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# Corporate Plan

*2005-6 to 2009-10*

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University of Oxford



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## **Corporate Plan 2005–6 to 2009–10**

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## Purpose and contents

1. The Corporate Plan is, first and foremost, a ‘to do list’ for the Collegiate University. Its ten strategy sections identify issues to be addressed over the planning period (2005–6 to 2009–10). It covers attributes of Oxford that need to be changed, like the financial position, and others that need to be sustained, like the tutorial system. The Plan has been compiled after extensive consultation over a three-year period, beginning with discussions on learning and teaching in 2002–3. The first academic strategy consultation a year later called for further work to be done on assessing Oxford’s current performance. The results of that work were published in the 2005 *Academic Strategy Green Paper* along with sets of policy proposals. Those proposals have been modified substantially as a result of the latest consultation.
2. Preparation of the Corporate Plan is the responsibility of Council. Now that the text has been approved by Congregation, Council will treat the various strategies as instructions to its committees and those responsible for their business, and as the framework within which academic and service units will be expected to plan. This marks the 2005 Corporate Plan out from its two predecessors.
3. A divisional planning system was introduced as part of the governance reforms in 2000. It has enabled the divisions to take a strategic view about their academic interests and the financial constraints within which they must work. However, the absence of an effective corporate planning framework, bringing together the thinking of the divisions, services and colleges, has led to outcomes that are problematic, especially the rapid growth in student numbers. Growth in the volume of externally funded research has also raised questions about sustainability, and has highlighted the need for infrastructure developments.
4. Formulating strategies that are capable of resolving such problems and commanding widespread support is a significant challenge. The consultation process has been lengthy and some of the discussions have been difficult. The resultant Corporate Plan attempts to address the difficulties squarely but not, in all cases, definitively. The Plan will evolve over time (see the section on Governance and Management) and, as with any algorithm, the initial solution may prove to be some way from the optimum.
5. The contents will mature as the new planning cycle unfolds. As a framework within which academic and service units will be expected to operate, the Plan is not yet fully populated with their ideas. Different parts of the Collegiate University face quite different challenges and will respond to the strategies in locally appropriate ways. In turn, this is likely to require modification of the strategies themselves.
6. Moreover, both initially and in each planning cycle, it is inevitable that discussion on some issues will be more advanced than on others. The Plan has been completed in July 2005 with the Governance Review still in train (the first discussion in Congregation about the Review Committee’s findings is scheduled for November). The Working Party on Admissions will not report until Michaelmas Term; the agreed cycle for policy-making on student numbers has its next decision point in early Michaelmas; and proposals for major developments in the library sector are awaited. The Task Force on Academic Employment is currently consulting on its terms of reference.
7. On the other hand, there have been a number of developments since the publication of the *Academic Strategy Green Paper*. The University’s Access Agreement has been published along with details of the Oxford Opportunity Bursary scheme; the working parties on graduate taught programmes and graduate teaching assistantships have completed their deliberations; good progress has been made in restructuring the University’s financial management; and Oxford-wide fundraising protocols have been developed.
8. For these reasons, and in response to the extensive feedback from the consultation process, the contents and structure of the Corporate Plan differ significantly from the Green Paper.
9. First, there is a section on values and objectives. The objectives set out in the Green Paper were all concerned with the pursuit of excellence. Central though this is to Oxford’s thinking, there are other values, including academic freedom and collegiality, that are equally cherished. In a Corporate Plan it is appropriate to make these implicit values explicit and, indeed, axiomatic.
10. Second, the Plan does not recapitulate the performance analysis of the Green Paper, other than to set the scene for the presentation of the strategies.
11. Third, the strategies themselves have been reorganised. There is now an academic strategy covering: Research; Learning and Teaching (incorporating both size and shape and admissions and access); and Enterprise and Collaboration. The supporting strategies are on Academic and Student Services, Personnel, Space, Finance, and Governance and Management. The contents of some sections have been expanded a little by the inclusion of elements from the Academic Strategy Action Plan that was adopted at the end of the 2003–4 consultation exercise.

## Values and objectives

12. The strategies contained in this Corporate Plan are designed to achieve the objectives set out below. These objectives are all concerned, in their various ways, with excellence, but a commitment to excellence is only one of the defining features of Oxford. Other values define the context within which – and the means by which – the objectives will be pursued. It is these values that help to make Oxford distinctive and give it its enduring appeal.

### Academic freedom

13. The most fundamental value, common to all universities worthy of the name, is academic freedom, which may be defined as the freedom to conduct research, to teach, speak and publish, subject to the norms and standards of scholarly inquiry, without interference or penalty, wherever the search for truth and understanding may lead.

### Subsidiarity

14. Closely connected with this concept is that of subsidiarity – the notion that decisions should be taken at the lowest level appropriate to the matter in hand. Thus, for example, deciding what to research is a matter for individuals and, where relevant, research groups. It becomes a matter for departments and faculties, divisions and the University as a whole only when support is required, most obviously through the allocation of resources. Subsidiarity applies equally to teaching and, of course, administration generally.

### Disciplinary diversity

15. The pursuit of excellence, if left unqualified, could lead to a concentration of activity and investment in a decreasing number of departments and faculties. The principle of disciplinary diversity requires the University to continue to operate across a broad spectrum. Organisational diversity should flow from this principle and that of subsidiarity.

### Parity of esteem

16. This leads in turn to parity of esteem, which, in Oxford, applies both between disciplines and between teaching and research. There is no hierarchy of value in either case. The fact that Oxford attaches as much importance to teaching as to research is one of the characteristics that distinguish it from many of its international competitors.

### Collegiality

17. Together with Cambridge, it is distinguished absolutely by its collegiate structure, which is an institutional and physical expression of its commitment to collegiality. Through Congregation, academic staff have a collective responsibility for the fortunes of the University. Within each college, the powers and responsibilities of trusteeship are exercised by the fellows collectively. These participatory democracies are complemented by the university committee system, which

constitutes a representative democracy. Throughout Oxford, staff in all categories approach their work not as employees, first and foremost, but as members of a community. There is, in short, a shared responsibility, which is made manifest through formal structures and discharged through a sense of mutual obligation.

18. This sense of obligation applies equally to the relationship between staff and students, and amongst the students themselves. Oxford's colleges enable students to belong to small, caring communities whilst being part of a large, complex university. The tutorial and graduate supervision systems create uniquely supportive learning environments by virtue of the obligations which they embody.

19. The principle of collegiality might be thought to subsume those of subsidiarity, disciplinary diversity and parity of esteem. These virtues arguably flow from the collegial notion that Oxford is a scholarly community based on mutual respect and shared responsibilities.

### The pursuit of excellence

20. It is against this background that the objectives of the Corporate Plan should be seen. They are concerned with Oxford's pursuit of excellence in its research, teaching and direct contributions to society, and in the quality of its staff and students and the environment within which they work.

### Objectives

- (1) *Lead the international research agenda across the University's disciplinary spectrum and through interdisciplinary initiatives*
  - (2) *Provide an exceptional education for both undergraduates and graduates, characterised by the close contact of students with distinguished scholars in nurturing collegiate and departmental communities*
  - (3) *Make significant contributions to society, regionally, nationally and internationally, through the fruits of its research and the skills of its graduates, its entrepreneurial activities and policy leadership, and its work in continuing education*
  - (4) *Attract, develop and retain academic staff of the highest international calibre and make Oxford University and its colleges employers of choice for all staff in the international, national and local environments*
  - (5) *Recruit the very best students nationally and internationally through an equitable process based on achievement and potential*
  - (6) *Deliver exceptional facilities and services and manage them effectively and responsively for the benefit of staff and students*
21. None of these objectives is achievable without a significant improvement in the finances of the Collegiate University.

## The strategic challenge

22. In the first *THES* world university league tables, published in 2004, Oxford is ranked fifth overall and third on peer review. The benchmarking exercise conducted by McKinsey and Company for the *Academic Strategy* Green paper reinforces the *THES* findings. On research impact, it puts Oxford third behind Harvard and, marginally, Stanford. With respect to learning, the evidence indicates that Oxford continues to offer students an outstanding education. Performance in ‘third-leg’ activities (including OUP and Isis Innovation) is also of the highest order.

23. Any attempt at benchmarking is, of course, problematic and should be treated with caution. However, the data suggest that Oxford has managed to retain its position amongst the world’s elite despite chronic under-funding. Figures prepared under the Government’s Transparency Review Costing Method show the extent of the problem. For the year 2002–3 (the last for which data are available) there was a deficit on publicly funded teaching in Oxford of £27.8m, not counting the shortfall in the colleges, and a deficit on publicly funded research of £67.7m. At the same time, Oxford’s international competitors have been generating substantial surpluses and investing them to enhance their standing.

24. The task for Oxford, then, is to find the ways and means to keep up with – and outperform – its competitors in challenging financial circumstances. The scale of the challenge was made clear by the work of the Vice-Chancellor’s Financial Strategy Group in 2003, which identified the need to raise an additional £100m per annum. Other work has suggested that the annual ‘vision deficit’ is as much as £200m.

25. Whilst seeking to increase its income substantially, the University must make every effort to use its resources efficiently and effectively. This does not mean working its staff harder. Excessive workloads are part of the problem, not the solution. The continuing success of Oxford is built on the dedication and determination of its staff. If the University is to continue to perform at the highest levels it must find ways to ensure that its academics are able to devote more time to their core activities.

