

Schools and Universities

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University of Liverpool

The University of Liverpool has extensive experience of providing highly educated graduates across a wide-range of built environment professions including architecture, building engineering, civil engineers and planning. In so doing it works in conjunction with a variety of professional institutes to deliver initial education and on-going professional training which is challenging and develops an appreciation of the importance of outcomes, which help to contribute to the delivery of "sustainable communities".

The Egan Review on the skills, knowledge and understanding that built environment professionals require in order to deliver 'sustainable communities' and recognise the need for multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary work that seek holistic and integrated solutions to complex problems is welcomed in so far as it helps to highlight some of the issues facing the Built Environment professions, but fails to acknowledge the significant changes in initial professional education that are already in place. In providing initial education we believe that the cultural change that is being called for by government is already being embraced by both the professional institutes and the educational providers, including the University of Liverpool. From the outside it is important to recognise that the University of Liverpool, along with other Universities primarily promotes education which includes a number of professionally orientated and generic skills but that these need to be honed and developed through further experience and training. Our primary goal is education not training, which promotes the idea that students to become critical and reflective practitioners.

The following observations respond to the overall thrust of the 14 Egan Review questions and highlight examples of good practice and innovation.

1. Research and Teaching

As a research led University we believe that there are strong links between research, which often has an applied policy focus, and curriculum design and teaching. Staff links with practice, through research ensure that students are made aware of the rapidly changing professional context within which they will operate. It is also important to recognise the value of research to the funding of academic departments in Universities.

2. Focus on Interdisciplinarity

Whilst we welcome the emphasis on interdisciplinarity we reject the notion of common foundation years or sets of core generic introductory modules. Such approaches have been tried in several institutions over many years and experience suggests they are unpopular with students and unhelpful to the disciplinary specialisms. Such ideas have been tried before and have been shown not to work. Where is the evidence that that such an approach will bring real added value to built environment education programmes. Instead we believe that students need to initially develop an appreciation of their own specialism and associated skills and knowledge and the scope for fruitful, effective and meaningful interdisciplinary work is much greater in later stages of professional education and training. At Liverpool we are reviving a long established tradition of dual qualification routes in planning and architecture and this is being facilitated by recent changes in professional accreditation. New interdisciplinary MBA programmes in Urban Regeneration and Environmental management have been developed which combine generic business skills with specialist knowledge. Encouragement is also given through the modules system to links to other disciplinary groups and departments such as University of Liverpool Management School, Civil Engineering, Biological Sciences, Geography, Law, Sociology, etc.

3. Specialist versus Generic Skills

We recognise that in delivering sustainable communities there is a need for multi-disciplinary teams, which embrace a range of specialist skills, knowledge and understanding. The generic skills required to work together are now deeply embedded in the educational world and need to be honed within the

context of the disciplines themselves and enhanced through facilitating interdisciplinarity. Furthermore the understanding of context, including the development process, project management and communication skills are now firmly embedded in all our curriculum.

4. Relationship between the Professional Bodies and Professional Accreditation

The broader agenda of cultural change is being addressed by our professional bodies and we, as educational providers, are responding to the changing structures of professional education and adopting a positive approach to the changes needed linked to the delivery of sustainable communities. For example we welcome the structural change, which reduces the minimum length of initial postgraduate professional planning education recently introduced by the RTPI. This provides new opportunities for new and innovative MA programmes in Urban Regeneration and Environmental Planning, which can help foster interdisciplinarity and also facilitate more dual professional accreditation programmes of study. Within the RIBA the emphasis on sustainable development has fundamentally reshaped the curriculum. It is important to realise that the University of Liverpool is already working creatively to respond to many of the concerns that the Egan Review is exploring. This is not to suggest complacency, programmes must and will continue to evolve but professional accreditation and internal periodic review means that the integrity of programmes are now subject to much greater internal and external review. Course development is also usually informed, though not led, by practitioner advisory panels

At Liverpool we acknowledge the changes that are taking place in relation to the skills, knowledge, understanding and expectations of Built Environment professionals. Our curricula, teaching and learning and assessment methods are being constantly reviewed to meet these new challenges. The employability of our graduates' bears testimony to the fact that our programmes help to deliver the education the profession requires. It is important to remember our role is to provide initial professional education, which produces students who can think clearly and critically about problems and adapt to change. Whilst training is a component of education it is not the total of the experience and partnership with employees and government, recognition of the need for life long learning will help to deliver the cultural shift desired by government.

