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THE HIGHER EDUCATION MANAGER'S HANDBOOK

Effective Leadership and Management
in Universities and Colleges

THIRD EDITION



Peter McCaffery



The Higher Education Manager's Handbook

Drawing on professional experience from university innovators and a wealth of international case studies, *The Higher Education Manager's Handbook* offers practical advice and guidance on all aspects of university management. An engaging, comprehensive and highly accessible practitioner's guide, the book tackles all the key areas central to the job of managing in higher education, from understanding the culture of your university and the role it plays, to providing effective leadership and managing change. Now in a thoroughly updated third edition, the book is written from the unique perspective of the higher education manager, offering advice that can be implemented immediately by leaders at all levels.

The book is organised into four prerequisites that any prospective higher education manager must master if they are to be an effective university leader:

- Knowing your environment
- Knowing your university
- Knowing your department
- Knowing yourself

Each of the chapters within these sections provides commentary and analysis of the particular role aspect under review, and offers advice and guidance on good practice, including case study examples and self-assessment tools. New topics include:

- The new higher education landscape
- The first 100 days
- Avoiding cognitive bias and developing a flexible mindset
- Strategic planning and Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)
- Reviewing course portfolios and subject areas
- Improving student outcomes and staff experience
- Assessing and mitigating risk
- Project management and managing up
- Widening participation and social mobility

Vice chancellors, university presidents, provosts and deans, heads of academic departments and university services, subject leaders, course directors and others in management positions within the field of higher education will find this book to be an irreplaceable resource that they will use time and time again.

Professor Peter McCaffery is a former university vice chancellor and a Winston Churchill Fellow. He has over 35 years of teaching, research and management experience and has worked in a range of institutions from further education colleges to an Ivy League University.



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The Higher Education Manager's Handbook

Effective Leadership and Management in
Universities and Colleges

Third edition

Peter McCaffery

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To Sean and Kyle, so they now know what I do.



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Preface

The demands made upon higher education managers are greater today than they have ever been. Effectiveness as a university leader requires managers to master four essential prerequisites. They must know their environment, know their university, know their department and know themselves as individuals.

The *Higher Education Manager's Handbook* aims to help university leaders to do just that. This new third edition has been fully updated to take account of the important changes that have occurred since the second edition was published in 2010.

It includes entirely new sections to help leaders and managers:

To prepare for – or review – their role: your first hundred days; avoiding cognitive bias; developing a flexible mindset; mapping your university culture;

To make a difference in their role – strategic planning; reviewing your course portfolio and subject area; improving student outcomes and your TEF assessment; enhancing your staff experience; managing projects;

To navigate their role – assessing and mitigating risk; managing up; the psychological contract; handling complaints; handling an employment tribunal;

To understand how environmental changes affect their role: the new HE landscape; globalisation and populism; widening participation and social mobility; the university of 2035?

Like previous editions this new one draws on a wealth of US and UK case study examples of university innovators and offers self-assessment tools in all these areas.

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Abbreviations

AAUP	American Association of University Professors
ACAS	Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service
ACCA	Association of Chartered Certified Accountants
ACE	American Council on Education
AGB	Association of Governing Boards
AOB	any other business
APM	Association for Project Management
ARA	academic-related administration
ARWU	Academic Ranking of World Universities
AUA	Association of University Administrators
AUT	Association of University Teachers (now UCU)
BPS	British Psychological Society
BME	black and minority ethnic
C&IT	communications and information technology
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CEQ	Course Evaluation Questionnaire
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
CMA	Competition and Markets Authority
CMI	Chartered Management Institute
CPD	continuous professional development
CRE	Commission for Racial Equality
CUA	Conference of University Administrators – now AUA
CUC	Committee of University Chairs
CUPP	Community–University Partnership Programme
CVCP	Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals – now UUK
DCFS	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DGB	degree-granting body
DLHE	Destination of Leavers from Higher Education survey (now Graduate Outcomes survey)
DRA	default retirement age (65 years)
DRC	Disability Rights Commission