26. This requires organisational changes. The governance reforms of 2000 markedly improved Oxford’s decision-making machinery but more needs to be done, especially at the interface between the centre and the colleges and at the institutional level. In addition to structural questions, attention must be given to the organisational culture. At every level there must be an appropriate balance between strategy and opportunity. Within the framework of the Corporate Plan, there must be clear responsibility and accountability for the delivery of agreed objectives. Divisions, faculties and departments (both academic and service) must have the freedom to set and achieve their own objectives within the agreed framework, just as colleges must remain free to act in accordance with their statutes. The effective functioning of the whole institution requires the engagement of the university

community in decisions on strategic directions, which in turn requires excellent internal communication. There is a need to build management capacity, improve business processes, and reduce bureaucratic burdens, consistent with the principle that academic decisions should be made by academics.

27. The competitiveness of Oxford in the longer term is contingent on much greater financial security and autonomy, where the former depends in part on the latter. To achieve both will require demonstrably effective management, a substantially enhanced programme of enterprise, innovation and knowledge transfer, and highly effective external communication. There is a need to mobilise public and political opinion behind the idea that Britain and Europe require genuinely world-class universities and that Oxford is, and intends to remain, one of them.

28. The following ten sections of the Corporate Plan set out strategies to achieve this general goal and the objectives specified above, in the context of the wider values of the Collegiate University.

## Research

### Strategy I

- (a) Sustain global excellence where it exists by funding and otherwise supporting excellent units to continue to perform at the highest level
- (b) Support outstanding new initiatives within and across disciplinary boundaries where they are likely to enhance the University's research impact and be sustainable financially
- (c) [Re-]establish global excellence in selected departments and faculties based on their research potential and the cost of realising that potential
- (d) Assess the research performance of departments and faculties through the regular cycle of reviews, taking full account of the diversity of disciplinary research cultures and academic values
- (e) Make new appointments, rebalance academic workloads, provide extra administrative support and staff development opportunities and, where necessary, make changes in organisational structure, in order to address issues of research quality and productivity
- (f) Retain scholars of the highest distinction and potential and expand their numbers by selective recruitment
- (g) Improve research infrastructure and the efficiency with which it is used
- (h) Build on the considerable research strengths within Oxford's colleges, so that their role in supporting research is effectively co-ordinated with that of the divisions and their constituent units

29. The research strategy flows directly from Objective (1): Lead the international research agenda across the University's disciplinary spectrum and through interdisciplinary initiatives. It also directly affects Objectives (3) and (4).

30. The research benchmarking exercise conducted for the *Academic Strategy* Green Paper confirmed the ranking of Oxford by the *THES* as the leading university outside the US and one of the top five in the world. It showed that within Oxford's research profile there are impressive peaks of research excellence, and strength across the board, with some localised underperformance.

31. Sustaining research excellence is demanding. Doing so with modest resources whilst maintaining teaching of the highest quality is especially exacting. The first goal of the research strategy (I (a)) is to ensure that, where there is demonstrable global excellence, it is sustained. Performance at this high level transcends the requirements of the RAE and assessment of its quality may require quite different forms of judgement. Over the next five years, substantial sums will be invested to support research of the highest quality.

32. In addition to sustaining existing activities, strategic investment is required for new initiatives both within and between departments (I (b)). For Oxford to flourish it must support new work whilst preserving the best of the old. To this end, the University will increase the size of the Research Development Fund (RDF).

33. A major new initiative that will take root over the planning period is the James Martin 21st Century School. It will stimulate research on issues such as climate change, ageing, extreme inequalities in wealth across countries and continents, epidemic risks, and the effects of rapid technological change. James Martin's benefaction – worth more than £3m a year in perpetuity – will provide funding for researchers to focus specifically on the ideas, methods, policies and practices that will address some of the major challenges facing humanity.

34. Historic under-investment in Humanities infrastructure will be addressed by the development of a Humanities Centre on the Radcliffe Infirmary site (see the Space Strategy, VIII (c)). Current humanities projects include:

- up-dating the on-line version of the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (ODNB)
- deciphering lost, ancient texts and inscriptions, using modern scientific and computational methods developed in Oxford
- launching the new Khalili Research Centre for the Art and Material Culture of the Middle East

35. There are many other initiatives elsewhere in the University reflecting a rich diversity and dynamism of research activity. Much of this activity is interdisciplinary. The primary role of the University in this context is to act as an enabler: to

provide the framework and infrastructure within which the work of individuals and departments can flourish. The success of interdisciplinary projects – and collaborations in general – depends on their being researcher-led. The University can react positively to ‘bottom up’ initiatives, as it did with e-Science by providing pump-priming from the RDF plus strong central support for an allocation of SRIF2 capital, or it can erect frameworks within which such initiatives can develop, as with the Princeton Partnership.

36. If excellence is to be rewarded and new initiatives nurtured, the funding available to transform the fortunes of less successful departments and faculties will be limited. It will be necessary, therefore, to use it selectively to support those units that are able to make the most effective and persuasive cases in terms of their research potential and the cost of realising that potential (I (c)). Following the last RAE in 2001, significant investments (totalling more than £12m over six years) have been made to support research in areas including Economics and Geography. More recently additional funds totalling £11m over five years have been committed specifically to support research in preparation for the next RAE.

37. For the University to make sound judgements on the above issues, it must continue to assess research performance on a regular and systematic basis (I (d)). Such exercises are usually best conducted by departments and faculties themselves, with support from officers, using methods that are appropriate to the discipline. It is proposed, therefore, to embed benchmarking in the University’s regular review system (see Strategy X (e)) so that it becomes part of the self-evaluation exercise, making it subject to the scrutiny of the expert externals on review panels.

38. The *THES* world university rankings and the Green Paper benchmarking exercise both suggest that there may be a problem of low research productivity in some areas. The high rankings of Oxford departments on overall research impact were not matched with respect to impact per faculty member. This is partly explicable in terms of general differences in academic culture (similar effects were observed for all the leading UK universities) and the particular commitment in Oxford to having leading researchers engaged in teaching. Nevertheless, it is clear from internal reviews and other sources that academics in Oxford can be less productive in research terms than they would like to be because of the competing demands on their time (see the Personnel Strategy, VII (b)). Various measures can be used to address this issue. They include: the recruitment of new staff (either to bring in new blood or relieve pressure on existing staff); rebalancing workloads; recruiting additional support staff; and providing opportunities for staff development (I (e)). If there is evidence of sustained underperformance across a department or faculty the possibility of restructuring must remain open.

39. It is obvious that research success at the highest level requires outstandingly talented people. It is essential for the University both to have academic staff of high quality across the board and to attract and retain scholars of particular distinction whenever it can. Strategy I (f) recognises that it is important to pay as much attention to potential as to achievement and to regard the development of ‘home grown’ talent as a challenge of equal importance to that of attracting ‘stars’ from other universities. Both will be done.

40. A substantial part of the research effort in Oxford is provided by contract research staff (CRS). They constitute two-thirds of Oxford’s academic staff (a higher fraction than at any other UK university). Their numbers have grown from around 400 to almost 3,000 over the last thirty years. Whilst their work is central to its research performance, they are not well integrated into the Collegiate University (see Strategy VII (g)).

41. However good the people, they cannot function effectively without high-quality resources. Numerous improvements in research infrastructure – and the efficiency with which that infrastructure is used – will occur over the next five years (I (g)). Plans for improving the library and ICT systems are outlined in the Academic and Student Services Strategy (VI).

42. Research in Oxford is not just the business of the divisions and their constituent units. Colleges also make significant contributions beyond their support for joint appointments. In particular, they: fund senior and junior research fellowships (over 200 college post-holders were included in the last RAE); fully fund titular appointments pending the availability of divisional funding; provide financial, academic and pastoral support for doctoral students; have, in some cases, significant research programmes and reputations of their own, and foster collaboration across traditional disciplinary boundaries. Much of this activity is funded from endowments and directly supports the research agendas of divisions, departments and faculties. The strategy proposes enhanced coordination of these efforts (I (h)).

## Learning and teaching: programmes and methods

### Strategy II

- (a) Maintain the tutorial system for undergraduate education
- (b) Stimulate the creation of new patterns of teaching and assessment, consistent with the maintenance of the tutorial system, which focus on learning outcomes rather than the allocation of teaching hours
- (c) Encourage changes in course structures that would allow increased student choice and mobility, innovation in programme design, and greater consistency with the Bologna framework
- (d) Increase flexibility in the assignment of teaching duties across the Collegiate University
- (e) Ensure that graduate study is embedded as a core activity of the Collegiate University, with colleges offering high-quality academic as well as social benefits to their graduate students
- (f) Establish an Academic Assistantship scheme
- (g) Establish disciplinary programmes of Preparation for Academic Practice under which graduate students and contract research staff can acquire the skills to teach and are given the opportunity to do so
- (h) Develop systems to reward particularly successful teaching at undergraduate and graduate level
- (i) Support the sharing of good practice in teaching and learning between colleges and between departments and faculties
- (j) Review part-time and other flexible forms of provision in the context of the growing regional, national and international demand for continuing personal and professional development

43. The programmes and methods part of the strategy on Learning and Teaching seeks to deliver Objective (2) and to contribute to the fulfilment of Objectives (4) and (5).

44. The provision of frequent direct academic contacts between students and scholars of real distinction lies at the heart of the Oxford approach to learning and teaching.

45. For undergraduates, the tutorial system requires students, typically in pairs, to prepare work independently (and with guidance in advance of their tutorial), to engage their critical faculties and intellectual curiosity, to reflect on and set out their ideas, to develop analytical skills, and to articulate their views. This promotes critical thinking, clarity of understanding and argument, personal and intellectual confidence, and the desire to learn. The tutorial system has given Oxford its worldwide reputation for teaching as evidenced by the high calibre of applicants for its degrees, both from the UK and internationally.

