UAS Annual Report for 2014
Welcome to the new-look UAS Annual Report, which presents the current strategy of the UAS, a selection of key achievements and contributions to the University, and an update on its finances, people and culture.

The document covers the 2014 calendar year, and aims to give both those working in the UAS, and our colleagues across the collegiate University, an opportunity to reflect on our progress and performance over that period, and to understand our goals and activities for the near future.

This is a very exciting time to work for the University. By way of illustration, I offer three current examples that I believe capture the scale of our ambition.

First, the North West Cambridge Development. As many of you will know, construction for Phase One started at the end of last year, and during the course of 2017 there will be hundreds of new homes (many for qualifying University and College staff), as well as a primary school, community centre, local supermarket, shops, a hotel, and new roads and cycle paths. The development is a key part of the University's long-term plans to ensure Cambridge remains one of the world's leading research and teaching institutions.

Also key to our long-term plans is the University's new fundraising campaign, which is due to launch formally in October of this year. This new era of philanthropy at Cambridge is an opportunity to form productive relationships with donors, to work in partnership with like-minded individuals and organisations, and to develop a vital income stream that will help us make a major contribution to understanding and resolving some of the great challenges facing the world.

Meanwhile – amid much debate and deliberation on the continuing devolution of UK politics – the Cambridge City Deal programme could see hundreds of millions of pounds invested in the Greater Cambridge region. This will stimulate economic growth and jobs, as well as tackle major problems such as traffic congestion and a shortage of high-quality, affordable housing. This is important to us for a number of reasons, not least because of our need to make Cambridge an attractive place to live and work for all of our staff.

These hugely ambitious programmes can only be delivered through genuine collaboration: collaboration between the University and the Colleges; between senior academic leaders and the wider research community; and collaboration with students, alumni and other partners. They also require effective administration – at all levels within the University – and individuals and teams who can provide high-quality professional services, whether in relation to capital planning, IT, research grants and contracts, or legal matters, to take just a few examples.

This report explains how we in the UAS are working to support projects like these so that the University is able to fulfil its mission. I hope you enjoy reading it.

Dr Jonathan Nicholls
Registrar
2014 – the UAS in numbers

1 new UAS Director appointed

969 staff were employees of the UAS in December 2014 – 555 women and 414 men

454 Freedom of Information requests were processed

46,462 users accessed the online Reporter

4,898 kilowatt hours were saved during Switch Off Week

47,948 applications, from 1,947 job vacancies, have been generated by 127 departments using the new online recruitment system

2,059 contracts were negotiated,

2,839 grants checked, approved and submitted, and

1,198 awards were accepted and activated

28,626 students from across the UK engaged in outreach activities led by the Admissions Office

18 new Equality Champions started work, covering all six Schools and non-School institutions

* Data correct as of February 2015

20 people completed the Administrator Development Programme, a training scheme for administrative staff across the University
The UAS’s strategy:
Context, priorities, change

Amid a continually challenging financial climate, and potential changes in the higher education sector, the UAS is focused on supporting the University fulfil its mission, and adapting where necessary to achieve that

The purpose of the UAS is to help Cambridge remain one of the world’s leading universities. In partnership with colleagues in Faculties, Departments and other institutions, we work on some of the most exciting and ambitious projects in higher education – the benefits of which will be felt for many years by many people. Staff across the UAS provide some of the core services, skills and expertise required to make these, and other important programmes of work, a reality. Our contributions range from promoting and securing key partnerships overseas, to professionalising student services; from negotiating contracts for academic staff, to developing recruitment and retention policies; from providing the skills and expertise to manage the growth of our estate, to providing essential financial systems.

We do this in an environment that is becoming ever more challenging. The state of the public finances remains a particular concern, with the new government needing to make some very difficult decisions regarding the deficit. With high-profile calls for additional resourcing for the health service, education and defence, higher education and the science budget look vulnerable. Another area of concern is the erosion of the so-called Haldane principle, where researchers, rather than politicians, decide how research funding is spent. But political and financial pressures are just some of the external drivers that are increasing the burden placed on universities – you only have to dip into publications such as the Times Higher Education to get a fuller picture.