DTI/OST	Department of Trade and Industry /Office of Science and Technology
DUMB	defective, unrealistic, misdirected and bureaucratic
ECU	Equality Challenge Unit (now Advance HE)
EFQM	European Foundation for Quality Management – business excellence model
ELQ	equivalent or lower qualification
EPI	Education Policy Institute
EQ	emotional quotient
ESFA	Education and Skills Funding Agency
EU	European Union
FE	further education
FTE	full-time equivalent
GMU	George Mason University
GROW	goals, reality, options and will (coaching model)
HE	higher education
HEA	Higher Education Academy (now Advance HE)
HEC	Higher Education Corporation
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England (replaced by OfS)
HEI	higher education institution
HEPI	Higher Education Policy Institute
HERA	higher education role analysis (job evaluation)
HERDSA	Higher Education Research and Development Society for Australasia
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HMT	Her Majesty’s Treasury
HR	human resources
ICT	information and communication technology
IFS	Institute for Fiscal Studies
IiP	Investors in People
IQ	intelligence quotient
IT	information technology
JCPSPG	Joint Costing and Pricing Steering Group
KEF	Knowledge Excellence Framework
KPI	key performance indicator
LEA	local education authority
LEO	longitudinal education outcomes
LFHE	The Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (now Advance HE)
LGBT	lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
MBO	management by objectives
MBO	master of the bleedin’ obvious
MBWA	management by walking about
MLE	managed learning environment
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NAB	National Advisory Board (no longer current)

NAO	National Audit Office
NATFHE	National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (now UCU)
NEF	New Economics Foundation
NHS	National Health Service
NICE	needs, interests, concerns, expectations (media communication plan)
NLE	New Learning Environment – at TVU
NSS	National Student Survey
NTFS	National Teaching Fellowship Scheme
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OFFA	Office for Fair Access (replaced by OfS)
OfS	Office for Students
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
OIA	Office of the Independent Adjudicator
ONS	Office for National Statistics
OPM	Office for Public Management
OU	Open University
OUP	Open University Press
P4P	Partnerships for Progression
PAC	Public Accounts Committee
PQA	post-qualifications admissions system
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
QUT	Queensland University of Technology
RAE	research assessment exercise (replaced by REF)
RBL	resource-based learning
RDA	Regional Development Agency
REF	research excellence framework
SME	small and medium-sized enterprise
SMT	senior management team
SMART	specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-related
SNC	student number control
SRHE	Society for Research into Higher Education
SSC	Sector Skills Council
STEM	science, technology, engineering and mathematics
STEP	social, technological, economic and political
SWOT	strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats
TA	Teaching Assistant
TDA	Training and Development Agency for Schools
TEF	Teaching Excellence Framework
<i>THE</i>	<i>Times Higher Education</i> (formerly <i>THES – Supplement</i>)
TQA	Teaching Quality Assessment (replaced by TEF)
TRAC	transparent approach to costing
TVU	Thames Valley University
UCAS	University and Colleges Admissions Service

UCEA	University and Colleges Employers' Association
UCU	University and College Union
UGC	University Grants Committee (no longer current)
UKCISA	UK Council for International Student Affairs
UKES	UK Engagement Survey
UKeU	UK e-University
UKPSF	UK Professional Standards Framework
UKRI	UK Research and Innovation
USP	unique selling point
UUK	Universities UK
VLE	virtual learning environment
UWS	university-wide services
WOW	World of Work



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Introduction

The challenge for HE managers

I left the Presidency just as I had entered it – fired with enthusiasm!

Clark Kerr, President, University of California on being
dismissed following Ronald Reagan's election
as Governor in 1967

'Management is a punishment from God!' Pilloried in the media for incompetence, badgered by the incessant demands of government bodies and often vilified within their own academic communities, there can be few managers in higher education who cannot have identified with this popular epithet at some stage in their career. And yet, ironically, this sentiment is strikingly at odds with the vitality of the very institutions which this group purports to manage. For while universities have, like other public sector institutions, experienced unprecedented change over the last quarter century, they have been equally successful in facing up to the unprecedented demands that successive governments have placed upon them.

In essence, HEIs have, on the one hand, had to become more accountable for the way they manage their affairs while, on the other, been obliged to cater to the needs of a mass student clientele, rather than those of a privileged few. While this transition in role and function has been neither smooth nor uncontested, HEIs have, by and large, successfully managed to do 'more' (that is, teach more students) with 'less' (fewer resources) while simultaneously maintaining 'quality'. In the UK for example, HEIs have accommodated a tripling of student numbers over the past twenty-five years while assimilating a 50 per cent reduction in the unit of public funding per student. More than that, HEIs have maintained their international standing in research while continuing to produce first degree graduates quickly, and with low drop-out rates, compared to other countries. Further still, between 2005 and 2011 HEIs reported £1.38 billion of efficiencies against a cumulative target of £1.23 billion along with a further £1 billion in cost savings between 2012 and 2015 and in the process created 117 jobs in the wider economy for every 100 people employed in universities (700,000). Universities, in sum, contribute at least £73 billion a year to the national economy and generate more GDP (gross domestic product) per unit of resource than health, public administration and construction (UUK, 2017; 2015; NAO, 2007; Eastwood, 2008). Universities, then, can quite rightly be proud of their collective achievement. Once perceived as a drain on the public purse, they are increasingly recognised as key contributors to wealth creation and economic well-being.

