

Consequences of Renewal – examples

Some examples of the impact of Renewal:

- *There is no longer even the pretence of consultation with staff within my faculty – merely edicts of what must occur.*
- *Numerous errors in LMS and CAS have increased workload for academic and administrative staff unnecessarily. There were more problems with LMS and CAS this year compared with previous semesters – it seems these systems are becoming less user friendly and reliable. This has also adversely impacted on students.*
- *Errors with CAIDi “appeared” as a result of restructure. Once detected, a “process” had to be devised in order to correct these errors – this took 2 weeks.*
- *My area has merged to form a much larger school. The modus operandi seems to be a “one size fits none” model. There has been no effort made to ascertain, consider or listen to the various ways a task may be performed efficiently and effectively, merely instructions on how things must be done.*
- *Bullying now seems to be acceptable practice.*
- *Some areas within the faculty and school have become adept at identifying what they will no longer do. This leaves a broad range of activities that have fallen on “academic services”. This impossible situation is compounded by delays in hiring replacement professional staff within the school.*
- *Morale – already at a low point last year – has fallen even further. Anxiety and stress levels are higher than I have ever experienced here at UWA. Staff who used to enjoy coming to work now approach their working day at UWA with dread.*
- *Delays in hiring staff at school level mean greater workloads for existing staff.*
- *Ordering anything is now a time-consuming activity – left to academics.*
- *Approval for spending, reimbursements of even small amounts of money sets of an endless stream of emails, before being resolved – if you’re lucky.*

The renewal process is the worst example of organizational change I have witnessed in 30 years of academic work across four universities. In contrast to the frequently espoused view that this is “just a transition phase”, my view is that most of the changes have been poorly-thought through, applied with little knowledge of strategy or organizational design, and have been executed with no genuine consultation with those who do the work. The simple fact that UWA is now having to urgently hire 120 support staff speaks to this point.

The way that the support staff have been treated at UWA is inhumane. In the early stages of the centralization process, in our department, we witnessed support staff anxiously waiting more than six months to find out whether and where they were to be ‘mapped’, with several of the best staff opting to depart early rather than waiting to find out whether they have a job. Then, once finally mapped, some staff had been swapped to other departments and yet were not allowed to physically transfer across, meaning they sat for months in our department in limbo, not “allowed” to do their own work but not yet required for their new work. This was quite simply soul-destroying for these individuals. Other staff were then mapped, in an apparently random way, with no consultation with anyone in the department, to jobs where many of these individuals could not see how their skills would be used. And then there were the “lucky” ones who were mapped to their existing job, but are now expected to do the job of three or four people. If there is not a flood of workers' compensation claims for stress, it will be a miracle.

In terms of efficiency and performance, the situation in our faculty is, and has been now for several months, chaotic. The administration that was once carried out by support staff is either not being done at all, or is being done by academics. In the short-term, the latter might appear a sensible strategy: putting administration onto academics reduces the cost of support staff, creating many apparent ‘savings’ for UWA, and means us academics just have to do it for ourselves. But from a very simple cost point of view, it does not make sense to have academics carrying out vast amounts of administration (compare the salary costs per hour of most academic staff relative to support staff). And the costs go beyond such simplistic metrics: in the long term– there will be reduced performance, burnout, and turnover amongst many of our academic staff as we juggle with extra administration no longer being carried out by support staff, increasingly bureaucratic processes, and chaos in many systems.

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Although the effects of the renewal for me are far less than those for support staff, personally, some of the consequences of the change include:

- hours and hours of wasted time trying to carry out low-level administrative tasks for which we now have no support;
- more than two-month delays in getting basic computing set up for new staff (three of them still have no computers);
- delays in getting short-term contracts set up, causing anxiety for all, and problems meeting funding body deadlines;
- delays of several months in finding out whether previously-funded activities will continue to be funded, with spin off effects on staffing (e.g., uncertainty over continued MOOC funding has meant I have now lost the human resource capacity to do the work);
- weeks waiting for purchasing (or whoever) to raise an 'urgent' invoice;
- having to deal with numerous different service units to get a job done;
- countless more frustrating examples that I don't have time to recount.

In terms of moving forward, I would like to see:

- (1) Acknowledgement by UWA's senior management that the renewal process has gone awry in at least some parts of the University. The current approach is to either blame specific individuals or attribute the chaos to transition. I'd like to see some ownership.
- (2) Short-term, patch-up support for those areas that need it urgently.
- (3) Delegated decision-making so that school managers/ faculty deans can make decisions and allocate resources to where they are most urgently needed.
- (4) An analysis as to the right balance between centralization and de-centralization, with a commitment to reverse decisions that do not make sense.

My workload has increased considerably in that I have to take on more administrative duties that were fulfilled by a position that is not there anymore.

The administrative staff members who are trying to fill the role are overloaded and consequently I am having to do tasks that they don't have the time to do.

It is harder to get things done. If I want something done the process is now takes longer to get approval as requests have to be approved I think at 6 levels now to the previous 3.

