Discussion Paper: Shared Services – Response to Feedback

January 2017

On 23 November 2016, the University released to staff the Discussion Paper: Shared Services. The closing date for feedback was 9 December 2016.

Over 90 responses were received and many insightful and useful comments, queries and suggestions contributed.

The University is committed to reviewing and considering all feedback received. Consequently, this paper focuses and consolidates the recurring key themes of feedback so as to respond accordingly.

The themes are:

1. **Consolidation and centralisation**
2. **Areas and functions not included in the paper**
3. **Consultation undertaken to understand professional services**
4. **Capability and technology required to enable successful implementation**
5. **Academic and research support requirements**
6. **Technical support**
7. **Technical and Blended Learning support**
8. **Casual staffing administration and recruitment**
9. **Student misconduct**
10. **Risk assessment and management**
11. **Timing**
12. **Planning and implementation**
13. **Request for further information**
14. **Further communication and feedback**

Consolidation and centralisation

The Discussion Paper identifies areas considered appropriate for consolidation.

A significant proportion of the feedback related to clarification of 'consolidation', the shared service models being proposed and an explanation of how, for particular functions, such models might work in practice. This includes the nuances between centralised, hub and spoke, and decentralised models.

In response, the use of "consolidated services" is a generic term to describe a range of shared service models. The optimal model would depend on the function of the service in question. Consequently, it is proposed that the shared service model be tailored to each specific function. Further information around the various models and how they would work from a practical perspective is identified as a clear requirement for additional information.

It is important to note that consolidation does not necessarily mean a reduction in the number of positions responsible for that function, or changes to the physical location of service provision.

The project team is continuing to review and develop proposals for each of the identified functions. This will include ongoing discussions with relevant representatives of the functional areas. Additional information and detail about proposed optimal models will be communicated to staff throughout this process.

Areas and functions not included in the paper

A significant proportion of feedback received from staff regarded areas that were not specifically addressed in the Discussion Paper.

It is acknowledged that at present, not all areas or functions have been reviewed in depth or are proposed for consolidation.

Following the initial data gathering exercise and analysis of current operating models, only service functions that were deemed to have a high potential to benefit from a consolidated delivery model were identified in the Discussion Paper. These functions will be the primary focus; however, there is an opportunity to consider other ideas and options if there is a clear benefit or need for doing so.

Consultation undertaken to understand professional services

It was raised that a select group of staff members were consulted in the initial scoping phase of the project and there was an interest expressed in the opportunity for others to be consulted on future service models before implementation.

The initial data gathering exercise achieved a preliminary understanding of the range of professional services provided in Schools and Institutes. This involved holding workshops with Deans, Directors and School, Institute and Divisional Managers to verify the data and develop possible future state models.

The University recognises that staff communications and pre-consultation discussions, in both the strategic and design phase, as well as during the formal change process, are essential to ensure that future state models are optimally designed and delivered. Additionally, the University acknowledges that formal change will involve the consultation process as prescribed in the Staff Agreements.

Consequently, the project team is in the process of broadening staff pre-consultation discussions and engagement as the project moves into the detailed design phase. This will involve establishing working or reference groups with staff representatives across a range of levels in order to map current processes and design and test new options. In addition to this, a change management team is being established to support staff communication and consultation throughout the transition. This will ensure all staff have opportunities to contribute and engage throughout the project.

Finally, the detailed feedback provided by staff in response to the release of the Discussion Paper has provided a valuable source of information for the next phase of the project.

Capability and technology required to enable successful implementation

Feedback received noted the Discussion Paper did not include details for specific capabilities and technological requirements needed to implement proposed changes to service delivery models.

It is agreed that the paper does not provide this detail. Each work stream requires detailed planning and design work and this will include identifying technologies or systems that may be required. All proposed technology and systems will be identified, communicated and tested with the functional areas to ensure optimal design.

Academic and research support requirements

A proportion of feedback received was regarding the highly specialised skills and experience required to support academic and research outcomes.

It is acknowledged that there are professional services that will require knowledge specific to certain Schools and business units. Consequently, it is important these activities remain within Schools, Institutes and Divisions. To ensure optimal design, detailed review and consideration of support for research in the Schools and Institutes are required.

Technical support

Feedback was received in regards to technical services being an opportunity for consolidation. Due to the broad range of technical services across the University, there were queries as to how changes to the current model could continue to provide the specialised services that currently exist.

The University acknowledges that technical services cover a wide area of functions and skills, and that many of these areas have evolved to provide very specific and specialised services to Schools and Institutes. It is recognised that many of these specialist functions will need to be provided and coordinated at a local level.