46. The tutorial is – and will remain – the bedrock of undergraduate education (II (a)). However, this does not mean that there will be no developments in teaching practice. The 2002–3 consultation on learning and teaching, which drew on the reports of external examiners, review committees, subject and institutional audit reports, the Oxford Student Course Experience Questionnaire (OSCEQ), and reference data from the Franks (1966) and North (1997) Commissions, highlighted three reasons for change:

- the steady increase in the quantity of tutorials over the years appears, in some areas, to have been at the expense of their best qualities
- inappropriately high undergraduate workloads adversely affect the quality of learning
- the use of a wide range of pedagogic methods has the ability to enhance learning

47. The growth in the number of tutorials per student, the steady deterioration in the staff–student ratio, and the expansion of graduate education have made teaching loads for many staff excessive. It is not possible to give of one’s best as a teacher or researcher when over-burdened. The process of ‘stint reform’ has had some impact on this problem but, in some instances, at the expense of treating syllabus design as a matter of allocating teaching inputs. Strategy II (b) seeks to refocus thinking in this area onto learning outcomes and the teaching required to deliver them. If and when changes in the pattern of teaching are introduced it is important to ensure that their impact on learning is assessed.

48. In some parts of the University there is no pressure or reason to change current practice. In others the pressures are great and the reasons compelling. In all cases, subjects have been asked (through the 2004 Academic Strategy Action Plan) to publish revised norms for each programme for the amounts of teaching of different types to be provided, including tutorial

teaching, where the tutorial norm should be set so as to preserve the best qualities of tutorials, allow for the development of an appropriate range of pedagogic methods, and ensure that workloads are acceptable.

49. Individual undergraduate programmes are subject to periodic review and have their core content and internal options refreshed on a regular basis. There is less frequent consideration of the undergraduate offer as a whole, either at divisional or University level (see the discussion of shape in the Size and Shape section). Compared with master's level, there have been relatively few new undergraduate programmes in recent years; Mathematics and Statistics, and the four-year courses in Computer Science and Mathematics and Computer Science are notable exceptions. Because of differences in course structure it is difficult to develop new programmes from existing course components and there is little opportunity for single honours students to take courses outside their primary discipline. The North Report (1997) proposed a radical solution to this problem – standardisation of course structures. The strategy for the next five years (II (c)) is rather different. Academic divisions will be asked to address structural constraints on student choice and innovation in programme design, where they are inhibiting intellectually desirable developments.

50. They will also be asked to consider the structural difficulties associated with the development of exchanges and jointly taught programmes, of the kind that exist with Princeton and, at doctoral level, the Scripps Institute (see the Enterprise and Collaboration section). In addition, attention will have to be given to the Bologna process and its implications for programme structures.

51. Many new programmes are at the development stage and may be introduced over the lifetime of this plan. They include the master's programmes in Clinical Pharmacology, Embryology, Film Studies, Medieval Studies, American History, Modern South Asian Studies, Archaeological Sciences, Biomedical Engineering, Mathematical Finance, and Nanotechnology (the last of which will be offered on a part-time basis and is a joint venture between the Mathematical and Physical Sciences Division and Continuing Education). New programmes in Financial Economics and African Studies have just been introduced.

52. One of the constraints on the introduction of new programmes is workload. There is widespread concern that responsibilities for new graduate programmes have been added to, rather than melded with, undergraduate duties. Tutorial fellows who supervise a significant number of doctoral students or make major contributions to master's teaching frequently do so in addition to their normal tutorial 'stint'. Current mechanisms for addressing this problem, such as buy-outs, are thought by many to be inadequate. As the Conference of Colleges has made clear, the role played by academic staff in

respect of their graduate teaching and supervision must be fully recognised, and rewarded in the same way as undergraduate teaching and research. In seeking to increase flexibility in the assignment of teaching duties across the Collegiate University, Strategy II (d) is based on the recognition that this is a structural issue having to do with contractual responsibilities and funding flows. The latter will be addressed through the design of the Joint Resource Allocation Mechanism or JRAM (see the Finance Strategy, IX).

53. This issue is closely related to another theme of both the North and Franks Commissions – embedding graduate studies as a core activity in the Collegiate University (II (e)). Departments and faculties have the major role in graduate education so, as graduate numbers have grown, the proportion of Oxford's students for which the (historically undergraduate) colleges are primarily responsible has diminished. The notion that graduate studies should be a core activity of the Collegiate University encompasses the idea that all graduates should be members of colleges, contrary to the arguments of some departments, and that there should be an academic dimension to their college life. This can be pursued in a number of ways, including the development of 'subject families' and the establishment of interdisciplinary graduate seminars. It will also be helped by the establishment of an Academic Assistantship scheme (II (f)); proposals for such a scheme have been made by the Graduate Teaching Assistantship Working Party and will be the subject of consultation in Michaelmas Term 2005.

54. The success of Oxford in being awarded funding for a Centre of Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) will further cement graduate studies as a core activity. It will also create new opportunities for contract research staff. The Centre is devoted to preparation for academic practice and is designed to complement the work of departments and faculties to make Oxford the university of choice worldwide for those seeking an academic career. Through discipline-specific programmes, it will enable them to acquire teaching skills and develop their teaching practice (II (g)).

55. Pressure to perform on the research front, with both prestige and funding at stake, is capable of unbalancing the commitment to treat teaching as being of equal standing with research. For this reason, Strategy II (h) proposes the development of reward systems for teaching that go beyond the Rewards for Excellence in Teaching initiative, which focused on successful change.

56. Strategy II (i) embraces the extensive work done by the Senior Tutors' Committee and others to support the sharing of good practice.

57. Strategy II (j) identifies the need to review part-time and flexible forms of provision, which are becoming increasingly important parts of the Oxford scene.

## Learning and teaching: size and shape

### Strategy III

- (a) Return to the historical overall growth rate from the currently elevated level then 'plateau out' before the end of the planning period
- (b) Review the distribution of student numbers between degree categories (PGR, PGT, UG and Visiting Student) and between programmes within each category, with a view to accommodating change within the agreed envelope for growth
- (c) Base any redistribution of numbers on explicit criteria, involving considerations of departmental and college academic policy, student quality, long-term trends in demand, access, teaching loads, and income and expenditure
- (d) Ensure that future annual reviews have available an analysis of the full economic cost of each type of programme to the Collegiate University as a whole
- (e) Set targets for numbers, on a rolling, five-year basis with annual review
- (f) Respond to opportunities to develop part-time provision, subject to the quality of that provision being consistent with Oxford's expectations
- (g) Keep under review the potential impact on Oxford's size and shape of national and international developments

58. Size and shape has an impact on Objectives (1), (2), (4) and (5) and, of course, on funding. It affects, in particular, staff workloads, the quality of the student body and the student experience, the capacity to grow research, and the achievement of educational outcomes. The general principles agreed by Council with respect to size and shape are included in the 2004 Academic Strategy Action Plan. The specific policy for the next five years will be decided by Council in Michaelmas Term 2005 on the advice of EPSC and the Conference of Colleges, in accordance with the procedures agreed in 2003. The Strategy set out above is that which the Educational Policy and Standards Committee (EPSC) has proposed to Council and on which the Conference will give its advice.

59. The overall size of the student body has grown steadily over the last 50-odd years at an average annual rate of 1.5 per cent. The total number of undergraduates in residence has risen from just under 6,000 in 1951–2 to over 11,100 in 2003–4. Over the same period, the total number of postgraduates has risen from just over 1,000 to over 6,100. In contrast, 'established' academic staff numbers have remained relatively static, so the ratio of staff to students has deteriorated. This has been offset to some degree by the dramatic growth in contract researchers, some of whom contribute to teaching.

60. The rate of growth in student numbers declined in the late 1990s but increased substantially following divisionalisation to almost 2.5 per cent in 2003–4. Since 2000, the divisions have made the case for growth on an annual basis through their divisional plans. Current plans indicate that, in aggregate, the divisions wish to see growth of over 4 per cent per annum over the next few years, but the colleges are concerned that growth in excess of 1 per cent would exceed their capacity to provide accommodation and sustain the student experience. The draft Local Plan states that the City Council expects the University to be able to accommodate about 83 per cent of its students, but since 2003 it has not been able to do so. Planning permission for new ventures may be affected if this issue is not addressed.

61. At present, it has been estimated (using data derived from the Government's Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) initiative) that the annual cost to the Collegiate University of each non-medical undergraduate ranges from £12,600 to £14,600 (undergraduates reading medicine are significantly more expensive). Comparable figures for the costs of non-medical PGT students range from £9,500 to £12,000. The costs of PGR provision vary depending on the precise nature of the research being undertaken, and the facilities required, but the TRAC analysis suggests that core costs are between £7.5k and £9k. Income to Oxford for publicly funded undergraduate students and PGT students in these non-medical subjects ranges between £5,600 and £7,600, which means that the annual loss per student is running at about £7k–£8k (fees charged to overseas students are more closely related to costs).

The introduction of ‘top-up’ fees and the associated bursary system will reduce the annual loss per Home/EU undergraduate student by only about £1,000.

62. Under these circumstances, growing student numbers whilst maintaining a commitment to the quality of the student experience would lead to unsustainable losses. Strategy III (a) recognises that there is a significant amount of growth built into the system through, for example, contracted increases in medical student numbers, a long-standing agreement to expand the MBA, and new graduate programmes coming on stream (see the section on Learning and Teaching: programmes and methods). However, it seeks to constrain growth in the short run and to stabilise numbers before the end of the five-year planning period. This should stem the losses, drive up the quality of the student body, and combat the twin problems of deteriorating staff–student ratios and escalating workloads.

63. If overall growth is to be constrained, difficult choices will have to be made about the shape (composition) of the student body.

