Council Oversight Group: Student Lifecycle Project (Meeting held on 2 October 2017)

Chair: Mr Adrian Belton

Secretary: Mrs Rebecca Barker

1. Background

In 2015/16, the University has embarked on a major project to replace the IT systems which support the student experience.

The student lifecycle project (originally student systems project) in its entirety will constitute a major capital investment (c£25M) with the potential for substantial organisational change arising from the implementation of new systems and associated business process improvement.

This is a major change project which aims to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our services for students across the student lifecycle from recruitment to alumni. The project will deliver its objectives through the review existing services, redesigning services where required, improving and streamlining processes and implementing a new student system. The project will also help manage the delivery of the resultant changes.

There will be many benefits resulting from the project which will, ultimately, provide the University with enhanced student services and a modern student system in a rapidly changing and competitive environment.

In February 2016, Council received and approved a proposal to establish a Group to oversee the project, together with its terms of reference and membership. The project was subsequently been renamed Student Lifecycle Project to better reflect the scope of the project and recognise that it is IT-enabled rather than IT-led.

The Group, chaired by Mr Adrian Belton, focuses on governance oversight matters, while the more detailed work associated with the programme is the domain of a Programme Board (chaired by the Director of Academic Services) and an Executive Sponsorship Group (chaired by the Provost & Deputy Vice-Chancellor).

This project represents a significant opportunity for the University but its large scale and complexity necessitated the engagement and support of a wide-range of colleagues across the organisation.

2. Progress to date

The Group has met on the following two occasions:

<u>15 May 2017</u>

At this meeting, the Group received an update from the Programme Director covering progress to date, a summary of the agreement for PwC to undertake project assurance and PwC's first Programme Assurance Report.

This review was undertaken at the request of the University and primarily focused on the project build. The Group noted that plans and structures had been tested in advance of the discovery phase so that any significant risks could be identified and mitigation processes put in place.

<u>2 October 2017</u>

At this meeting, the Group received an overview from the Programme Director on the governance arrangements that had been established to oversee the project, together with a delegation of authority for decision making to support the project with delivering its objectives in an effective manner. The Group also received PwC's second Programme Assurance Report which was presented by a representative from PwC)(Mr Stewart Light).

The Group noted that the report covered three main objectives:

(1)   to provide an up to date assessment of the project in relation to governance structures, controls and mechanisms in place;

(2)   to review the workstream at blueprint stage. The purpose of the blueprint phase is to provide a plan for implementation, covering project definition, scope and approach, risk assessment and deliverables. It provides key stakeholders with the information necessary to authorise the start of the project.

(3)   to consider the remaining two workstreams in discovery stage. The purpose of the discovery phase is to assess and refine the scope of the overall project and further develop the implementation plan, identifying the required projects, priorities and dependencies.

Mr Light then provided the Group with an update on the relationship with Tribal, programme methodology and enterprise change.

Management responses to each of the reports were considered and the Group noted that the recommendations were being progressed by the Sponsoring Group accordingly.

The Group noted that the Programme Assurance Reports had been undertaken by PwC outside of the routine Internal Audit process in order to provide external scrutiny on the project. The selection of PwC was unrelated to its role as the University's Internal Auditors:

The Programme Director provided clarification that the estimated completion date for the project is on track for 2020.

3.   **Risks and issues**

Major risks for the project include:

Risk
Failure to articulate/ promote vision and benefits
Unclear ownership and accountability in decision making
Lack of skills to successfully deliver implementation
Difficulties in relationship with systems supplier
Change/Project blight
Unable to effectively manage (the scale of) business process re-engineering
Failure to involve and engage key people across the University community

Funding availability/ commitment changes
Speed of external change outpaces development
Exceeding project budget

The risks highlighted in bold resulted in related issues which the project needed to address since approval in November 2016. These issues have all been resolved to the satisfaction of the project's Executive Sponsoring Group and Programme Board.

4. Next steps

It was agreed that Council should receive:

- a brief summary of the project and progress to date from the Programme Director (Appendix 1);

- an update on the financial aspect of this project in April 2018.

It was also agreed that the next meeting of the Group would take place in March 2018 (date to be confirmed).

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Student Lifecycle Project - Summary

The Student Lifecycle Project is an ambitious programme of change that will make our services for students more efficient and effective by improving processes and systems. The programme is delivering a number of interdependent projects over the next three years to review and enhance different areas of the student lifecycle, from recruitment to graduation.

Our Aim
To provide efficient, sustainable, sector-leading services to students by improving our processes and systems.

Our Objectives
- **Improved efficiency** through process redesign to simplify, streamline and remove workarounds;
- **Enhanced student experience** through consistent delivery of fit for purpose services and processes;
- **Improved ability to support new and non-standard academic delivery and services** through increased flexibility;
- **Enhanced user experience** through use of more intuitive systems;
- **Improved technical resilience and sustainability** through the effective outsourcing of system hosting and management;
- **Better decision making** through the improved provision of timely, relevant and accurate information.

