UEA
A World Class Future

August 1998

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FOREWORD

This report is the result of a long hard look at the future of UEA by some of the people who may be leading it in ten years' time. They care passionately about the University and are committed to ensuring that it continues to flourish.

Their analysis of UEA's position in its marketplace indicates that we are not doing as well as we should. They have come up with constructive proposals, and a vision of our future, which shows that we can deal with the challenges that face us and create a successful and prosperous University for the future.

The University's senior managers have heard these messages and were impressed by the stature of the work done and the commitment of the team that undertook it. We believe it shows much of what we need to do, and can do, to become one of the leading research-led Universities of this country. We share the team's sense of urgency.

The report reveals a great deal that is good about the University. It has identified examples all over the University of the very best practice, which we need to share with each other. In many areas we are working hard but not achieving as much as we should, perhaps because we are attempting too many things. We also need to make ourselves, and the world around us, fully aware of our strengths and achievements.

Most importantly, the report (and the commitment of the team that produced it) confirms the strengths of our most important asset - our staff. It is not our people who are hampering change and efficiency, but the way we do things, which is far easier to change.

This report is a starting point. In the next few months we shall be putting together a new Strategic Plan for UEA which will assimilate and develop the Creating Our Future message. Some aspects of that message will be challenged and debated, others strike an immediate chord, but I have no doubt that we are well placed to become the internationally renowned, research-led institution to which this report aspires.

The Creating Our Future group - drawn from all sectors of the university - has demonstrated that shaping the future of UEA should not simply be left to the formal processes by which we manage and govern this institution. It has succeeded because involved individuals researched and mastered the issues and reached the collective view that follows.

I believe that as many of us as possible need to participate in exercises which operate in a similar way to Creating Our Future. These may be small scale, or deal simply with short term or process issues, but the benefits in building up shared knowledge and trust will be enormous. Taking this University forward is a collective and participative process in which we must all join. I commend this report to you.

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Vincent Watts
Vice-Chancellor

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INTRODUCTION

The Rationale
The Creating Our Future (COF) project was initiated by the Vice-Chancellor in January 1998 with the aim of thinking creatively about the strategic choices which face UEA. As such the COF project was conceived to:

- utilise the expertise which exists across the University
- provide a forum for discussion
- identify the nature of a possible achievable strategic vision for UEA 10 years hence
- agree on such a strategy which can then be integrated into the management and planning process of the University, leading to action for the benefit of all at UEA.

The Process
The COF team numbered 25 members of staff in a variety of staff categories both academic and support staff, from across the University (see Appendix 3). The team worked in small groups investigating aspects of UEA in the present and thinking about possible futures. Through discussion, consultation, analysis and argument, the team arrived at specific recommendations. The COF team gathered and analysed information by a variety of means including statistical work, reading a wide range of existing material, interviewing members of UEA staff, visiting other HE Institutions, and holding a series of workshops. (Appendix 1 lists all information sources consulted by the team). The last 2 sections of this report outline their findings.

Although the work proved challenging and time-consuming, COF members have commented on the positive experience of working together with colleagues from across the institution, while at the same time learning more about how the University functions. This report is a distillation of many months of activity and contributions from a wide variety of UEA members and others. We hope you will find it informative and thought-provoking.

The Structure of the Report
Section 1 of this report outlines a vision of what a successful UEA would look like in 10 years time, based upon the findings outlined in Sections 2 & 3 and describes a strategy for achieving that vision. The team have presented this material to the Senior Management Team along with a recommendation that they consider seriously adopting the strategy proposed.

In order to arrive at a realistic strategy, it was necessary to explore issues around what we came to define as UEA's crucial constituencies both now and into the future.

Section 2 explores where UEA sits today in relation to what we have termed its "Peer group", that is the group of universities founded at around the same time in similar circumstances, and with perhaps similar aims.

Section 3 then moves on to report the findings of the team looking inwards at the institution, focusing on: our relationship with research funders and with our "customers"; what our strategic assets are or might be, and finally looking at how we deal with people and processes at UEA.

Much of what is written is hard-hitting and critical of the UEA of today. We have necessarily focused on the things we need to do and to improve - but without the strengths we have also identified, such a task would be impossible.

The Vision
One of the key elements of the COF Strategy is that all members of the University share a common vision. The COF team have devised a vision which ensures UEA's future in the 21st Century. Put succinctly, the strategy is that UEA can and must become a leading research-led University, broadly defined as follows:

- Carrying out internationally competitive research in the majority of areas in which we are research active
- providing high quality, research-led, teaching
- attracting the most able students from around the world (with those students participating in the intellectual community of the University as members, not customers)
- significantly involved in regional activities which contribute to the institution's mission
- telling the world about its successes

The nuances and implications of this strategy are explored and analysed in the following report. We are committed to this strategic vision, and we believe that there is little alternative for success. We commend it to you and hope you will find it one you can support.

Rowena Armstrong
Project Co-ordinator; Creating Our Future

SECTION ONE

A. UEA 2008 - THE COF STRATEGY

COF investigations revealed that:

• UEA's performance has not kept pace with that of its peer institutions.

• People within UEA do not know enough about its very real successes and nor does the outside world.

• UEA lacks an overall sense of institutional direction; we are trying to do too many things and not achieving excellence in enough areas.

• UEA's staff are very committed and hard working, but often frustrated and prevented from really excelling by institutional barriers.

In developing the strategy that follows, the team considered two possible alternatives for UEA. The first was a regionally-focused university of the type envisaged by the Dearing Report[1]. This would draw students primarily from the region, and a significant part of its research activity would be led by regional economic issues. The second was a more traditional model of a university, with a focus on internationally competitive research and with students drawn from all over the world.

We reached the conclusion that becoming a regionally focused university was not an option for UEA. The region is thinly populated, and the majority of potential research funders are located to the South and West of the region. Anglia Polytechnic University already has a strong regional role, and is much better placed than UEA to develop this than UEA. This does not imply that we can or should ignore our region; we should actively foster those regional links which support our mission. However, if we are to survive in anything like our present form, we must look beyond the region and become an internationally competitive, research led institution.

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[1] HE in the Learning Age: published 1997 "The "Dearing Report": the report of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, set up with bipartisan support by the Secretaries of State for Education and Employment, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland on 10 May 1996. Its terms of reference: "To make recommendations on how the purposes, shape, structure, size and funding of higher education, including support for students, should develop to meet the needs of the United Kingdom over the next 20 years, recognising that higher education embraces teaching, learning, scholarship and research."

The Future?

Increased selectivity in UK government funding, based on Research Assessment criteria, is moving Higher Education in the UK towards the creation of an elite group of institutions who will receive significantly more research funding than others.[2] These elite institutions will certainly attract the best staff and students in the future; moreover, their increased funding will fuel even better future performance, which further enhances their reputation. As well as attracting other sources of funding, a high quality research reputation attracts more and better students, who are more likely to stay on as postgraduates, and who function as members of an intellectual community, thus enhancing the research culture of the institution. In addition, more research postgraduates mean more HEFCE Research funding in other words, a **virtuous circle** emerges.
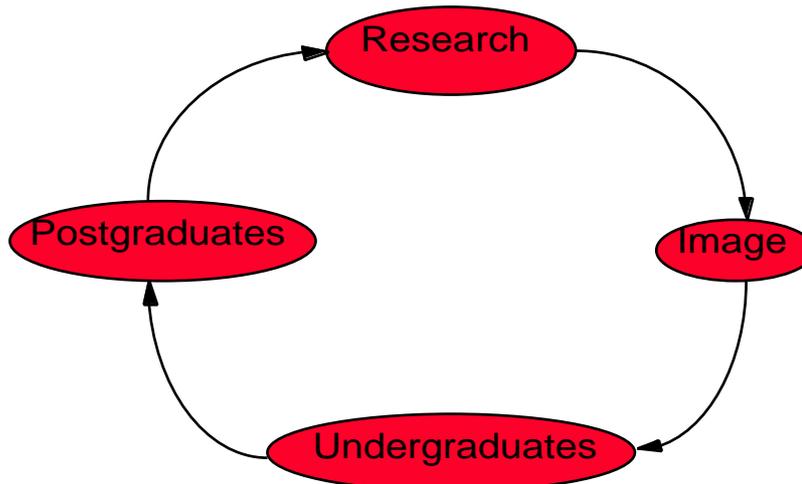
As noted above, becoming one of the largely regionally focused institutions envisaged by Dearing is not a viable option for us. In consequence, UEA must not "miss the cut" - we must be in the research led group of institutions, characterised as follows:

A Research-Led University
- carrying out internationally competitive research in the majority of areas
- providing high quality, research-led teaching
- attracting the most able students from around the world (those students participating in an intellectual community as members, not customers)
- significantly involved in regional activities which contribute to the institution's mission
- telling the world about its successes

As a Research-Led University

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[2] Dearing's observations on the USA: Research institutions "have large graduate schools and play a major role in the development and training of future researchers" while teaching universities "have teaching of the highest quality to degree level as their principle purpose, yet require most of their teaching staff to engage in research, primarily to support their teaching"

We are able to make choices about what activities are pursued; focusing on activities with a high profit margin and cutting activities which make a loss.

