

# The George Boole Foundation

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## The proposed role of The George Boole Institute

The George Boole Foundation has, as its central objective, the organization of The George Boole Institute as a centre to foster the recognition of the contributions of George Boole to modern society, through practical and useful means.

### *Institutes in the United Kingdom*

In the United Kingdom, the word "Institute" is used by organizations<sup>1</sup> when they conduct research at the highest level or are a professional body of the highest standing. In order to be registered there needs to be sufficient evidence that there is a need for such an institute and that it has appropriate regulations or examination standards. It is also necessary to provide evidence that the organization enjoys the support of other representative and independent bodies.

### *The proposed role of the Institute*

It is the purpose of the George Boole Foundation to establish a useful role of the proposed Institute, avoiding duplication of work of other organizations and, in collaboration with representative and independent bodies, to shape an Institute organization proposal that will:

- provide evidence of its role in contributing to research
- explain how it will foster the professional proficiency of those involved in its activities
- demonstrate adequate support from other representative and independent bodies
- draw up appropriate regulations and administrative structure

### *A centre of excellence for innovation*

In order to maximize the benefit to the British economy, and society as a whole, it is proposed that the George Boole Institute be a centre of excellence for innovation based upon the promotion of the appropriate management of information and methods of inference to improve the effectiveness of decision-making. Such decision analysis should be applied to all areas of human endeavour. Today, digital technologies and techniques, used to support decision analysis in the form of devices and software logic, represent an enormous potential means of achieving higher levels of productivity signifying a more efficient use of scarce resources and by taking decisions whose outcomes are closer to original outcomes. There is a significant gap in the degree to which the most productive state-of-the-art technology<sup>2</sup> has been applied across most economic activities. This is caused by a natural lag between the introduction of a new way of doing things and the rate at which state-of-the-art advances. There is a need to gain sufficient returns on each investment otherwise funds run out making future innovation more difficult. There is also, in many cases, a lack of information concerning appropriate application of state-of-the-art and this slows down the rate of introduction. There is therefore a need to identify ways and means of accelerating the process whereby technological transfer and the take-up of appropriate technologies and techniques is accelerated so that the whole of the British economy benefits more from such innovation<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> According to the explanation in the company formation literature on sensitive names issued by Companies House.

<sup>2</sup> State-of-the-art technology signifies proven methods, devices and software where the risks of utilization are known with some certainty.

<sup>3</sup> Details on the impact of innovation on economic growth will be set out in an ABS paper.

A challenge facing the process of translation of ideas into practice is an issue of confidence. People have varying assessments of the probability of successful outcomes of actions arising from decisions. If people feel that the likelihood of success is low then they assess the investment to be one associated with risk. On the other hand, individuals who are better-informed as a result of having participated in a more thorough decision analysis might be more aware of the feasible options for an activity and be capable of selecting those implying less risk. As a result, they are more likely to change their investment behaviour, be this in the form of time, resources or funding, by engaging the process of innovation.

#### *Extension service & demonstrations*

In order to broaden and deepen the innovative front, throughout the British economy, it is proposed that a central task of the George Boole Institute is to function as an *extension service*<sup>4</sup> whereby ***new ideas are prototyped*** and ***proven to be feasible through demonstration***. In this way a larger number of entities will have the opportunity to assess the utility, convenience and economy of innovations without any initial risk to themselves and then, on the basis of their assessment of the potential contribution of innovations to their activities, decide to progress with investment or otherwise. In order to increase the awareness of demonstrations the Institute will need to disseminate information as to how demonstrations can be seen as well as additional information evaluating the costs and benefits of any particular application demonstrated.

#### *Creating an institutional legacy*

In the light of the state of affairs in Britain, it is evident that the proposed role of the Institute can be better understood, by sponsors and financial supporters, if they can observe examples of the likely practical benefits of the proposed activities. Therefore, in addition to managing the raising of funds for The George Boole Institute Appeal, the Foundation will initiate two important ongoing activities which eventually will be taken over by the Institute. These are:

- The Decision Analysis Initiative
- Boolean Society publication series

***The Decision Analysis Initiative*** - this will be a demonstration programme involving online demonstrations of the feasibility, utility, economic viability and benefits of online decision analysis systems for business, governance and the national constituency.

***The Boolean Society publication series*** - this will be a set of documents and briefs suitable for professionals, politicians, businessmen, educators, higher education students as well as school children. These will cover a wide range of topics on the application of decision analysis in realizing effective solutions to defined social, environmental and economic problems.

Both of these activities will be supported by meetings, committees, workshops, seminars, other fora and activities, the proceedings and outcomes of which will be reported on the Foundation website:

<http://www.boolean.org.uk>

as well as the Decision Analysis Initiative website:

<http://www.decisionanalysis.org.uk>

These ongoing activities, for which the Foundation is organizing a separate funding appeal, will provide a demonstration of the type of service the Institute will be able to provide. This will also enable the Foundation to hand over to the Institute a functionally useful service, as a legacy. This more practical approach also provides a means whereby sponsors can benefit from their support within a reasonably short period of time, through the selection of demonstrations and publication topics of direct interest to them or groups they wish to support.

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<sup>4</sup> The most successful examples of long term innovation and improvements in productivity promoted through extension services has been in the agricultural sector

This practical approach will help improve the short-to-medium term benefits of the initiatives while gaining support for the medium-to-longer term objective of the establishment of the George Boole Institute. This operational structure will help shape and clarify the role and scope of activities of the Institute helping to strengthen the justifications for requests for support of The George Boole Institute Appeal. Details on the Appeal are to be found in GBF Brief No. 04.

25th February, 2010.