

# JBM and Industrial Liaison Panels

The University of Edinburgh experience and challenges

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# The brief

- **Role of the panel:**
  - **Objectives**
  - **Composition**
  - **Meetings**
- **Some “deliverables”**
- **Challenges**
- **Conclusions**

# Objectives

- **To promote links, communication and understanding between the University, the professional Institutions and Industry.**
- **To advise and contribute to the School on teaching and research activities.**
- **Specifically, to advise and review:**
  - Strategy in both teaching and research
  - Academic content of courses
  - Strategy for recruitment of undergraduate and postgraduate students
  - Promotion and marketing the School to schools, industry, professional bodies and the wider community

# Composition

- **Initiated in 1999**
- **One half day meeting a year. Department tour, design project visit, workshops.**
- **Initially 7 industry members and similar staff**
- **Now:**
  - 17 industry including consultants (8), clients (4), contractors (3) supplier and ICE (1 each)
  - 16 staff (including student development officer)
  - students and PhD attendance

# Meetings (1 of 2)

## Agenda 2009:

- Welcome, apologies, matters arising
- Feedback from previous meeting
- Long term Industrial Advisory Board outcomes
- School / Discipline news, appointments etc.
- Student Recruitment news
- Royal Academy of Engineering Secondment Scheme
- Breakout session “Collaborative SWOT”
- Reports from breakout groups and Consensus SWOT
- AOB

# Meetings (2 of 2)

- **Department tour, design project visit, workshops.**
- **Workshop topics:**
  - Mentoring of students
  - Industrial placements and follow-on research projects.
  - How do we incorporate “Safety in Design” into degree programmes?
  - What makes a good engineering graduate?
  - Design in the curriculum
  - Design projects review
  - Embedding sustainability into undergraduate courses
  - Student recruitment

# Some deliverables

- **The objectives!**
- **Lectures** (structures, health and safety, sustainability)
- **Design courses** (environmental, geotechnical, structures, architecture)
- **Research** (fire, NDT, water, rail)
- **Recruitment/visibility for companies**
- **Placements for students**
- **Support at JBM visits**

# Challenges

- **Staff numbers** (staff student ratio/teaching load)
- **Faculty “balance”** (civil, electrical, mechanical)
- **Research funding** (lack of industrial input)
- **Advisory Board now too big** (but everyone wants to attend!)
- **Academia is getting tougher, so more support is required**



# SWOT Analysis

- As concluded by the board meeting 13 Jan 09
  - examples:

## • Strengths

- Good reputation
- Research >> Teaching
- Industrial engagement

## • Weaknesses

- Limited skills in some key areas
- High teaching loads
- Space/resource problems

## • Opportunities

- Industry secondments for staff
- Research pooling in Scotland
- Increased infrastructure spending?

## • Threats

- Current economic slowdown
- Reduced industrial participation
- Not seen as a serious research area for funding

# Current action points for board

- SWOT analysis and discussion led to five action points for current year:
  - Greater contributions to teaching – perhaps an ‘inverse secondment’
    - cover areas where current skills limited
  - Development of innovative teaching topics
    - lecturers perceived to currently operate within a ‘comfort zone’
  - Identification of mutual requirements for research
  - Greater scope for placement and mentoring within companies
  - Explore use IAB sub-committees
    - Board needs to be more effective – currently only meets once per year and part of that is information dissemination



# Conclusions

- **Advisory Boards add value for:**
  - The School
  - The University
  - The students
  - The industrial partners
- **Industry needs to get more involved**
  - University needs to exploit the high level of goodwill that exists amongst industrial partners
  - Industrial partners need to be *directed* in their involvement
- **And some observations:**
  - Create personal links at several levels (junior to senior)
  - Use your alumni
  - This is a long term game.... and gain!