2 Introduction

Where universities have been much less successful, however, is in managing the internal ramifications of these externally imposed changes. Indeed, alienation, cynicism and demoralisation are, and have been, rife within academic communities throughout this period. (Weale, 2017; Back, 2016; Finkelstein and Altbach, 2016; Coaldrake and Stedman, 2013; McNay and Bone, 2006; Watson and Amoah, 2007). Witness one Oxford University Professor of English in 2000, for example, who, in response to his own question: ‘What does the institution of higher education care about?’ railed,

Bleakly observed, the local institution seems to have thrown in the towel. Degree-factory rhetoric is all we hear. New-style university managements are, actually, counter-productive. If you piss off your teachers and researchers you are eating the seed-corn, selling the family silver, sapping the life-blood. You would think our institutions were suicidal, the way they treat us – with the bad pay they colude in, the abolition of tenure they have agreed to, the rash economisings by engineering early retirements of good people, with the weekly questionnaires and the constant abuse of our time and energy and their acceptance of piss-poor TQA-inspired formalisms and abomination of abominations, their utter short-termism (their kow-towing to the silly time-scales of the RAE bods, their iniquitous short-term contracts – you can have your job back at the end of the long vacation if you ask nicely). Managerial cynicism is rampant in higher education as never before. They (THEY) don’t care about the poor bloody infantry. . . . People are fed up, they are glad to give up and retire; they are going into internal exile, clock-watching, minimalising their effort. The government-inspired way, the neo-managerial way, is a mess none of us can survive on.

(Cunningham, 2000)

It is not a surprise then, if no less cause for concern, that a UCU-sponsored (University and College Union) inquiry into university staff well-being in summer 2013 still found that ‘levels of psychological distress among academics’ exceeded ‘those of the average British worker, even those in high-stress occupations such as accident and emergency doctors and nurses’ (Kinman and Wray, 2013; McCall, 2006) and an independent qualitative study in 2016 warned that ‘unremitting work’ means more academics ‘will be off long-term, with stress-related conditions’ (Elmes, 2016). Likewise a comparative survey on the ‘professional well-being’ of the 140 or so officially recognised occupations (commissioned by the Economic and Social Research Council’s ‘Future of Work’ program) actually placed university teaching professionals at number one in their ‘Job Misery Index’. Nor is this grim picture peculiar to the UK. Researchers at Melbourne Business School, for instance, have charted how stress levels in Australian universities have risen dramatically over the past decade, generating an epidemic of work-related illnesses across the country’s campuses; an outcome which they attribute to, among other things, the role played by university managers. (Grove, 2017; Reisz, 2017; Cunningham, 2014; *Times Higher Education Supplement (THES)*, 2000, 2003) It is also the case that the pressure on universities worldwide to embrace yet still further change is – and is likely to remain for the foreseeable future – unrelenting. Globalisation, information technology, the ‘Knowledge Society’, marketisation, social media, economic nationalism and the UK withdrawal from the European Union (or Brexit) all presage a new environment to which universities will have to adapt (Royal Society, 2017; Quinn et al., 2015; PA Consulting, 2014; HEPI, 2009; Spellings, 2006). And all at a time when only one in three higher

education students consider their course offers value for money and a new regulatory body – the Office for Students (OfS) – has been established (January, 2018) to develop a new regulatory framework for the HE sector (NAO, 2017).

The challenge facing universities then, and in particular individual managers, is a formidable one. Nor can they prepare for it with a *tabula rasa*. On the contrary, as we've seen above, 'management' in universities, unlike in other organisations, has long had its legitimacy questioned. Often depicted by academics ('the managed') as an irrelevant business practice which has no place in the (essentially) collegiate environment of the academic world; this view was, until recently, upheld for the most part by those who occupied such 'management' positions in HEIs. On the other hand, there have been well-publicised instances when 'new managerialism' has allegedly run rampant in its quest to bring the techniques, values and practices of the commercial sector to the university world. Thus, where once universities may have been led and managed in an amateurish, complacent or uninformed way in the past, they are now widely perceived as in the grip of an aggressive managerial cadre determined to run HE as a business.

