is buoyant and friendly with a committed and enthusiastic staffing complement.