The current state of higher education in the UK presents us with opportunities – which Cambridge, in many ways, is uniquely placed to grasp – and threats, which we must deal with. The UAS is responding to the current situation in many ways, but three key areas of focus are: supporting the University’s capital plan; updating our HR and reward strategy; and developing a more responsive approach within the UAS to our administrative services. Let us take a look at each in more detail:

1. Supporting the University’s capital plan

The University needs a capital plan to support its ambitions to develop research facilities, accommodate increasing numbers of graduate students, and to make better use of its current accommodation. It is a vital part of enhancing our competitiveness and attractiveness. You can read about the work of the Estate Management Division in managing the construction of the new University Data Centre on page 7. Other key capital projects include the refurbishment and alteration of the Arup Building, now called the David Attenborough Building, a new building for the Department of Chemical Engineering and Biotechnology at West Cambridge, and the Maxwell Centre, to be built on the same site.

2. Revising HR and reward strategy

It is vital that the University can attract and retain the very best academics while allowing current staff to progress and flourish. Competition for talent, especially at a global level, is fierce. Additional financial pressures, such as the proposed reform to the structure and benefits of the Universities Superannuation Scheme, have made this a priority. But pay and reward, although important, are not the only factors that people consider when moving jobs. As a place to live Cambridge scores highly on quality of life and schools but, as most of us know, suffers from a lack of affordable housing and traffic congestion. So the work that our HR Division is taking forward around pay and reward, as well as assistance in relocation, is important. This is also true of our critical work in relation to civic engagement and the City Deal.
3. Flexible and responsive administration

Within the UAS, we are working to create a more flexible and responsive approach to administration – in terms of how we deliver our services, approach business systems and processes, as well as culturally across our workforce. Our accommodation strategy, built around three hubs – the Old Schools, Greenwich House and, when completed in early 2018, the Student Services Centre – will gather pace this year. It is designed to bring people together who have a sense of shared purpose, but also the range of skills needed to work across boundaries on large-scale administrative projects, and across the different layers of the University. Our aim is to identify those areas of administration that are susceptible to this kind of approach so that we can become better coordinated, more efficient and more effective. This will require improvement on our behalf, and a willingness to engage and walk in the shoes of those we support.

At a strategic level, our activities are, to a large extent, focused on the delivery of our accommodation plan, which is due for completion during 2017. Beyond that, the UAS Directors, under the leadership of the Registrar, and in consultation with the Vice-Chancellor, the current and incoming Pro-Vice-Chancellors, as well as key colleagues such as the Heads of Schools, are already thinking about how the UAS can support the University’s longer-term strategy as effectively as possible. This support will require partnership in policy-making, delivery and focus in a complex world. The University is becoming increasingly diverse in its activities and international in its partnerships, with a growing burden placed on both academic and administrative activity. This is likely to require consideration within the UAS of quite bold organisational change. Last year we saw MISD move out of the UAS as part of the merger of that division, the University Computing Service and the High Performance Computing Service into the University Information Services. There is a growing interest in thinking at scale about how professional services – not just those within the UAS – can be shaped to respond in a cohesive and effective manner to the needs of the Schools, Faculties and Departments.

Finally, much excellent work has been done in recent years on the development of our culture, values and staff. You can read about various established initiatives in the following pages. This is an area we intend to expand on. Our strategy is nothing without the hard work, dedication and achievement of individuals, at all levels, across our divisions.

Investing in our future: the new home for the Department of Materials Science and Metallurgy at West Cambridge is just one of a number of new buildings that are contributing to a bold expansion of the University’s estate.
Eighteen months ago, it was little more than a vision. Now, just a few months ahead of its opening in September 2015, the University of Cambridge Primary School is nearly a reality. The school is a key part of the North West Cambridge Development – the largest capital project in the history of the University. The development is seen as crucial in maintaining Cambridge’s position as one of the world’s best universities, especially in creating a new community that will house students and staff in an increasingly congested and expensive city.