Common to both scenarios is the low status and low esteem which is accorded university management not only within HE but beyond it as well. 'Bogus professionalism' is the pejorative comment most commonly used by Whitehall departments – in private if not in public – to describe the way in which universities are led and managed. For the intellectual, 'there is no scientific basis to management therefore it does not deserve to be taken seriously'. A view which is too often compounded in university settings by the disregard that some managers themselves have for their positions when it comes to their own training and development – the notion somehow that 'training is for the second eleven' (Bryman, 2007; Bolman and Gallos, 2011); a disposition that the Leadership Foundation for HE (2004–2018) has sought to counter by successfully 'establishing an emergent community of practice among professional university leaders' (Gentle, 2014). Instances of mismanagement and incompetence in universities, however, have continued to exhibit an upward trend. How then – given the prospective changes in the environment, the degree of internal malaise within institutions, and the 'crisis in management' – can university managers hope to manage effectively in such a setting? Indeed, how can and should university managers prepare to meet this challenge?

The purpose of this study is to help university leaders and managers – both academic and professional heads alike – to do just that. Taking my cue from my academic research as a historian – one who regards history as 'doing moral philosophy and public advocacy' (i.e. 'to understand the past as a means of changing the present'); a legacy of my Idlewild Fellowship with Lee Benson at the University of Pennsylvania and at the London School of Economics – this study argues that we ought to be as professional in our leadership and management as we are in our teaching, research and administration. It draws on a variety of sources including the continuing research on university innovators overseas, which I undertook for the Travelling Fellowship I was awarded by the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust. As a Dean of Faculty, Deputy Vice Chancellor – and latterly, a head of institution – I, like many others in the HE sector, have both a professional and a practical interest in how our institutional counterparts in other countries are responding to the common dilemma which, as I indicated above, we all face no matter our domicile; namely, how to do 'more' with 'less' while still maintaining 'quality' in an ever-increasing competitive environment. This study, based on a selected number of universities in

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the USA and Australia, not only reports the findings of this inquiry, but also seeks to identify the lessons we can learn from these university innovators and in particular those which we can all apply in practice.

It also draws on my own personal and professional experience – as a teacher, researcher, leader and manager in a variety of institutions from further education college to USA Ivy League university – and especially of crisis management in three different universities: Thames Valley University (TVU: now, the University of West London), the University of Cumbria and London Metropolitan University. Indeed my initial research followed on from Tony Blair and David Blunkett's visit to TVU in September, 1996 when – in the week after the former had declared at the annual TUC Conference that his three key priorities in government if his party were elected to office would be 'education, education and education' – the then Leader of HM Opposition, formally opened the new state-of-the-art Paul Hamlyn Learning Resource Centre on the Slough campus with the rejoinder: 'Why, I wonder, can't every university be like TVU?' At that time, TVU was attempting to establish a self-styled 'New Learning Environment'; a bold innovation that was to founder, not because the aspiration behind it – to create an education setting which was more learner-centred than teacher-centred – was unsound, but because, as the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) subsequently pointed out, the scale and speed with which attendant change processes had been introduced (notably, the centralisation of academic-related administration and the establishment of an internal market) had undermined the university's infrastructure, thereby placing academic standards at risk.

The whole of this process – the conception, and subsequent unravelling of, the NLE; the QAA's investigation into allegations of 'dumbing-down'; the naming and shaming of TVU as Britain's 'first failing university' and the development of the HEFCE recovery plan under the stewardship of Sir William Taylor – conducted, as it was, under intense public scrutiny and in circumstances unprecedented in higher education in the UK, yielded penetrating insights into management practices and processes; both their deficiency and also their efficacy. Not only that, but when contrasted with the examples set by university innovators overseas, it rendered transparent those prerequisites which are essential to effective management and leadership in HE. It is these characteristics which this study seeks to identify. In doing so it also offers guidance, where appropriate, on tried and tested methods derived from the training programmes and the professional development schemes provided by, among others, the Cabinet Office, Institute of Directors, Work Foundation (the former Industrial Society), Chartered Management Institute and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. It is informed too by the feedback from the leadership and management development consultancy I have undertaken with a variety of sector bodies including the Leadership Foundation for HE; the HE Academy; British Council; Epigeum (Oxford University Press); the former American Association of HE; the Higher Education Research and Development Society, Australasia; the Centre for HE, Germany; the Botswana Tertiary Education Council; and the University of Jamaica project. Taken together, this study aims to provide university leaders with a 'good practice' guide to effective management.

