

## Discussion Document

# Co-operative University and Business School

## Developing an institutional and educational offer

*For the co-operative movement*

### Prepared By

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June 2011	1.0	First draft following Co-operative Congress 2011
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## Who is this document for?

This document is primarily for a working group established at Co-operative Congress 2011 to take forward the idea of a co-operative business school. It is also being circulated to the wider co-operative movement so that members can feed into discussions at the formative stage. The idea of a Co-operative University is not entirely new. It was put forward a couple of years ago by Pat Juby and Chris Herries during a doctoral study. At a 'lite-bite' session at Co-operative Congress on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> June organised by the UK Society of Co-operative Studies, the following question was put to Congress: "Is it time we had a Co-operative Business School in a UK University?"

The speakers at this session were:

- Linda Shaw (Vice Principal, Co-operative College)
- Rory Ridley-Duff (author of "Understanding Social Enterprise: Theory and Practice")<sup>1</sup>
- Chris Herries (The Co-operative Group, Vice Chair of Co-operatives UK)
- Britta Werner (HR Officer, Unicorn Grocery, post-graduate student)
- John Retaskis (author of "Humanizing the Economy: Co-operatives in the Age of Capital")

Further ideas on a Co-operative Business School are put forward in Robin Murray's draft report 'Co-operation in the Age of Google'. At the suggestion of Ed Mayo, further informal discussions took place in the evening. Those present included:

- Robin Murray (author of "Co-operation in the Age of Google")
- Rory Ridley-Duff
- John Goodman (Co-operatives UK, Head of Policy and the Regions)
- Sarah Deas (Chief Executive, Co-operative Development Scotland)
- Nick Matthews (Lecturer, Chair of UK Society for Co-operative Studies)
- Andrew Gold (Chief Operating Officer, Mutual One)

At the suggestion of Robin Murray, this document has been written as a discussion document to inform the writing of business plans. It aims to stimulate discussion on the institutional and educational offers that would attract support from the co-operative movement. It was argued by Linda Shaw at Co-operative Congress that initially there may be a need to prioritise the development of a research base. This can be achieved through funded research activities, PhD bursaries and delivery of an M-Level education programme. As people graduate with PhDs/Masters qualifications, undergraduate provision can be developed to compliment the work of co-operative schools. This combination of 'upward' and 'downward' development will eventually meet to shape the provision of co-operative education at the A-Level stage. As Pat Juby has commented, there are likely to be students coming out of Co-operative Trust Schools who will want to study in a Co-operative University (any subject) as well as those who will want to do Co-operative Studies.

