COLLEGE OF SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING
NOTED FOR CL&TC PLANNING MEETING
17TH JANUARY 2017

ISSUES ON ORDER OF PRIORITY
(collated from CL&TC and CQA meetings)

- Impact of ‘uncontrolled’ increase of PGT numbers
  Fluctuations in numbers of UG intakes can cause problems with planning and this makes timetabling and staff allocation difficult. However one of the main problems in planning is the largely uncontrolled levels of increase in PGT numbers. This is impacting significantly on honours and PGT courses taken by both sets of students (this is common in Schools with a ‘portfolio’ approach to DPT) and on the quality of teaching and the learning environment. This was raised by several Schools in the QA reports with Informatics indicting that they are concerned that the drop in NSS scores could be connected with the larger sizes of joint honours UGT and PGT courses which has led to a ‘…. dilution of the attention given to our UG students (whose needs are different as most are working towards a university degree for the first time’.
  Schools also reported that they were struggling to be able to support the large increase of PGT dissertations (this is in terms of project material and resources as well as with supervisors/tutors).

- Schools indicated that they have now reached full capacity in terms of laboratory space either in “science” labs and for computer laboratories. The real concern is that the number of places in labs is ‘static’ i.e. you cannot just squeeze in another person and in many cases laboratory attendance is compulsory. As laboratory and practical skills are an integral part of CSE degrees and are required by accreditation bodies this is a high risk for the Schools. Many Schools are already running multiple repeats of lab sessions but even this ‘remedy’ is at capacity now due to space and tutor availability constraints. (overall message: the College is at the tipping point now)

- In addition GeoSciences have indicated that they are at their capacity to resource ‘field trips’ as these are staff intensive and with increasing student numbers, more and more staff numbers are required to ensure the appropriate student: staff ratio.
  Again field trips are a major component and an attractive incentive for applicants and students. Any dilution in provision would be a high risk for the College. They also highlighted the loss of greenhouse and laboratory space as a limiting factor on dissertations and projects.

- GeoSciences also raised the fact that the increase in PGR numbers has also impacted on the provision for PGT group based learning as tutorial space has had to be converted to accommodate PhD students.

- Planning staffing levels for future: balance between academic staff and administration.
  While Schools and College have been able to make some additional academic appointments there is a now an urgent need for an increase in administration staff.
School TOs are under much greater pressure due to sheer volume e.g., increase of student with complex requirements and SC plus additional pressures such as tighter deadlines for BoE operation and decision making, external Tier 4 monitoring requirements etc.

- Timetabling work: this has become much more complex and time-consuming actively for Teaching Organisations over the last few years. It has changed from a “room booking” process to an allocation of students to individual classes/tutorials etc. When problems arise with timetabling and the late notification of required adjustments for students this adds considerable workload to TO staff and routine work has to be prioritised and delayed as there is no ‘slack’ in the system. Getting temporary cover for priority times is extremely difficult.

- There has been a shift of exam responsibility from University Student Administration to teaching organisations over the last few years. This includes recording of all marks and progression. While it is accepted that this will bring efficiencies into the operation of examination administration in the long term, this is having an immediate impact on staff working environment. Where teaching office staff used to be able to take holidays immediately after June exam boards (mid-June), work on exams and progression now goes on until into the first week of July. Similarly, the progression work after resits clashes with the intensely busy time getting ready for the new academic year and induction activities. The ability of teaching organisation staff to take holidays in late August/early September has also been affected. This impacts on staffs’ work/life balance and ability to continually work at the high level of efficiency and pace required.

- Effective working relationships between academic and support staff positively impacts on operational efficiency, however, the University has no clear mechanism to support and maintain this essential relationship.

- Current University practice of prioritising academic staff recruitment has led to an imbalance of staffing ratios and this, coupled with no reciprocal reallocation of work from Teaching Organisation, is making the absorption of the work with new projects very difficult.

- Administrative staff are under such pressure that it can feel like a ‘treadmill’ of work, work, work for very little praise and with no time for training and development of staff skills or time to consider improvement in processes.

- Some Schools have experienced high turnover in administrative staff – the School of Informatics reported that they had lost the equivalent of 40 person-years of experience through departures, secondments and maternity leave. Such levels of staff movement can no longer be accommodated swiftly and this can impact significantly on remaining members of staff workloads and on the quality of the service provided to the academic staff and students.

- The lack of recognition and opportunities for career progression in Schools for administrative staff is also having a significant impact on staff morale. The recent moratorium on staff recruitment has meant that few new jobs have been created so there is little movement- good staff are moving out of the College and sometimes the University to gain advancement.

- **CSE Teaching and Study Estate and University systems**

  - Timetabling: information in the TT system has not always been updated after refurbishing leading to allocation of rooms that are not appropriate for the teaching/study activity.

  - Many buildings at KB are closed at 5pm which effectively prevents the use of the 5 – 6 pm lecture slot. The use of the 5-6 pm slot would help to create capacity in the TT system and has been successfully adopted in the School of Physics and Astronomy.
• LEARN; this system is consider to be ‘clunky’ and slow. It is not flexible/intuitive and is not popular with students. The user facing screens are unattractive and outdated.
• The lack of teaching space leads to ‘doubling up ‘of lectures using live streaming to an additional room. The technology for this in some teaching spaces can be inadequate meaning that in some instances the School could only provide PowerPoint (no audio or video or virtual stream) to the second room. In these cases, the structure and delivery of the lectures had to be altered to match the delivery method. This had a negative impact on the student experience (and on the academic staff delivering the courses).
• The need to double up on provision due to large class/year sizes has the ironic knock on effect on the requirements for Timetabling which is leading to ‘grid lock’ in the TT system.

• Additional factors that will have an impact on resources:

• Timetabling development: integration of staff diaries into the timetabling system.
• College Internationalisation strategy to increase student numbers and collaborations arrangements and degrees; Possible increase in Visiting students particularly targeting USA market
• Future developments that will need to be planned for in terms of resources for setting up/pilot schemes etc.:  
  o Online assessment and marking  
  o Online BoE operation  
  o Assessment/examination rebalancing ⇔ innovation in assessment methods/teaching