Don Gray Schools of Architecture in the United Kingdom

SCHOSA, the Standing Conference of Heads of Schools of Architecture, is the professional subject association which represents all 36 HE Institutions (Schools or Departments) which deliver architectural education in the UK.

Eight elected SCHOSA members constitute the SCHOSA Council. This response to the invitation to comment on the Egan Review of Skills: Public Consultation has been prepared by SCHOSA Council. SCHOSA want to be involved in any further consultation, as SCHOSA members are key providers of built environment education in the United Kingdom.

Clarify what 'sustainable community' means.

Sustainable design is the strategic use of design to meet and integrate current and future human needs without compromising the environment. Sustainable design in the built environment should deliver the best (social, environmental and economic) performance or result for the least (social, environmental and economic) cost. Sustainable communities constitute places or networks of places which integrate home, work, leisure and services in a way that

- allow but do not require easy travel
- give preference to modes of transport with low environmental impact
- are designed around a coherent, democratic and accessible public realm
- allow for full social inclusion

Sustainability is by its nature multidisciplinary as it tends to straddle various organisational functions and considerations. Sustainable communities must concern themselves with social issues as much as environmental, and should be founded on an awareness of corporate social responsibility.

General approach, leadership and process

1. Yes. Sustainable development needs to be driven by public awareness, involvement and consultation rather than depending exclusively on the creative force of markets. This suggests that resources need to be applied to the early (conceptual) stage of planning and development - the crucial territory between policy formation and planning realisation - without losing a sense of vision. Mechanisms for encouraging local involvement of all sections of the community are important, but cannot be a substitute for visionary propositions.

2. Yes. Local authorities must play a key role. It is essential though that they optimise outcomes by utilising consultation networks, by expanding their knowledge of best practice worldwide and by ensuring that they are advised by concerned professionals. Local authorities should seek to extend their knowledge base through continuous enhancement of learning and by placing trust in professionals working for the common good.

3.

a) Greater certainty and speed of decision can be achieved by extending the use of local Design Panels at the important pre-planning application stage. Schemes which are vetted in this way (as CABE has shown) are more likely to achieve the **right** proposal in the shortest time.

b) We do not think uniformity is as important as achieving a high quality outcome. However, the use of an integrated internet planning database would allow creative appraisal of like schemes in different communities.

c) While we agree that collaborative working is highly desirable, it is important that a collaborative approach to planning does not result in an architecture of mediocrity. Leadership and vision should not be supplanted by a lowest common denominator consensus. Regional Architecture Centres have

an important role to play in the dissemination of information to support discussion and decision-making.

Professional skills

4. The fundamental skill is the act of design - the ability to conceive a proposition for making new places or regenerating existing places. The range of skills offered by built environment professionals should support the realisation of such propositions, which must be grounded in experience and evidence, often in the guise of precedent. The generic knowledge and behaviours required of such professionals will include an understanding and acknowledgement of the importance of design and creativity which meets and integrates current and future human needs without compromising the environment. All stakeholders must buy into the vision through a mutual respect for professional skills.

5. The wholesale reconstruction of the professions and built environment occupations is an immense undertaking, and there is no guarantee of an improved system. We believe that it is preferable to continue to erode barriers through intelligent interdisciplinary education and institutional co-operation. An extension to the range of degree qualifications, including joint honours, is one way forward which SCHOSA members are actively pursuing. It must not be forgotten that design is utterly crucial to moving towards a more sustainable future.

6.

a) Without diluting the core skills of individual disciplines, there are opportunities for more interdisciplinary working at undergraduate and postgraduate level to produce individuals with new qualifications which straddle professional boundaries:

- architecture / engineering
- architecture / environmental services
- architecture / planning

b) Our experience suggests that a joint foundation course which attempts to cut across all disciplines could fail in its ambition because:

- there is a danger that the level at which it is pitched may be too elementary
- the content may be perceived as bland
- it could be seen as a serious delay to a 'real' built environment course, detrimentally affecting recruitment to the subject
- individual students have no sense of cultural or subject identity in their first year

c) If such a course is introduced, it must be jointly owned by all concerned professional groups, and as such must be consensual rather than imposed.

