Performance Enabling Programme

University of Swansea
Swansea’s award-winning Performance Enabling Programme (PEP) was established to drive cultural change over a five-year period to deliver the university’s strategic aims of an outstanding student experience, excellence in research and innovative engagement with the national knowledge economy.

It is a holistic and long-term approach to raising institutional and individual performance and contributes to the achievement of these key objectives through a unique set of individual staff key performance indicators (KPIs) and an exemplary process of staff engagement that has built a commitment to the programme throughout the academic community.

Now in its third year, the programme has been pivotal in supporting the increasing success of the university in a turbulent environment.

PEP provides an environment for all staff to perform at their best, offers clarity for every employee’s role and benchmarks the standard of performance required. It ensures that all members of staff are clear on the university’s objectives and their part in contributing to their delivery.

It describes how support, training, feedback and a positive working environment are available to all employees to enable them to perform to their maximum potential level.

As a result of PEP, a high performing culture is becoming the norm in the university. 99% of professional development reviews were completed in 2013 against around 20% in 2010 and, according to the post-professional development review online surveys, 80% of staff “understand clearly now what is expected of them in their role” against 40% in 2012. University-wide positive indicators - a result, at least in part, of the programme - relate to the key areas of student experience and research.

PEP will help deliver the university’s aims in the future through robust processes and leadership development. The programme ensures that staff are recognised, rewarded and appropriately challenged on the basis of evidence, and are supported and developed in ways which will enhance institutional performance in an increasingly competitive and changing higher education environment.
What we did and why

The approach is highly innovative in the UK higher education sector as the starting point was to drive cultural change initially through the performance of academic staff as they are at the heart of the delivery of the university’s strategic aims. Through a continuous improvement approach it has now been implemented throughout the organisation.

Sustaining such radical change depended on a proactive HR partnership, driving continuous and intense engagement with key stakeholders.

The focus of the programme has been to recognise, incentivise and challenge performance through a range of inter-related and mutually supporting initiatives. There are four key strands to the approach:

- Online professional development review.
- Development of academic staff KPIs embedded into professional development reviews.
- Head of college KPIs embedded into professional development reviews.
- Academic career pathways.

Improved professional development reviews

The programme has an online professional review capability that allows academic staff and their reviewers to access and structure discussion around a suite of individual KPIs that link personal performance directly to corporate objectives.

The commitment of the HR team to proactively engage with managers and staff has resulted in much greater participation (99%) in the professional development reviews process and the quality of the review has also improved significantly.

Development of academic staff KPIs

The areas of focus for the suite of academic staff KPIs are publications, grant applications, PhD students, student satisfaction, student outcomes and student retention. These link directly with the university key objectives. The KPIs identify individuals with excellent performance and those needing further support, enabling leaders to recognise or challenge staff performance.

An online student feedback system which measures individual staff performance is linked to the individual’s professional development review. The outcome of Research Excellence Framework (REF) preparation exercises are also linked to measure, recognise and challenge individual research performance.

To be effective it was critical that line managers were equipped to handle difficult conversations in a constructive way. 98% of senior line managers were trained on leadership coaching skills and 70% of reviewers trained in a coaching approach.

Head of college KPIs

The programme now has an online professional review scheme for heads of college based on a suite of business-centred KPIs, aligned with strategic objectives. These enable every head of college to be recognised for their achievement and challenged where areas have not been delivered. As a result of this development heads of college are enthusiastic about implementing this approach for the next level of managers in 2014 – a further step in the journey.

Academic career pathway

The new academic career pathway scheme was implemented to align with the university’s strategic aims. It provides meaningful career opportunities that are aligned to individual strengths, enabling academics to progress to professorial level through research, student experience, leadership and innovation and engagement. Distinctive features of the scheme include a single career pathway, with one set of roles, with contributions of excellence equally recognised and rewarded so all staff feel valued. To ensure national standards were incorporated within teaching, collaboration with the Higher Education Academy ensured new profiles were aligned with its Professional Standards Framework.

The engagement process

The acceptance and continuous development of this radical approach by all staff has only been possible through an exemplary, intense and continuing process of staff engagement that has succeeded in building a commitment to the programme across the university. This involved all stakeholders, including managers, staff and trade unions. The HR team initiated a proactive partnership with the academic community that included 180 engagement sessions with management, staff, trade unions and input from best practice elsewhere to inform the PEP and implementation plan. 860 cultural change sessions were held with 940 staff in colleges/departments as part of the early implementation process.