UEA has lacked a clear strategy, with the result that we have been unable to choose between competing activities internally. We have developed an opportunistic rather than strategic approach to potential new business. To enable us to make choices, we need to understand what constitutes "profit" for a research led university.

Profit in a university?

To be successful we must be able to generate income in excess of costs, but this should not be the primary aim of the institution. For a research-led university, profit lies mainly in the enhancement of the academic reputation of the institution and its members. The most significant factor in this is our research reputation, resulting from the public research output of staff (published articles and books, monographs and patents granted). A second component is a reputation for being one of best places in the world to study the particular subjects we teach (to which research reputation also contributes).

Another significant aspect to profitability for a university is the personal satisfaction of its staff. A major motivating factor for academic staff is intellectual fascination with particular subject areas, and to encourage enthusiasm, we should allow staff to research and teach in their specialist area wherever possible. There will necessarily be limits to this freedom: research must contribute to the institution's academic reputation by leading to high quality publications; the requirement for financial viability means staff cannot expect to do all their teaching within a particular specialism, unless student demand is strong.

Although financial profitability is not an end in itself, our activities do need to be financially viable. We need to become much more aware of the costs of the activities we engage in when assessing their financial viability. For example, teaching large numbers of undergraduate units with very low enrolments will cost considerably more to teach than the income they bring in to the School. There may be sound academic reasons for continuing to teach some of these units, but the decision should be informed by a sound knowledge of costs.

To use the criteria outlined above, we need to examine all the activities we are involved in and ask:

•	Does this contribute to the academic reputation of UEA (directly or indirectly)?

•	If not, does it generate a financial surplus, and can we identify how these profits are used to cross subsidise activities that do contribute to academic reputation?

•	If neither of these are true, can it be justified because it is on a relatively small scale and gives personal satisfaction to those involved?

If there is no clear positive answer to at least one of these, we need to ask as individuals, as units or as an institution, why is it being done at all? Where there is a positive answer to at least one of these, we need to concentrate on ensuring that it is being done well and efficiently.

In research we would:

• Aim for RAE ratings of at least 5, with 4 considered the minimum acceptable performance

In 10 years time we would expect all academic units to be achieving grades 4, 5 or 5*. This implies all units aiming for a rating of 5 in either the next RAE (2001) or the one following. Where units currently have a rating of 4, 5 or 5*, a 5 or 5* in RAE 2001 should be achievable; where units are striving for more significant improvement, i.e. from a 3 or below, they should at least improve their score in RAE 2001, and aim to achieve 5 or 5* in the RAE following, with 4 being minimal acceptable performance.

In teaching we would:

• offer high quality teaching programmes in areas where we have a strong research reputation and be known as one of the best places in the world to study those subjects. We would therefore also boast a strong postgraduate community, in both taught and research categories.

• offer a high quality student experience and be able to attract able students from the UK, EU and elsewhere. The University would be playing a major role in training the next generation of researchers [3]

We would characterise this approach as one of "research-led teaching". By this we mean teaching carried out by active researchers, with the subject areas taught being mostly determined by areas of strength in research. These would usually be subject areas where teaching and researching are mutually compatible and beneficial to both students and researchers. This description also implies that teaching is organised in a way which is not detrimental to research activity, in the sense that faculty teaching load is reasonably focused in terms of subject area and timing. This does not mean a reduction in the quality of teaching; but it does mean playing to our strengths and not creating obstacles to our overall strategy.

In the region we would:

• Focus on a small number of major initiatives which contribute to our strategic objectives or which have significant potential to do so in the future.

We believe that we can make the greatest contribution to the region by focusing on our strengths. The decision to take on a new enterprise would necessarily involve a rigorous

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[3] Dearing Report

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costing process (this applies just as much to activities which are not specifically regional in nature).

- Avoid complex networks of client institutions and short-course/part-time teaching unless profits are high.

UEA should concentrate on a research-led teaching agenda and enable other institutions to carry out activities which do not fall into that bracket through franchising or validation. Other institutions in the region, notably Anglia Polytechnic University have a great deal more expertise in certain kinds of regional activities and we should not waste time and energy trying to compete where we do not have comparative strength.

We would have a clear strategy

Which would enable the University to organise its support services more effectively and make the decision making process much more straightforward.

The Alternative for UEA is:
- possible rapid and catastrophic decline with research active staff leaving the institution, damaging its reputation and lowering the quality of teaching

- being forced towards more low profit-margin business to compensate for the loss of funding

- a continued spiral of decline (the virtuous circle in reverse)

A loss of funding reduces the level of support for, and quality of teaching offered. This affects the student experience, word-of-mouth publicity and eventually reputation, as well as our success in recruiting postgraduates and retaining undergraduate to postgraduate level. Problems in recruitment lead to further financial difficulties and loss of postgraduate numbers damages the research culture of the institution. Research active staff leave and there are difficulties in recruiting high quality replacements, the student experience suffers further and reputation is further damaged, affecting recruitment of good staff still further.

Can we get there?
The strategy is achievable for UEA: significant parts of the institution already fit the research-led model; RAE performance in Science at UEA is 8th in the UK (and Science is the most expensive area in which to effect change). We have several other areas doing very well in research terms too. COF investigations found that there is significant scope for structural improvement to encourage research and widespread commitment to research if staff are given the time.

B. HOW DO WE ACHIEVE ALL THIS?

COF was set the task of defining a vision of what a successful UEA would look like in 10 years time, and a broad strategy for how that would be achieved and maintained. Detailed implementation, if the strategy gains wider acceptance in the University, would be a matter for existing management and governance structures, more particularly the newly appointed Executive Team. What follows are necessarily broad strategies and not detailed implementation plans.

1.   Facing up to the problem
The institution needs to recognise clearly that there is a significant problem, that UEA is under-performing in relation to its peers for a variety of reasons and that current structures are not working for us. We have to want to change and share a vision of where we want to be.

2.   Deciding what not to do
Some of UEA's troubles can be attributed to the difficulties we experience in deciding what not to do. Simple logic tells us we cannot continue to run almost 300 degree programmes, 287 undergraduate units with fewer than 10 students and 114 with fewer than 5 students, and still expect to carry out research. Work carried out by the group indicates that there is a critical mass for research success, and that improved efficiency of the teaching programme is crucial to delivering the really essential ingredient for research success - time.

3.   Removing Barriers
Academic staff consulted by the COF team felt that a significant barrier to the delivery of quality research was a lack of time. We need to find a way to teach less, but deliver better learning; the team felt this supported the parallel strategy of treating students as part of a community, not as paying customers, and thus enhancing their overall experience of UEA. There is a need to change the focus of administration and management in the university away from "keeping rules" and towards "making things happen". There is also a need to break down barriers between Academic units, between sectors within academic units, and between Academic and Support units. These barriers were mentioned by almost every interviewee and work-shop participant involved in the project.

4.   Measuring Profitability (academic units)
We have access to externally-arbitrated measures of our success in the form of RAE and TQA scores. The difficulty is that these are infrequent and we need to find ways of measuring success for ourselves. There should be regular internal audits of research performance against agreed targets and confident use of our own quality systems should be enhanced.

5.   Measuring Profitability (support units)
We need to regularly ask the question: How does this unit contribute to profit in core business? As for academic units, we need to have regular audits of performance against targets and direct accountability to service users.