7. The professional institutions have a wealth of knowledge and heritage to support them, and this is a valuable resource. Extending collaboration and encouraging cross-disciplinary activity will extend mutual understanding, trust and team building among protagonists to the advantage of all.

8. There is a shortage of design-literate graduates in the field of environmental and services engineering. Creativity and design at project level is pitched at the numeric and prosaic at the expense of conjecture and exploration.

9. Planning at local authority level is seen as non-creative and anti-aspirational. Planners are seen as barriers to innovation, or worse, as perpetuators of mediocrity. There needs to be a move from the regulatory to the visionary: planners should be seen as the route to the enhancement of the built environment.

Engineers, whether services, civil or structural are often thought to be boring and bland, concerned only with calculation and caution. The emphasis on team-playing, seeing them as major contributors to successful built environment projects, will change the perception to attract appropriate recruits into the profession. Universities and the professional institutions must concern themselves with the perceived identity of practitioners. An emphasis on links with architecture (and the construction of new communities and iconic buildings) may strengthen their position as architecture has maintained a strong public image.

10. Yes, although 'rebranding' is redolent of transient marketing opportunities. See above.

11. No. Local authorities should work with schools of architecture, perhaps in conjunction with other departments, on the provision of appropriate learning materials and courses for planners and built environment professionals to enhance:

- awareness of the importance of design
- information on international precedents
- knowledge of successes in regeneration worldwide
- understanding of value engineering

12. See above, but design awareness courses (such as these offered by Canterbury School of Architecture) are for all participants in the procurement of sustainable communities.

13. Emphatically, yes to the first question. If the training is aspirational and celebrates the creative, and is led by experienced professionals with a broad view, then compulsion is unnecessary. Schools of Architecture could be the prime providers of this kind of training, designing the appropriate syllabus of study in conjunction with the relevant local authority. Schools of Architecture are also palaces of conjecture, theatres for ideas, where propositions which were hitherto thought impossible can be tested, debated and refined. Architecture Centres also have a role to play in each region, providing information on local and national developments and policy.

Other

14. No. Short term market considerations and opportunities regularly over-ride the long term view which is essential to sustainable development. There has to be a sophisticated matrix of tax, VAT and regulatory regimes which will encourage best practice and sustainable development while penalising inadequately designed proposals. Housing would be a good place to start. This strategy is developing now in the regulation of private transport.

Longer term, the industry must be educated to the advantages and inevitability of sustainable development, including the financial benefits.

East Riding Council

General approach, leadership and process

1. A culture change is required to achieve the step change envisaged in the Sustainable Communities Plan. There needs to be a greater emphasis on the quality of outcome. This will be difficult to achieve with the Governments current emphasis on achieving quantitative performance targets.
2. Yes. Local Government has the local knowledge and is impartial in terms of advice and decision making. Regional Government is too large and self-interest and the profit motive drive the private sector. Other groups and organisations will need to be involved to deliver major projects and programmes. Effective delivery of these usually also requires an area-based approach/structures within the local authority that can be achieved through cross departmental working.
- 3a. Greater certainty can only be achieved by formalising the pre-application stage so that planning applications are technically sound on submission, by maintaining the primacy of the Development Plan in the process. In terms of speed of decisions, the pre-application stage is important because it should remove uncertainty. Review of Section 106 or 'Planning Gain' procedures might help. From an economic development perspective it is important to clearly identify priority areas for investment. The urban/market town renaissance as promoted by Yorkshire Forward is a good example.
- 3b. Greater uniformity in process across different Local Authorities can only be imposed from the outside. If Local Authorities are given discretion in process development then this needs to be made clear that it is acceptable by the Government.
- 3c. This would be difficult to achievable. The whole basis for the planning system is conflict resolution, recognising that different stakeholders have different aspirations and objectives. Local communities tend to be NIMBY on a larger scale and also almost all key stakeholders have a specific axe to grind.