Its focus furthermore – unlike the bulk of the literature on university management to date – is on the HE manager per se. That is to say, it is written quite deliberately from the manager's perspective. Much of the research in this area in

the past – whether conducted by HE researchers, staff developers or management practitioners themselves – has invariably focused on a particular issue or theme in question (e.g. curriculum, personnel management, staff development, globalisation and so on): an approach which while quite legitimate given the conception of the subject matter, and which has very often yielded critical insights into the subject, is also one which has not always rendered them transparent or explicit from the (subjective) perspective of the reader. Put another way, the received wisdom to date offers HE professionals cogent analysis and advice on *what* one could – or should – do in academic environments, but it is implicit, and not explicit, on *how* one should go about doing it.

Ironically, this same trait is also characteristic of the literature which has been designed by management developers and deliberately targeted at the middle management HE audience. It is almost as if the same affliction which has affected management development in HE in the past – the (false) assumption that any intelligent, educated individual can manage, and there is therefore no need for training – has also influenced many of those who write about HE for a HE audience, viz. they appear to argue that ‘since any intelligent and educated individual *can understand* what we say then *ipso facto* they will *automatically* be able to manage it’. Their conception of management within HEIs is also equally if not more damagingly restrictive, in that they invariably exhibit a consensual acceptance of the status quo in universities and a disposition to regard academic staff as an undifferentiated mass, as well as a tendency to view the role of HE managers as confined solely to responding to the needs of the managed.

In this book I have attempted to overcome the deficiencies of the received wisdom by, on the one hand, conceiving of the academic environment from the holistic perspective of the university manager, rather than in terms of a particular theme or issue (i.e. by making the manager the independent variable of the study rather than the dependent variable as has conventionally been the case) and, on the other, by maintaining an open mind about how such environments could or should be organised and managed, viz. by recognising that universities do indeed have distinguishing features – the autonomy of the individual scholar; the precedence of subject over institutional loyalty; the strength of tradition and the cult of ‘the expert’ – but that these characteristics are not so peculiar in themselves that HEIs *have* to be managed in a particular way. And it is for this reason that I have not drawn any particular distinction between so-called academic managers such as Heads of Subject Departments and general (‘support’) managers such as ‘administrators’ of central services; that, and the fact that such distinctions – as the success of new alternative providers demonstrate – have more to do with the endemic elitist ethos that prevails within many institutions, than they do with the reality of how HEIs operate in the twenty-first century.

This book then seeks to address the needs of all those who manage in HEIs – with a particular emphasis on those who occupy head of department roles – and to make explicit, rather than implicit, the competencies and skills required to be an effective manager. It does not assume that any educated and intelligent individual can be an effective manager *without training*. Nor that universities are unique environments that can only be managed in a special way. And it has been structured and organised accordingly with the manager’s ‘world view’ in mind – the need to master the ‘four knows’:

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- Knowing your environment;
- Knowing your university;
- Knowing your department and;
- Knowing yourself.

From the examination of HE in the broader context in Chapter 1 and analysis of HEIs as organisations in Chapter 2, through to the expectations of the role (leading your department; leading by example) and the demands of the role (managing for high performance, developing staff, celebrating diversity, enhancing the student experience, managing change) and finally onto accomplishing mastery of the role: managing up; managing the 'downside'; managing oneself. Each of the chapters provides a commentary and analysis of the particular role aspect under review, and offers advice and guidance on good practice, including case study examples and self-assessment tools.

Taken together, these chapters argue the case for a professional (or 'managerial') approach to people management in HEIs, and the case against amateurist, elitist and reactionary perspectives on university management – that we ought to have the same professionalism in the way we lead and manage people as we do towards our research and teaching. They further seek to demonstrate that 'managerialism' is not necessarily incompatible with collegiality, and to show how 'institutions of learning' can indeed become more like 'learning organisations'. More than that, they aspire to inspire. For history teaches us, as George Bernard Shaw implies, that 'nothing has to be as it is' – maybe that even leadership and management can be a blessing, as much as a punishment, from God!

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