

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Corporate Planning Statement submitted to the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) in December 2007, refers to the University's Strategic Plan 2007-2020, the "2020 Vision" and the supporting three year operational plan which will be revised annually.
- 1.2 The operational plan identifies 29 performance indicators which will be used to monitor progress against plan. The current three year operational plan, covering 2007/8 – 2009/10, has aggregated the 29 performance indicators under five "critical success factors" which will be used to report progress to the Board of Governors.
- 1.3 These factors comprise:
- The student experience
 - Securing and diversifying income
 - **Employee engagement**
 - Capital programmes
 - Brand image and reputation
- 1.4 The critical success factor for employee engagement is as follows:
- "To ensure that the staff of the University are fully engaged in both its development and its success and are enabled to enhance their individual and collective capability in pursuit of the Institution's goals."*
- 1.5 Staff understanding and ownership of the University's strategic direction and operational plans is critical to its success. It is clear that staff develop ownership of strategy and operational plans best when they have had some input to its formulation. Additionally staff engaged in planning of resource allocation and decision making have increased levels of motivation and this in turn improves organisational success. This input can take a variety of forms and

will vary depending on factors relating to an organisation's developmental stage. Additionally input will vary depending on the level of the employee within the organisation.

- 1.6 There is, of course, a plethora of routine communications within departments/faculties and teams across the University. There is additionally an expectation that these will be used to engage with staff in relation to the management task, e.g. setting objectives, planning, monitoring and review of actions and undertaking risk management processes.
- 1.7 This strategy is designed to underpin the critical success factors as in paragraph 1.5 above and will lead to continuous improvement over time in the University's engagement with its workforce.

2. MMU Staff Engagement Factors

- 2.1 The MMU Change Agenda was introduced nearly three years ago and in its early stages the focus was on providing information to employees and creating awareness about the proposed changes. MMU is now at the stage where the need is to both *engage and inform* employees and thus better align their performance with the organisation's vision and goals. It is critical that such dialogue is two-way.
- 2.2 The Investors in People (IiP) diagnostic assessment, carried out in February 2008, identified that more work was required to disseminate the vision for the organisation and to involve employees in decision making that affected them, especially around strategic planning. The diagnostic also identified the need to increase opportunities for two-way communication and feedback to senior management.
- 2.3 Some employees, particularly academic staff, cite a lack of opportunity to be involved in decision making and comment on proposed policy changes.
- 2.4 At present, mechanisms for gaining staff feedback and ideas are not embedded. There is an extensive committee structure but this necessarily operates through a 'top-down' communication approach.
- 2.5 Consultation with staff on planned changes is through formal consultation with the recognised trade unions and directly with our

workforce using a variety of mechanisms such as open meetings, presentations and development days.

3. Objectives

Objectives of this strategy are:

- To ensure that there are Executive Champions for the employee engagement agenda.
- To further improve consultation with the workforce over the University's strategic direction and to support two way communication ensuring that **all** our staff, including 'hard to reach groups' are encompassed.
- To enable and encourage meaningful and timely consultation with the workforce over major policy initiatives to inform the success of their development and implementation.
- To develop a culture of continuous improvement by providing training and development opportunities which encourage the involvement of staff in decision making at all levels.
- To ensure goal alignment throughout the organisation by means of structured performance review mechanisms.
- To broaden and improve the general level of organisational awareness and communication.

4. Staff Engagement Strategy

4.1 Executive/ Directorate Champions

Our strategy is to engage in a number of activities that demonstrate support for and leadership of employee engagement.

Our tactics include:

- **Surgeries** – Members of the Executive/Directorate will provide two hour slots in which any member of staff may meet with them, or phone, to discuss any question of importance to the individual.
- **Executive walkabouts** – A schedule of visits to operational departments will be arranged to enable senior staff to discuss

day to day operations, find out about the work of MMU staff and gain views on proposals and plans.

- **Back to the shop-floor sessions** - Members of senior staff will undertake junior staff roles to increase their understanding of the issues faced by this group of staff and the impact of institutional decisions and processes on their jobs.
- **Senior management speed question session** – During Mind, Spirit and Body Week, each member of the Executive will host a table where members of staff are able to have ten minutes maximum conversation on any topic.

4.2 Senior Staff events

Our strategy is to engage regularly with senior managers in relation to strategic direction.

Our tactics include:

- Ensuring there is a shared understanding of the University's direction of travel and of key priorities for each academic year, as stipulated in the University's Corporate Plan.
- Ensuring that senior managers are clear about their role in disseminating information in respect of strategic direction and key priorities throughout their Faculty/Department.
- Supporting senior managers to develop further as advocates for the Change Agenda and actively cascade this role to all levels of management.

4.3 Development of two-way communication throughout the organisation

Our strategy is to develop varied means to ensure that staff are informed about, consulted upon, and have an input to new policy initiatives. Staff will be given feedback on their ideas and suggestions as appropriate.

Our tactics include:

- The Vice-Chancellor and other members of the Executive producing "all staff letters" to inform staff about issues of major importance to the University.

- The Vice-Chancellor and other members of the Executive undertaking “open staff meetings” to provide staff with a detailed explanation and opportunity to discuss issues critical to the University.
- Focus groups to provide an informal opportunity for staff to discuss hot topics with senior managers and share ideas.
- Review of consultation strategies to enable academic and support staff to input to proposed changes and policies which affect them.
- Incorporation of employee engagement into all appropriate staff development provision
- Development of creative approaches to communication and decision making structures

4.4 Staff Training and Development

Our strategy is to ensure that all management and leadership development programmes reflect the importance of the engagement agenda.

Our tactics include ensuring that:

- Managers are aware of the University’s strategy and the importance attached to staff engagement.
- Managers are equipped and supported to deliver the employee engagement agenda
- There is adequate coverage of staff engagement techniques and methodologies within all programmes.
- That managers are encouraged to take individual responsibility for appropriate staff engagement within their sphere of responsibility.
- Supportive tools for effective communication and engagement with staff are made available to all managers by Organisation Development and Training (ODT).

4.5 Professional Development Reviews

Our strategy is to continue to put emphasis on the importance of delivering effective professional development reviews to all our staff to ensure effective goal alignment.

Our tactics include ensuring that:

- Effective mechanisms are in place to underpin professional development review.
- That staff have a positive review experience when discussing their performance, development needs and career aspirations.
- That professional development review is embedded in the culture of the University.
- That managers ensure that strategic and operational plans are communicated effectively and appropriately

5. Conclusion

5.1 This strategy has been subject to initial approval by the Executive, Directorate and Board of Governors and staff consultation within the University.

5.2 The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the Equality Act 2006 include a requirement for all Higher Education Institutions to carry out Equalities Impact Assessment on all policies and procedures, both formal and informal and written and unwritten. This strategy is currently undergoing an Equality Impact Assessment to determine equality relevance for the following equality groups: Race, Disability, Gender and Age. Initial screening commenced in May 2009

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