6.   Helping to Improve: People

We need to have clearer job descriptions at all levels and to significantly improve recruitment and selection in relation to strategic objectives. There is a need for better, more focused and timely induction, and an appraisal, training and development programme which will motivate people towards the institution's strategic objectives. Academic staff need an effective mentoring system which provides real academic leadership not "learning by discovery". All staff should have access to training in key skills and there should be some element of compulsion where appropriate.

7.   Helping to Improve: Processes

There is a great deal of frustration among UEA staff about processes in the institution, which are variously described as bureaucratic, over-complicated and slow . There should be more focus on making things happen, and more executive responsibility given to individuals to speed up some decision-making processes. The team found many examples of good practice in the institution, but also found that good practice is often not spread, or is only spread by accident. Better communication across the institution is vital. It is probably the case that formal structures for this kind of thing would be counter-productive, but a general improvement in awareness of communication issues, along with ironing out some of the logistical problems eg by IT standardisation, would help. With processes, as with other aspects of the University's work, we should always be asking the question "how does this contribute to profitability?" (As defined above).

8.   Balancing autonomy with accountability

Autonomy of both units and individuals is highly-prized at UEA, but we need to recognise that autonomy has to be earned; no-one should have autonomy without accountability. All units should be accountable on the basis of their performance and their contribution to academic "profit" - not just financial surplus or deficit.

9.   Improving Teaching Quality and Efficiency

We need to make a rigorous assessment of the costs and benefits of all our teaching; to increase the efficiency of our teaching and probably to reduce the range of units and degree programmes that we offer. We wish to characterise UEA as a research-led institution, where our students are part of the intellectual community, not simply customers. This will mean that much of our teaching is focused towards the specialist end of the spectrum outlined in the Dearing Report[4], and will be concentrated in subject areas where we have a strong research reputation. Continuation of a modular structure will however allow students to pursue more general programmes of study if they wish and the interdisciplinary approach of much of UEA means that we are well placed to show students how specialist programmes fit into a broader academic context.

To reach this point, we need to begin by deciding in what subjects we can offer viable nationally and internationally competitive programmes. For each of these we need to define the knowledge and skills we expect students to have at the end of the programme, and then determine how best to structure programmes so that students acquire these, given available resources. The overall strategy proposed is "less teaching, better learning". By combining some reduction in the number of course units that we offer with tackling the teaching and

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[4] Dearing Report "Higher Education in the Learning Society" Chapter 9

learning agenda set out by Dearing[5] we will be able to both reduce teaching loads and improve the quality of students' learning. This will involve giving students greater autonomy and responsibility for their own learning, coupled with the focusing of faculty time more deliberately on the achievement of well-defined learning outcomes. [6]

More effort should be put into developing IT-based learning and eliminating the duplication of teaching across Schools which currently occurs in areas such as basic mathematics and computing skills. We need efficient ways of spreading good practice in teaching methods internally and from other institutions. Wherever possible, teaching staff should be afforded the opportunity to teach in their specialist area, as this enhances the experience of both students and staff.

10.   Improve Research Infrastructure

All academic units should have a methodology for measuring faculty load (some already do) to prevent teaching overload on individuals and to demonstrate clearly the expectations of faculty as regards teaching and research activity. There is a need to clearly recognise differences of approach in the organisation of research, and to learn from what succeeds. UEA needs to learn how to improve research performance from its research "stars" and from the literature and to actively consider what kinds of work produce the highest profile for the institution. UEA needs better mechanisms to spot research opportunities and to make them happen, eg links with business, other NRP institutions. Researchers consulted by the team were of the opinion that research support should be provided on a subject-specific basis so that real specialist expertise can be developed in the support unit.

11.   Improve marketing and PR

The team were struck by the fact that while it is common knowledge that UEA came 42nd in the 1998 Financial Times ranking of UK universities, few people know that UEA Science is ranked 8th. This seemed to illustrate a problem with both the institution's own knowledge of itself, and the image the outside world holds. UEA has some very significant assets and successes and we desperately need to do a better job of promoting these. The team believes we should keep our name, but update our logo, which is perceived to be very "1960s"[7]. We should make much better use of our "friends in high places" and our alumni generally and take our case to London, Brussels, the Regional Agencies and Industry. We need a marketing strategy which will attract the best students from the UK, the EU and the rest of the world.

12.   Reward Success

Individuals and units who are successful need to be clearly recognised as such, as do the different contributions made by different staff members. We need to concentrate on retaining the best staff and on providing the resources for continued success.

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[5] Dearing Report "Higher Education in the Learning Society" Chapter 8

[6] One possible model of how this might be achieved is described in Bourner, T and Flowers, S., 1997 Teaching and learning methods in Higher Education: a glimpse of the future. Reflections on Higher Education 9 pg 77-102.

[7] See Section 3 "Strategic Assets" page 28

13.   Dealing with Under performance

For this strategy to be realistic we need to accept that some units will not satisfy the profitability criteria and some individuals will not deliver. Criteria must therefore be completely open and understood.   There should be a process of monitoring, identifying problems and providing support, with time given for improvement. BUT ultimately some hard decisions will have to be made. Given this, the University needs to have good, planned "exit strategies" where an activity is to cease.

14.   What success will look and feel like

•   All academic staff are active in research.

•   All staff work together to make UEA a successful research active University.

•   There are clear procedures and set criteria by which human resource decisions are made.

•   There are explicit understandings about targets and timescales in all plans.

•   External criteria (RAE and TQA) are used as genuine criteria in decisions about continuing support.

•   "Profit" features substantially in such decisions.

•   Teaching is actively managed in support of research objectives.

•   Schools have a clear research strategy.

•   There are ad hoc reviews leading to change (eg HIS).

•   We achieve RAE4 in all under-par areas next time round, with a real prospect of 5 in the next

•   Academic success is respected

•   Success for one is success for all

•   Mutual support and respect

•   Open and rapid decision making

•   Optimism, risk taking and willingness to try new things

ALL MEMBERS OF A WINNING TEAM

SECTION TWO

WHERE IS UEA IN ITS PEER GROUP?

Findings: The League

The team defined our 'Peer Group' as the 11 campus universities, including UEA which were founded at around the same time, in the late 1950s and 1960s, with similar aims and resources. We soon discovered that this group of 11 has subsequently divided between three notional 'divisions': **Appendix 2** shows this in full.

•   *Premiership (top 10 of all UK Universities)*: Warwick, York and Bath are consistently ahead on a range of indicators (Times Ranking, Financial Times Ranking, RAE 1992 and 1996, income earned from research and industry, teaching quality assessment, etc).

•   *Playoffs (top 30 of all UK Universities):* includes Lancaster, Sussex, Essex and Surrey.

•   *First Division (top 50 of all UK Universities):* includes Exeter, Kent and Keele.

At the moment UEA can be characterised as being at the bottom of the second division or possibly in the third. UEA is currently 42nd with the Financial Times, 29th on the Times 1998, 28th in the Research Assessment Exercise[8] 1996 and towards the bottom of income for research and industry.

Not only have most of our peers moved ahead of us, but we are also moving downwards on key indicators. In particular we dropped from 18th place in the 1992 RAE to 28th place in 1996. This declining performance has further profound implications, reflected in a significant drop in student applications to UEA (potentially resulting in weaker and therefore more "resource hungry" students), and UEA's relatively poor financial settlement from HEFCE for 1998. Currently the gap between UEA and our better-performing peers is widening, whilst our financial ability to bridge the gap is diminishing.

While everyone is aware that performance tables are not necessarily objective and absolute, they are inescapably vital to the way others perceive us, and when looked at cumulatively, broadly demonstrate relative levels of success or otherwise. League tables are not going to go away whether we like it or not.

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[8] The Research Assessment Exercise, a peer review of research activity carried out by the Higher Education Funding Council every 4 years. Research groupings are rated 1 - 5* with 5* being the highest achievable. Funding for the support of research is then calculated using these grades.

***Findings: Factors Associated with Success (drawn primarily from site visits to Warwick, York, Bath)***

The team's investigations revealed no single recipe for success, but several common ingredients. Warwick, York & Bath have pursued different paths to the top. Warwick is large generalist, York is smaller generalist, Bath is smaller and science-focused. Nevertheless they share many (interrelated) characteristics, most of which have been far less evident at UEA.