The new primary school will be the first operational building on the site, which will help demonstrate the commitment of the development to new residents. The schedule has been ambitious but, over the past year, great progress has been made by a range of people across the University, but especially the North West Cambridge Development Team and Primary School Trust. A contractor was appointed, as was James Biddulph, the school’s first headteacher. The Secretary of State for Education signed the funding agreement for the school, and a governing body was established.

As the first primary-level university training school in the country, the University of Cambridge Primary School will serve the new community and local area, provide teacher training and – through close ties with the Faculty of Education – facilitate education research. It will be a mixed ability, co-educational school, and will not have a specific religious character or a particular faith ethos.

The building – designed by Marks Barfield Architects, creators of the London Eye – has been created to capture the vision of a democratic, non-hierarchical school that can be divided into smaller classroom clusters, all with direct access to the outside. It will also make use of communal areas and shared ‘learning streets’.

The opening of the school will mark an exciting time for Phase 1 of the North West Cambridge Development, which is due to be completed during the course of 2017. Phase 1 includes 700 homes for qualifying University and College staff, postgraduate accommodation, as well as many of the development’s other key services such as the supermarket, community centre, hotel and café. There will also be market housing available.

Attracting talent

The success of the University is dependent on its ability to attract talented people at all levels. Successful recruitment – a complex and resource intensive activity – is dependent in turn on good administrative processes and systems.

The Web Recruitment Project – a collaboration between colleagues in HR and Information Services – has professionalised recruitment procedures across the University. Tasks that were largely paper-based can now be carried out online, including applications, reference requests, and generating offer and rejection letters.

Online recruitment creates a good first impression with potential members of staff, but the real gains come in making managers’ and administrators’ working lives easier, reducing inefficient and time-consuming practices across the organisation.

A hallmark of the project has been the high levels of user consultation, and the adoption of an agile approach to the construction of new systems. This has contributed to the large number of institutions across the University that have moved over to online recruitment. At the time of writing, 127 Departments have advertised a total of 1,947 job vacancies, receiving 47,948 applications.

Feedback has been extremely positive. According to one administrator in the School of Clinical Medicine:

“As an extremely busy HR team, web recruitment has streamlined a lot of our work. The system has saved us time and made the recruitment process more manageable due to the sheer volume of applications we receive. It has changed our day-to-day work enormously.”

Another happy customer in the Institute of Criminology explains: “Our experience of web recruitment was very positive from the start. We found the whole process very simple and very user friendly, from advertising vacancies, to viewing lists of candidates, to filling the position. We would definitely recommend the system to other Departments.”

In addition to the web recruitment project, the Recruitment Services team in the HR Division has been working with LinkedIn to extend the reach of hard-to-fill posts.
Building our future

This is a period of considerable growth for the University, with major development underway at North West Cambridge, West Cambridge and the Biomedical Campus.

While the North West Cambridge Development has its own governance, management and financial arrangements, the Estate Management Division of the UAS is responsible for the stewardship and delivery of many capital projects across the University. As of March this year, the Division was overseeing 22 major projects collectively valued at more than £500m and around 80 minor works projects of between £500,000 and £2m.

The new £20m Data Centre, completed last year, provides a good example of the work involved in the erection of a high-spec building – and the benefits to different users and the University itself.

The initial business case for the building was driven by a desire to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions. Huge amounts of energy are expended in the processing and storage of digital data, whether as part of ‘high-load’ research activity – for example, in astronomy or medical research – or the creation and use of files, emails, webpages and applications that most of us generate on a daily basis.

Addressing energy efficiency is a challenge when there are multiple server rooms across the University – many of them half full, each doing the same thing inefficiently. Here was an opportunity to pull all major data processing and storage into one, high-spec, energy-efficient facility, and release valuable space within Faculties and Departments for research and teaching.

The project, from conception to delivery, lasted approximately four years, and saw Estate Management working with a number of important stakeholders. Among them were the principal users of the Data Centre – the High Performance Computing Service, Cambridge Assessment and the Faculties and Departments – each of whom had different needs and expectations.