Our Approach
The project is:
- reviewing the way we deliver services to students;
- redesigning services where required;
- developing streamlined processes to support services;
- implementing a new student system;
- managing the delivery of the changes.

This work is being delivered as a programme – a group of interdependent projects looking at different areas of the student lifecycle. Each project involves experts from the University working with experts in systems development, change management, business analysis and project management.

Our Scope
The programme has a comprehensive scope which covers the student lifecycle from recruitment to graduation. The lifecycle has been split into five workstreams:

Admissions – student recruitment, admissions
**Assessment** – assessment, examination, progression, award and graduation
Curriculum – academic model/curricular structures, curriculum design and management
CRM (Customer Relationship Management) – student enquiry and referral management, campaigns/events, student communications

Student – registration, records, student finance, support and progress, development

Timeline

The Student Lifecycle Project will span the next three years with a phased development and launch of new services, processes and systems for different areas:
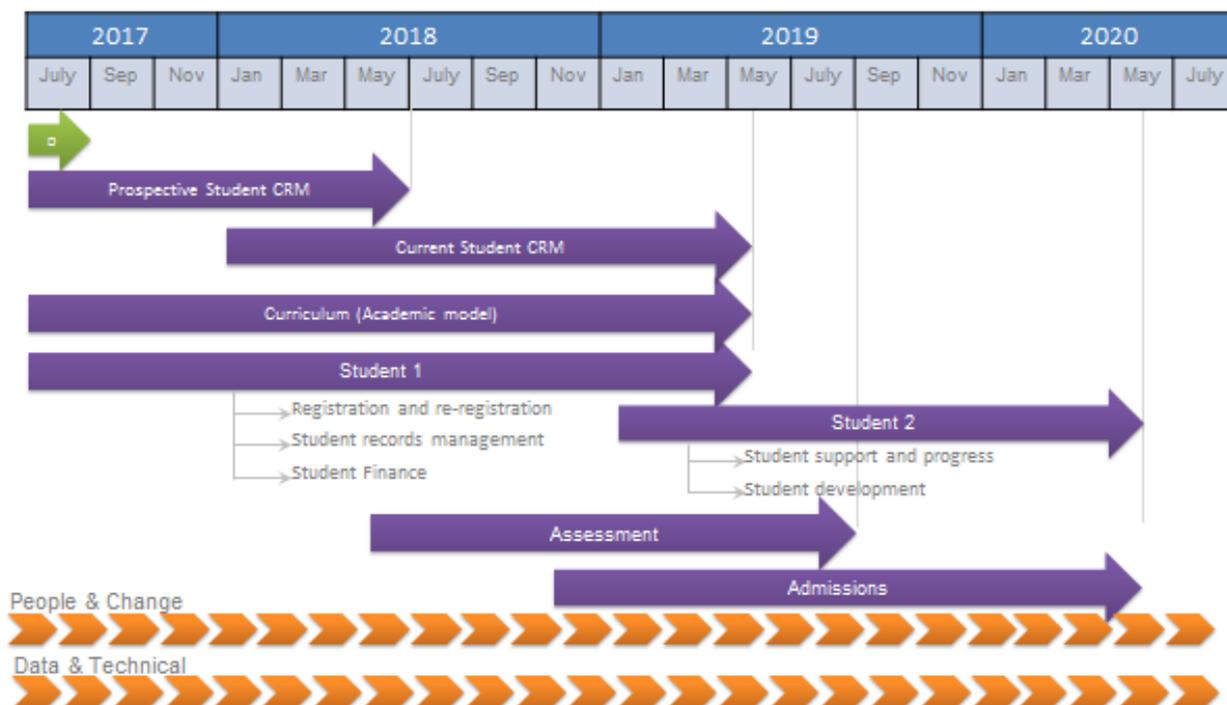
Key achievements in the last six months
- Completion of the planning period (Discovery), which has developed the foundations for the programme including a detailed implementation plan and technical strategies;
- Three projects are approved and in development;
- Recruitment and development of new capabilities in project management, change management, Agile and systems development;
- Creation of the new system environments.

Key themes for the next six months
- Managing the changes being delivered by the initial projects and the impact on people in the related areas of the University;
- Alignment with other developments and change within the University;
- Making the final decision of when to move all student records into the new system;
- Considering some of the 'big questions' uncovered up by work so far.

Governance and oversight

Governance for the programme is provided by several groups, including an Executive Sponsoring Group chaired by the Provost & Deputy Vice-Chancellor and a Programme Board chaired by the Director of Academic Services. A Council Oversight Group meets periodically to consider stage gate (assurance) reviews completed by PwC.

Further Information

More information about the programme can be found at: www.sheffield.ac.uk/slp