•   *Strategic Vision/Institutional Identity:* each has a clear strategy, a clear sense of what the institution is about and what it aims to achieve. For example, staff at all levels and in different parts of the university interviewed at Warwick used the same phrase "strong centre, strong departments" without prompting. In addition, both York and Warwick's web-sites give the impression of a coherent entity. [9]

•   *Culture of Success at all levels of the institution:* All staff interviewed knew their institution's precise league table positions and all activities mentioned were geared specifically to achieving success.

•   *Recruiting the best:* each has extremely rigorous staff recruitment policies. They will not appoint if no candidates is the "right" person and are very specific about what they are looking for in each appointment.

•   *Strong Centre, Strong Departments:* the Centre is able to implement strategic aims alongside departments. Warwick, York and Bath have different academic structures but each structure supports the institutional strategy. In contrast UEA appears desegregated with no central steer and ongoing conflict between a weakened centre and strong Schools, and indeed between Schools.

•   *Taking Hard Decisions:* facilitated by strategy and structure Warwick, York and Bath are able to take hard decisions. Mechanisms are in place to deal with research underperformance at departmental and individual levels. An example might be initiating external reviews of units who are in trouble. All these institutions will say 'no' to new areas if they do not fit or cannot be done excellently.

•   *Real Accountability*: and open and transparent decision-making. For instance, at Warwick, departments are not automatically allocated a sum of money, but have to put a rigorous case annually for what they believe they need.

•   *Size is important/Viable Departments*. There is no clear link between success and institutional size (see Table 2 over).

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[9] Http ref for York and Warwick: http://www.york.ac.uk and http://www.csv.warwick.ac.uk/info/

Table 2: Universities of Different Sizes Can Be Successful

Numbers of Academic Staff
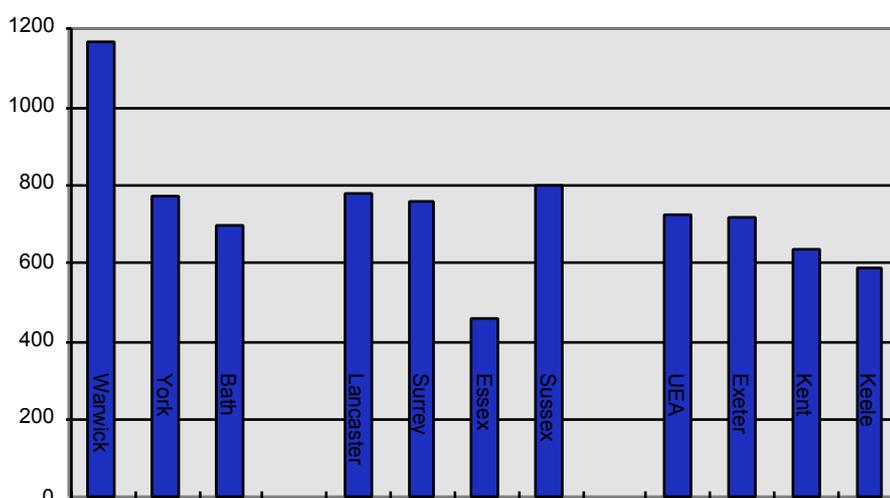
However, there is a clear link between departmental/RAE unit size and success. Warwick, York and Bath have chosen, and been able, to concentrate resources in selected areas. Warwick submitted to 25 Research Assessment Exercise panels in 1996. UEA submitted to 28 despite being half Warwick's size. York and Bath, at a similar size to UEA submitted to 23 and 21 respectively. Table 3 indicates quite clearly that larger RAE units, or strong viable departments with a larger critical mass are associated with better RAE performance. Academic coherence is maintained at York, for example, by requiring an academic justification for the release of posts even if the funding is already available and departments are regularly peer reviewed.

Table 3:   96 RAE Ranking in relation to our Peers

Institution	Mean Unit Size	96 RAE Ranking
Warwick	31.64	8
York	19.69	10
Bath	18.28	7
Lancaster	18.00	9
Sussex	17.30	12
Essex	16.33	11
Kent	15.76	52
UEA	14.96	28
Keele	12.53	53
Exeter	12.02	47

- *Diversification of Income Sources and Reinvestment in Success.* As well as RAE income each has generated income from research grants and industry and trading activities, e.g. conferences. Warwick, in particular, is reinvesting in recruiting the best postgraduates and new blood academics.

- *Selling Strengths.* Warwick, York and Bath are highly active in publicising their successes and strengths. They appear regularly in the press, exploit media contacts and have well developed and impressive web-sites. They are also careful to refer specifically to successes at every opportunity offered.

Conclusion: UEA is falling behind many of our peers and must take action to forestall or arrest a cycle of decline and build upon our strengths. There are a series of identifiable aspects of the successful institutions described which UEA would do well to consider.

SECTION THREE

A: How can we seek to stimulate and satisfy our "Customers"?

Findings: Our Image

- It is evident that UEA has a serious problem with its image and national visibility.

Data on the frequency with which particular institutions were mentioned in a recent survey of young applicants to HE [10] showed UEA at the bottom of the list. Only 1.1% of young applicants mentioned UEA; the highest ranked, Durham and Manchester, were mentioned by 30% and 25% of applicants respectively.

- Even where UEA is mentioned in the national domain, it is more often than not in the context of "The University of Easy Access" [11] or for certain very high-profile courses, the obvious example being Creative Writing

Every piece of information we have, whether from external reports or internal surveys, indicates that UEA has a severe image problem, that is causing real harm to every area of our core business.

Findings: Recruitment potential in the region?

- Population predictions show little regional growth in the next ten years.

Predictions give a reasonably constant figure of approximately 8500 people per year group in Norfolk over the next ten years. [12] For the more widely defined "Eastern England" trends indicate a constant of about 65000 people per year group.[13] For the 18 year old year group

- roughly 30% take two A-levels or more

- roughly 33% of the 65000 go on to University

The conclusion is that there are approximately 21,600 potential students per year group in the Eastern region. Regional trends information concerning current A level scores among the 18 year old population in the East indicates that to retain current entry standards, we would be

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[10] The Higher Education Information Services Trust (HEIST) report "Young applicants' perceptions of Higher Education" 1997

[11] Report: From UEA to Employment: A Survey of 1993 Graduates UEA Economic Research Centre, March 1997

[12] Norfolk County Council planning department.

[13] "Regional Trends" 1995 figures

interested in about 16% of the 18 year old population, but to meet our current intake numbers we would have to take about 20%.

These numbers are almost certainly not enough to sustain sufficient student recruitment in the long term and certainly not enough to put UEA in a position where it can actively select students to any significant extent, were we to rely solely on the region for recruitment. UEA needs to recruit nationally and internationally to survive financially and to preserve an optimum size and this need is made more pressing by the projected increase in regionalisation amongst undergraduates.

Findings: Recruiting and retaining students

- Marketing is of extra importance for UEA given the low profile we appear to have,

but at present UEA's marketing is diffuse and operated by several different offices; Admissions, Communications and the Graduate School amongst others. We do not engage in sustained and focused market research, but rather a series of "dip-stick" surveys, which, while useful, have questionable value as regards strategic decision making.

- Once we have succeeded in attracting students, we have to find ways of making the student experience as positive as possible.

- 97% of our students would recommend UEA to a friend; we have a good reputation to build on.[14]

In most cases, the team found UEA students enjoy being taught by active researchers who are excited by their subject (and active researchers usually enjoy the stimulation of teaching), although experiences vary. Currently the teaching of transferable skills (of increasing importance to students and employers) is patchy and variable across UEA. In addition, the team found that students prefer to be treated more as members of a community, rather than simply customers. To this end, communication between staff and students could be much improved. The team's investigations revealed some excellent practice in teaching and associated areas which was not necessarily being disseminated across the institution.

- UEA does not currently organise the teaching programme well or have a clear strategy for making decisions about what programmes are delivered

UEA currently runs about 300 degree programmes, 287 undergraduate units with fewer than 10 students enrolled and 114 units with fewer than 5 students enrolled.
The team found that while some Schools had clearly defined methods and processes for making decisions about the content and delivery of taught programmes, others did not, and seemed to make decisions in a piecemeal way. The University Committees dealing with these matters appear to have little real impact.