64. For many decades, the proportion of graduates has been increasing and this trend is set to continue. With respect to research students, national benchmarking data from Evidence Ltd. indicates that numbers in Oxford are low in some areas, given the level of research activity, and low overall. The areas in question are Medicine, the Life Sciences, Engineering and, to a lesser extent, the other Physical Sciences. All divisions wish to grow their research student numbers, albeit at different rates, and it is generally agreed that the vitality of the University’s research culture is dependent upon their succeeding.

65. College concerns about the desirability of expanding master’s provision, as planned by the divisions, led to the establishment of a postgraduate taught course working party, which has now completed its deliberations. Its report will be available to the Conference of Colleges and Council when they consider the size and shape strategy.

66. Oxford’s reputation for undergraduate education resides in the quality of its teaching, not in the number of students admitted. Indeed, increases in the latter are capable of compromising the former. In the consultation on size and shape in 2003–4 it was suggested that undergraduate numbers should remain static. In fact, total undergraduate admissions declined by around 3 per cent between the 2002 and 2003 entries and again in 2004.

67. Strategy III (b) leaves open the question as to whether this decline should continue. Instead, it requires divisions and their constituent units to consider the relative numbers of PGR, PGT, UG and Visiting Students in the disciplines for which they are responsible and to include proposed changes in numbers in divisional plans. To ensure that college interests are included in the process, it will be necessary both to involve colleges at an early stage in the planning cycle (see the Governance and

Management section) and to extend the dialogue that exists between departments and colleges over places for new programmes to all proposed changes in student numbers.

68. To facilitate the dialogue, III (c) calls for criteria to be developed to guide the redistribution process. Specifically, it proposes that consideration should be given to departmental and college academic policy, student quality, long-term trends in demand, access, teaching loads, and programme income and expenditure.

69. At present, it is difficult to establish the full economic cost of academic programmes – the cost to the Collegiate University as a whole, including the cost of capital. For example, when divisions make judgements about new programmes, direct college costs are not accounted for, nor are the costs of providing accommodation and teaching space (other than through the space charge). Strategy III (d) requires the central administration to work with the divisions and colleges to provide better data at an appropriate level. Information on costs must be combined with an assessment of academic benefits so that decisions can be taken in the round. Some of the Collegiate University’s educational and scholarly activities will not and cannot be expected to break even – one of the primary reasons for seeking to grow endowments is to allow shortfalls on such activities to be covered. However, the Collegiate University must live within its means and, at current levels of endowment, many of its activities must do better than break even to allow the possibility of cross-subsidy.

70. Because of the need to formulate clear plans, to coordinate them across the Collegiate University, and to communicate them effectively, it is proposed that target numbers should be set on a rolling, five-year basis with annual review (III (e)). Whatever the level of these targets, it is important that they are understood to have a degree of flexibility, given the manifold uncertainties in recruitment, admissions, and completion times.

71. In addition to the 17,500 full-time students, there are around 6,200 part-time students on credit-bearing courses (equivalent to 1,190 FTEs), including, for example, Software Engineering, Evidence-Based Healthcare, and International Human Rights Law. There are also more than 8,000 students (around 600 FTEs) on non-award bearing International Programmes, regional Public Programmes, and Continuing Professional Development courses. Part (f) of Strategy III calls on the Department for Continuing Education and its academic partners across the University to respond to opportunities to develop part-time provision, subject to a high quality threshold.

72. Finally, all judgements about size and shape are necessarily conditional on national and international circumstances. As they change, Oxford must be ready to adapt its position (III (g)).

## Learning and teaching: admissions and access

### Strategy IV

- (a) Ensure that the best applicants are admitted, irrespective of origin, circumstances, and college choice
- (b) Strengthen public confidence in the access and admissions processes
- (c) Implement the University's Access Agreement by setting appropriate targets for applications from under-represented groups and coordinating domestic access efforts across the Collegiate University to achieve those targets
- (d) Ensure that the Oxford Opportunity Bursaries scheme is operated successfully, making the University the most affordable place to study for talented British students from families on low incomes
- (e) Implement a vigorous programme of international recruitment
- (f) Significantly expand funding for graduates through scholarships and bursaries and the availability of Academic Assistantships
- (g) Improve the flexibility of the new graduate admission system and its use for quality control across disciplines
- (h) Monitor the impact of changes in the composition of Oxford's student population on the demand for student facilities and services

73. The admissions strategy is designed to further Objective (5): *Recruit the very best students nationally and internationally through an equitable process based on achievement and potential*. Considerable attention has been focused on this objective over many years and, as part of the regular process of review, the Admissions Working Party was re-established in 2004–5 to consider further improvements to the admissions system. The Working Party will report after the publication of the Corporate Plan, so this section is likely to be revised in the light of its findings and responses to them. It will also be necessary to consider the implications of national developments in relation to Post Qualification Applications.

74. Amongst Oxford's 10,000 UK applicants for undergraduate places, around 8,000 have, or will achieve, three or more As at A level. With about 3,200 places available, it is necessary to obtain information that goes beyond A-level performance if fair decisions are to be made. Consequently, extensive use is made of interviewing and, increasingly, pre-interview tests. Medicine, for example, in concert with medical schools at other HEIs, has developed a sophisticated test-based process that is designed to ensure that the best candidates are admitted across the University, irrespective of school circumstances, college choice and country of origin. The Admissions Working Party is considering system changes to facilitate the achievement of this objective in all subjects (IV (a)).

75. It is also reflecting on the need to persuade public and political opinion of the fairness of the system. The University must be able to demonstrate that candidates' chances are affected only by their achievements and potential and that everything reasonable has been done to promote access (IV (b)). This may require changes that go beyond what is necessary to satisfy internal opinion that the system is fair.

76. The University's Access Agreement<sup>1</sup> focuses on promoting applications from under-represented groups, using targets based on the populations achieving the required entry standard in appropriate A-level subjects. There is a substantial programme of access and outreach activities, including summer programmes, regional conferences, aspiration raising, and schools and colleges liaison. The evidence suggests that the programme as a whole has been successful (state sector applications increased by 33 per cent between 2000 and 2004) but it is less clear which activities are the most effective. To find out, research has been commissioned from the NFER, jointly with Cambridge University, the findings of which will inform the future scope and nature of Oxford's outreach activities. Current plans are set out in detail in the Access Agreement.

<sup>1</sup>[www.admin.ox.ac.uk/po/050317.shtml](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/po/050317.shtml)

77. The University has decided to set up an Access Steering Group to examine the range of access work that takes place across the Collegiate University, with a view to improving its coordination and cost-effectiveness. The Group will seek to find the optimal balance between activities carried out by colleges, divisions, and the central Admissions Office, and to ensure that they are linked together in a coherent strategic framework (IV (c)).

78. From 2006–7 onwards, the University will be offering one of the most generous bursary schemes in the country for undergraduate students from the UK, through the Oxford Opportunity Bursary scheme<sup>2</sup> (IV (d)). Awards of up to £13,000 will be available for students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, ensuring that no student is deterred from applying to Oxford on financial grounds.

79. On recruitment, a domestic campaign has been launched in connection with the introduction of the Oxford Opportunity Bursary scheme. Internationally, the scale of the recruitment effort has been modest compared with Oxford's competitors. More needs to be done both in gathering intelligence about the international student market and in developing carefully targeted campaigns to attract students of the very highest calibre (IV (e)).

80. The extent to which such a strategy can succeed is limited by the availability of funding. The Clarendon Fund, financed by OUP, supports around 100 new overseas graduate students per annum, but it is dwarfed by the sums available to the leading US universities. The problem is even more acute for home graduate students, for whom there is no fund comparable to the Clarendon. This creates particular difficulties in disciplines where there are few research council grants.

81. Over the next five years, the Collegiate University will seek to extend greatly its financial support for graduate students, both domestic and international. It will also improve the coordination of information about the funding that is available. The support will take the form of increased bursary and scholarship provision (financed chiefly through increased fundraising) and the availability of Academic Assistantships (IV (f)).

82. With respect to graduate admissions, a new system was introduced for 2004–5, which uses 'gathered fields' to improve equality of opportunity and the quality of the students admitted. Quality control across disciplines is facilitated by asking Colleges to specify the numbers of students they intend to admit by programme, and to change their specification year-on-year to reflect their quality judgements. Following the first

of two scheduled evaluations, the new process will be modified to increase its flexibility, particularly with respect to the admission of research students in the sciences and medicine (IV (g)). The operation of the system will continue to be monitored and modified where necessary.

83. Successful implementation of many of the strategies on access and recruitment is likely to have an impact on the nature of the demand placed on student services and facilities. Changes here will be monitored to ensure that the management of the services is able to respond to increased demand (IV (h)).

<sup>2</sup>[www.admissions.ox.ac.uk](http://www.admissions.ox.ac.uk)

## Enterprise and collaboration

### Strategy V

- (a) Maintain the current arrangements for the governance and management of OUP, under which the Press has enjoyed a remarkable period of success
- (b) Use ‘third-leg’ funding to support existing programmes and to develop new initiatives within Isis Innovation, the Begbroke Science Park, the Science Enterprise Centre, the Regional Liaison Office, and Continuing Professional Development
- (c) Further develop interactions with business, the public sector and government, through technology transfer, consultancy, Continuing Professional Development, business incubation, executive and enterprise education, and business planning
- (d) Sustain and develop relationships with key local and regional bodies
- (e) Enable departments and faculties to build research and teaching collaborations regionally, nationally and internationally
- (f) Continue to develop bilateral and multilateral partnerships, where they are likely to support the achievement of Oxford’s objectives
- (g) Create an international strategy for the Collegiate University to facilitate the delivery of the Corporate Plan, with component strategies for countries, regions and/or continents which integrate relevant academic interests, institutional collaborations, research and teaching partnerships, work on innovation and knowledge transfer, continuing professional development, student recruitment, and fundraising

84. Oxford has a long history of success in what is now known as ‘third leg’ activities (research and teaching being the other two). Those activities include publishing (through OUP), commercialisation of intellectual property (through Isis Innovation), collaboration with industry (especially on the Begbroke Science Park), consultancy and policy work (across a range of disciplines), and public service (through its museums, collections, services and outreach activities). The University also has a strong enterprise strand within its research and teaching. Strategy V focuses on the development of enterprise, external engagement and collaboration at regional, national and international levels.