Professional skills

4. Different professions have developed because there is a need for professionals with different skills to perform different functions. There is probably greater understanding between the professions now than has been the case before and continuing co-operation and cross professional training is to be welcomed. This is not the same as producing generic professionals and this would not necessarily be a desirable objective. A willingness to listen to others (an open mind) is important rather than a silo mentality. Transport planners should be identified as providing a wider sustainable remit than highway engineers. A basic understanding of the economic processes and a rigour to assessing the economic impact of a proposal is an important skill.
5. The distinctions between the professions/occupations arise from the processes that are in place, rather than the converse. While the systems remain the same, then the mix of professions is likely to remain fundamentally unchanged, although each profession will develop and there may be some convergence in certain respects. It would not be productive to try to change the world by altering the professions of the people who work in it. If the world changes, the professions will alter to reflect those changes. Sustainability should underpin all the professions and not be an add-on or a singular professional area.
6. There may well be a place for some fairly broadly based foundation course so that a planning professional, for example, may understand some of the financial fundamentals employed by the Chartered Surveyor, and some of the design fundamentals required by an architect. The education system should encourage more cross profession meetings in order to see all angles. There is also a requirement for teachers to get involved in working in the 'real world' to understand 'real-issues'. The skill shortages in planning and associated areas are reflected in a number of other areas such as health. There is the issue of raising aspirations as well as attainment levels in Hull particularly but also in the

East Riding. As a result the Learning Partnership in Hull and the East Riding are supporting and working on 2 initiatives, scheduled to merge in 2004, called Aim Higher and P4P - Planning for Progression. These initiatives are about encouraging young people to stay on into FE and HE and courses are very much about this and then hopefully getting people onto full degrees. A reference to the relevance of these two initiatives in supporting young people to think about planning as a career would be helpful.

7. The role of the professional institutes should be in seeking to influence the way in which the agenda develops and to be responsive, both in advising its Members and influencing training of young professionals accordingly.

8. In terms of planning, yes, there clearly is a shortage, which is well documented.

9. In the planning professions the shortages are partly due to the lack of attractiveness of the profession itself, both in terms of its status and its rewards, particularly in a Local Authority context. I think it is also due to shortsighted funding of training which has not been remedied, even when greater demands are being put on the profession. Length of time and cost of teaching Dip TP is a deterrent with the introduction to tuition fees. Lack of pay, in comparison to other professions, is an issue in the planning profession.

10. Yes. Although 're-branding' suggests a superficial response. What is needed is a fundamental overhaul of the status of the profession and the status of Planners within Local Authorities and elsewhere. The view is normally provided by students that local authorities are seen as bureaucratic and unimaginative, the voluntary sector as poorly paid, constancy as a recipe for burnout or compromising quality for profit.

11. Some do and some do not. It would certainly be helpful if appropriate economic/financial skills and knowledge training could be provided in some properly co-ordinated and accredited fashion. However, the same thing could be said about a whole range of other skills, notably urban design.

12. There may be a role for ourselves as a Local Authority in making a contribution towards the training of others. If that is the case, one of the groups that may be included would be Parish and Community Councils. Developers, transport companies and government departments all need to be trained/informed about sustainable development issues, although it is recognised that this would be difficult to achieve.

13. Training is always helpful if it is well structured and well delivered and targeted to specific needs. The provision of training would represent a significant financial commitment which would need to be funded in a way which would have no direct impact on current budget pressures.

Other

14. Overall, probably not, although there would be considerable variation. There is a difference between interest/expertise/commitment. Commitment would need some form of enforcement, through regulations. If that were the case, then the market would provide the expertise. There is very little money to be made in sustainability and the link between sustainability and profits needs to be explored. More incentives are needed to encourage 'cost in use'; aspects of development i.e. energy saving features. Improving building techniques and technology needs to underpin this.

Greg Lloyd - University of Dundee

General approach, leadership and process

1. The primary focus of the Egan Review concerns the skills that built environment professionals need to help deliver the vision and aims set out in the Sustainable Communities Plan: Building for the Future. These have to be based on a critical and deep reaching understanding of the urban condition. It is far more complex and comprehensive that is implied by the Sustainable Communities paper and the instrumental approach to skills in the Egan document. These approaches represent a crude and simplistic supply side interpretation of the urban problem, and fail to address the complex demand side issues involved. Existing cultures and processes are not sufficient even for our very superficial and simplistic understanding of urban change. Clearly far more radical thinking and analysis is required. There is a danger that the rhetoric of sustainable communities obscures the very stark realities of modern urban living. We know what the evidence is, it is our ability to understand that evidence that is weak and flawed. The solution is not an instrumental adjustment in terms of skills. Skills for what?