“The new Data Centre provides a good example of the work involved in the erection of a high-spec building”

The process, out of necessity, was highly collaborative. The business case was developed with the primary users, but refined through scrutiny and feedback from the West Cambridge Data Steering Committee, the Buildings Committee and the Planning and Resources Committee. Detailed assessments relating to the building’s specifications, the best ways to cool equipment, the level of resilience and back-up required, site options, benchmarking and lifespan were developed.

By seeking to pull major data processing and storage into one facility, the Data Centre is an important contribution to the University’s efforts to reduce its carbon footprint.

The next step was to define the budget, which was not straightforward given that the requirements for the University’s Data Centre were not typical of those in the commercial sector.

Once sign-off had been given, Estate Management’s role was to manage the build, liaising between the principal users and the contracted specialists. This is a crucial and high-risk phase, which calls on the experience and expertise of the EM Projects Team to design and oversee the execution of an effective brief, and to implement the processes and checks that help prevent failures and ensure timely delivery within the allocated budget. Those processes need to be watertight when one of the things you are testing is the level of back-up resilience in the face of power failure or an adverse incident.

The project was a complex one. Despite this, the process, from start to finish, was relatively smooth. The building was erected to spec, on time and within budget.

The next challenge is one of internal engagement: to encourage institutions from across the University to decant equipment from their own server rooms into the Data Centre. Only once the centre has a high degree of occupancy can real efficiencies be made and the predictions on the amount of energy saved be properly tested.

That is something being taken forward by the West Cambridge Data Steering Committee. In the meantime, the University will continue to draw heavily on the skills and expertise within EM as we create an estate that supports our ambitions for the next 25 years and beyond.
Communicating governance

The University’s governance and management arrangements are often praised for being inclusive, deliberative and robust. When ratings agency Moody’s assigned an Aaa (stable) rating to the University ahead of its £350m bond issue in 2012, it wrote: “The University of Cambridge is governed through two bodies: the Council and the much larger Regent House. These bodies, which are heavily dominated by University members, provide a high level of internal accountability and strategic planning, and in the execution of University policies.” They also noted the “very high level of transparency in the University”.

These arrangements serve the University well – but they are often hard for staff (new and old) to understand. With that in mind, the Registrar’s Office has been at the forefront of developing new ways to communicate the importance of the University’s governance structure, and information that might be of interest and use to administrators and academics.

At the heart of this is a new, online governance hub (see below for weblink). The governance hub provides information on the University’s governance structure, decision-making processes, instruments of governance and the key people involved. It also provides access to agendas, minutes and papers of a number of central committees, including the University Council, the Council’s Business Committee, the Audit Committee and the General Board. The intention is that, over time, other central bodies will post committee papers to the site.

It is already proving to be an invaluable resource for administrators across the University who need access to clear, definitive and accurate information about governance and policy. Over the coming 12 months, the Registrar’s Office and Office of External Affairs and Communications will be looking at how the communication of key University decisions and policies can be improved using new online and digital technologies.

You can find the governance hub at www.governance.cam.ac.uk

Financial statements and performance

<table>
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<th>UAS Financial Summary 2013-14</th>
<th>Chest Recurrent (£k)</th>
<th>Other sources of funds (£k)</th>
<th>Total (£k)</th>
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<td>Surplus/(Deficit)</td>
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<td>(882)</td>
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Please note the figures shown here exclude the income and expenditure activity of MISD, plus any brought forward reserve balance, as MISD has now transferred out of the UAS.

Analysis of financial statements

- The Chest position for the year finished with a deficit of £245,000, mainly due to various unbudgeted one-off charges such as the recruitment to a number of senior University administrative appointments.
- The expenditure from Chest reserves includes both the planned spend down of divisional reserves, aligned to the UAS strategic plan, plus further non-recurrent central UAS spend in the support of key operational activities.
- The deficit on the non-Chest source of funds is predominately due to the spend down of donation and trust fund reserve balances.
- The UAS holds centrally over £2.0m of unrestricted non-Chest (trading) reserves, along with the Chest reserves shown above. This gives a total of over £3.3m which can be used to support UAS strategic and development plans.
Coordinating the REF

There is likely to be little argument with the assertion that the 2014 Research Excellence Framework was the single most important aspect of academic policy affecting the University in 2014.