This approach to engagement has continued and 3031 cultural change sessions have now been held as part of the early implementation process.

Initially trade unions and staff were suspicious of the programme, particularly the use of individual KPIs. Internal engagement radically changed this, resulting in cross-institutional ownership of an HR process by leaders across the university.
What impact did it have?

The scope and impact of the programme extended to the whole university and is now becoming the accepted way of doing things – a high performing culture is becoming the norm.

- 99% of professional development reviews were completed in 2013 against around 20% in 2010.
- There is systematic evaluation of perceived impact: of the 36% of staff who completed the survey, 80% of staff stated in the post-professional development review online survey that they "understand clearly now what is expected of them in their role" against 40% in 2012.
- A robust and inclusive programme of engagement: 1500 cultural change sessions in 2013 involving members of staff (3031 since 2011).
- Number of staff not engaged in professional development review completion – reduced from 222 in 2011 to 5 in 2013.
- Management development alignment – 734 leaders receiving coaching skills training since 2011.
- Development of HR professionals – 38 sessions since 2011.
- Greatly improved management information through the introduction of business planning institutional KPIs directly into heads of college professional development reviews.
- Improved techniques applied to maximising the REF submission – 400 staff submitted to REF, all aligned to the new academic career pathways research strand.
- Maximising staff potential - 60 members of staff changing to alternative career pathways.
- Every individual member of staff’s impact on the student experience measured through the online student feedback system and directly linked to their professional development review.
- Every individual member of staff’s contribution to the REF preparation exercises were measured and directly linked to their professional development review.

In addition there are a number of university-wide positive indicators that are, at least in part, a result of the performance enabling programme.

### Student experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targets for 2017</th>
<th>2010/11</th>
<th>2011/12</th>
<th>2012/13</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>93% of our students will successfully complete their course</td>
<td>92% 52nd in the UK</td>
<td>94% 31st in the UK</td>
<td>96% 15th in the UK</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Student Survey outcomes: 90% of our students satisfied with the overall experience</td>
<td></td>
<td>87% (2012) 33rd in the UK</td>
<td>86% (2013) 54th in the UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 70% of students getting a first or upper second class degree</td>
<td>61.4% 63rd in the UK</td>
<td>63.8% 59th in the UK</td>
<td>70.8% 45th in the UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 students taking up a work or study opportunity overseas</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75% of our graduates, six months after leaving university, will be in a professional job or graduate level study</td>
<td>72.4% 66th in the UK</td>
<td>77.4% 17th in the UK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate taught students 17% of all students, over 1,570 fee paying postgraduate taught students</td>
<td>12.5% 71st in the UK</td>
<td>12.4% 63rd in the UK</td>
<td>13.5% (1,099 FTE students) 51st in the UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas students 17% of all students, over 2,580 full time equivalent students</td>
<td>11.6% (1,566 FTE students) 64th in the UK</td>
<td>12.3% (1,658 FTE students) 58th in the UK</td>
<td>12.9% (1,900 FTE students) 56th in the UK</td>
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### Research

#### Targets for 2017

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Target Description</th>
<th>2010/11</th>
<th>2011/12</th>
<th>2012/13</th>
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<tr>
<td>Annual income from research grants and contracts of more than £50m with 20% of the university's total annual income generated from research grants and contracts</td>
<td>£30.9M</td>
<td>£33.1M</td>
<td>£37.2M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research income per university funded academic FTE, target £106k (£53M / 500 FTE academics)</td>
<td>£59.1k 29th in the UK</td>
<td>£66.2k 23rd in the UK</td>
<td>£79k 17th in the UK</td>
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<tr>
<td>RCUK income per university funded academic FTE, target £26K (£13.2M / 500 FTE academics)</td>
<td>£18.1k 37th in the UK</td>
<td>£19k 35th in the UK</td>
<td>£20.3k 32nd in the UK</td>
</tr>
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<td>Industry research income per university funded academic FTE, target £6k (£3M / 500 FTE academics)</td>
<td>£2.5k 46th in the UK</td>
<td>£3.1k 44th in the UK</td>
<td>£5.6k 31st in the UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public and third sector funded research income per academic FTE, target £69k (£34.7M / 500 FTE academics)</td>
<td>£36.5k 20th in the UK</td>
<td>£41.6k 19th in the UK</td>
<td>£48.9k 12th in the UK</td>
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<tr>
<td>PGR FTE per university funded academic FTE, target 2.0</td>
<td>1.4 31st in the UK</td>
<td>1.5 34th in the UK</td>
<td>1.5 27th in the UK</td>
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Lessons learned