2. A problem over the past 20 years or so has been the systematic erosion of local government. To act as a champion or leader with respect to urban change to create sustainable communities would require a very radical 'reflation' of local government's role - in terms of powers, resources, standing and confidence. At present it has been so stripped out that it could not conduct itself to meet our expectations. Arguably it has been so eroded and weakened that it is not discharging its job in current circumstances. A problem is the ridiculous fragmentation of agency responsibility in the urban arena. Local government has to compete with others to deliver the basic infrastructure for a sustainable community. The ability to provide a strategic canvas has been so badly eroded that radical thinking is required. This is a structural adjustment not an instrumental reconfiguration of those skills perceived to fit a particular interpretation of the urban problem. Local government is the only democratically legitimate body to deliver future expectations. Thought also needs to be given to the creation of local authority development authorities to discharge these priorities.

3. There needs to be a better understanding by developers and planning authorities of what the intended outcomes are. There is a tendency by developers to vilify and antagonise planning authorities and to diminish the importance of planning policy priorities. Witness the recent CBI report on planning which is not intended to serve better understanding of planning by anyone. Evidence suggests that pre-application negotiations are important. They lead to better decisions and understanding. Yet these are not resourced and are not recognised in performance indicators. Radical thinking around simple ideas will achieve much. Partnership needs to be worked at.

Professional skills

4. Knowledge of the nature of the capitalist market in which we live is important. This is often taken for granted - often by proponents of it. The nature of property markets is also important especially for architects and planners. For the former, an appreciation of planning (even an acknowledgement that it exists) would be a dramatic step forward. Essentially the knowledge requirements are very similar. As for skills, then given the different professional requirements of each player, different skills are required. An appreciation of how it fits together is important. To reduce the built environment to a simplistic linear progression of development, implementation and maintenance for a sustainable community only contributes to the problem. Development for sustainable communities is far more complex. It would be useful also to define what is meant by knowledge and learning.

5. The current distinctions reflect historical and cultural traditions. These are important. There is a blurring at the edges. These changes tend to be mechanistic and instrumental and do not reflect a critical appreciation of the role to be played between them. Professions have become overly precious and aggressive - witness the planner bashing that surveyors and architects engage in. yet planning is probably more adept at delivery and sustainability than either of them.

6. Changes are needed to reflect the points made in 4 above. Planners need to be more aware of the nature of (the economics of) property development. Developers and architects need to be more aware of planning (the fact that it exists perhaps), governance and citizenship matters and the processes associated with local democracy. An important political priority at the moment is civil renewal - the sustainable communities debate must be couched within that debate - not simply treat it as an add-on.
7. I am not convinced that the professional institutions bring very much to the table. Frankly I learn far more from my employer liaison groups made up of local practitioners from across the planning and development spectrum. They are closer to the markets and can respond relatively more quickly to changing circumstances, and at an appropriate scale. As is the case with so much else in society the professional institutions tend to be London based and give the impression of being quite out of touch with reality.
8. There is a general shortage of planners and surveyors. I say this because an aspect of the urban condition is the under-funding and under-resourcing that exists. Planning certainly requires considerable support. There is a need perhaps for developers and builders to provide mentoring opportunities to architects and planners so as to provide a more in depth experience of the needs of the different communities of interest in managing urban change.
9. There is generally a relatively poor image of planners, surveyors and developers. Perhaps architects would be included in this general statement. The professional bodies have failed to sustain an interest in land and property development, in economic rebuilding of urban areas and in the whole agenda associated with community regeneration. This must have had an effect on the potential supply of young people wishing to enter the professions at large. Sometimes I feel the industry itself does not help matters. It tends to offer a fractured, adversarial view of change. This does not contribute to the mindset expected of sustainable communities.
10. No. there is a need to deal with the core problems of degenerated urban life. Address the real causal processes at work. Adopt a more realistic view of what is preventing sustainable communities from emerging. Skill enhancement is a part but is not the primary matter in hand. We live in a very divided society - economic, social and environmental injustices abound. We live in a disenfranchised society, and attempts to create sustainable communities through skills alone is facile beyond belief. This is not an instrumental challenge, it requires radical transformation across urban society. Re-branding is superficial and facile. It represents a failure to address the real structural problems in society
11. This has been dealt with above. Many officers accrue the appropriate experience. I question whether elected members have the insights and knowledge. Expand educational institutions to provide the appropriate needs.
12. In Scotland, community planning represents this way forward. In effect it is already happening. But it needs to be resourced. The question is loaded. It suggests developers do not need to be brought in. It is not only the public sector that should be the only mover. This stems from the approach in the review that reduces the (perceived) key components of a sustainable community to a simplistic catalogue of environmental, housing and the built environment, transport and connectivity, economy, social and cultural, services and governance. It is more complex than this. What about the dynamics of inter-action. What about the learning curves? What about the capacities of communities?
13. Yes. The higher education sector could and would if resourced appropriately. At least it could bring together demand and supply side insights, and attempt to transform our understanding, and that of the built environment professions. Instrumental approaches have failed us, and will continue to do so.

