SCHOOL OF INFORMATICS

Strategy Committee

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School Strategy and Plan – SWOT Analysis

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Background
The School is expecting to submit its annual planning documentation and forecasts by the end of calendar year 2018. The document will include an updated School SWOT analysis.

Action requested from the committee
Strategy Committee is invited to comment on the SWOT analysis included in the current School Strategy and Plan, noting that the development of an updated analysis to be included with the 2019-22 School Strategy and Plan will be an iterative process, including being informed by the SWOT analysis to be undertaken by each Institute.

SWOT Analysis
The SWOT analysis included with the School Strategy and Plan 2018- 21 is appended.

Equality and diversity implications: None.

Resource implications (staff, space, budget): None.

ANNEX: School of Informatics – SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Ranked #14 in the 2018 Times Higher Education World Computer Science subject ranking
- Excellence in research at scale (top in UK for research power in REF2014)
- Breadth of research and teaching within the School
- Strong demand from prospective students (especially overseas)
- Strong demand for graduates
- Strong industry links and track record of spin-outs and start-ups
- Well established and effective support structures for academic staff
- Dedicated research and teaching facilities in the Informatics Forum and Appleton Tower
- Athena SWAN Silver Award

Weaknesses

- School is feeling the strain from recent growth in (taught) student numbers and in staff numbers – structures, processes, student load (teaching, personal tutors, etc)
- Work allocation model no longer fit-for-purpose and not able to adapt to changing patterns of demand
- Shortage of space for certain activities (eg server rooms, practical research labs, small meeting rooms); teaching space at or near capacity
- Performance in National Student Survey (although not reflected in anecdotal feedback from students)
- Variability in student demand across programmes/subject areas means uneven spread of load between staff
- Shortage of staff willing and/or able to take on senior academic leadership roles

Opportunities

- New academic staff – increased research capacity/critical mass in key areas; increased grant capture, research collaborations and industry links; increased teaching capacity
- Online learning – to enhance learning for on-site students and deliver to students off-site
- Bayes Centre – opportunities for more interdisciplinary and industry collaborations, plus more space
- Edinburgh Futures Institute - opportunities for more interdisciplinary and industry collaborations, plus possibly more space
- Usher Institute - opportunities for more interdisciplinary collaborations
- City Deal (including linked to all of above) but detail not yet clear
- Strength in high profile areas of research and teaching which are attracting Government interest and funding – eg Security and Privacy, Artificial Intelligence
- Centres for Doctoral Training funding call – continuation of existing CDTs plus opportunity for up to two more
- Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund – building on existing strong industry partnerships

Threats

- Loss of staff to industry and overseas institutions who can pay much higher salaries and offer attractive support packages
- High dependency on student fees for income and potential vulnerability to external factors

- Brexit – loss of access to staff and students; potential loss of existing staff if they do not feel welcome; loss of access to EU research funding
- UKVI – further restrictions/costs for visas for staff and students
- Increasing compliance burden on staff
- University change programmes (eg Service Excellence) if not well thought through, well-managed, and responsive to School needs (and, especially, seen to be beneficial to academic staff)
- Increasing competition from other Universities in the UK, Europe, USA, Far East and elsewhere (potential threat to UoE and SoI rankings and, thus, reputation/prestige)
- Potential changes to Government attitude towards Universities in terms of governance, funding (including student funding), etc