The REF, to give it its universal contraction, was an opportunity to confirm Cambridge’s pre-eminent reputation as a leading research university. Of longer term significance, REF outcomes, announced earlier this year, have considerable impact on the allocation of research income to higher education institutions.

The long, collective process that saw Cambridge submit its REF return in November 2013 involved a phenomenal amount of work by many people across the University. A cursory and incomplete list would include the 32 Unit of Assessment Committees, the Schools, Faculties and Departments, central committees and individual academics and administrators.

While it was down to the Units of Assessment (UoAs) to decide who and what was submitted, the REF Office in the Academic Division played a vital role in coordinating and reviewing the University’s submission to HEFCE.

The REF Office provided much of the underlying software that helped the UoAs build up their individual submissions. A crucial tool that was provided centrally was Symplectic, which helped the UoAs present all of their staff, those who were eligible for the REF and those who were submitted. Information and research outputs logged in Symplectic were then fed into the HEFCE submission system directly, so there was no double entry. Separate software was developed to store and manage the 242 impact case studies submitted by the University, as well as the impact and environment templates.

It was the job of the small team working in the REF Office over the past couple of years to review all of the information and data that formed the University’s total submission.

The extent and depth of scrutiny is worth considering. One fatal error, such as an incorrect date of birth, or a case study not written using the required font (Arial, no smaller than 11 point) could wreck the whole return.

In addition to this, all research outputs published as journal articles or conference proceedings for all of the University’s 2,200 submitted staff had to include the unique ‘digital object identifiers’ that enabled review panels to source them. Every one was checked and approved by the REF Office. All impact case studies were read and re-read for clarity, effectiveness and compliance with HEFCE guidelines.

TheREF Office was also the main reference point for any questions about the process, and was the crucial link between the University and HEFCE. It reported regularly to the REF Project Board, the REF Policy Committee and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research. One useful tool that was developed as part of these regular meetings was an at-a-glance risk register that provided a visual update on the status of the University’s submission across the 32 assessment areas.

“The REF Office played a vital role in coordinating and reviewing the University’s REF submission to HEFCE”

Having half a dozen people based centrally who lived, breathed and ate the REF for the 18 months leading up to the submission deadline enabled the Academic Division to provide advice and support to the whole University. Providing that service centrally avoided replication across Departments and Faculties.

The work of the REF Office continues. It has recently launched an impact repository, which will act as a central databank that can be used for the next REF, for research councils that ask for evidence of impact, as well as other important purposes such as donor relations and PR. Becoming institutionally proficient in demonstrating the impact of our research is going to become ever more important to the University.

Challenges remain. The next REF will make it mandatory for all submitted research outputs to be compliant with HEFCE’s open access policy. In reality, this will mean that if papers are not compliant – either published in an institutional repository or in an open access journal – they cannot be submitted to the REF. And they cannot be made open access retrospectively.

It is clear that the complexity of research assessment is only going to increase. But the expertise that the University now has within the Academic Division to coordinate and advise in this area will be invaluable.
Developing our people

Growth. Technological change. Pressures on funding. Changes to higher education policy. The challenges that universities face today are many and diverse. Just as it is important to look after our estate and the University’s resources in an ever-shifting sector, so we must develop our people and the environments in which they work. Professional development is vital if we are to equip staff with the skills they need to do their jobs well, and create the kind of career paths that first attract, and then progress, the very best talent.

The work that various teams and individuals across the UAS do in supporting administrative staff – both centrally and across University institutions – is one important contribution in this area. Our ambition is to create a suite of training courses that cover the needs of professional services staff across the majority of grades.

The flagship training programme is the Administrator Development Programme, organised by the Personal and Professional Development team in the HR Division. Beginning in the 2003/04 academic year, it has seen 209 people complete the six-month, six-session course. Aimed at mid-level (grades seven to nine) administrators with one to five years’ experience at the University, it covers some of the key skills and knowledge required to be a successful administrator. Among the topics covered by this year’s cohort were financial strategy, resource allocation, HR, educational and student policy, presentation skills and communications, research and innovation, leadership and business analysis.

Participants are also expected to complete and present a group project, which is developed outside the designated training days.