85. OUP is by far the largest and most successful university press in the world. It plays a major part in defining the English language and contributes substantially to the University’s income and reputation. In recent years it has been transferring significant sums to the rest of the University. In 2003–4 the transfer was £17.8m to fund ongoing academic activities plus a one-off capital sum of £62m, primarily for the acquisition of the Radcliffe Infirmary site. The success of the Press both as a scholarly publisher and in commercial terms has been underpinned by the efforts of its staff and effective arrangements for its governance and management; these arrangements will be maintained (V (a)). At the same time, like any other publisher, OUP’s ability to produce substantial operating profits in excess of those needed for reinvestment in the business is dependent on the commercial environment in which it operates. The rest of the University cannot afford, therefore, to rely on transfers from OUP to underpin recurrent operations.

86. Isis Innovation is widely recognised as one of the country’s best university technology transfer companies. In the last five years, it has filed over 300 patent applications, signed 250 licence and consultancy deals, and established 50 spin-out companies, raising £185 million of external investment. HEIF and other sources of funding will continue to be used to support Isis initiatives (V (b)).

87. The same applies to developments at the Begbroke Science Park. Begbroke is dedicated to undertaking applied research, to working closely with industry, and to encouraging the formation and growth of research-led, high-tech companies. The Park already contains a multidisciplinary institute devoted to Industrial Materials and Manufacturing. An Institute of Advanced Technology is now under construction, which will house work in fields such as nanotechnology, aerospace and automotive materials, energy and the environment, and ICT. An Innovation Centre is also under construction.

88. The new e-Science Laboratory, a £7.5m building funded from SRIF2, will house the Interdisciplinary e-Research Centre whose role is to facilitate better, faster and different research using e-Science underpinned by a new type of distributed computing technology—the grid. Oxford is one of eight regional e-Science centres in the UK and has been very successful in developing a set of flagship projects. Many of these have been undertaken in close collaboration with IBM Hursley. As a consequence the Vice-Chancellor and the Director of Hursley signed a strategic partnership in January 2004.

89. Further evidence of the vitality of the Oxford enterprise culture comes from a variety of sources: its research collaborations, such as the Faraday Partnership in Automotive and Aerospace Materials; the Oxford Science Enterprise Centre, which encourages entrepreneurship through the acquisition of business skills by staff, students and members of the local community; Venturefest, a forum for the advancement of high-tech and knowledge-based enterprise; the Regional Liaison Office; and the Careers Service, which plays a central role through advice to students and contract research staff, liaison with employers, and introductions to firms and institutions. This work, together with its professional development services and its enterprise and executive education, puts Oxford in a strong position to broaden and deepen its interactions with business (V (c)). Competencies across the Social Sciences provide a similarly solid foundation for the further development of relations with the public sector and government.

90. The final report of the Lambert Review of Business–University Collaboration recognised that Oxford has played a significant part in developing what has become one of the most dynamic business regions in the country. This activity has been underpinned by good local and regional relationships. The Vice-Chancellor and Registrar continue to serve on key regional bodies, including SEEDA's South East Scientific and Technology Advisory Committee, Aim Higher South East, and the County and City Councils' Strategic Partnerships. Regular meetings are held with officers of the City and County Councils on matters of mutual interest, and with officers from SEEDA and GOSE to consider specific issues. Strategy V (d) indicates that these relationships will be maintained and developed.

91. The University makes significant contributions to the region in other ways. Its museums and collections attract more than a million visitors every year and offer a broad portfolio of activities for groups of all ages. Continuing Education and its academic partners offer more than 600 part-time courses for personal and professional development, and opportunities to gain degrees and other awards on a flexible basis. And the University and its colleges are major contributors to the local

economy both directly and through the revenues they generate from tourists and business visitors.

92. In addition to its collaborations with industry and government, Oxford has a wide variety of relationships with other universities and research establishments. Part (e) of Strategy V recognises both the desirability of collaborative projects being led by individual academics and the need for logistical support from the centre to help them flourish.

93. Part (f) relates to the further development of partnerships at university level on a bilateral or multilateral basis. Such partnerships are likely to be fruitful if they are consonant with the ambitions of departments and faculties whilst advancing the University's wider interests.

94. The nature of those interests is shaped by the international higher education scene, which has changed rapidly in recent years. Countries across Europe, Asia and Australasia have been seized by the need to have 'world-class universities'. Some, most notably China, Canada and Australia, have increased funding dramatically for their leading institutions. Universities across the spectrum of quality have internationalised, using a variety of mechanisms including bilateral and multilateral agreements, remote campuses, and distance learning. In Europe, the Bologna process, the development of the European Research Area, and the provision of Anglophone graduate courses are making the leading continental universities increasingly competitive. On top of these developments, a free market regime in higher education may materialise through GATS (the General Agreement on Trade in Services).

95. Oxford has responded to these developments in a variety of ways. Its international activity includes institutional and research collaborations, a range of teaching partnerships and, through OUP, a presence in more than fifty countries. The Oxford–Princeton initiative is directly aimed at securing a structured alliance across a broad front of activities. A new research and graduate training programme has been agreed with the Scripps Institute. The University has entered into a partnership with Stanford and Yale to explore the development of quality distance delivery. And Oxford is an active member of the League of European Research Universities and other groupings, including Coimbra, the ACU and the Commonwealth Universities Study Abroad Consortium (CUSAC). Oxford students continue to take part in the Socrates Erasmus programme as well as benefiting from other scholarships provided by the University and its colleges for study abroad. Staff exchanges are an integral part of the extensive international links that exist at departmental level.

96. All this activity has developed piecemeal. Oxford does not have a comprehensive international strategy to facilitate its

## Academic and student services

### Strategy VI

- (a) Increase the responsiveness of OULS to readers' needs, with greatly expanded access to electronic resources and well-located physical collections
- (b) Reduce the cost of delivering a high-quality library service by concentrating onto a smaller number of sites and investing in lower-cost, high-density, depository storage
- (c) Provide high-quality and cost-effective ICT services and training that meet the needs of the University and its members
- (d) Foster innovation, best practice, and value for money in the use of ICT in teaching, learning, and research across the University
- (e) Further develop the museums and collections as a research, educational and cultural resource for the University and the wider world
- (f) Review service provision across the Collegiate University from a student perspective with a view to improving the coherence of core student services, and enhancing the quality of student life

engagement with international agencies, governments, universities and firms, or to provide a coherent focus for academic activities related to individual countries. Part (g) calls for the development of such a strategy, paying particular attention to relevant academic interests, institutional collaborations, research and teaching partnerships, innovation and knowledge transfer, continuing professional development, student recruitment, and fundraising.

97. The provision of academic and other services across the Collegiate University is complex, with a multiplicity of providers. The strategy set out here, which relates to Objective (6), covers OULS, OUCS, the museums, the Counselling Service and the Careers Service directly, and other college and university services indirectly, insofar as they contribute to the student experience. Its overall purpose is to review service provision from the standpoint of users (primarily Oxford's students and staff), to make service provision more coherent and effective, without losing the benefits of flexibility and devolved delivery.

98. Strategy VI (a) is intended to ensure that services to library users will be improved across OULS, and coordinated so that consistent, effective and timely delivery is the norm throughout the system. Improvements in communicating with users will enable OULS to take account of users' needs more effectively than hitherto. Within the context of a hybrid library environment, in which there will be an increasing emphasis on electronic library resources, OULS will continue to build its traditional world-class collections of printed and manuscript holdings, and will greatly augment access to electronic materials, whether by subscription, Open Access, digitisation, or other means. New electronic interfaces to catalogues, collections and web-based services will facilitate access to library resources.

99. Major changes are planned in the distribution and organisation of the OULS estate to concentrate provision on a reduced number of sites (VI (b)). Combined with the extensive refurbishment and renewal of its major buildings, and the construction of new facilities, a programme of consolidation and rationalisation will allow OULS to deliver its services more effectively and efficiently, at a reduced cost. A new high-density depository at Osney Mead will be key to much of what OULS wishes to achieve. It will accommodate annual growth, allow low-use material to be moved from city-centre locations so that libraries may be physically combined, permit the decanting of the New Bodleian Library so that it can be redeveloped to improve the service to library users, and allow the release of the Nuneham Courtenay store for alternative university use. Formal proposals, including the allocation of sites and buildings, will be put to Congregation.

100. Reorganisation of the estate will allow concentrated provision for research to be made on key 'hub' sites, and place library resources tailored for undergraduate and taught postgraduate study on 'satellite' sites. Low-use material will be delivered rapidly from the depository to library sites, as required, and an increased proportion of higher-use stock will be made available on open-access shelving. Electronic delivery will be the most common means of access to research materials in the sciences and medicine.

