Measuring the Value of Knowledge Management

The Knowledge Management Strategic Plan has entered into its second edition. It is timely to measure what has succeeded and establish what is needed to improve the plan against the original stated aims of the plan. While it is very important to review our position we do not want to involve Knowledge Management Strategy Advisory Committee or others in a time consuming management exercise so it is important to consider how much as well as what we should aim to measure.

Aims of the Plan (Benefits)

1. **The achievement of milestones**

Knowledge Management is integral to what people do in their organisational plans so it is difficult to separate out the elements that would have been done anyway. Nevertheless highlighting certain activities will focus greater attention on these outcomes in comparison to plans that remain largely internal to an interest group.

Progress on achievement of milestones has been published on the Knowledge Management Website and a brief report has been made in the Knowledge Management Annual Report.

2. **Opportunity to agree priorities on a University-wide basis**

The outcomes of consultation held with Colleges, some Schools, EUSA and individual staff members provided a guide to those activities that most members of the University felt were important. The subsequent ranking of the milestones that was undertaken by Colleges affirmed what we had already learned through the consultation period. Further work is needed on the process that Colleges (and possibly Schools) used to rank the highest priorities if it is to be effective and engage members of the University. It is important that these rankings are considered seriously in the planning process, therefore the timing and input from Colleges and Schools is critical. Some of the key milestones cannot be achieved without achieving additional funding through the planning process. Therefore the relationship between Knowledge Management planning and University-wide planning needs to be more clearly articulated.

3. **Financial – Return on Investment (Efficiency)**

What are the costs and benefits of a Knowledge Management Strategy?
One of the benefits of the Knowledge Management Strategic Plan is that scarce resources can be targeted to highest priority "must do" milestones. In 2004/5 these priority milestones included teaching space infrastructure, learning and study spaces and library materials and a student management system. Work has been carried out in all these areas including the student system which is a longer term project. One of the other priorities that may result in reduced cost to the University is to address centralisation and decentralisation where this results in high cost duplication or business inefficiency. In the 2005/6 plan the cost of such duplication will be estimated to inform future planning priorities. Concerted effort will be needed to achieve an agreed University-wide approach to this issue involving Colleges and support groups.

4. **Greater joining up across like functions/greater collaboration in support of corporate goals**

The functional approach taken in the Knowledge Management Strategic Plan crosses institutional silos and is now reflected in the University's draft plan 2005/8. This approach has helped to identify where joining up exists, as well as where greater recognition of interdependencies is still required. As a result MIS and EUCS are working more closely and jointly planning activities. MIC and C&IT combined to create a single committee of advice (ICT) on all IT issues as has MALTC and the E-learning Strategy Group that have combined to create a single source of advice on enhancing learning through ICT. Where conflicting goals and activities have been identified these have been addressed and activities that did not fall within a single line of responsibility have been identified for joint action e.g. learning and study spaces for students and ICT infrastructure in common teaching spaces through TRIAG (Teaching Room Infrastructure Advisory Group).

5. **Greater reuse of information and knowledge**

To date this area has not been as successful as it might be in stage one. Progress has been made through the allocation of E-learning strategic funds to identify common projects and to bring project staff together to identify common ground.

The principle of "golden copy" has been agreed but needs to be achieved in practice. Common issues e.g. E-learning strategy and support have been workshopped by stakeholders to share information and knowledge and the Website Advisory Group aims to redevelop the website to lead users to authorised accurate information. Joint working groups are addressing common issues including the working group on Intellectual Property Advice for E-learning that will provide advice to practitioners.

6. **Easier access to knowledge and information when and where it is needed**

Members of the University require information that is consistent and responsive, and can be accessed easily, and while many areas have been improved e.g. federated searching, University portal etc, we have identified some barriers to the achievement of this aim and work has commenced to overcome some of these barriers e.g. a combined helpdesk for EUCS and library. Nevertheless more work is needed to identify further barriers to information access including what is required on a 24x7 or
similar basis, navigation of the University's websites, issues around interoperability and lack of integration where this contributes to difficulty of access.
7. **Responsibilities are being more clearly defined**

Sources of advice (Committees) and decision-making for policy and planning (KMSAC and CMG) have been more clearly defined. While authors of plans have responsibility for their part of the plan this needs to be extended to identify responsibility for each of the milestones. A set of principles relating to agreed responsibilities for Colleges and support groups have been agreed and these principles now need to be applied to individual services. Responsibility and authorisation needs to be agreed for each of these service areas including variation to accepted policy or practice. For example who authorises any changes to network services, etc. Where issues need to be addressed beyond existing lines of responsibility working groups were established. For example the Website Advisory Group, and the Learning Spaces Working Group.

8. **Communication is improved**

An extensive consultation process that preceded and continued throughout the development of the first edition of the Knowledge Strategic Plan. Focus groups considered particular issues and milestones were discussed. Nevertheless communication was necessarily ad hoc and a communication plan is needed to accompany the Knowledge Strategy to provide opportunities for those members of the University to engage with and contribute to the plan. One of the outcomes of the communication process was the opportunity to identify activities that were not getting attention and this was particularly so where responsibility is unclear or requires a joint approach to address issues.

Consultation on IT and e-learning issues with key College staff will continue alongside other operational lines of communication. Information sharing improved on a number of levels both between support groups e.g. MIS and EUCS, and Colleges and information support groups. Infrastructure planning is taking into consideration the need for greater functional alignment and opportunities for members of the University to meet informally e.g. library redevelopment plans.

9. **Impact of the Knowledge Management Strategic Plan**

The Knowledge Management Strategic Plan achieved an overall impact beyond its original aim. In addition to the aims as originally stated the overall impact of the plan needs to be considered. The University's Near Final Strategic Plan for 2004/8 has embedded Knowledge Management as one of the three cross-cutting programmes in support of research, learning and knowledge transfer. The University sees knowledge management as one of the ways of empowering the University's business. Two further sections have been provided for the second edition of the plan. These are: support for research and support for knowledge transfer. There is a particular need to take a more strategic approach to research support recognising the various needs of the Colleges and aligning the plan to more closely identify future requirements.
The University has established objectives for the achievement of quality Knowledge Management and these objectives will form the basis for measuring the value of the plan when reporting for 2005/6.

These objectives are:

- acquire, create, preserve and curate high quality, shareable, and relevant information to support teaching, learning, research and management
- ensure that our information support infrastructures and services facilitate and enhance the work of all our users
- develop e-learning provision and infrastructure which encourage and enable curriculum innovation and diverse modes of learning.

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