The course is a mixture of practical skills development and presentations from senior staff across the University and Colleges. This year’s presenters included the Registrar, the Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Directors of the UAS Divisions, the Chair of the Colleges Committee and the Directors of Information Services and Communications.

Those who have taken the course say that this high-level, strategic insight into key areas of the University and its priorities is invaluable. Most also appreciate the opportunity to network and share professional experiences with their peers – people who are doing similar roles in different areas. Each year there is a carefully selected mix of central administrators and those from Faculties, Departments and other areas of the University. The organisers have found that this gives attendees a useful way of gaining fresh perspectives on shared issues.

Partly in response to the success of the Administrator Development Programme, and also to meet the specific requirements of senior administrative staff, PPD are now working with the School Secretaries to design a course for grade eight to ten departmental and central administrators. It is intended that this course will cover strategic planning, change management, management styles and have a greater emphasis on project management.

The training and development needs of the large numbers of junior staff are also being considered, typically those in grades four to six, and work is underway to assess the specific needs of this cohort.

PPD usually contacts heads of institutions in the summer, asking them to nominate staff who may benefit from the Administrator Development Programme.

For more information about training and development generally, log on to www.training.cam.ac.uk/cppd

“The UAS aims to create a suite of training courses that covers the needs of University professional services staff across the majority of grades”
Appointments made in 2014

Gail Christey
Gail Christey took up the post of HR Business Manager for the School of Clinical Medicine. Gail has been an HR Manager at the University of London and the Civil Service, and joined from East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust. Her role is to provide information and advice relating to strategic change, give specialist employment law advice on employee relations matters, and support the School with key activities such as senior academic promotions.

Sheila Gupta MBE
Sheila Gupta MBE became the University’s Director of Human Resources after seven years as Director of Human Resources at the University of Edinburgh. The current chair of the Russell Group Human Resources Directors Forum, she has extensive experience of the UK higher education sector, having worked in five separate institutions in senior leadership roles as Director of HR or equivalent, including City University London and the Institute of Education, University of London. She is a Fellow of Homerton College.

Dr Rebecca Simmons
Dr Rebecca Simmons was appointed Head of the Vice-Chancellor’s Office. She plays a key role in positioning and promoting the work of the Vice-Chancellor and his office to both internal and external audiences. Formerly Senior Investigator Scientist at the MRC Epidemiology Unit, her post-doctoral research focused on risk identification, screening and the prevention of diabetes and cardiovascular disease. She is a Fellow of Murray Edwards College.

Gail Christey took up the post of HR Business Manager for the School of Clinical Medicine. Gail has been an HR Manager at the University of London and the Civil Service, and joined from East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust. Her role is to provide information and advice relating to strategic change, give specialist employment law advice on employee relations matters, and support the School with key activities such as senior academic promotions.

Sheila Gupta MBE
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Dr Peter Hedges
Dr Peter Hedges was appointed the new Head of the Research Office, joining from the University of Warwick where he was Director of Research Support Services. Prior to this, Peter spent 18 years working for the UK Research Councils, latterly the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council. He is a regular contributor at research administration professional development training events and conferences, and has a particular interest in research information management and research governance.

Dr Rebecca Simmons
Dr Rebecca Simmons was appointed Head of the Vice-Chancellor’s Office. She plays a key role in positioning and promoting the work of the Vice-Chancellor and his office to both internal and external audiences. Formerly Senior Investigator Scientist at the MRC Epidemiology Unit, her post-doctoral research focused on risk identification, screening and the prevention of diabetes and cardiovascular disease. She is a Fellow of Murray Edwards College.

Emma Stone
Emma Stone took up the position of Assistant Director of HR, initially providing interim leadership for the HR Division between Indi Seehra’s departure and Sheila Gupta’s arrival. Emma’s role includes leading the HR Operations team, policy development, working on the HR Systems project and acting as secretary to the HR Committee. She was also a key member of the team that oversaw the move of the Cancer Research UK Cambridge Institute into the University.

These are a selection of senior appointments made within the Unified Administrative Service. Key Divisional appointments are covered in the monthly UAS Bulletin.