Other

14. No. The higher education sector could and would if resourced appropriately. See above.

Tony Crook - University of Sheffield

Below you will find our response to your Committee's consultation. I do hope you will find this useful in your final deliberations. We have worked hard to establish a programme of teaching here that addresses the skills gap that your committee has been analysing. I think you will find that we have taken several steps to provide innovative approaches to this key challenge.

In the light of that I would like to invite you and your colleagues to join me, the Vice Chancellor, and other senior colleagues for lunch at a mutually convenient time so that we can explain to you what we have been developing and discuss matters of mutual interest. If you would find this helpful please contact my PA, Zara Smith, to make arrangements. We should be delighted if you can take up this invitation.

The University of Sheffield has extensive experience of providing highly educated graduates across a wide-range of built environment professions, including architecture, civil engineering, planning, surveying, and landscape architecture. In so doing it works in conjunction with a variety of professional institutes to deliver initial education and on-going professional training which is both challenging and develops an appreciation of the vital importance of delivery in the context of scarce resources.

The University very much welcomes Sir John Egan's Review particularly in the light of its emphasis on the importance of ensuring that professionals working within the built environment have the necessary skills to deliver 'sustainable communities'. An agenda based on the premise of delivering 'sustainable communities' challenges education providers and professional institutes to take a holistic approach to the task of skill and knowledge development and not to retrench within disciplinary 'silos'. It is all too easy to caricature current education provision in terms of the latter approach, without acknowledging the significant innovations in practice which have taken place in the last ten years. Cultural change is already under way. The following observations respond to the overall thrust of the fourteen questions the Egan Review poses as well as highlighting examples of good practice drawn from initiatives within the University of Sheffield.

1. Integration: breaking professional 'silos'

Effective delivery of 'sustainable communities' necessarily involves integration of knowledge and skills within and between the built environment professions. It would, however, be wrong to assume that educational providers have been unresponsive to such concerns. The following initiatives exemplify such trends:

Dual degrees: the University of Sheffield currently offers the following dual degrees which aim to foster inter-professional learning - BA Architecture and Landscape, BA Landscape Architecture with Planning, MArch Architecture and Planning, MEng Structural Engineering and Architecture amongst others.

Inter-professional learning: modules which foster inter-professional learning are now very much part of the learning and teaching strategies for all programmes, not just those which have a dual degree structure. A good example is an initiative on the teaching of sustainable development, which involves collaboration between staff and students in Civil and Structural Engineering, Architecture, Mechanical Engineering, Town and Regional Planning (including surveying) and Chemical and Process Engineering as well as the consultancy, Arups.

2. Differentiation between 'specialist' and 'generic' skills

Current approaches to learning and teaching across the relevant departments reject the notion of a separation between specialist and generic skills in relation to the delivery of sustainable communities. The understanding of context, including knowledge of markets and financial constraints, as well as project management and communication skills are an integral part of programmes of initial education,

at least within the University of Sheffield. Assessment strategies are carefully devised to integrate the development of knowledge and skills by students in relation to real world settings.

