

Academic Restructure - Student FAQs

FAQs from February 2019

1. Why are we re-organising the academic department's administration?

The decision to dissolve the faculties and create 6 Academic Schools and a Doctoral School means that we need to reconfigure our Academic Administration to meet the needs of the new school/department structures. At the same time, it has also presented an opportunity to transform the way in which Academic Administration is delivered across the College to enhance the student experience and deliver a better service to academics.

A new administrative approach will enable the College to improve services used by students and staff, including using new technologies to make the services more efficient and accessible. The structures will mean that we can offer longer opening hours at the help desks and avoid closing at lunchtimes. It also creates bigger and more sustainable administrative teams, which mean that staff will be more supported and more likely to be able to develop their careers at the College.

2. What does the consultation involve?

The formal consultation on the transformation of academic administration began on 17 January with a series of meetings to brief all staff who could be affected by the proposed changes. Everyone has had a 121 and there are further opportunities to attempt drop-in meetings and have further 121s. The formal consultation period will last for 45 working days and close on 20 March when all staff affected will have confirmation of the options available to them.

The consultation time is available to give the opportunity for staff to feedback their views on the proposed transformation and many people have taken that opportunity, including academics. For staff whose jobs may be affected they also have the opportunity to discuss how the proposals would affect their role and the likely options open to them. At the end of the period the overall restructure proposal will be adjusted to reflect feedback received during the consultation.

3. How will you make sure local knowledge is not lost when department teams are dissolved?

We appreciate how important local knowledge is to the successful administration of departments and want to ensure that as much of this is retained in the new school teams as possible. Department expertise will therefore be a key factor in allocating individuals to schools. Heads of School and School Managers will need to take full advantage of this expertise as the new school teams find their feet.

4. How can students feed into the consultation?

The formal consultation with individuals whose roles are affected by the restructure is not subject to consultation outside that group. However, we have taken part in briefings with the Students' Union at two of their recent events and we are holding a further open session in Medicine on Friday 1 March at 12pm for all students to ask questions. More details on this open session will be provided in the student newsletter.

Academic Restructure - Student FAQs

Updated existing questions in academic restructure FAQs

5. Will the restructure cost the university more or less money than the current system?

The primary purpose of the restructure is to create an effective structure that meets the needs of students and staff today and is more robust for the future. We expect there also to be cost savings which will be reinvested in services for students and which will be quantified as the new structures are finalised.

6. Will there be specific staff assigned to departments in the Schools?

The new structures have been designed to ensure that all School and Department activities will still be supported, however, all staff will support all Departments in the School rather than just one. This means that if you have a question there will be more staff available to help you, giving you a quicker response.

7. Where will the School offices be located?

The location of the Schools is subject to ongoing discussions. We hope that we will be able to make an announcement on where the School offices will be soon.

8. What impact will the proposal have on the admin process and efficiency of departments given that the School Manager will, potentially, be in another building?

To ensure that each service is delivered as effectively as possible and by the right people in College, we are reviewing each of the core services, mapping how they will be delivered within new structures and noting where changes to processes and systems are also needed to deliver the service more effectively.

9. Will admin staff have to reapply for their jobs or will there be an element of redeployment?

As we are still going through the consultation period we do not yet know what the final structure will be and therefore what the definitive impact will be on current staff. It is possible that some staff will not be matched to a role in the new structure and so will need to apply for a role in the new structure or seek alternative employment. Absolute job assurance cannot be guaranteed but the College is committed to supporting anyone affected by the restructure and we hope to be able to place as many current staff as possible into the new proposed structure.

10. Will the results of the consultation effect the Doctoral School?

Part of the proposal is to establish a full-service Doctoral School. This would bring together all elements of administrative support for PGR students in one place, including; admissions support, scholarships, student administration, examinations and generic skills training.

Academic Restructure - Student FAQs

11. What's the timetable?

24 October 2018	Academic Board voted to support the move to Academic Schools
22 November 2018	Council approved new academic structure
November – December 2018	Heads of School appointed
January – March 2019	Working groups to review operational and governance issues and determine how the new academic structure will work
20 March 2019	End of Academic Administration Transformation consultation period
End March 2019	Announcement on the Academic Administration Transformation
April – June 2019	Appointment of School & Department Academic Roles Appointment of School Administrative Roles
August 2019	New structure to come into place

Academic Restructure - Student FAQs

FAQs from autumn term 2018

1. Why are we re-organising the academic departments?

We believe that dissolving the faculties and creating between seven to ten schools will enhance the student experience and deliver a better service to academics.

It will enable us to bring about closer relationships between all parts of the College and reduce the length of decision-making processes, enabling greater ownership and engagement by all. It will also enable more effective use of academic administrative resources to provide better levels of service to students and colleagues.

Replacing faculties with schools maintains the strengths of departments and your academic relationships as we recognise how important these are to you.

