

‘Institutional Planning for Quality and Change’

See also ‘Notes on Planning by Institutions of Higher Education’

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Planning is about change:

- How the world in which the institution exists (including academic subjects) is changing
- How the university is to change in relation to the changing world

Without sound institutional planning the management of change can be no more than “crisis management”

It is also about maintaining,

and whenever possible,

enhancing quality

in a changing world

A university with a sound planning process

- has a point of reference for decisions on budgeting and the allocation of funds
- can use its resources to optimal effect
- provides consistency despite changes in leadership
- gives confidence to funding authorities and potential sponsors
- can demonstrate a sound basis for continued institutional accreditation

Moreover, an institutional plan which is known and accessible to all staff and students, and which has, through the process by which it was developed and is reviewed, secured the commitment of at least the great majority, is one important key to successful management.

The development of a satisfactory planning process (with a developed institutional plan) takes

- time
- effort
- commitment

It also itself needs to be planned

- A. An institutional self-evaluation
- B. What the institution aspires to be

*Institutional planning is
a coherent set of decisions on how
to get from A to B.*

It is analogous to planning a journey. It will never reach a final destination, but the working principle must be that it can.

Requirements for planning (1)

A shared vision of the future, at least in terms of the university's 'mission' – i.e the direction it is taking.

This may well require inspiring leadership, at least initially.

Requirements for planning (2)

Autonomy – the greater the freedom of action the more can be planned

- without any autonomy there can be no planning.

There will always be external constraints – but as far as possible these should be either predicted or negotiated.

Requirements for planning (3)

Accurate information on the *status quo*

– at every progressive stage not just at the start.

*This should be qualitative information (evaluative)
as well as quantitative (data)*

Requirements for planning (4)

An **analysis of the external needs** (on a long view)

which the University will be called upon to meet

- locally
- nationally
- internationally

Requirements for planning (5)

Effective decision making at every level, based upon

- utilizing all viewpoints within the institution
- an iterative process
- transparency and good communication
- building a consensus and a sense of corporate responsibility

With many conflicting interests:

*Sufficiently general agreement
to make a plan effective
entails
consensus.*

Consensus in that context will require compromise.

*Readiness to compromise will require a corporate
sense of shared responsibility.*

Requirements for planning (6)

Consultation with stakeholders

(including any national planning bodies; those who will fund the university in the future; those who will employ its graduates; professional bodies; both current students and the university's graduates; and other HEIs.)

Consultation does not necessarily imply acceptance of their point of view - but their views should be given proper consideration.

Requirements for planning (7)

A long view

(but with an acknowledgement of immediate need),

and an appreciation that most planning decisions will have long-term implications.

This implies longer term commitment than that of current post holders.

(E.g. there will probably be a minimum of five years from the initial decision to introduce a new First Cycle degree to the production of its first graduates.)

Requirements for planning (8)

- An **agreed planning year** (e.g. the academic year)

- An **agreed planning horizon** (e.g. five years) with targets for each year.

Requirements for planning (9)

A **rolling review** (probably an annual cycle) based upon

- an updating of both the quantitative and qualitative analysis,

(including monitoring the achievement of declared targets)

- a review of anticipated income

- more detailed planning decisions for the following year, including budget allocations (based on differential expenditure for subject needs)
- corrections to the plan for subsequent years
- identification for future capital investment needs (e.g. accommodation or major equipment)
- *an extension of the planning horizon by a further year*

Requirements for planning (10)

- **A planning body** (e.g. a Standing Committee of Senate, with a Secretary)
- **A full-time senior officer** of the University (e.g. a Vice-Rector)

and if possible

- **a “financial wizard”**

Quantitative Evaluation

Quantitative evaluation

Statistical data on people:

- Students of all kinds (including predictable future numbers)
- Student demand (the ratio of applicants to places by study programme)
- Staffing of all kinds (including age profiles)

Statistical data on previous income and expenditure

Where the data allows: statistical trends

Quantitative evaluation (continued)

Data on:

- Accommodation (including location)
- Learning resources (e.g. libraries)
- Information Technology
- Obsolescence

Qualitative Evaluation

Qualitative evaluation of strengths and weaknesses:

- Subject disciplines / inter-disciplinarity
- Location
- Relevance to external needs (including modes of study)
- Student employability in the long as well as short term

Qualitative evaluation of strengths and weaknesses (continued):

- Size and complexity
- Organisational aspects
- Adequacy of accommodation for its purpose, including physical relationships
- Policy

Qualitative evaluation of strengths and weaknesses (continued):

- Student concerns/welfare (e.g. careers guidance)
- Learning support
- *Quality*

Quality

Planning is about Quality as well as change:

- How the University can best fulfil a changing role in a changing world (including service to its community), while maintaining its academic values
- How the University can maintain and where possible enhance both the quality of the education offered to students and its contribution to the world of research

A University has a responsibility to ensure the quality of the provision made for its students,

(a) through ensuring an appropriate form of Quality Assurance at each level which, *inter alia*, will confirm any identified needs

and

(b) through the University responding to the confirmed needs through its planning and/or resource allocation

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