G2.0 The Role of the SRO

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UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Date	Version	Author	Notes
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The role of the Senior Responsible Owner

Introduction

In November 2017 BESC established a working group to devise proposals for implementing the concept of the Senior Responsible Owner (SRO). The findings and recommendations of the group have been considered and endorsed by BESC (January 2018), PRAC (February 2018) and Council (March 2018). The following recommendations were approved:

(i)   *that Project Sponsor Groups should be renamed as 'Project Boards'* - Introducing the role of SRO does not require a major change in the *composition* of the group that oversees the delivery of a University capital project (see Fig. 1 below). But it will require a change in *culture and dynamics* if the full benefits are to be realised: moving from collective responsibility and democratic decision-making to individual responsibility and executive decision-making authority.

(ii)   *that the SRO is nominated by, and acts on behalf of the lead Division, or the University* to lead the delivery of an agreed business case on behalf of the University. Whilst the SRO should be someone who can command the confidence of the end users, s/he must also take a wider institutional view (see Annex A Sample SRO role description).

(iii)   *that, in most cases, the SRO will also be the executive chair of the Project Board* and that where this is not the case the Project Board chair will be a non-executive role. This is consistent with the standard PRINCE2 model and ensures clarity of authority in an environment where, historically, the role of committee chair carries certain resonances and responsibilities.

(iv)   *that appropriate leadership costs and resources to support the SRO and Senior User should be built into project budgets* (e.g. Client Representative).

(v)   *that the SRO should have full delegated authority over the use of any contingency that has been released to his/her control by SCSG or CSG.*

(vi)   *that the SRO must have the right to view all information relating to their project* and should implement, in consultation with the Senior Supplier, a clear framework for reporting and information flows.
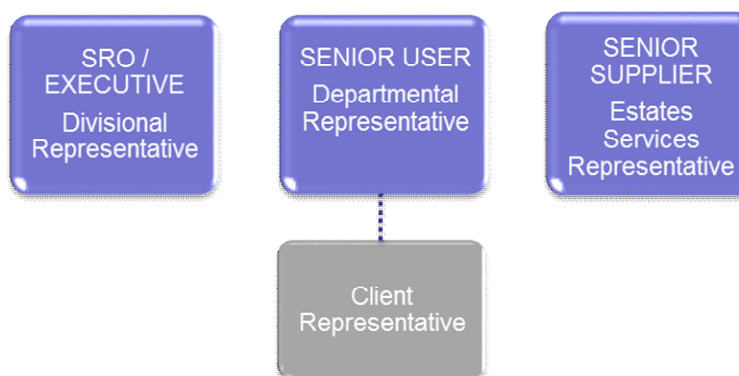

Figure 1 **Project Board structure**

The role of Senior Responsible Owner

SROs are personally accountable for ensuring the ongoing delivery of their Project and will ensure that the project is delivered on budget, on time and to scope. SROs are responsible for securing the resources necessary for the success of their project and for ensuring that the related implementation and transition

activities realise the agreed objectives and benefits. They are personally accountable to the Building and Estates Sub-committee via the Programme Board and are expected to explain the decisions and actions they have taken. SROs must ensure the effectiveness of the governance, assurance and project management arrangements and maintain them throughout the life of the Project. They should adopt best practice and be prepared to justify any deviation from it, in line with guidance issued in the Financial Regulations, Estates Standing Orders and Philosophy Documents.