2. Why now?

At Royal Holloway, we aim to stand out for the way we support you to succeed in your goals. We believe these proposed changes will benefit you and our academic colleagues, making it easier for you to access the support you need. It will also be better for our academics, releasing them from some administration tasks so that they have more time for you.

In developing this proposal we have tried to protect what you tell us you value; your department identity, while addressing some areas that we believe would be even better if organised in a different way.

3. What led to the decision to undertake the restructure?

We believe that dissolving the faculties and creating six schools will deliver a better service to academics and enhance the student experience.

It will enable us to bring about closer relationships between all parts of the College and reduce the length of decision-making processes, enabling greater ownership and engagement by all. It will also enable more effective use of academic administrative resources to provide better levels of service to students and colleagues.

4. Why was the decision made to not ask for student opinions?

The Students' Union have been consulted on and involved in the academic restructure proposal since August. On being informed on the proposal, the Sabbatical Officers formed a response supporting the proposal in principle, recognising structural change was needed. The Sabbatical Officers spoke in favour of the proposal at Academic Board, along with the large majority of attendees. They gave a very clear representation of the views of students, welcoming the proposal.

5. What was the process for grouping the departments?

The first stage of the proposal was to consider the principle of moving to a school department structure and to decide which departments would form each school.

Academic Restructure - Student FAQs

This was the process:

It is assumed that schools share some cognate disciplinary interests in research or pedagogic matters

It is hoped that schools may be an invigorating vehicle for driving inter-disciplinarity amongst its member disciplines, whilst not preventing work with other schools

The size of schools was not a driving factor, although location may well have been a secondary consideration

Current Heads made clear they would prefer larger grouping rather than two departments coming together.

6. Will the restructure cost the university more or less money than the current system?

The primary purpose of the restructure is to create an effective structure that meets the needs of students and staff today and is more robust for the future. We expect there also to be cost savings, which will be quantified as the new structures develop.

7. Who will control the finance management of the current departments?

Schools will control overall budgets and will then devolve to department's operational budgets for teaching, consumables and student experience.

8. If you are a joint honours across two schools (e.g. Classics and Drama), would things be made more complicated? Sometimes getting information from the same faculty is difficult enough.

The creation of Schools will make it more likely that the majority of joint honours students have one office to contact, rather than the current two departments. Where a student is part of two Schools they should be able to use one Office predominantly and the systems will be the same across all the Schools which will lead to a more consistent experience for students.

9. Will the restructure make courses more flexible? For example, could you take modules across your school more easily?

Yes! This is one of the key aims for the new School structures.

10. How will scholarships be affected by the restructure? For example, the Future Leaders Scholarship currently offer three (one per faculty) – will this increase to six (one per school)?

We review our scholarships packages annually, so we will consider this as part of that review.

11. How will the Head of School positions be decided? Will outside applicants be sought? What is the process for nominating and choosing the successful candidate?

This is the same process as we currently use for Head of Department roles - they are advertised and then an interviewing panel will shortlist and interview suitable candidates who meet the person specification. It is the same process we use for any job at Royal Holloway. The Head of Schools appointment will be for five years (rather than the three year tenure of Heads of Department).

Academic Restructure - Student FAQs

12. Will the Head of School have specialist knowledge to be able to fully understand the needs of the staff, students and researchers within each individual department in the school?

Senior managers should be able to represent the interests of each department at School level and Schools will have an Executive team which will include Heads of Department.

13. Will there be specific staff assigned to departments in the Schools? Would you have to speak to someone with generic knowledge assigned to your School?

We are currently creating a School model and there will be general and specific roles in the School structures. The development of the plans is being created in conjunction with a reference group with student and staff representatives.

14. Where will the School offices be located?

The location of the Schools is subject to discussion and we expect these conversations to begin in January 2019.

15. What impact will the proposal have on the admin process and efficiency of departments given that the School Manager will, potentially, be in another building?

To ensure that each service is delivered as effectively as possible and by the right people in College, we are reviewing each of the core services, mapping where each of them would be best located within new structures and noting where changes to processes and systems are also needed to deliver the service more effectively.

16. Will admin staff have to reapply for their jobs or will there be an element of redeployment?

We are creating a new structure to best serve Schools and at present it is not possible to know what the administration of these Schools will look like exactly. Colleagues affected by any re-organisation will be consulted with as part of the next stage. Absolute job assurance cannot be guaranteed but we are committed to supporting anyone affected and giving as much information when we can.

17. Will the results of the consultation effect the Doctoral School?

It is proposed that we investigate establishing a full-service Doctoral School. This would bring together admissions support, scholarships, student administration, examinations and generic skills training.

18. What's the timetable?

To 12 October

Consultation on proposal and consideration of alternative suggestions

24 October

Future academic structure considered at Academic Board

Academic Restructure - Student FAQs

22 November

Council approval of academic structure

November - December

Appointment of key roles, such as Heads of School

December - March

Working group with Heads of School-elect to detail operational and governance issues

March - June

Appointment of school/departmental roles

August 2019

New structure to come into place