

THS001 Simeon Underwood

Track 1 [43:46] [Session one: 10 June 2015] Simeon Underwood [SU] born 1954; Academic Registrar and Director of Academic Services; joined LSE in 2000 as Assistant Academic Registrar; responsible for relationship with the Quality Assurance Agency, 2005 appointed Academic Registrar. [00:28] Began work in higher education in 1977 at Leeds, worked with Christine Challis later School Secretary; 1980 moved to York University; 5 years at Lancaster University mainly quality assurance consultancy; [1:12] First impressions of LSE - different from previous institutions in three ways: small and crowded campus, student body highly motivated and engaged with their studies; LSE in some ways old fashioned – maintained an academic hierarchy, reliance on examinations for assessment and attitudes towards quality assurance of teaching and PhDs. [1:52] A professional challenge was the engagement between the administrator and academic community; this has changed in past 15 years.[4:29]. Concern about student experience of teaching and priority of research over students; issues reflects that this is an issue for all top level research intensive universities [5:00]. Notes that international postgraduate students have experiences of other universities and systems [6:50]. Role and importance of loyal and committed administrative staff and issues of respect, reward and representation in School governance. Administrative staff often a buffer between management and academic departments. [7:17] LSE management structure Director and Provost managing all heads of department, traditional independence of academic departments. [9:54] LSE departments not aggregated into faculties; mentions establishment of Department of Management. [10:35] Academic Board as an inclusive rather than a representative body. [11:25] Role and size of Academic Registrar's Division [12:12] Registrar working with the Directorate and LSE committees to ensure changes are practical and cost effective and that implementation is monitored. [13:55] LSE relations with Quality Assurance Association, March 2001 LSE'S vote to secede from QAA. [15:00] 2004-2008 changing relationship with the University of London; LSE establishing the independent organisation of examining for research degrees and acquisition of degree awarding powers; 2008 first award of LSE degrees; question of secession from University of London. [17:12] 2008-12 Chair of Academic Registrars' Council working with Home Office and UK Border Agency on impact of changes in student visas [21:00]. Importance of succession management and introduction of effective deputies, supporting colleagues in developing careers at LSE [24:12] Personal thoughts on living in London, work/life balance and dealing with difficult issues [25:42] Positive achievements supporting

LSE's students in getting most from a demanding academic environment [27:02]; chair of Senior Common Room committee. [27:40] Demographic of LSE administrative staff, need to improve representation on gender and ethnicity and relationship between administrative and academic staff [28:12] Changes to physical space, refurbishment of Library, move onto Lincoln's Inn Field, relationship between buildings and teaching – teaching can happen in any environment. [29:35]. Relationship of School to its founding principles, wide variety of courses run by the School before Second World War, reference to Shaw's Pygmalion; changing attitudes towards the nature of education. [31:32] Future of LSE, impact of acquisition of 44 Lincoln's Inn Fields; future size, types of teaching and development of the social sciences, balance of research and teaching. Discusses the School's continuing as a small niche institution. [34:00] Changes in government funding and introduction of tuition fees. [38:35] Discusses executive summer schools and University of London International Programmes and opportunities arising from changes in the academic year. [38:50] Need for administrators to earn academic response, it has been possible to develop excellent working relationships with academic colleagues including Nicholas Sims, Howard Davies, Ray Richardson, and Janet Hartley. [41:34]