An SRO will:

• Be a visible, engaged and active project leader, and not simply a figurehead
• Deliver the agreed outcomes and benefits
• Create an open, honest and positive culture committed to delivering at pace
• Challenge when appropriate and escalate concerns to the Sub-committee
• Provide appropriate support, leadership and strategic focus to the Programme Manager and Project Manager
• Have sufficient time, experience and the right skills to undertake the full responsibilities of the role

Specific SRO accountabilities:

Ensure that the project environment is structured to deliver a successful outcome

• Establish a robust business case for the project during the initiation/definition phase and ensure that it continues to be aligned with the University and/or Divisional strategy
• Identify and secure the necessary funding for the project
• Exercise financial control of the project, including ensuring that value for money is obtained, having due regard to running costs in addition to capital expenditure
• Champion robust, appropriate and transparent project governance
• Build strong and effective relationships with key stakeholders, justify their trust and retain their confidence, and obtain their commitment to benefits realisation
• Ensure that there is a defined organisational structure and appropriately detailed project plan
• Build the right project environment, securing necessary resources and skills and providing clear lines of accountability
• Provide appropriate support, leadership and strategic focus to the Programme Manager and Project Manager

Ensure that the project meets its objectives and delivers the projected benefits

• The SRO owns the Business Case, Delivery Plan, and Risk Log and is therefore responsible for establishing and maintaining them, and for ensuring that the aims of the project continue to be aligned with University and/or Divisional strategy
• Gain agreement to the project objectives and benefits amongst stakeholders
• Understand the University and/or Divisional strategy ensuring the strategic fit of the project objectives and benefits

Monitor and take control of progress

• Monitor, control and report the progress of the project at a strategic level, maintaining openness and transparency especially with regard to project progress, risks and issues
• Ensure that the business case is updated at the required gateways
• Champion accurate and consistent project reporting
• Communicate effectively with stakeholders and the Programme Board regarding project progress

<u>Ensure problem resolution and referral processes are appropriate and effective</u>

• Identify, understand and drive the successful mitigation of project risks
• Escalate issues to the Programme Board which after mitigation have the potential to impact the successful delivery of the project
• Arbitrate between stakeholders and/or Project Board members' conflicting opinions and balancing user aspirations with project constraints
• Ensure that communication processes are effective and that the project's objectives and deliverables continue to be consistent with the University and/or Divisional strategy

<u>Ensure that the project is subject to review at appropriate stages</u>

• Champion the project team's active participation in the benchmarking, Key Performance Indicator and Project Quality Review Processes as required by BESC
• Champion the value of robust project review and ensure it occurs at key points in the project lifecycle, particularly at the pre-initiation (feasibility) and initiation stages; ensure that the project follows the Gateway review process

<u>Manage formal project closure</u>

• Formally close the project and verify the final financial position of the project
• Ensure that the post project and post occupancy evaluations (PPE & POE) take place and that the output is communicated to the appropriate stakeholders
• Ensure a plan for both long term benefits realisation and on-going sustainability is agreed with key stakeholders as part of the process of moving the project to "in use"

What behaviours and characteristics should an SRO have?

An SRO needs to:

- take responsibility for, and ownership of, the project - including taking corrective action and implementing mitigation measures when issues arise, and celebrating success
- have a good understanding of the business case associated with the project
- be a senior reputable figure approved by the Building and Estates Sub-committee and be able to discharge the responsibilities of the SRO role
- be active and engaged, not just a figurehead
- have sufficient experience and training to carry out SRO responsibilities

An SRO must be someone who can:

- broker relationships with stakeholders both internal (University) and external
- deploy delegated authority within a clear framework to ensure that the project achieves its objectives while retaining full responsibility and ownership
- provide advice, guidance and direction to programme and project managers as necessary
- acknowledge their own skills or knowledge gaps and resource the programme or project team accordingly
- give the time required to perform the role effectively
- negotiate well and influence people
- be aware of the University and/or Divisional strategy University and how it influences the project
- represent the interests of the project through effective networking with peers and key stakeholders
- maintain a candid and transparent culture, promoting openness and honesty when reporting project progress

Training

A three-day development programme for all SROs is currently being rolled out by the Capital Projects team in partnership with Saïd Business School, based on their Major Projects Leadership Academy programme. This is supplemented by Project Board training, currently delivered to all Project Board members by the Capital Projects team.

The themes of the course are:

- how to identify and lessen project challenges and complexities
- the importance of leadership
- information on managing specific challenges identified by the cohort