You requested feedback on the December 10 Student Services Review Group’s proposals, and so my comments on the process are below.

1. I am broadly supportive of the move to review the way student education is structured and managed across the University. I agree that the inconsistency of such varied roles and responsibilities amongst student support staff is confusing and unhelpful, and I totally agree with the notion that all students should be treated equitably and should expect a (minimum) quality of student experience throughout their student journey, regardless of which faculty or unit they are part of.

   Noted, thank you.

2. I agree that any move to reorganise has to be ‘top down’ in the sense that service provision requirements must be determined before individual roles can be mapped across. The process has to be service-led and not determined by staff availability.

   Agreed

3. That said, I am concerned about the effects of (2) for two reasons: firstly, that the reorganisation as suggested will enable better career progression. I fear that if jobs become too unitary and focussed over too narrow an area, this will damage staff’s job satisfaction and morale, and hinder career progression, other than via a narrow route in one area. I have seen this happen with student support staff in faculties where this model is already in operation.

   It is not the intention to force staff to focus on a narrow area. There will remain opportunities for staff to work across a number of student support areas as at present and therefore be members of more than one functional team. It is however proposed that the variability should come from within student education.

I share the concerns expressed at last week’s meeting about the threat the new SEM posts pose to existing grade 8 administrative and academic-related staff across Faculties. Those of us in this position are all making the same assumption – that functional lead roles are unlikely to be graded as highly as the SEM role, therefore if our assumption proves to be correct, downgrading/red circling is a probable outcome for many staff in this position. Clearly there is potential for a similar outcome at all levels, but grade 8 staff seem to be particularly ‘at risk’ in this regard.

The Review Group is considering carefully the impact that the Faculty Student Education Services Manager post may have on existing staff and will report further on this. The impact will vary between faculties, and the transition will be managed on an individual phased basis.
I share the view expressed at the meeting about staff being our most valuable resource. Whilst (2) seems to me to be the correct way round for this sort of reorganisation, I hope those charged with its implementation will try and find a way to ensure that the wealth of skills and experience around campus can be tapped, rather than lost. In some situations a good compromise might prove the best way forward in the sense of not sacrificing staff goodwill for the sake of a rigid structural model.

Agreed - we have a very experienced and dedicated group of staff and it is seen as essential to maintain and, if possible, tap more into this expertise - as has been achieved with the work of the Process Analysis Teams as part of the Student Processes Project.

Environment School 2

The following comments and concerns were raised at a School meeting of learning and teaching support staff held on 17th February. Those present included representatives from the undergraduate, taught postgraduate and research postgraduate areas.

The key principles, benefits and emerging themes outlined in the consultation meetings were welcomed, as is the review of internal business processes. It was strongly agreed that the University needs to adapt to the changing landscape of Higher Education.

A number of concerns were raised by staff:

• Whilst it was recognised that the model proposed was an early draft, more detail is needed. Colleagues found it challenging to comment on the structural diagrams when these have not yet been fleshed out. ‘The devil is in the detail’ was a phrase that was used repeatedly.

This is the first stage of a consultation process and we agree that more detail is needed and will be available shortly.

• Colleagues agreed that it was imperative that consultation and transparency is maintained as structures and models become more detailed. Colleagues felt that transparency it particular had been missing in part during the past months.

The Review Group is keen to provide transparency and has tried to do that. We will continue to do so.

• Colleagues are understandably concerned about the service they provide to students and academic colleagues. Of particular concern is how the proposals will affect a student’s sense of belonging to the

Will certainly not remove the concept of the student’s home being their school and there will need to be trained and appropriate staff to ensure this. The consistency will allow staff to dedicate their time to the areas
School and the level of personal service that is offered. Will the ‘human touch’ be removed in order to remove variability and inconsistencies?

- A key element of the student experience is the relationship between academics and support staff. This in turn ensures that staff are able to be responsive to students. If academics and support staff are located remotely across dispersed faculties these working relationships can become distant, fragmented and inefficient.

- The idea of the ‘functional areas’ received a mixed reaction. On one hand they could enable individuals to build up a specific knowledge base and focus and refine this knowledge. This could help facilitate mobility and career development. Conversely staff often thrive on variety and diversity in their roles. Balancing these will be a challenge.

A number of areas need clarification, at this stage:

- How would academic-lead staff, largely at school level, fit into the faculty structure? E.g. admissions tutors, DLT, examinations tutors etc (p.4 of the ESRG paper)? Would this disparity between support and academic structures lead to inconsistencies in decision-making? Linked to this is the need for further clarification of the job descriptions and responsibilities for these academic leads.

- Information systems are key to supporting these processes. How will these be developed and are there definite plans to develop a replacement for Banner which will effectively underpin revised processes?

- In the consultation meeting held on 10th February questions were asked about the “flexibility” of the proposed model. In particular it was reported that for

where the personal touch is needed.
No intention to remove staff to a central location unless that is a faculty decision.

It is vital that we maintain the personal contact by academic and support staff; they are expected to continue to work in partnership together.

Agreed and it is intended that career development is enhanced and variety is not significantly diminished. There will be remain opportunities for staff to work across a number of support areas as at present and therefore be members of more than one functional team.

Effective partnerships between academic leads and support staff are crucial and further thought is being given to this.

Systems development will focus on admissions initially, but a key aim of the ongoing process analysis is a comprehensive strategy for systems development. There is a firm commitment to investment in appropriate IT systems, but it is intended that Banner will provide the core database.

The Review Group is developing a range of models with agreed parameters which all allow local faculty requirements to be met,
different schools that have different requirements there may be flexibility in the structures adopted, whilst also adhering to the principles of the new model. It was also said that the decision about how functional teams are located will be made locally, presumably by heads of school? Further detail about such flexibility and decision making is needed.

- Academic-related staff are concerned particularly about how current roles, responsibilities and activities relate to the proposed Faculty Student Education Manager (SEM) positions. How will academic-related staff fit into the proposed structure and best utilise their knowledge and experience if they are not a Faculty Student Education Manager. Will red-circling take place?

Finally colleagues are understandably concerned about the service they provide to students and academic colleagues. More fundamental concerns for staff involved in student support relate to job security and job satisfaction.

while maintaining consistency.

We will be working with each faculty to consider the impact on all staff, but do recognise the experience and skills of all support staff. We also recognise that faculties currently have very different structures in terms of size and grade spread.

Noted and point taken.