3. Role of professional institutes in fostering and accrediting innovation

The experience of department's in this University is that, in recent years, professional institutes have generally been supportive of creative approaches to course development. This is evidenced in the support received for the dual professional accreditation of programmes of study. Moreover, some Institutes have even taken the lead in encouraging greater creativity amongst education providers. This is exemplified in the Royal Town Planning Institute's *Education Commission Report*, which seeks to operationalise the 'new vision' for planning. In the past neither professional institutes nor universities have been renowned for their creativity, however, times and circumstances have undoubtedly changed and it is important that such developments receive the acknowledgement they deserve. That is not to suggest complacency as programmes of study must, and are, continuing to evolve. Moreover, these developments are taking place with the support of professional institutes, which have the important characteristic of being able to take long term judgements rather than being susceptible to the whim of the moment.

4. Research excellence and teaching excellence

The implication that excellence in research is not compatible with excellence in the provision of initial and on-going professional education is strongly rejected by this University. The most resounding endorsement of this view is exemplified in the employability of our graduates. The various departmental liaison committees (with employers) indicate a strong demand for more students of the calibre produced by this University, based on a research-led teaching mission. The problem is more one of difficulties in recruiting into the built environment professions sufficient high quality individuals. In this connection changing societal and governmental attitudes as to the value of such professions is of vital importance to the further development of the built environment professions.

Conference of the Heads of Planning Schools

The Conference of Heads of Planning Schools (CHOPS) is a network comprising representatives from all Universities who offer undergraduate and postgraduate professional accredited planning education. Our membership includes planning schools beyond the UK. Members of this organisation all have programmes that are professionally accredited by the Royal Town Planning Institute. In providing initial professional education we seek to provide students with the necessary knowledge and understanding, skills, values and ethics, which will equip graduates to embark on a career in professional planning, whether as part of a public, private or voluntary sector organisation.

We welcome the government's initiative to promote the value and importance of planners as an integral component within the "Sustainable Communities Plan" the new "Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill" and the broader "Changing the Culture of Planning Agenda". These initiatives are also mirrored in the RTPI's "New Vision for Planning" which amongst other activities has engendered considerable change and innovation in initial professional planning education, both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Hence it is clear that significant change is already underway and indeed there has been much creative innovation in planning education that has taken place over the last ten years.

The questions raised by the Egan Review are extremely wide ranging and indicate the multiplicity of agencies, organisations and individuals that have a role to play in helping to deliver "Sustainable Communities." It requires a multi-dimensional approach, which goes beyond education and training, but also involves developing properly resourced career structures, improving the moral of those involved in the public sector and finding effective means of making difficult decisions when different stakeholders have varied goals and aspirations.

The following observations acknowledge this wider agenda but focuses on the generic issues drawn from the 14 questions of the Egan Review which relate to professional planning education. We also try to highlight examples of best practice and innovation.

We believe many of the process issues are being addressed by the government's reforms to the planning system and we welcome the central role that planners are expected to have in identifying and implementing visions which respect community needs and aspirations. However within this context there is a huge and as yet unresolved tension regarding the delivery of projects, which are promoted by some stakeholders, but at the same time contested by other groups. The tension between efficiency and effectiveness in terms of speed of decision making balanced with increased community involvement and empowerment and the need for quality of final product has still to be reconciled. We believe this means that local authorities, with a degree of local accountability, must have a central role in identifying and helping to deliver what communities require and expect. Planning will have an important role in facilitating and guiding this process, recognising that difficult decisions will have to be made and that the need for negotiation, mediation, openness and transparency will be of primary importance.

In relation to the professional skills required by planners we would suggest there has been a great deal of innovation in terms of how planning education has been, and is being delivered and will be further enhanced by the implementation of the recommendations of the RTPI Education Commission. Thus initial professional planning education already provides many examples of best practice. The following bullet points highlight a number of issues and concerns.