101. An ICT Strategy for the Collegiate University will be delivered by April 2006 (VI c) and will detail the principles and processes necessary to deliver effective and efficient services. In parallel, an Enhanced Computing Environment will be developed in 2005–6 for central services, and this will be available to be bought in by other units across the University in due course. OUCS will operate, develop and support to the highest standards the University's primary computing infrastructure and services, including the network backbone and its external connections, central e-mail, web servers and backup servers, security, and other core university-wide support services and training. In addition, it will seek to develop new services to meet university requirements, in particular by improving network connection to departments and colleges and by providing support for wireless and other forms of roving access.

102. OUCS will actively support the work of, and collaborate closely with, ICT Support Staff within the University (VI (d)). It will foster the effective use of ICT in all disciplines through the provision of training and tailored courses, and the development, support and promotion of the Virtual Learning Environment. The development of reusable and centralised e-learning resources that serve the needs of multiple departments will be increased, and the Research Technologies Service will continue to function as a centre of expertise supporting the development of research e-infrastructure, including e-science. OUCS will seek to lead or collaborate on projects that pilot digital technologies on behalf of the University, in particular to contribute to the development of grid computing and e-science, virtual research environments, the construction of a CampusGrid, and ICT services for the support of research across divisions.

103. The museums, Botanic Garden, and other collections of the University will continue to maintain and develop their holdings as a resource of unparalleled range and depth, international scholarly importance, national heritage status, and public interest (VI (e)). Their objectives are: to make the collections a focus for research, teaching and collection-based scholarship within the University; a research resource for a wide range of external scholarly users, nationally and internationally;

a facility for communication and interaction between the University and the public; an educational resource for schools and for other tertiary educational institutions; a catalyst for life-long learning and cultural recreation in the immediate region, and for national and international visitors; and an active contributor to the cultural and economic development of the region. The museums plan to improve efficiency by concentrating staff and collections in improved conditions on a reduced overall number of sites.

104. Oxford's excellent teaching and learning is underpinned by the wide range of services and facilities provided for students, responsibility for which is shared between the University and its colleges. Some are jointly funded, such as the Counselling Service. Others are provided by the University, such as the Careers Service and Accommodation Office, and by the colleges individually, including the bulk of the accommodation, catering and social facilities. There are extensive advice and support networks in both colleges and departments and over 400 university-wide clubs and societies, in addition to countless college clubs. Sports facilities are provided both by the University and the colleges. Taken together this combination of services and facilities offers every opportunity for a rich and diverse student life.

105. There is, however, a need to ensure that these facilities and services cohere more effectively. It must be clearer from the student's perspective where responsibility lies for providing support, advice or a particular service. Services must also be responsive and flexible as demand changes, for example because of the changing composition of the student body with the impact of access initiatives. Service provision across the Collegiate University will therefore be reviewed from this perspective, looking at the whole student experience from application to graduation (VI (f)). An initial focus will be on the Counselling Service and the Careers Service, and on the provision of financial support and advice to students.

## Personnel

### Strategy VII

- (a) Revise the University's Human Resources Strategy from 2006, taking full account of the strategies in other sections of the Corporate Plan
- (b) Review the principles relating to all academic appointments, and the effects of the appointments system on both workload and the achievement of academic objectives
- (c) Review academic salary structures, including the number and structure of pay grades, promotion, arrangements for recruitment and retention payments, for merit pay and market pay, and for allowances and other additional payments and benefits
- (d) Review arrangements for tenure
- (e) Review the use of titles of distinction
- (f) Make proposals for future structures in relation to (b)–(e), bearing in mind resource issues such as the financial position of the Collegiate University, the proportion of its expenditure which should be devoted to academic salaries, the desirable balance between general and discretionary levels of pay, and the importance of arrangements to recruit, retain, and reward academic staff of the highest international calibre
- (g) Find ways to integrate contract research staff (CRS) more fully into the Collegiate University, as part of a general initiative to improve CRS management and career development
- (h) Take a proactive approach to equal opportunities and career development
- (i) Create improved systems for appraisal and staff development that are consistent with Oxford's values and institutional structures; for the holders of joint appointments these systems should take account of performance across all of the individual's responsibilities (research, university and college teaching and administration, and other professional duties)
- (j) Devise a coherent and effective system of management and administration across the Collegiate University to improve the quality of decision-making and the capacity to support research, teaching and third-leg activities

106. Excellence in research, teaching, and 'third leg' activities is dependent on the achievement of Objective (4): *Attract, develop and retain academic staff of the highest international calibre and make Oxford University and its colleges employers of choice for all staff in the international, national and local environments.* A Task Force has been established to ensure that the Human Resources Strategy fully addresses this objective with respect to academic employment and, thereby, supports the achievement of Objectives (1), (2), and (3). It will be asked to undertake the work specified in parts (b)–(f) of Strategy VII, as modified in the light of feedback on its terms of reference.

107. The University's current Human Resources Strategy, *Rewarding and developing people at Oxford*,<sup>3</sup> was the subject of extensive consultations across the Collegiate University before its adoption by the Personnel Committee and Council and its approval by HEFCE in 2004. The strategy was designed to cover the period from 2004 to 2009, with specific costed initiatives in place up to 2006.

108. The strategy will be reviewed and revised in the light of developments since 2004 (VII (a)), including the adoption of this Corporate Plan, bearing in mind the Plan's general commitment to the reduction of academic burdens and the equal standing of research and teaching, and its specific undertakings to:

- make new appointments, rebalance workloads, and provide extra administrative support and staff development opportunities, in order to address issues of research quality and productivity
- retain scholars of the highest distinction and potential and expand their numbers by selective recruitment
- increase flexibility in the assignment of teaching duties across the Collegiate University
- establish an Academic Assistantship scheme
- develop systems to reward particularly successful teaching at undergraduate and graduate level

The current strategy covers all university staff groups, so the process of revision also needs to address a range of issues designed to ensure that the University and the colleges are employers of choice within the local and national environments from which they draw their essential support staff.

109. As noted above, the work on the academic side will be conducted by the Task Force on Academic Employment, which will review a wide variety of matters, including those associated with the current system of joint university/college appointments. In general terms, the Task Force will consider how to improve arrangements for academic employment in Oxford, bearing in mind the importance of recruiting,

<sup>3</sup>[www.admin.ox.ac.uk/ps/staff/strategy/Strategy0409.pdf](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/ps/staff/strategy/Strategy0409.pdf)

retaining, and rewarding academics of the highest international calibre within a structure that has regard to the values of the Collegiate University and which meets the needs of students and staff alike.

110. Considerable thought has already been given to these issues at a variety of levels. The Medical Sciences Division, for example, has reported in its recently published Educational Strategy that it has examined 'how to balance the workload of academic staff, and to do so in a way that would be manifestly fair to all; how to reduce excessive workloads on staff; how to promote and value excellent teaching'. With respect to the equal standing of research and teaching, it has drawn attention to the value of systems in which candidates for promotion 'must demonstrate achievements in Scholarship and effectiveness in Teaching, or achievement in Teaching and effectiveness in Scholarship, or, more rarely, achievement in both areas', where scholarship includes both research and creative professional activity (such as the development of significant new processes and techniques). The Task Force will consider the merits of such systems.

111. Because of the importance and sensitivity of the issues, the Task Force is currently engaged in an extensive consultation on its draft terms of reference. These highlight the principles relating to all academic appointments, and the effects of the appointments system on workload and the achievement of academic objectives (including, for joint appointments, the effects of having two employers) (see VII (b)). They also cover: academic salary structures, including the number and structure of pay grades, promotion, arrangements for recruitment and retention payments, for merit pay and market pay, and for allowances and other additional payments and benefits (c); arrangements for tenure (d); and the use of titles of distinction (e). The taskforce is likely to focus on whether more flexibility in the pattern of academic duties should be introduced over a career, and/or between subject areas, and/or between those holding similar posts within the same subject area. In this context, it will be necessary to recognise that individuals make a wide variety of contributions to the work of the Collegiate University and mechanisms are required to facilitate an appropriate balance of these at different stages of their careers.

112. Once the terms of reference are finalised, the Task Force will again consult widely before it makes proposals for future structures for academic employment (f), bearing in mind resource issues, the proportion of expenditure which should be devoted to academic salaries, the desirable balance between general and discretionary levels of pay, and the importance of arrangements to recruit, retain, and reward academic staff of the highest international calibre. Detailed final proposals will be subject to the approval of Congregation.

113. Contract research staff (CRS) are key to the achievement of the University's mission of research excellence (g). A group chaired by the new Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) and supported by staff with full-time responsibility for CRS has been established with a view to:

- integrating CRS more fully into the Collegiate University as partners in research and teaching
- improving the management of CRS
- increasing the access of CRS to professional and career development

The group will report to the University's Personnel Committee at the end of 2005.

114. To date, the promotion of diversity has tended to be tackled through general policy activity, which seeks to achieve change incrementally with the engagement and understanding of staff. Whilst this approach is necessary, it will not be sufficient to achieve perceptible change in a short time-frame (h). The Career Development Fellowship scheme has demonstrated that targeted interventions can tap a source of talent amongst women and ethnic minorities which traditional approaches fail to reach.

115. In the case of senior positions in the University it is proposed to engage in a programme of targeted development of high-potential staff from under-represented groups. At the same time, for the wider population, there will be opportunities for the discussion of career progression and enhanced provision of courses for staff at turning points in their careers.

116. The Personnel Committee is keenly aware of the significance and complexity of human resource issues in Oxford, particularly with respect to academic staff. It recognises the high degree of personal responsibility inherent in world-class research and teaching and the challenge of developing personnel policy and practices consistent with Oxford's objectives and values. Academics must be able to concentrate on their core duties without obtrusive and inappropriate line-management. At the same time, they need access to a system of appraisal which enables issues of concern, such as the level or distribution of workload, to be addressed (i).