1. Engagement is critical to overcoming resistance and ensuring buy-in of staff and managers.
2. The individual KPIs must be relevant and timely.
3. Appropriate training for managers and leaders to handle difficult conversations is critical.
4. A commitment to an approach of continuous improvement, which is embedded into the process, is necessary to ensure continued success.

The programme attracts attention both in the sector and outside. HR professionals from other HEIs, private sector and BIS have already contacted Swansea to learn from their approach. The University of Swansea is happy to collaborate with the partners in the higher education working group to proactively disseminate this good practice and learning more widely as the programme develops.

Also in this series:

- Sustainable Excellence Programme
  University of Birmingham
- People Management Framework
  University of Leeds
- Delivering excellent campus service with passion, pride and professionalism
  University of Kent
- Performance Enabling Programme
  University of Swansea
- Academic Promotion and Progression programme
  Kingston University
- Financial turnaround
  University of Cumbria
- Cost efficiencies through creativity
  Ravensbourne
- HR contribution to business efficiency:
  Management of Academic Workloads
  Nottingham Trent University

New case studies will follow this launch series, so please check back on our website for the latest resources.

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About the case studies

This series of case studies has been developed from the work of the Leadership Foundation and partners for the report 'Efficiency, Effectiveness and Value for Money' led by Professor Sir Ian Diamond and published by Universities UK in February 2015.

Partners in the 'Diamond' higher education workforce group (UCEA, UHR, Hefce, GuildHE, UUK and the Leadership Foundation) commissioned the case studies with support from the joint Hefce/Leadership Foundation Innovation and Transformation Fund.

Dr Lesly Huxley, director of membership and organisational development, leads the LF’s Innovation and Transformation Fund and our contribution to the HE workforce group. She said: “The leadership, development and commitment of people at all levels in higher education is fundamental to successful change and delivery of greater effectiveness in the core activity of our universities and colleges. These case studies and other work funded through the second phase of the Innovation and Transformation Fund show the importance of staff engagement and development in helping higher education institutions improve organisational performance.”

Gwen Wileman, LF Associate, who worked with the universities to develop this series, explained: “The case studies all provide powerful success stories and some real measures of impact on efficiency and effectiveness. However, the challenges of culture and complexity also come through loud and clear and there are many lessons to be learned and shared.”

About the Innovation and Transformation Fund

Acknowledging the central role of leadership in driving change, in 2012, together with Hefce, the Leadership Foundation initiated a £1m, UK-wide Innovation and Transformation Fund (ITF) to progress key themes of the first ‘Diamond Report’ on efficiency in higher education. Nine projects were funded and have now concluded.

Sir Ian Diamond was invited by the Department of Business and Innovation Skills to lead a second phase of this work early in 2014, looking particularly at organisational change and development, the higher education workforce, estates and research assets, open data and evidencing efficiency.

In 2014-15, further joint investment totalling £500,000 is supporting the sharing of existing effective practice particularly in the leadership, management and development of the higher education workforce. A key to the Innovation and Transformation Fund is in unlocking and making best use of good practice. For more information go to: www.lfhe.ac.uk/ITF

About the Leadership Foundation

The Leadership Foundation is a membership organisation that delivers leadership development and consultancy advice to higher education institutions in the UK and around the world. The focus of the Leadership Foundation’s work is to improve the management and leadership skills of existing and future leaders of higher education.

The services provided include consultancy, leadership development programmes and events, including a major series of events for governors. This work is supported by a highly regarded research and development programme that underpins the leadership development programmes and stimulates innovation.

The Leadership Foundation has a small team of experienced leadership and organisational development professionals drawn from higher education, other parts of the public sector, and also from the private sector. Much of the Leadership Foundation’s work is delivered in partnership with the higher education sector and other partner organisations. www.lfhe.ac.uk

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