

JBM and Industrial Liaison Panels

The University of Edinburgh experience and challenges

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The brief

- **Role of the panel:**
 - **Objectives**
 - **Composition**
 - **Meetings**
- **Some “deliverables”**
- **Challenges**
- **Conclusions**

Objectives

- **To promote links, communication and understanding between the University, the professional Institutions and Industry.**
- **To advise and contribute to the School on teaching and research activities.**
- **Specifically, to advise and review:**
 - Strategy in both teaching and research
 - Academic content of courses
 - Strategy for recruitment of undergraduate and postgraduate students
 - Promotion and marketing the School to schools, industry, professional bodies and the wider community

Composition

- **Initiated in 1999**
- **One half day meeting a year. Department tour, design project visit, workshops.**
- **Initially 7 industry members and similar staff**
- **Now:**
 - 17 industry including consultants (8), clients (4), contractors (3) supplier and ICE (1 each)
 - 16 staff (including student development officer)
 - students and PhD attendance

Meetings (1 of 2)

Agenda 2009:

- Welcome, apologies, matters arising
- Feedback from previous meeting
- Long term Industrial Advisory Board outcomes
- School / Discipline news, appointments etc.
- Student Recruitment news
- Royal Academy of Engineering Secondment Scheme
- Breakout session “Collaborative SWOT”
- Reports from breakout groups and Consensus SWOT
- AOB

Meetings (2 of 2)

- **Department tour, design project visit, workshops.**
- **Workshop topics:**
 - Mentoring of students
 - Industrial placements and follow-on research projects.
 - How do we incorporate “Safety in Design” into degree programmes?
 - What makes a good engineering graduate?
 - Design in the curriculum
 - Design projects review
 - Embedding sustainability into undergraduate courses
 - Student recruitment

Some deliverables

- **The objectives!**
- **Lectures** (structures, health and safety, sustainability)
- **Design courses** (environmental, geotechnical, structures, architecture)
- **Research** (fire, NDT, water, rail)
- **Recruitment/visibility for companies**
- **Placements for students**
- **Support at JBM visits**

Challenges

- **Staff numbers** (staff student ratio/teaching load)
- **Faculty “balance”** (civil, electrical, mechanical)
- **Research funding** (lack of industrial input)
- **Advisory Board now too big** (but everyone wants to attend!)
- **Academia is getting tougher, so more support is required**

SWOT Analysis

- As concluded by the board meeting 13 Jan 09
 - examples:

• Strengths

- Good reputation
- Research >> Teaching
- Industrial engagement

• Weaknesses

- Limited skills in some key areas
- High teaching loads
- Space/resource problems

• Opportunities

- Industry secondments for staff
- Research pooling in Scotland
- Increased infrastructure spending?

• Threats

- Current economic slowdown
- Reduced industrial participation
- Not seen as a serious research area for funding

Current action points for board

- SWOT analysis and discussion led to five action points for current year:
 - Greater contributions to teaching – perhaps an ‘inverse secondment’
 - cover areas where current skills limited
 - Development of innovative teaching topics
 - lecturers perceived to currently operate within a ‘comfort zone’
 - Identification of mutual requirements for research
 - Greater scope for placement and mentoring within companies
 - Explore use IAB sub-committees
 - Board needs to be more effective – currently only meets once per year and part of that is information dissemination

Conclusions

- **Advisory Boards add value for:**
 - The School
 - The University
 - The students
 - The industrial partners
- **Industry needs to get more involved**
 - University needs to exploit the high level of goodwill that exists amongst industrial partners
 - Industrial partners need to be *directed* in their involvement
- **And some observations:**
 - Create personal links at several levels (junior to senior)
 - Use your alumni
 - This is a long term game.... and gain!