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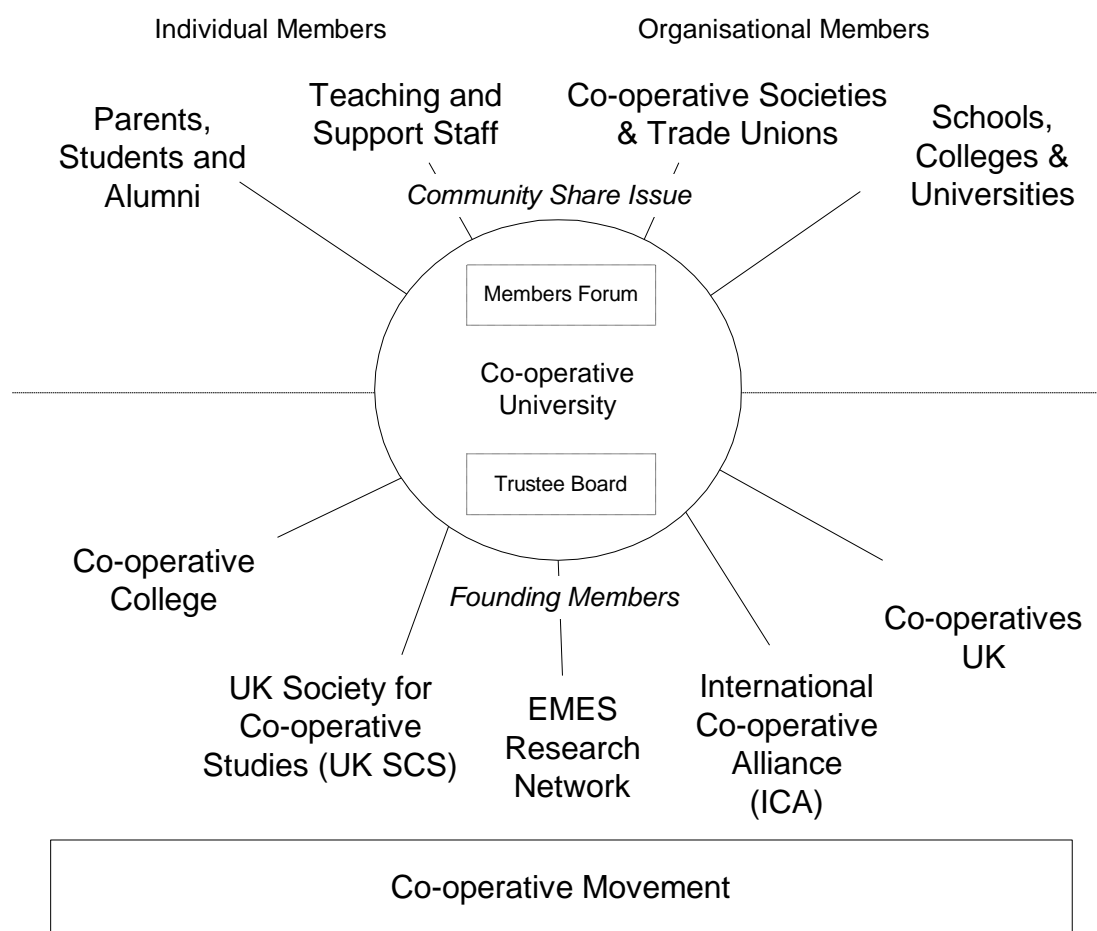
<sup>1</sup> Dr Rory Ridley-Duff is leader of the MSc Co-operative and Social Enterprise Management course at Sheffield Business School, currently the only full degree programme in the UK explicitly aimed at co-operative members and organisations. There are modules covering co-operative studies within other degree programmes in the UK.



## The Institutional Offer

At the ‘lite-bite’ meeting, the balance of opinion highlighted the difficulties of trying to establish co-operative courses (and co-operative curricula) in a UK university. It was put forward that the institutional arrangements should reflect the values of the movement, and not simply the educational offer. Figure 1 is a diagrammatic representation of ideas that surfaced in the two meetings, and distinguishes between the institutional support needed to form a co-operative university, and the membership that will be needed to sustain it.

**Figure 1 – Building a Co-operative University**



While it is desirable to have a small group of dedicated staff to drive the organisational and educational development of the university, the goal is more than to offer courses to the co-operative movement. It would also be to disseminate co-operative concepts and ideas in the higher education sector (building on the Society for Co-operative Schools model), to promote the concept of a co-operative university, and to contribute research and curriculum to higher education institutes and research networks. It was suggested that lecturers may wish to remain within their existing university institution, but want to embed new curricula in courses they deliver. This institutional offer provides for a two-way exchange between the co-operative university and wider higher education sector by attracting lecturer and university membership.



## The Educational Offer

The priority of Co-operatives UK, based on the discussions in Robin Murray's recent draft report, is to develop and strengthen support for co-operative development. The movement has many people who have worked locally – on the ground – in challenging circumstances. An educational programme, therefore, is not simply an opportunity to accredit what is already taking place. It is a mechanism by which those who have spent years on co-operative development activities can contribute their knowledge in a way that informs the development of higher education.

The educational offer of a co-operative university, however, needs a long-term vision that goes beyond short-term development needs. During the informal meeting, the promotion of sector specific courses was discussed. These can be summarised as:

- Co-operative Retailing and Supply Chain Development  
(target market: co-operative retail societies and fair trade retailers)
- Mutual and Employee Ownership  
(target market: worker / producer / artisan co-operatives and employee-owned business)
- Co-operative Financial Services  
(target market: co-operative banks, mutuals, credit unions and CDFIs).
- Co-operative Agriculture and Fair Trade  
(target market: co-operative and fair trade producers and suppliers)
- Co-operative Education  
(target market: co-operative trust schools / academies, FE and HE staff).
- Co-operative Housing and Facilities Management  
(target market: housing co-ops, development trusts, football clubs and health facilities).
- Co-operative Government and Development  
(target market: co-operative councillors/politicians, local authority officers developing 'co-operative councils', people in co-operative infrastructure bodies)
- Co-operative Health and Social Care (target market, professionals establishing health and care services through mutual organisations)

We discussed two educational offers: first, one that builds the skills of people in co-operative development bodies and the wider social economy; second, one that develops sector specific knowledge for a co-operative advantage relative to private businesses. The offer must be attractive to the individuals committed to co-operative development, as well as sector specific employers.