- We welcome the emphasis on interdisciplinary but feel that the best opportunities for learning from different specialisms occur when students have a better understanding of their own specialism. Interdisciplinary projects and joint accreditation all facilitate this inter- and multi-disciplinary working. Many planning schools have embraced this agenda with joint programmes, e.g. Geography and Planning, dual accredited programmes e.g. Architecture and Planning programmes, Planning and Surveying programmes etc. Also we believe the context within which planners work, in terms of institutional, political and inter-professional is an important component of the planning curriculum, and this idea of interdisciplinarity is already embedded in many of our programmes.
- Whilst accepting there are some broad generic skills, knowledge and understanding required for built environment professionals we believe that these should be initially taught within the context of specialist programmes. There is already plenty of experience in terms of foundation modules for all built environment professionals having failed. We remain to be convinced such an idea will add any value to built environment education in general and planning education in particular. Most students choose particular programmes of study because they have a specific interest that they want to pursue. They are not initially concerned with broader issues. Furthermore, until they have a reasonable understanding of their own discipline they do not know how to relate to other interests. We believe that there is considerable strength brought to planning education through the high levels of postgraduate study. Students bring the range and variety of first degrees and experiences that can be built on to enrich the educational experience and then used in practice. Hence diversity and distinctiveness can lead to more fruitful courses which are interdisciplinary in nature at later stages during the programmes of study.
- It is worth remembering that the Construction Industry Board already has a specified a set of common learning outcomes for all degree programmes in the Construction and Built Environment areas. These relate to communication skills, group dynamics and professional awareness. All accredited planning programmes are tested against these core learning outcomes.
- As the providers of initial professional planning education it is not our role to provide training. Instead we focus on a broader education which encourages critical and reflective thinking, an ability to adapt to change and an emphasis on life long learning. Whilst there may be some generic skills we need to work in partnership with the employers to help individuals to become critical and reflective practitioners who are able to make some tough decisions or recommendations. Nevertheless the style of planning education is very professionally focused, with considerable use of live group projects, student placements, case studies etc. These themes have been a long-standing feature of planning education and programmes are currently being modified as the Planning School embrace the recommendations of the RTPI's Education Commission.
- The current quality of our output is in part reflected in terms of the employability of our students. Most students find suitable employment opportunities very easily, not only in mainstream planning but also in a range of related employment areas. However simply by increasing the number of graduates, although we would all welcome this, will not produce a quick fix. Planning education needs to be supported and our graduates will need support an investment in life long learning throughout their careers.

- A more critical issue is the shortage of candidates and this is a wide-ranging and multi-faceted problem, which requires addressing on a number of fronts. There is a need to promote the profile of planning more widely as an interesting, challenging and worthwhile career, perhaps as an integral part of schooling at all levels. There are emerging changes to the structure of planning education which are currently underway, especially at the postgraduate level and this is reflected in the majority of the Planning Schools submitting proposals for a one-year intensive initial professional postgraduate planning programme, although it is too early to say whether these will be approved. There is a need to address structural problems with the career structure of planning to attract, reward and retain suitable staff. In recent years there has been a growing shortage of planning graduates compared to job availability and this has been reflected in the dramatic increase in part-time postgraduate students reported for September 2003 intake. The RTPI have monitored the Supply and Demand for Planners over many years and the latest report produced earlier this year tends to confirm the anecdotal evidence that employers both in the public and private sector are facing difficulties in recruiting qualified planning graduates.
- Recruitment, retention and succession problems are not just related to the planning profession per se but is also an issue for the academic community at large having regard for the age profile of existing teaching staff and the pressures are also under to deliver on a number of other fronts, including the importance of achieving success research assessment exercises.
- The academic planning community and the RTPI believes that there is a strong link between research and teaching which should be maintained and enhanced. Research and other out-reach activities ensure that the academic community is kept abreast of issues and trends in practice. This can be used both to inform the curriculum in general, but also the teaching through the use of contemporary case studies.
- This research knowledge helps to place planning schools in a good position to support lifelong learning and some of the wider professional needs in terms of up-skilling. Indeed many schools already offer a range of short courses and other continuing professional development opportunities. We recognise the importance of life long learning which we are willing to continue to support so long as it is appropriately resourced.
- The government, through the ODPM, the RTPI and the planning schools all recognise the need for change. The RTPI's Education Commission Report seeks to operationalise the 'new vision' for planning. Change is occurring and much of it is creative and innovative. It is important to recognise that change is already occurring and programmes will continue to develop and evolve with the appropriate levels of support.

The planning schools are embracing change, promoting interdisciplinarity but within the University sector their role is to provide education rather than training. Whilst some training can and is already embedded within various degree programmes we will continue to strive to produce high quality graduates who can contribute to the delivery of the "Sustainable Communities" agenda. As the providers of this initial education we need support and recognition for what we are doing. Programmes need to be properly resourced and students need to be supported through bursaries, sponsorship, etc.