- ~30% of UEA undergraduate students choosing to go on to study Masters/PhD/PGCE are currently choosing UEA for that study

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[14] Report: From UEA to Employment: A Survey of 1993 Graduates UEA Economic Research Centre, March 199?

but the rate of retention varies enormously between Schools and recruitment is patchy; we do not do as good a job in promoting the graduate experience as we might. Postgraduates are valuable to us for several reasons. Research students count towards Funding Council Quality-Related ("QR") research income, (see Table 4 below) postgraduates in general may be less regional in nature and therefore less susceptible to the likely trends towards more regional recruitment in universities. Postgraduates also enhance the research culture and reputation of the University.

Table 4:   Research Income
**   QR as the hidden factor eg income (pa) from a PhD student**
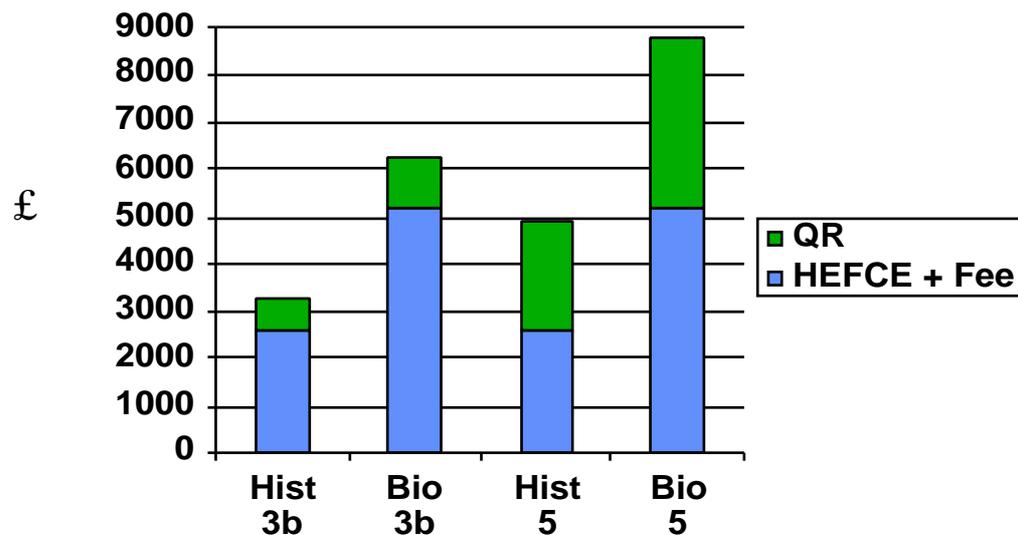
Conclusions:

•   Let's be market bred *not* market led.

We need to be fully aware of the market we operate within, and of where our strengths are; but we should not slavishly follow fads and fashions which may be short-lived and detract from the quality of what we deliver.

•   We need sustained market research and a coherent marketing strategy.

We should initiate a high visibility marketing department to monitor the market and promote our existing strengths.

•   We need to improve recruitment and induction procedures.

This applies to both undergraduates and postgraduates and might include providing a fully costed package when recruiting.

- We need skills teaching which is embedded in course delivery and available to all.

Skills teaching should be provided early in students' studies in order to equip them with the ability to learn more effectively and generally to increase their employability on graduation. Where possible, skills teaching should be tailored to specific student groups, for example specific provision could be made for international students.

- We need to significantly reform undergraduate and postgraduate degree portfolios.

This implies both improving efficiency, reducing teaching loads and improving the way we recruit postgraduates from our undergraduate population by providing more coherent pathways from undergraduate to postgraduate study. In general we need to focus on managing our portfolio of Masters degrees and recruiting postgraduates as professionally as we do undergraduates. To help improve the graduate experience we should explore the options for creating a physical graduate school building for subjects promoting interdisciplinarity.

- We should make promulgation of best practice in teaching mandatory

- We need to improve communication channels between staff and students

There is much that is excellent at UEA, we need to maximise its impact

- Data explored in Section 2 indicated that a university's research reputation appears to impact significantly on recruitment (see Table 5 below)

Table 5:   Research reputation and its impact on recuitment

Institution	1998 Change	Rank
Bath	21.7%	2
Lancaster	14.1%	5
York	6.1%	12
Warwick	3.0%	21
Essex	0.7%	35
Surrey	-6.7%	69
Exeter	-7.8%	78
Sussex	-7.9%	79
Kent	-9.1%	84
Keele	-12.4%	92
UEA	-14.8%	95

The reulsts of the team's own investigations implied that an active research culture could be a positive factor in students' experience of UEA. The result of improving all the aspects of the student experience of UEA described above should be that more undergraduates stay on to study at postgraduate level and that word-of-mouth reputation and hence recruitment generally improves. A stronger postgraduate population supports and enhances the research culture of the institution and active researchers can make stimulating teachers. Rationalising teaching to some extent should serve to improve the quality of the teaching which is carried out, both by focusing effort on areas of excellence and reducing stress on faculty.

In this way improved efficiency in the delivery of teaching can be a benefit to students, improving their overall experience and the quality of teaching delivered, while simultaneously supporting the research culture in the institution and the development of a research-led strategy.

SECTION THREE

B. The Impact of Government, Funders and the Region on Research at UEA

Findings:

- UEA has a reputation for high-quality research which is both distinctive and interdisciplinary.

This was clear both from the opinions of others:

"UEA and Sussex are the Oxford and Cambridge of Development Studies in the UK"
(World Bank Officer)

"I wish Sussex could organise interdisciplinary research the way UEA does"
(Senior research professor, Sussex)

and from consultation with UEA colleagues who cited the existing atmosphere of close interaction across both the campus and the Norwich Research Park as a unique asset. The RAE 1996 ranking of comparable science bases showed UEA in 8th place behind only Cambridge, Oxford, Imperial College, Warwick, University College London, Bristol, and Edinburgh, despite ranking 20th in size. So there is high quality research at UEA, but it is not currently consistently achieved across the institution. (see Table 6 below)

Table 6

Institution	No of units	% of staff
Warwick	1	0.5
York	2	4
Bath	1	1
Lancaster	1	2
Surrey	1	5
Essex	1	2
Sussex	1	1
Exeter	6	13
UEA	8	14
Kent	6	17
Keele	7	17

- QR ("Quality Related") income is the critical component of research income in <u>all</u> Schools

UEA's current income is split 32.1% HEFCE [15] teaching grant, 28% fees, 17.7% HEFCE QR [16] Research grant, 10.8% teaching contracts and 4.2% overhead earnings. Many of these items e.g. fee income from home/EU students and related HEFCE teaching grant are fixed in one way or another (particularly where the government controls student numbers). Although we have some opportunity to grow in terms of student numbers, the income received per student is unlikely to rise significantly in the near future. So while teaching-related income remains the largest slice of our total income, the potential for earning significant extra income is predominantly in research and contract work (including industry funded activity). Additionally, teaching income is not yet related to external Quality measures; if it were to be so, it is unclear whether the amount involved would be significant (and in any case, the team firmly believes that research-led teaching is the best way for UEA to develop and maintain teaching excellence in all areas).[17]

RAE grade has a significant impact on HEFCE QR income, with the impact more significant the higher the grade. In addition, departments with a higher RAE grade earn significantly more extra cash per research student, and interestingly, research funding from Charities attracts higher QR income per £ of funding than the combined overhead and QR enhancement from Research Council funding. (see Table & below)[18]

Table 7:   Research funding - maximising QR income
eg University income per £ of research funding

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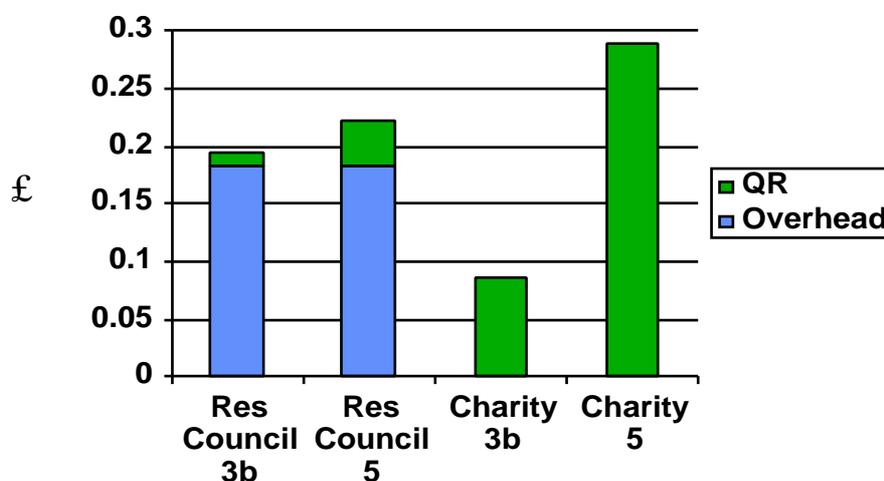
[15] Higher Education Funding Council for England , annual grant made in support of teaching

[16] Higher Education Funding Council for England, annual grant made in support of research, "QR" indicates that the amount given is dependent upon RAE Quality ratings achieved

[17] See "Customers" pg 17

[18] See also Table 4 pg 19

•	All researchers need to understand the link between research and income.