117. Finally, there is a need to devise a coherent and effective approach to management and administration across the Collegiate University. In addition to supporting any new structures that result from the Review of Governance, there is an opportunity to improve the quality of decision-making and to enhance the capacity to support research, teaching and third-leg activities.

## Space

### Strategy VIII

- (a) Review the quality and current usage of teaching facilities across the Collegiate University and make recommendations on the best use of the available space
- (b) Pursue a vigorous programme of renewal, refurbishment, redevelopment and disposal, to improve the overall condition of the building stock and to provide adequate and suitable facilities to enable delivery of the University's world-class academic activities
- (c) Provide the means to deliver the objectives of the libraries set out in Strategy VI (a) and (b)
- (d) Undertake a master planning exercise for the Radcliffe Infirmary site, focusing on the development of a Humanities Centre and a new building for Mathematics, whilst preserving expansion space for the next twenty years
- (e) Replan the Science Area to improve circulation and servicing, and identify sites and buildings which should be redeveloped to enable effective delivery of the divisions' research and teaching strategies
- (f) Develop new buildings on the Old Road Campus in Headington to allow the delivery of the research strategy of the Medical Sciences Division
- (g) Continue to develop the Begbroke Science Park to support its current mission
- (h) Improve the integration of college estates planning with that of the Buildings and Estates Subcommittee (BESC)
- (i) Extend the stock of residential accommodation for staff housing in the interests of recruitment and retention of high-quality staff

118. Oxford has been through a period of rapid expansion in its building stock, supported by substantial injections of capital from the Government, the Wellcome Trust and numerous other bodies under the JIF and SRIF initiatives. It has developed a detailed estates strategy to support the achievement of Objective (6) and, thereby, the University's other objectives. Strategy VIII specifies the priorities for the development of the estate, which are underpinned by the long-established goal of concentrating cognate disciplines geographically.

119. The overarching objective of the University Estates Directorate is to make the best use of space and physical resources across the University, ensuring that infrastructure is maintained and developed in a sustainable way. This will require substantial continuing investment, building on the major initiatives of the last five years. The Space Strategy is closely linked to the Financial Strategy, which seeks to ensure that Oxford increases its income to cover the full costs of all its activity, and develops a sustainable programme of capital investment and renewal.

120. Oxford's estate has developed substantially in recent years and now comprises over 480,000 square metres, a 34 per cent increase compared with 10 years ago. Total spend on capital projects by the University in the last five years totals £340m, of which 74 per cent was funded from external sources. These figures exclude the colleges, which have in many cases undertaken significant building and development programmes of their own in this period.

121. The estate is distributed around central Oxford and beyond, and includes major new developments in Headington and at Begbroke, north of the city. Through a series of coordinated planning activities, the use of space is being reviewed, so as to improve coordination of facilities, rationalise space usage, minimise duplication of facilities, and eliminate the need for departments to occupy buildings on several sites. Where possible, teaching and research facilities will be shared between departments, building on the models developed in Headington and in South Parks Road through the pre-clinical teaching block and the Inter-Divisional Science Area Facilities initiative (promoting the sharing and joint development of workshop facilities). As equipment and facilities become more specialised and costly, it is all the more important that plans for their provision and management are coordinated.

122. The Estates Directorate will also develop high density depository storage for the libraries (see Strategy VI (b)), review teaching facilities, and pursue a vigorous programme of renewal, refurbishment, redevelopment and disposal, to improve the overall condition of building stock and to provide

adequate and suitable facilities to support the University's teaching and research programmes.

123. Within this overall framework, plans for each the five principal areas of the University's estate in the lifetime of this Corporate Plan are outlined below. These plans are designed to enable the University to make the most effective use of its capital assets.

- (i) **The Radcliffe Infirmary site** was purchased in 2003, and will be vacated by the NHS in 2007–8. It provides the main area for expansion in the centre of Oxford for the next 20 to 30 years, and it is therefore important that the development of the site is properly planned. In spring 2005 a master-planning team, led by one of the world's leading architects, was appointed to assist in this process.
- (ii) **The Science Area**, centred on South Parks Road, has suffered from years of ad hoc development. It is not well serviced and many of the buildings are in poor condition, have low levels of functionality, and do not make the best use of the available space. A key strategy is to replan this area completely to improve circulation, identify buildings/sites to be redeveloped, improve servicing, and upgrade the infrastructure available to the whole area. The strategy will provide for the increase in facilities needed to match the planned growth in research activity within the existing occupied area.
- (iii) **The Old Road Campus site**, situated in Headington close to the Churchill Hospital and within easy reach of the John Radcliffe Hospital, was purchased to provide space for medical research facilities which are not required to be within hospital premises. This site will continue to provide growth space for Medical Sciences. A masterplan has been accepted by the local planning authorities, and infrastructure to the site has been improved to meet the planned growth. The first group of new buildings are up and running.
- (iv) **Begbroke Science Park**, north of Oxford, will continue to meet the University's strategic needs for the next 10–20 years for the development of collaborative research (with other academic institutions and with industry), for space-intensive science, and for other scientific activities which do not need to be located in the heart of Oxford. A masterplan has been agreed with the local planning authorities. The necessary upgrading of infrastructure to allow development to go ahead is complete, and the first new buildings are being constructed.
- (v) **The Manor Road site** in central Oxford has been developed as a focal point for the social sciences, with the

recent opening of the Manor Road Building next to the existing St Cross Building. A new, integrated social sciences library has been established on the site and the further concentration of social science departments in this area will be considered.

124. The buildings and facilities directly managed by the University are complemented by those of the colleges. In particular, the colleges provide the bulk of accommodation for Oxford students, of whom about 80 per cent are housed in university or college accommodation, together with extensive teaching facilities and office space. There is likely to be considerable scope for greater coherence in the planning and use of facilities between the University and its colleges, and this will be developed during the planning period.

## Finance

### Strategy IX

- (a) Generate additional resources to support the achievement of Oxford's academic objectives, including improved remuneration, an expanded programme of graduate studentships, and enhanced academic infrastructure
- (b) Introduce a Joint Resource Allocation Mechanism (JRAM) to align incentives across the Collegiate University to deliver the academic strategy and increase Oxford's income
- (c) Maximise the recovery of the full economic cost of research and third-leg activities
- (d) Consider the full economic costs for Oxford as a whole when setting policy on student numbers
- (e) Develop the Collegiate University's fundraising protocols and capabilities to support a step-change in activity
- (f) Review investment management processes against best practice
- (g) Achieve significant annual cost savings through improvements to core administrative processes and by utilising the benefits of scale
- (h) Ensure that long-term financial planning incorporates full allowance for service and maintenance costs, and (through realistic allowance for depreciation) the sustainable replacement of assets
- (i) Use the Strategic Reserve Fund for the University's highest priority strategic development initiatives, rather than as a reserve for recurrent activities
- (j) Release substantial sums from the balance sheet to support academic investment
- (k) Continue to improve financial systems and strengthen the internal control environment in order to underpin good governance and support better decision-making

125. The University cannot sustain academic excellence if it continues to make large losses on its core activities. The ability to improve reward systems for staff (Objective (4)), to have competitive scholarship and bursary schemes (Objective (5)), and to invest in improving facilities and services (Objective (6)), is conditional on a substantial improvement in the financial position (IX (a)). This can be brought about only by pursuing the recovery of full economic costs on research, altering the size and shape of the student body to reduce losses on teaching, increasing income from commercial activities and spin-outs, more effective fundraising and the better management of financial and other resources.

126. In comparison with most UK universities, Oxford enjoys a relatively diverse income base. For example, income from HEFCE accounts for less than 30 per cent of the total. At the same time, only about 12 per cent of the central University's annual income comes from fees, and about 8 per cent from endowments or investments. While Oxford's colleges benefit from significantly higher levels of income from endowments and investments, Oxford's overall endowments are dwarfed by those of the leading US institutions.

127. In recent years, the growth in Oxford's annual income from all sources has failed to keep pace with rising costs. Given the competing priorities for scarce resources, it has proved difficult to secure adequate investment in academic and other support services. Infrastructure development, despite much progress, has not kept pace with academic growth. Underlying these problems has been a failure to take adequate account of depreciation costs, and hence make provision for sustainable development in the medium to long term. The combination of strategies in this section is designed to tackle these problems.

128. Central to the task of increasing the income of the Collegiate University, and aligning incentives to deliver the academic strategy, is the development of a Joint (university/college) Resource Allocation Method (JRAM) (b). The University and the colleges jointly contribute to the delivery of Oxford's teaching and research and to the support services which underpin them. Oxford's colleges remain financially autonomous, but since the 1998–9 changes to college fee arrangements agreed with the Government and HEFCE, most of the public funding they receive has been channelled through the University. The present internal arrangements for transferring that funding are unsatisfactory, and the financial incentives faced by colleges and university departments have not been well aligned, either to each other or to the delivery of common academic objectives. Work to prepare for a more integrated approach through a JRAM is now under way, with the intention of putting a new system in place for the year 2007–8.

129. Whilst improvements in internal arrangements are clearly needed, it is the flow of money into Oxford that is of greatest concern. The University has participated fully in recent national initiatives to develop more rigorous approaches to costing and pricing in UK higher education. It has taken part in the work of the Joint Costing and Pricing Steering Group (JCPSG) and acted as a pilot development site for the Government's Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) methodology.

130. The work undertaken has contributed to the current full economic costing (fEC) initiative, under which the UK research councils will, from next year, pay up to 80 per cent of the full costs of the research projects which they sponsor, but it remains unclear how far some other funders (in particular the research charities) are prepared to move in this direction. Oxford will seek to maximise cost recovery on its research, and on its third-leg activity (c).