Significant work is planned to develop a more in-depth understanding of the current portfolio of technical services and this will involve forming a reference group which will include technical staff as part of pre-consultation discussions. The University will continue engaging with staff to co-design and develop an optimal model that will provide the best possible experience for students, and academic and research staff.

Technical and blended learning support

Some of the feedback identified the potential for overlap between technical and blending learning support.

It is acknowledged that the alignment between academic staff and technical and blended learning support is paramount to the successful delivery of student learning and research outcomes. As the project moves into detailed planning and design of technical and blended learning support, the breadth of activities delivered across the University will be taken into account to ensure that the future state model enhances research, student learning and engagement.

The new service model will be developed with the vison that it will build on existing organisational capability and enable staff to develop stronger connections with colleagues across all Schools and Institutes.

Casual staffing administration and recruitment

Feedback was received regarding centralising the function of casual staffing administration.

A centralised model for casual staffing administration would streamline the process for engaging and recruiting casual staff within the University, and provide a more consistent

experience for employees. This would involve centralising tasks such as creating casual positions in the HR system, appointing staff by issuing casual employment contracts (CEAs) online and improving the on-boarding process.

The University has recently commenced a pilot for an online casual employment administration process, with up to six Schools completing the first round and two Divisional units starting the trial. So far, the pilot has demonstrated improvements for employees, administrators and the payroll team. Schools engaged with the new process have been complimentary about its benefits and the improvements to managing casual employment administration.

Under a centralised model, Schools, Institutes and Divisional units would continue to determine their business requirements for casual staffing in accordance with the provisions of the Staff Agreements. Decision making on the suitability of casual staff applicants would also continue to be made by hiring managers in accordance with University policies.

Student misconduct

The feedback received included a number of suggestions for activities and functions performed within Schools, Institutes and Divisional units that could further benefit from a centralised approach. This included student misconduct management.

While the initial focus will be on the functions identified in the Discussion Paper, further opportunities may be explored in the future.

Risk assessment and management

Some staff queried the level of risk assessment and management for the project. To identify, mitigate and manage risk, a risk profile has been developed for each function and activity. Consequently, potential issues that may arise from proposed actions or decisions have been captured and will continue to be captured during the program. Adopting this risk management based approach will actively mitigate and manage risks.

Timing

Feedback was received regarding the timing suggested in the Discussion Paper.

As outlined in the paper, a staged approach will be adopted and the sequence will reflect the need to prioritise certain areas. Areas significantly impacted by the EVRS will be prioritised, as well as functions that can be planned, designed and tested before the start of the Autumn session 2017 with relatively low risk and complexity.

The University acknowledges that a number of functions will require greater organisational design and engagement and that some areas may not currently be structured to support the transition to a shared service delivery model. Areas of increased risk and complexity will also require additional planning and support.

The Office of Human Resources is working with areas that require more detailed planning and are also impacted by the EVRS to develop work plans to manage any vacancies and ensure continuity of service.

Planning and implementation

It is very encouraging that a number of staff provided feedback recognising the need for detailed design, planning and engagement to ensure successful implementation of the proposed shared service models.

The next phase of the project will ensure a detailed project plan and project management structure is in place to deliver the next stages. The project team will provide high levels of staff communication and pre-consultation for each project stream to ensure that the models for each function are designed and tested appropriately.

Request for further information

Staff provided feedback asking for further information to be provided about the future service models and any organisational changes. The Discussion Paper was designed to present a preliminary overview of the opportunities available for the University to improve service delivery via alternative service models for a number of functions, and to seek staff feedback about these opportunities.

The next phase of the project will include a detailed analysis of individual functions and ongoing discussions (prior to formal consultation) with a broad range of staff on the development and design of future models for testing and implementation. This will be followed by formal consultation about the future model for each function, in accordance with the provisions of the Staff Agreements.

The University acknowledges the provisions of the Staff Agreements that relate to change management and will adhere to these at all times. Any proposed changes resulting from this project are likely to be released within the first quarter of 2017 and change proposals released will provide a detailed rationale for change and provide opportunities for consultation.

Further communication and feedback

Based on feedback, it is clear that there are areas where additional communication around proposed changes is required prior to formal consultation. There is also significant work to be done to develop and provide more detailed information about how the proposed models will work for various functional areas.

The initial review covered the broad landscape of professional services in School, Institutes and Divisions and as such, further detailed work is currently underway, including discussion with staff groups to enable more tangible information about the proposed models to be provided to staff.

It is proposed to structure ongoing development work into a number of streams, aligned by function and discipline, each including University management representation and reference groups as part of pre-consultation. A change management team is also being established to support staff communication and consultation through the transition.

The University will continue to inform and undertake pre-consultation discussions with staff about the development activities being undertaken throughout this project.

Further queries or feedback is always welcome via email to sharedservices@westernsydney.edu.au