RAE assessment takes research contract funding into account, therefore research funding and QR income are intimately linked. However, income generation must not compromise research quality i.e. the value of the research output.

The team's investigations revealed that few colleagues know or understand the current funding models and their implications for the overall finances of the University and of Schools. Additionally, the team found no common sense of urgency across the campus to raise substantial research funding. Some faculty feel under constant pressure whereas others feel none.

•	"The best contribution that UEA can make to the region is to be an internationally renowned, research-led institution" (Alan Waters, Leader, Norwich City Council)

Norfolk has very few major sources of research funding.

Government funding for regional development has been very limited in East Anglia, especially as compared with other similarly rural regions:

Scotland:	population 4.8 million govt funding: £450 million
East Anglia:	population 5.2 million govt funding: £25 million

It is therefore unlikely that UEA can sustain itself by concentrating on funding opportunities in the region. Of course the opportunities which are there must be exploited to the full, and there is work to do in stimulating Government to put more into the region and influencing the direction of the Government's regional agenda, but the University will probably always need to look further afield. Success internationally and nationally will bring more attention to the University and the region, and therefore attract more funding and economic growth in general.

•	There is a need to develop the University's mechanisms to encourage high-quality research and research income generation

Research requires commitment and initiative by individuals; this is present in many areas at UEA already. There is a general perception among academic colleagues of poor support for research from the centre and a belief that subject matter specialists are required to support funding applications. Faculty interviewed believed that there was currently no clear link between research attainment and career development and that this situation could be improved.

Representation on national committees helps UEA secure research funding and should be encouraged wherever possible.

Conclusions:

- If all at UEA better understand the research funding system, it can be exploited more successfully

- If we concentrate on becoming nationally and internationally competitive, regional opportunities will follow

- If we implement a transparent system of incentives and rewards we will promote a research culture

- If we diversify the sources of research income we will develop our research profile successfully

If we do all the above we will become an internationally renowned research-led university.

SECTION THREE

C. What are UEA's Strategic Assets and how might we best exploit them?

•   A strategic asset is something that makes UEA unique, gives us an advantage over other institutions or would be hard to duplicate.

•   Development of our strategic assets will be a key feature of any long term plan for the UEA.

Findings: significant "high-impact" assets for UEA

Findings: The Campus

•   UEA students and staff value the campus experience and our out-of-town location makes us a real community

There is real demand among staff and students for quality services on campus; interviews revealed a low level of satisfaction with the catering service, but a high level of satisfaction with the quality, range and price of accommodation (although notable dissatisfaction with the lack of eating/communal room facilities in the Village). A recent national survey placed UEA 8th for quality of accommodation and 10th for student and staff facilities.[19] (Many services are currently provided by the Students Union on a low budget and ad hoc basis). Students and staff value campus green spaces; in this respect UEA compares very favourably with our competitors (Bath, York, Warwick, Kent) and we should preserve this advantage. It is important to recognise that a high quality campus experience for students includes good pastoral care and this is delivered at UEA, although the strain on the advising system needs urgent attention.

•   we are now paying more attention to efficient use & maintenance of our Buildings

There is currently very high pressure on office and teaching space. The main teaching block suffers from poor energy efficiency and there is concern over deterioration and future maintenance costs. We do have some buildings which are energy efficient, and the University is moving towards use of clean energy. UEA has some specific issues to plan for and some buildings whose future use is to be decided and which could be exploited to our benefit, for example Earlham Hall, Earlham Lodge and the current Sports Centre.

•   Good transport links are essential to the development of the University and are currently a problem

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[19] The Red Mole survey published on the World Wide Web in June 1998 : (http://www.redmole.co.uk/studentmole/unirate1.htm) while dubious in its methodology, the results of this survey were widely reported in the national press and showed UEA in a relatively good light.

Road links to UEA are currently poor; UEA has parking problems and there is sometimes serious congestion on the roads approaching us. These difficulties are likely to worsen with the development of the new Norfolk and Norwich hospital in Colney, the Sports Park and the Norwich Research Park. Public transport is difficult from any further afield than Norwich itself, posing problems for students and staff alike, and contributing to road congestion. There is potential for improved links with continental Europe through development of Norwich and Stansted airports, but the benefits will only be maximised if local transport links are improved too. Road signs to UEA are notably lacking in a number of crucial areas.

- the planned Sports Park and the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts (SCVA) are unique assets

"UEA is to have the most modern integrated indoor and outdoor sports facilities of any UK university" (UEA press release)

The Sports Park represents a valuable resource for both the University and the region (and changes in Lottery funding regulations mean UEA will be the only University to benefit in this way). There is potential for developments in sports science research along with degree provision in this area, perhaps linked to OPT and HEA, and it should enhance the student experience of UEA quite significantly. The SCVA is also a truly unique asset, of value to both University and region; the team found that public awareness of UEA's connection with SCVA was not always high even in the local area.

Conclusions: The Campus

- We need to continue the development of better and wider facilities such as retail outlets, and consider introducing some fair competition in catering.

- We should preserve the green spaces on campus and encourage non-damaging recreational use of the area around the Broad.

- There could be room to enhance the existing "meet and greet" arrangements and improve pastoral care, with particular regard to the advising system and possibly enhancement of the Dean of Students' Office responsibilities.

- We should maintain the current range of accommodation and develop more on-site provision for families. A priority is to introduce catering, retail and recreational facilities at the Village. We should explore the possibility of using Earlham Lodge in this respect.

- We must plan now for the gradual replacement of the main teaching block (possibly look for funding through the PPP initiative[20]), and continue our emphasis on energy efficient buildings and recycling.

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[20] Public and Private Partnership: government initiative to bring private funding into capital funding for public sector organisations

- UEA should negotiate deals with local bus, rail and air companies for staff and students and look at introducing zonal parking permits to help control parking problems.

- UEA should approach the relevant authorities to improve road signs to UEA from the A11, A47, city centre and transport termini.

- The potential for research developments in connection with the new Sports Park should be explored at an early opportunity.

Findings: Image and Reputation

- We need to sell ourselves more effectively.

"some local employers think UEA is an Arts only university" (UEA Careers Centre).

UEA has a Communications Office but no marketing operation; the institution suffers from a lack of visibility which means we fail to benefit from our strategic assets. For example, the Norwich Research Park and SCVA are closely associated with UEA but many people are unaware of this; we are not currently getting the maximum benefit from these associations.

- We need to gain maximum benefit from our name and logo.

Opinion on the topic varies, but the team concluded that changing UEA's name would probably do more harm than good. We have 30 years of reputation and identity among our peers and alumni to build on and cannot risk being perceived as a new entity. The team did agree that the UEA logo is in need of modernising.

- We must put more into nurturing and encouraging our "Star performers".

by which we mean individuals or departments which are achieving excellence and are recognised as such nationally and internationally. This implies investing in *potential* star performers (both individuals and Units) as well as encouraging and publicising the work of existing ones.

- We must maintain and develop contacts with our Alumni.

We already have a valuable resource in our large and well maintained contact database, which comprises 76% of our total alumni, but there is more to be done in exploiting this resource eg: through professional networking events, careers fairs, an alumni-focused web-site.