131. Like almost all other universities in the UK, Oxford's freedom to generate revenue to meet the costs of its main activities is restricted. Even with the increase in the maximum fee chargeable to home/EU undergraduates to £3k from 2006 onwards, core income for each undergraduate will (at between approximately £5.6 and £7.6k for a non-medical course) be well below estimated costs (see also the section on size and shape). The University and its colleges have the freedom in principle to set their own fee levels for graduate and international students but there are de facto limitations on what can be charged to publicly funded Home/EU graduates. As noted in Strategy III, when considering the issue of size and shape it will be necessary to take account of these financial considerations (d).

132. The other major sources of income to Oxford are fundraising and investment. Good progress has been made in developing the Collegiate University's fundraising protocols but further work is required to build an organisation capable of supporting a step-change in fundraising activity (e). Having raised funds it is vital for Oxford to use them efficiently and effectively. Part (f) of Strategy IX calls for the review of current investment management processes against best practice.

133. Equally important will be improvements in the efficiency with which resources are used (g). This objective applies in particular to the provision of academic and non-academic support services such as libraries and ICT infrastructure (see Strategy VI). However, it is also relevant to the selection, installation and commissioning of major business systems, where the University's performance must be improved. Significant financial gains are capable of being delivered by changing administrative processes, streamlining existing systems, and sharing good practice.

134. A further task is to improve internal planning and analysis so that the full, long-term costs of all activities are clearly quantified, including making full allowance for service and maintenance costs, and for the sustainable replacement of assets (h).

135. With respect to investment, Oxford's strategic reserve funds have supported a range of initiatives in recent years, including restructuring in Economics, Geography and Physics, and preparations for RAE 2008 (on which £11m will be spent over the next three years). In addition, however, the strategic reserve has been used to supplement the annual revenue budget by more than £10m a year, in order to make up recurrent shortfalls. Use of the strategic reserve in this way is unsustainable. It also diverts funds away from strategic investment in new initiatives. In future, a key budgetary objective will be to ensure that calls on the strategic reserve to underpin revenue funding will be kept to an absolute minimum (i). Through a combination of improved cost recovery and cost control, the University's income and expenditure account will be brought into balance as soon as possible.

136. As noted above, Oxford has benefited from substantial investment in capital projects in the last five years, almost 75 per cent of which has come from benefactors and the JIF and SRIF programmes. However, the University itself has been required to fund a significant proportion of the total costs and this has put considerable pressure on its own resources. The future development of the Radcliffe Infirmary site will, even with the substantial transfers of capital funds from OUP, create additional demands.

137. For these reasons, Oxford's approach to capital planning and budgeting has been reassessed. The capital programme now relates more directly to the academic strategy. A more rigorous approach has been adopted to assessing the long-term costs of capital projects (including depreciation). Better integration of revenue and capital planning has been achieved. A new capital planning model is being developed to ensure that capital funding and cash flow projections are effectively linked. In addition, there will be further reviews of Oxford's non-functional capital assets so that, where possible, sums can be released from the balance sheet to support investment in academic activity (j).

138. Finally, work will continue to improve the University's financial systems and strengthen the internal control environment (k).

## Governance and management

### Strategy X

- (a) Act on the recommendations of the Governance Review, as amended through the process of consultation and debate in Congregation
- (b) Address the Lambert agenda so that Oxford is in a position to ‘agree with the Government what further steps will be necessary for [Oxford] to sustain [its] global position’
- (c) Ensure that divisions and other university bodies construct five-year plans within the framework of the Corporate Plan, that these plans are reconciled with one another and with the needs of the colleges, and that final approval is given to agreed plans by Council
- (d) Review the corporate and divisional plans annually and re-write them every three years
- (e) Redesign the EPSC and divisional review system to mesh with the new planning cycle, so that it is structured around the delivery of the academic strategy and is minimally burdensome consistent with fitness for purpose
- (f) Enable colleges to extend their participation in the planning process beyond ‘signing off’ on student number policy
- (g) Create a unified and streamlined system of management and administration and improve the delivery of new business systems
- (h) Improve internal communications by publication on the intranet of discussion documents on major issues, summaries of committee business, and approved divisional plans
- (i) Improve external communications to support the delivery of the Corporate Plan and the continued engagement of alumni

139. Effectiveness in governance and management is a prerequisite for the achievement of Objectives (1)–(6). The first part of Strategy X is concerned with both of these issues but the second part focuses on management. There is much to be done to improve management services, the planning and review processes, and internal and external communication.

140. Following publication of the report of the Commission of Inquiry (the North Report) at the end of 1997, Oxford introduced major reforms in its governance in 2000. At the time, it was agreed that the new system would be reviewed after five years. A Governance Review Group was duly established and an initial round of consultations was held in the autumn of 2004. This led to the identification of four objectives: (1) to streamline the current parallel university/college academic decision-making processes; (2) to involve a larger proportion of the Collegiate University’s members in decision-making on key academic issues, and ensure that information about these matters is communicated more clearly and effectively; (3) to improve, through better communication, understanding of the business of the Collegiate University, and of the challenges and risks which confront it; and (4) to meet the standards of best practice in institutional governance, enlisting appropriate expertise which does not exist in the University, and providing the best possible framework for the conduct of teaching and research.

141. The Review Group produced a Green Paper on Oxford’s Governance Structure in March 2005. The next step will be the publication of a new paper early in the autumn, followed by discussion in Congregation in November 2005. In due course, it will be necessary to act on the agreed recommendations that result from review process (X (a)).

142. The Lambert Review of business–university collaboration included some important recommendations concerning Oxford and Cambridge. Lambert acknowledged the strategic challenges facing the University, accepting, in particular, that:

- ‘[t]he longer-term objective must be to ensure that in 25 years time Oxford and Cambridge are still numbered among the world’s leading universities’
- ‘[t]op universities face a global competition for talent and money, which will become more intense in the years ahead’
- Oxford and Cambridge ‘need to generate significantly more money than they are likely to get from public funding in order to pay their academics a more competitive wage, to develop their research strengths, to cover their teaching costs, and to subsidise talented students where necessary’

- the two universities will certainly need ‘increased public funding... if they are to retain their current position – let alone to strengthen it’
- they require ‘greater freedom to run their own affairs’

143. The University fully supports these observations and agrees with the view that there is a ‘need to make further progress in modernising [its] governance and management structures’ (b). It also welcomes the opportunity presented by Lambert’s recommendation that: ‘In three years’ time, the vice-chancellors of Oxford and Cambridge should take stock of the progress of reform, and agree with the Government what further steps will be necessary for the two universities to sustain their global position.’

144. Strengthening Oxford’s annual planning and budgeting cycle will be a key part of the modernisation process. The current divisional planning system was introduced in 2000, alongside a new internal Resource Allocation Method (RAM). These changes have achieved many of their objectives but a number of problems have emerged, including weaknesses in budgeting and financial planning, and in the integration of capital and revenue planning. The absence of an overall plan has led to difficulties in setting the parameters within which individual academic and service units are expected to operate, and in harmonising and giving approval to their plans.

145. Henceforth, Council will expect the medium term (five-year) plans of each academic division and service to be set within the framework of the Corporate Plan. It will ensure that those plans are reconciled with one another and with the needs of the colleges, then give its formal approval to the agreed versions (c).

146. This process, together with the completion of items on the ‘to do’ list and the emergence of new issues, will require changes to be made to the Corporate Plan. It will be reviewed annually but rewritten thoroughly only at three-yearly intervals. The divisional and service plans will be subject to the same cycle of renewal (d).

147. The agreed plans will provide the backdrop for the annual process of setting operational goals and budgets. This process will enable a close link to be kept between the overall strategy and the allocation of capital and recurrent funding. It will also help with the monitoring of progress on individual projects. It is important to stress that this process, and the wider planning system, must be designed and used flexibly to allow a mix of strategy and opportunity. Contingencies need to be set at levels that will permit important but unforeseen opportunities to be taken without compromising essential strategic initiatives.

148. Monitoring of progress against agreed objectives, and the revision of plans, will be improved by integrating the planning cycle with the internal review system. There is existing statutory provision for the review of the divisions themselves, which will be utilised over the next five years. The present arrangement for alternating EPSC and divisional reviews of departments and faculties is currently under discussion. At both levels, the twin challenge is to ensure that the review is structured around the delivery of the unit’s own strategy and is minimally burdensome consistent with fitness for purpose (e).

149. In addition to these changes, the planning system needs to be redesigned to give colleges, individually and collectively, an enhanced role in both academic policy formation and, through their own plans, the delivery of Oxford-wide strategies (f). It is already the case that colleges are effectively represented on Council and its committees but this expression of the Collegiate University’s identity is not reflected in the planning system. Hitherto the main focus of college involvement has been the annual student number planning process but, even here, the implications of growth for estates, services and other college functions have not been addressed coherently.

150. Oxford is a large and complex institution, with responsibility for many activities devolved to departments or resting with colleges. Whilst this can often lead to greater responsiveness and flexibility, it can also make the achievement of coherence and common standards in service delivery more difficult. It can, in addition, be more expensive, making economies of scale harder to achieve. Reviews of business systems and processes have already begun in areas such as purchasing, but there are many other opportunities to share best practice, make systems simpler and easier to understand, and use resources more effectively (g). This applies in particular to areas such as student services, financial administration, and information systems. Unifying and streamlining these areas will be a high priority. In addition importance will be attached to realising the benefits of the substantial investment in new financial and student administration systems. The University’s HR system will also be replaced.

151. Last but by no means least, internal and external communications will be improved (h) and (i), to make it easier for members of the University, alumni, and other stakeholders, to become aware of Oxford’s objectives and of the work that is being undertaken to achieve them.