Increasingly "beaurocratised" in my role. I don't feel like an academic. I feel as if I am constantly having to justify my time here. I don't feel I have time to think. I need to think and I need to constantly learn to improve my teaching and improve my research output, but I am not given the time to do so. I feel as if I am being treated like a machine. That the management makes decisions that will affect how my time is used and I don't have a say in it. I feel as if the knowledge that I am meant to impart to my students and through my research is meant to magically appear and I'm just this conduit for measured outputs. Time. My time is increasingly being taken up in administration. I am not an administrator? It feels as if my role as an academic is being diminished. The time I need to be a decent academic is being diminished. The time I need to provide quality teaching and research is not being recognised as I am forced to take on more and more administrative roles.

At the end of January I moved into a different school to take up a new position in a new research centre. Although I had ordered (and my supervisor approved) a new work laptop even before my appointment started, almost 3 months later, I still don't have one. Since I changed jobs, I've been using my old personal laptop to do my job - and trying to work around the fact that I don't have much needed software on it (e.g. data analysis software). Moreover, the whole interaction with the IT support team was painful, with repeated emails left unanswered, no updates on

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the issue, and not much interest in making sure I am getting what I want/need. And I don't think people are to blame here, I've been told that the team has been reduced to less than half after the "renewal", so no wonder they are overloaded and not able to handle all the requests. But as an academic, I shouldn't be spending large chunks of my time chasing up on IT and other administrative services just to obtain basic resources and services I need to do my job.

1. Excessive delays in completing financial transactions related to purchases from research grants. This can lead to delays in delivery of equipment and other supplies for research

2. No longer receive monthly Peoplesoft reports that used to be prepared by School staff. I am now totally in the dark about the state of my PG's.

I have no major complaints, but I do feel that there are signs of fatigue mixed with the positives that we are attempting to find in Renewal. In particular, I would like to see genuine recognition that the administrative time that has been devoted to the project has cut into research opportunity, and that acknowledging this may involve some measures to put this right from now on and provide some incentives for individuals to respond to in doing so. There is no question that, whether intended or not, the outcome of Renewal has involved a greater employment of sticks than carrots.

We have changed from a single 'department' school to a new school comprising 2 'departments'. The transition for the most has been smooth: academics have put a lot of work into making it so. But it's clear that workloads are up for all administrative, academic and technical staff. In addition the flow on of admin work to academics has been noticeable.

In the past few years we have lost our computer technician, & admin staff. The lag in getting work done (say a technical problem) has grown.

In the process we have lost our School identity and hence direct marketing to students and all the work we have done in the community to have a name and presence.

Here is the fall out.

- 1. In the restructure, our School has lost its school manager (level9), a .7 project officer (level 6), and a full time executive officer (level 6), leaving 2:5 admin staff in our building to essentially do all the work that was done previously. There are other admin staff in the 'north wing' of the School, but I feel for them trying to coordinate across campus.*
- 2. As a result our current admin are unfairly snowed under. They are expected to do all the work previously done by more people at higher level. I have requested a reclassification for the person who is most affected but have been told there will be no reclassifications. It's clearly unfair.*

As an academic, all the admin work that used to be done for us (Unit submission, CAIDI, exams, open day etc etc etc etc) have now become our responsibility. And there is a noticeable flow on effect in the amount of administrative work which is now the responsibility of academics. It seems all the restructure has done has been to shift the administrative load onto academics.

In addition there have been other changes which have effectively hamstrung academics and forced them into doing more work.

- 1. The 3 types of assessment regulation. Where is there any proof that 3 assessment tasks is the magic number? All it has done is forced changes to assessment that may not have been necessary.*

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2. *Not allowing more than 50% D/HD in class. If we provide good matrices, teach well, provide quality feedback: then students should be achieving. There has been no provision for classes that are different in nature (more lab/practical based). Its forced us to scale students down. Rightly so, they are unhappy and rightly so they evaluate our units poorly. And hence our ratings are poor through no fault of our own. Yet we get judged and evaluated on these student perceptions.*
3. *Not allowing penalty for non-attendance to labs/pracs. This has resulted in academics providing more assessment in class to ensure students attend the most vital component of their learning. It has just shifted the workload. We are told that if our labs/pracs are 'interesting' students will come. This is insulting. A student that doesn't come to labs/pracs should be penalised if required. This change has has the most effect on our delivery.*
4. *Student reviews of less than 75% response. We are graded on our performance by students that don't attend. This is unfair.*
5. *Feedback to be delivered within 2 weeks, Feedback of exams etc. See above. We now have more admin work, more work to ensure students are in class, and now we are required to return work and do a feedback session with a minimal time.*

It seems we are just loading up academics. Just today I noticed that we are expected to go to training session for our PDR's. Good luck with that. I'm too busy coping with all the work that the restructure has created.