- We have friends in high places.

We need to make special efforts to exploit connections with high-profile alumni eg: MPs, those in the media . In addition, 2 MP's and a Minister of State are ex-employees of the University: Ian Gibson, George Turner and Patricia Hollis.

Conclusions: Image and Reputation

• We should create and finance a specific marketing department, under the authority of a PVC (recently appointed). Part of the mission of this department should be specifically to associate UEA in the public mind with the Norwich Research Park, Sainsbury Centre for the Visual Arts, Norfolk & Norwich Hospital and the Sports Park and encourage joint ventures with these partners.

• Change the logo but keep the name.

• Provide more funding for the work of the alumni office; expand the activities this office engages in to include networking and career development events or targeted short courses. We need to find ways to make more systematic use of our "friends in high places", high profile alumni and those in the media to raise the institution's profile. We recommend the establishment of a permanent lobbyist to promote UEA's interests in parliament.

Findings: Norwich Research Park

• The NRP represents a major partnership for UEA

The NRP includes 8 UEA Schools, 7 other partners and 6 additional collaborator institutions[21]. It employs over 3000 science staff (including those based at UEA) and is the largest concentration of biotechnology research in microbial, food, plant, diet and health subjects in Europe.

• There appears to be a lack of overall co-ordination of leadership and too little collaboration between partners

The various NRP institutions have high individual profiles, but the NRP's collective profile could be higher to the benefit of all partners.

• Significant new investment is in progress with respect to the new hospital at Colney and the Institute of Food Research

UEA is deeply involved in these developments and needs to remain so.

• There are plans for new research "hotel" developments on the site between UEA and the other partner Institutes

These would provide flexible lab and office space, infrastructure and resources and an innovation centre to take scientific advances into the commercial world by providing the business support required. The aim of this development is to attract new activity to the NRP.

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[21] Full partners are: British Sugar Technical Centre, the CSL Food Science Laboratory, the Institute of Food Research, the Sainsbury Laboratory, BUPA Hospital Norwich, Norfolk and Norwich NHS Trust. Collaborating institutions: Norfolk and Waveney TEC, English Partnerships, South Norfolk Council, Norfolk County Council, Norwich City Council and Norwich Area Development Agency.

- The new Norfolk and Norwich hospital site will provide significant opportunities for UEA

There are plans for a funding bid to relocate the School of Nursing and Midwifery to the new site, through a Public and Private Partnership finance deal.

Conclusions: Norwich Research Park

- we need to promote the NRP and its benefits internally at UEA and reaffirm our support for its activities

- UEA could promote the NRP nationally and internationally amongst venture capitalists and provide financial incentives to re-locate there

- the existing plans for research "hotel" developments should be encouraged and supported

Findings: Visitor Facilities

- We need to improve the way we receive visitors to the campus:

Currently visitors are greeted with a security barrier and parking is limited, confusing and difficult for those unfamiliar with arrangements. Furthermore, we have no information or visitor centre to provide maps and information, give directions, issue visitor parking permits etc.

- UEA has no "shop front" on campus

Such a facility could advertise courses and services or aid marketing of facilities and UEA merchandise. (The Learning Shop in the city has had very positive reaction from the public).

- Limited conference facilities exist at UEA but could be improved

Conferences are currently limited to vacation periods due to a lack of available meeting room space and the Guest Suite, while available all year round, is generally agreed not to be a success, partly because it does not have dining or meeting facilities.

Conclusions: Visitor Facilities

- We should consdier whether there is a market for a dedicated conference centre and look at the possibility of retaining Earlham Hall for this purpose if LAW are rehoused elsewhere. This could double as a more welcoming reception and information centre for visitors. Alternatively the old Sports Centre could become a Visitor Centre, and would have the advantage of a central location.

- In the interim, we should evaluate options for improvements to the Guest Suite to make it viable.

D. People and Processes

Part One.   Findings - People

The team believes that creating the right culture and good personal relations will be essential to getting UEA functioning as a unified and successful entity.

Culture
- There are many well-motivated and enthusiastic staff at UEA, but also instances of unhelpful poor attitudes and snobbery.

Consultation with people from a variety of staff categories at UEA revealed several areas of difficulty. Academics can be inclined to assume they are the only really important members of the University, and to give "orders" without understanding what those orders entail for others. In contrast they can also perceive that the administration "tail" is wagging the University "dog" and that as academics they lack control. Many academics at UEA believe there are too many administrators, while simultaneously claiming not to have sufficient support. Administrative staff can also be guilty of poor attitudes:

"You do realise we're not here to help you" (overheard in the Registry).

Secretarial and clerical staff can feel undervalued and have difficulty being recognised as responsible members of staff outside their particular School. For example, a School Clerk may carry out all the work relating to concessions, but responses from the Examinations Office will still be directed to the School Administrator. This kind of insensitivity feeds resentment and can lead to a lack of co-operation and an "us and them" tension.

- We all feel overworked and under stress.

Focus groups held by the project team revealed pressure on time to be one of the major complaints about working at UEA; with academics citing high teaching loads and a fragmentation of teaching time due to the timetable slotting system as serious problems. Although a major analysis of the levels and causes of stress in the institution was undertaken by the Group for Staff Support and Fellowship two years ago, its findings do not seem to have been taken on board by those in authority.

- Levels of trust vary across the campus.

The team discovered a palpable lack of trust and respect in the organisation, although the extent varied. It was present from the most senior to the most junior of staff and across sectors.

- There is some suspicion of the concept of "management"

which is usually equated with loss of freedom and growth of autocracy. The COF team embraces "management" where it means organising ourselves in the best way to get our jobs

done successfully, including freeing up time for research (for academics) or working more creatively/taking on more interesting tasks (for administrative and support staff).

Communication
- Effective communication is a cultural issue and we need a culture which encourages and promotes it.

- Lines of communication are often indirect or inappropriate or hit bottlenecks.

It is often the case that people send impersonal E-mail s rather than picking up a phone, or send messages unnecessarily through senior people rather than straight to the person dealing with the issue. Inappropriate communication methods are employed; an obvious example is posting information on the Intranet when not all members of staff have access to it, know how to use it or understand its potential. The Senior Management Team has been used as a network for communication, and this is sometimes not successful as it depends upon all SMT members being willing and able to pass information on to relevant staff.

- I.T. at UEA does not yet fully support effective communication.

Although the situation is improving, there could be improvements in access to electronic communication methods for all categories of staff eg Intranet and in the availability of training in I.T. Even the telephone system at UEA is out of date; some staff members still share phone lines; which causes problems both for staff concerned and for external callers.

- The result of these communication difficulties is that staff feel excluded from decision-making processes and the business of the university. Morale is affected, but the effects of this are overlooked.

Rôles
- People are not working effectively because they are not well-managed.

The team identified several gaps in formal management structures. There is clear line management for secretarial, clerical and technical staff, and for some research staff (although this does not necessarily imply that they are well-managed..) Academic staff on the whole are unmanaged. Some Schools and Units have good people managers, but this is almost accidental and depends solely on the individual involved; there is a lack of consistency across the University in the way academic staff are organised.

A significant problem could be that there has been no senior manager with responsibility for human resources issues (the COF team welcomes the recent appointment of a PVC with responsibility in this area) and little perception in the institution of what those issues are e.g. there has been little recognition of gender issues. In addition, there is no administrative or support staff representation on Staff Board. The team also identified an inflexibility in decision making processes arising from the unnecessary referral to higher authority of straightforward decisions eg. one-off student concessions; this issue wastes the time of many people at UEA.

- Rôles are not adequately defined.

The roles of Secretarial and Clerical and Administrative, Library and Computing staff are changing, but this is not formally recognised or followed through; there is occasionally duplication of effort arising from a reluctance to delegate fully to clerical staff. The academic role is also changing and expanding, but again little is done to recognise this or relieve stress caused by change.

- UEA has very few professional managers and does not generally train staff to manage, particularly in academic units.

