

Executive Summary of Business for Senate



Title	Schools of Engineering & Informatics
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Type	For recommendation to Council
Date	8 March 2011
Strategic context	Schools are central to the structure of the University. Strategic planning, operational management (e.g. Teaching & Learning, Research & Knowledge Exchange) and budget setting take place at School level.
Summary	Discussions are taking place with regard to the merger of the School of Informatics and School of Engineering & Design. This paper informs Senate on progress and makes in principle recommendations with regard to the future of the two current Schools.
Risk analysis	Futher work is being undertaken to identify and manage risks associated with a merger.
Resource implications	Work to date indicates that a merger of the two Schools is at worst cost neutral but will release resource (e.g. staff time) as a result of the co-operation.
Consultation	Staff in both Schools have been consulted and are involved in developing detailed future plans.
Future actions	Subject to Senate recommending the merger to Council, detailed work needs to be undertaken to confirm that merger is the correct course of action.
Effective date of introduction	1 August 2011
Recommendation	Senate is asked to support, in principle, the merger of the School of Informatics and School of Engineering & Design. Subject to further work being undertaken to the satisfaction of both Schools, a recommendation to this effect would be put to Council.

Proposed merger of the School of Informatics and School of Engineering & Design

Discussions have been taking place since early in the 2010-11 academic year with regard to a possible merger of the School of Informatics and School of Engineering & Design, led by Professor Carroll (Informatics) and Dr Young (Engineering & Design). After considerable debate, the two schools have concluded that detailed work to inform a final decision about whether or not to come together should now be undertaken.

There is no pre-prepared blueprint for a merged School and much of the detail will be worked out between staff Informatics and Engineering & Design as the next step before the two current Schools finally agree to come together. However, it is clear that the School would comprise two departments, Informatics and Engineering & Design. It will be important to retain the clear identity of the two separate Departments, not least for matters such as student recruitment and professional accreditation: there is absolutely no intention to remove the Departments. There would be one Head of School, at present Bernard Weiss.

Beyond that, the more detailed management structure would be for the School to determine. However, the structure should be one that best serves the interests of the two Departments. For example, the School is likely to have two Heads of Department, decided separately by the staff associated with each one. There might be a single Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange but with research group leaders empowered to take the lead locally. Directors would represent the School at University level, for example on Doctoral School Committee and Teaching & Learning Committee. A merged School would have a single teaching and a single research strategy, a unified approvals process and the opportunity to use resource in a more cost-efficient way.

Academic staff would not be required to make any changes to their areas of research or teaching specifically as a result of the merger. The School would contain two separate departments representing two distinct disciplines. As at present, teaching would be aligned to research strengths.. Over the medium term, priorities would be to maintain research grant income and prepare a strong REF return to two Units of Assessment (Computer Science and General Engineering).

There are no plans to reduce the professional administrative resource as part of the merger. What a merger would do is enable staff to be focused on more wide-ranging and substantial roles, such as maintaining and improving the web presence, marketing and external relations. These tasks are very important for School performance, in areas such as student recruitment and initiating new external collaborations. Having a larger single resource means that administration would be more efficient, avoiding repetition and enabling cover where appropriate.

Senate is asked to support, in principle, the merger of the School of Informatics and School of Engineering & Design. Subject to further work being undertaken to the satisfaction of staff in both Schools, a recommendation to this effect would be put to Council.

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8 March 2011