I have spent nearly all my time in the last month doing administration – particularly, wrangling with CAS and LMS, and communicating endlessly with students to try and iron out the endless problems they create. Specific examples:

- CAS assigning 38 students to a tutorial that should have 20 in it, necessitating a lengthy negotiation with dozens of individual students about their timetables
- CAS suddenly and randomly cancelling tutorials in the middle of week 2 and moving students to new tutes in different times and places
- LMS not playing lecture recordings in any browser other than Firefox
- me telling students to listen to an online lecture if they missed the live event, and then complete a quiz to demonstrate they have done so, only to discover belatedly (because I couldn't check the lecture due to the Firefox issue) **that LMS had actually streamed a completely different lecture from last year**
- LMS showing completely different tutorial groups from those on LMS
- Trying to work out how to generate an appropriate spreadsheet for my tutors (still working on that one)
- Students emailing me to tell me that they can't find / access / do things on LMS, despite the painstaking hours I have spent making the environment as fool-proof as possible

Time spent moving endlessly in and out of CAS, LMS, Outlook, Staff Connect, Timetables, and Outlook (and then the endless layers of screens within each platform) should not be underestimated, nor should the terrifyingly rapid accumulation of "administrivia" in my Inbox every time I take time out for teaching preparation, meetings with postgraduates, service duties, or any of the other tasks that I must complete. It would be perfectly possible to spend 8 hours a day just answering emails in a timely fashion, so I've been working 10+ hour days and also large chunks of weekends just to keep on top of things.

I'm on a salary of over \$100 000 a year and my expertise is not administration, so when it comes to things like manipulating spreadsheets I'm sure that I'm often slower at it than actual administrators would be. Spending so much time administrating has compromised my time spent on preparing teaching content (let alone research, ha!) and it seems to me that I'm a highly expensive administrator.

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For what it's worth, my personal experiences.

Before the implementation of the centralisation of services I would get a reply back the same day from admin staff re invoices, HR questions, ordering, purchasing. That way I knew it had been received and was dealt with (or I knew exactly when it was going to be dealt with).

I now have had the experience (multiple occasions) of not receiving an answer until I sent a reminder email a couple of days later.

Processes take much longer than they used to (invoices that need to be send out, payments to third parties, reimbursements etc).

In our School we also lost our main student enquiry office (There is no admin presence in our building at all). This was an office that was easily recognisable for students as a place of contact. I think that reducing these kind of services to students does not benefit student experience.

Reimbursements on receipts for work related expenses are not happening? Even after submission months ago. Why is this?

So far I have observed:

- 1) Uncertainty, anxiety, and grief all around*
- 2) The 'team leader' for Admin in my school had no experience in the school and, from what I understand, with any student services at all. Essential teaching contracts were not sent to HR with unit coordinators getting contracts as late as week 2. The competent administrative officers with long experience on the job in this school, with these academics, and doing the necessary activities have picked up the slack and are doing a terrific job but are really at the end of their tether.*
- 3) Graduation issues.*
 - i. The invitation for March 10 Graduation arrived for Arts staff on 1 March.*
 - ii. A colleague who resigned in the process of "renewals" was told he could not join the procession at graduation on 10 March because of a late RSVP (despite this being five days ahead of the date. He had been invited to attend graduation of a doctoral student he had supervised but the invitation was sent to his discontinued UWA email. In the past, when invitations to graduation were circulated in a timely fashion, academics have RSVP'd at the 11th hour and have been included in the procession. Incidentally, the dais was more than half empty. Unbelievable. (THIS WAS CONVEYED TO UWAASA BY MULTIPLE STAFF MEMBERS)*
 - iii. I spoke to one PhD student who was told a particular date was her graduation ceremony only to be contacted later with information that she should attend the ceremony next week with the rest of her Faculty. Her son, however, had already booked his flight from Melbourne for Thursday so she also was not graduated with any fellow students or supervisors.*

Here are my renewal stories:

a. I have now waited for two whole months since I submitted research cost reimbursements worth 5,000 dollars. I still have not been reimbursed. Never in over a decade at this institution have I waited so long. I should charge interest.

b. I tried to hire a research assistant. In the past I would have told my local admin person and within a week it would all be done. Now I had to send an email to a "team" email. No answer for a week. Then I was asked a string of questions by several people, always with several days delay. Then it all went quiet. When I inquired, I got an out of office email stating that the person in charge was now on paternity leave until 2018. After a somewhat impatiently

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worded email I got again several people respond in quick succession. None of them seemed to have found the time to read the email string, so they all asked the same questions. I still don't have a research assistant after two weeks out.

c. in the School of X we have been told that there will no longer be administrative support for X meetings. Preparation of meetings and even minute taking will now have to be done by academics. Given academic salaries this amounts to gold-plating agendas and minutes.

After obtaining a travel advance for field work, the receipts, list of expenses etc, was submitted in mid-December, yet this has not been reconciled with my research account (that is, the money has not been taken out of my account) as of 3 months later. Also, I have lost professional staff support for an administrative role I perform; as a result, the normal 15% of my time that this takes has increased to 20% AND there are high volume periods that will hit in the next couple of months that will, quite frankly, be impossible. And, many of the professional staff I interact with feel overworked and under- appreciated and no longer have the "we'll get it done" attitude that used to prevail. Decreases my time for teaching and research (my actual job) and is generally Very sad.

I have heard from a number of general staff that they feel their new jobs are simply not possible to do within a working week.