Motivating and Rewarding
- Reward structures for staff at UEA are not dynamic or responsive

Reward is not linked with appraisal, and under-performance is routinely tolerated. Pay structures are rigid and differ between categories of staff for mainly historical reasons; we should at least question their appropriateness. (The team noted that there are national moves to do so). Staff opinion is that while financial reward is usually the bottom line, non-financial rewards are also valid, for instance extra leave or even "more thank-yous would be nice" (COF Workshop participant). Academic staff appreciate opportunities for study leave and research days, but find these increasingly under threat. Reward structures need also to be responsive: at present "doing well" for academics is not necessarily linked to the University or even their School. Academic colleagues can achieve promotion while under-performing in core activities, e.g. teaching or administrative duties. Loyalty is rewarded but not in significant ways, e.g. 2 extra days leave for 8 years service and a clock for 25 years.

- The Appraisal system needs reviewing.

There is currently no link between appraisal or other assessment of performance and reward. The team discovered widespread opinion that appraisal is not working; and in more than one School it had not even been fully carried out for more than a year.

- Recognition of performance is uneven and not always transparent.

Different types of activity do not appear to be equally valued; there is a perception that the only work that counts is research, with other excellent performance e.g. in teaching, recognised to a lesser degree or not at all. It is a paradox that at UEA this perception is held while research is not even facilitated by rationalisation of other responsibilities. Some Schools have developed sophisticated and transparent models for measuring workload for academic staff, but others have not; this can lead to resentment and misconceptions about relative workloads. This is another area where more successful spreading of good practice could be extremely valuable.

- The effect of using fixed term contracts needs to be re-evaluated.

Employing non-project based staff on fixed term contracts gains no more for the University than employing them on indefinite contracts with three months notice would do, but does

have the effect of reducing morale and poor morale can be infectious. One quarter of academic staff were on fixed term contracts, along with almost 100% of research and analogous staff and one third of secretarial and clerical staff, as of February 1998.[22]

- The role of training needs to be better understood.

Training can play an important role in motivation of employees, but this seems not to be widely understood at UEA. There was a proposal in 1996 to introduce an Employee Development Scheme[23]. The scheme was rejected in part because it was thought that any training undergone should be work-related, which is a misunderstanding of the purposes and dynamics of these schemes.

Training is also necessary, of course, for skills development. I.T. training was revealed to be of particular importance to staff at UEA. Investigations also found a lack of training available in the area of management, although the Staff Development and Training Office has begun to offer such programmes. Attitudes towards training are variable, with many (particularly senior) members of staff treating it as a purely voluntary exercise and recognising no particular responsibility to attend training in crucial areas. The question of training of managers remains a controversial one, but will not go away.

Conclusions: People

We need to:

- Train people more

particularly in the areas of I.T., management and communication methods. We should consider the possibilities of employee development schemes and investigate their role in motivating staff.

- Define roles more clearly

The division of work between Secretarial and Clerical and Administrative, Library and Computing grade staff needs to be formally re-considered and administrative work devolved to Secretarial and Clerical staff recognised fully. The spread of responsibilities for administrative decision making and activities between academics and administrators should be better streamlined and clarified. We should investigate the use of professional managers in a wider variety of roles, with any such managers being trained in the specific needs of universities.

- Improve communications

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[22] UEA Personnel Office data

[23] These are schemes whereby employees are given a certain amount of money towards training or development activity, which need not necessarily be work-related. The schemes work by stimulating staff towards the whole concept of self-development, and usually lead to them taking other training which is related to their work. They have been successfully implemented by some new Universities, notably Oxford Brookes and Sheffield Hallam.

By standardising computer hardware and software, providing distributed I.T. support and extending E-mail and intranet access further. We need to ensure that any large I.T. system purchases (eg centralised timetabling) are compatible with existing systems and the intranet. Improving I.T. support also implies improving career structures for our I.T. professionals.

• Look hard at reward structures

We should at least consider a move to a single salary spine; a move away from fixed term contracts for non-project-based staff; and linking reward to an improved appraisal system. There is scope to develop more non-financial forms of reward, eg study leave for academics. Annual professional development plans for all staff should be drawn up, and transparent and agreed criteria used to recognise and reward all core activities.

• Focus on human resources issues at a higher level.

The appointment of a PVC with responsibility in this area is a step forward.

• If we want a culture of trust *we* need to build it.

Part Two.   Findings - Processes

- UEA has difficulty in seeing itself as a whole and unified entity and lacks a sense of common purpose.

- There is generally a lack of central cohesion or support at UEA.

Interviews with School staff revealed that there were areas in which central services at UEA could provide more in the way of co-ordination of effort, and information. An example given was that information about A level trends and syllabi did not seem easily accessible, and would be useful for course and unit planning in Schools.

- a greater standardisation of I.T. would benefit UEA

UEA is currently not making the best use of its I.T. Systems are not always successfully integrated and accessible by those who need them. Purchasing of software is done piecemeal and implications for wider connectivity across the campus are not always considered. The team was pleased to note that UEA's recently adopted I.T. Strategy addresses problems in these areas and includes plans for further networking of systems and for improving access from student residences.

- UEA currently lacks processes to help us decide what our strategy should be, taking into account the external factors we have to respond to.

For example, there is little active benchmarking against other institutions when planning course developments (with a few notably successful exceptions); most Schools rely upon anecdotal evidence and personal contacts to form opinion about market trends; few undertake any significant research. Responses to change tend therefore to be incremental and piecemeal rather than strategically planned, resulting in fragmentation of degree offerings and delivery of some units with very low student enrolments.

- We need to improve our *external focus,* to see ourselves as others see us:

"Too many courses made us look cheap in relation to our peers, we needed to rationalise."
(Interview with School staff re: course planning)

- We also need to develop our *internal focus,*

to take a longer-term strategic view of our activities. Course units are often offered on the basis of what teachers happen to be available, and extensive lack of commonality in course units can lead to teaching inefficiencies, however we do also have to recognise that some free choice in degree content is a selling point in relation to some other institutions. Part of this internal focus should be an awareness of the internal dynamics of the School or Unit:

"Leadership we see as a key necessity in School success. High integration within Schools encourages good continuity of staff and more cross-working between sectors".

(Interviews on course development and strategy at UEA)

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- We are not very successful at recognising the needs of different student groups

Interviews with International students indicated a need for more attention to orientation during their first few weeks at UEA, particularly in the areas of study methods, unit choice, assessment methods and form-filling. There are some processes involving international students which are unnecessarily complicated e.g. application to CEB language courses currently has to be done entirely separately from the simultaneous application for degree study.

UEA currently has little experience of the complexities of offering non-standard delivery of courses (part time, distance learning etc.) Such ventures have to be carefully planned and recognised as serving a different market need. A good example of this is the recent development of a distance learning MSc in ENV. An opportunity was identified in an area where UEA has a key strength and reputation, and where there is a market demand.

- Co-ordination of activities is currently managed by committee

In most cases these bodies do not have financial resources or official sanctions and therefore find it difficult to decide strategy or drive its implementation.

- There is confusion and uncertainty about the balance between centralised and decentralised roles at UEA

UEA faces the same difficulties as many other universities in managing the contradiction between centralised and decentralised power. Decentralisation can contribute to loss of institutional coherence and a risk of excessive internal competition [24] but equally, over-centralisation can damage the innovative potential of the institution. It is critical that we have a management and governance structure which addresses these tensions. The source of innovation (and ultimately strategic advantage) in any university is bottom-up; authority within the university is *intellectual* authority. If innovation is to be encouraged, then an appropriate autonomy must be accommodated. At the same time, the need to develop and implement a coherent strategic focus in the organisation is necessary if we are to compete successfully in the climate which now exists in the Higher Education sector.

Conclusions: Processes

- Systems need to be more integrated and easily accessible by those who need them and purchasing of software should be more consultative, involving those who will use it, and with the implications for wider connectivity across the campus considered at every stage.

- Processes should be put in place which encourage Schools to research seriously and plan more strategically when developing new programmes or units. Good practice needs to be shared on a routine basis. UEA needs to develop a culture of looking more carefully outwards and inwards.

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[24] An extensive list of literature on the management and governance of Higher Education institutions is included in Appendix 1 at the end of this report.

- All processes involving students need to be simplified and tailored to the type of student involved (especially international students).

- Management and governance structures should be developed to address current problems in the decision making and co-ordination processes of the University. This should be done in a way which maintains appropriate levels of autonomy at School/Unit level, but balances this with accountability to the institution's strategic direction.