Figure 2 is intended to stimulate thought about the development of curricula for M-Level co-operative education. As Linda Shaw (Co-operative College) has stressed, in the first instance there may be a pre-stage to develop the research capacity in specific fields. Developing the knowledge base from which to develop further courses might take 5 – 10 years before they are validated and recruiting co-operative members. It was also argued, however, that in some fields there are a sufficient number of academics to begin developing and delivering courses now.



**Figure 2 – Course Curricula for a Co-operative Business School (M-Level)**

Curriculum	Co-operative Retailing and Supply Chain Development	Mutual and Employee Ownership	Co-operative Financial Services	Co-operative Agriculture and Fair Trade	Co-operative Education	Co-operative Housing and Facilities Management	Co-operative Government and Development	Co-operative Health and Social Care
<b>Certificate Stage</b> (shared curriculum)								
Philosophies of Business and Management	Shared curriculum to promote inter-disciplinary learning between co-operators in all industry sectors Economies of scale that make it possible to support sector specific curricula at the diploma stage that will be more expensive to resource.							
Co-operative Learning and Personal Development								
Co-operative Economics and Social Accounting								
Democratic Management, Ownership and Governance								
<b>Diploma Stage</b> (sector specific curricula) – students on a co-operative development / social economy degree programme can choose a selection of ‘Intro to...’ modules (i.e. make choices tailored to the industry sectors they want to support/study). Students following a sector specific course would choose sector specific modules.								
Bespoke 1	Intro to...	Intro to...	Intro to...	Intro to...	Intro to...	Intro to...	Intro to...	Intro to...
Bespoke 2	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
Bespoke 3	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
Bespoke 4	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
<b>Dissertation Stage</b> (contributing to the co-operative research community)								
Research Methodology	Combination of shared lectures and one-to-one supervision so that students develop a contribution to the research community. Lecturers and researchers can develop the strongest outputs with students and submit them to academic journals, conferences and university library.							
Original Research								



## Discussion

It will take time to develop each of these educational offers, and business plans will be needed not only for the university (institutional offer) but also for each course (educational offer). Based on discussions at Co-operative Congress, there appears to be a willingness to prioritise educational support for co-operative development, and then address industry specific needs. The above framework provides a roadmap within which this can be developed. It suggests that the highest priority would be the development of the shared curriculum and introductory modules for each sector specific course. These would provide for a qualification in social economy / co-operative development.

In terms of branding the degrees, the co-operative university could pioneer a new qualification that constitutes a unique selling point. Degrees can be presented as an MSE (as opposed to MBA), indicating a degree from the Co-operative University. This might stand for:

- Masters in Social Economy
- Masters in Social Enterprise
- Masters in Solidarity Economy

The justification for this is that different countries have different terms for the co-operative economy but all share the same initials. In the EU, the term **social economy** is widely used. In Latin America, people talk of the **solidarity economy**. In Anglo-American contexts, the term **social enterprise** has gained widespread acceptance (albeit now covering non-cooperative enterprises as well). Whatever the context, a student graduating with an MSE in Co-operative Development would be instantly recognisable as a graduate of the Co-operative University. Different course titles indicate different career trajectories and specialist knowledge.

The institutional offer allows for the creation of joint awards with universities. For industry specific courses, the Co-operative University might seek a partner in each country to deliver the diploma/dissertation stages (variations in degree structures in different countries will need to be fully researched). The development of a joint award would enable the Co-operative University to focus on the shared curriculum, and developing a network of specialist researchers/lecturers to deliver the diploma and dissertation elements. This would provide a viable business model in which income is shared between the Co-operative University and existing universities making university membership of the Co-operative University more attractive. It will also provide support to individual faculty members who wish to promote co-operative education at their university.

## Next Steps...

Please circulate this document to stakeholders interested in a co-operative university. Further discussion will take place at the Co-operative and Social Enterprise Summer School (Sheffield Hallam University, July 22<sup>nd</sup>), and UK Society for Co-operative Studies (Cardiff, 2-3 Sept). You are welcome to Join the debate.

