UNIVERSITY OF BATH

RECRUITMENT OF OUR NEXT VICE-CHANCELLOR

REPORT OF INITIAL ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

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16 Mar 18

Abstract

A survey of staff, students, alumni and other stakeholders, augmented by a range of focus groups was used to gather views on the future challenges for the University and the characteristics of the next Vice-Chancellor needed to meet these. With a strong focus on student and staff engagement, and building on the University's strong reputation in both research and teaching, there was fair consensus that a leader will need clear vision and ability to build trust in all stakeholder groups if they are to meet the challenges of a volatile and changing HE environment. Many are seeking a new confidence and ambition in the University of the future, defining new standards for what an HEI should be. An essential foundation for success are more transparent, engaging and empowered forms of governance which involve members of the University in change. Our next Vice-Chancellor will need to be able to combine the best aspects of public-service with building a team to navigate the organisation to a sustainable and successful future

RECRUITMENT OF OUR NEXT VICE-CHANCELLOR

REPORT OF INITIAL ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Introduction

1. The Committee on the Office of Vice-Chancellor are keen to engage a wide community of stakeholders in the recruitment of the next Vice-Chancellor. The Committee itself has been broadened to be more representative of the community and a series of engagement events have been undertaken to involve stakeholders in understanding the direction of the University, the challenges a next Vice-Chancellor will face and the skills that she/he will need to address these.

Survey

2. An anonymous online survey was published on 29 January with access being made freely available. Communication to staff, students, alumni, Court and Council sought input from these stakeholder groups. Directed letters to significant stakeholders such as senior officials in local Councils, MPs, research grant funders etc. also offered the opportunity to respond via this channel. The survey closed on 23 February with a total of 857 respondents.

Figure 1 : Respondents to Survey

3. Annex A provides details of the survey questions and structure.
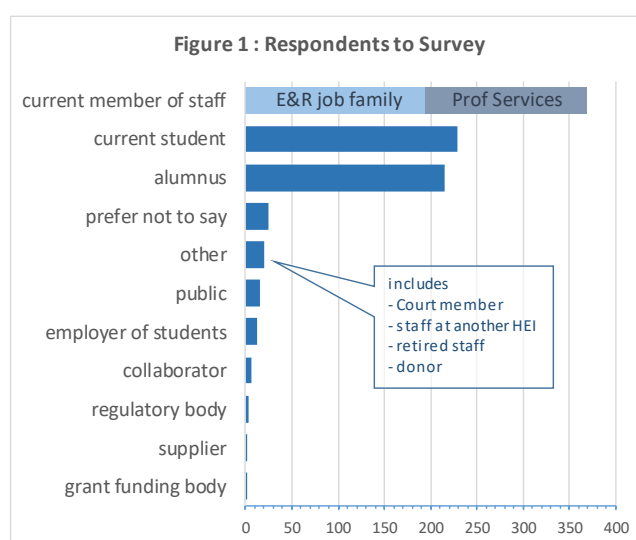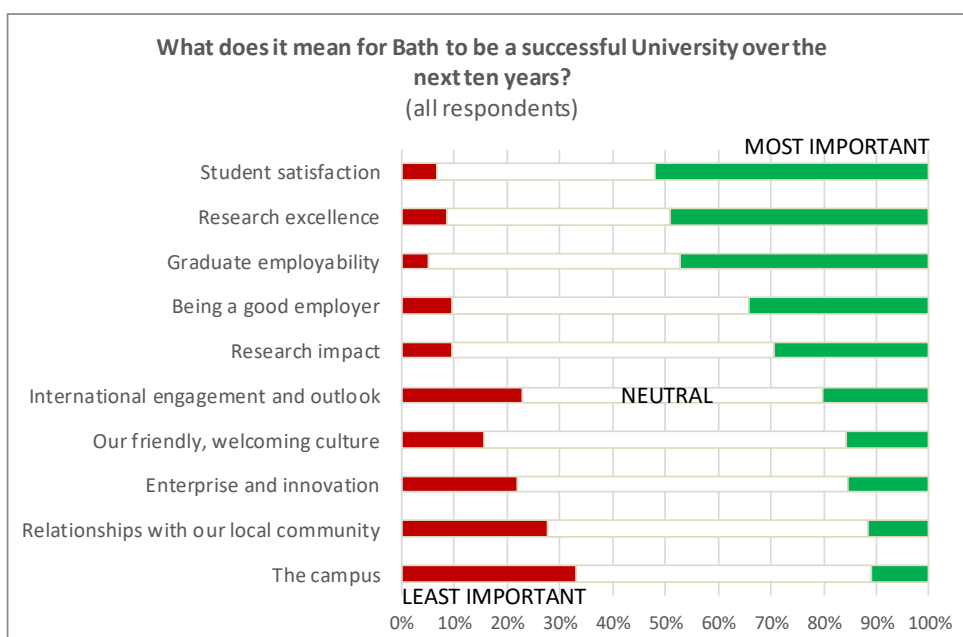
Focus Groups

4. A total of 21 focus groups were organised on the University campus and at Virgil Building. Invitations to participate were freely available and in total over 200 people took part. Each group was targeted at particular groups including:

    - Students : postgraduate, undergraduate and representatives from the Students' Union

    - Staff: from all four job families, at senior and junior level, plus officers from the Trades Unions

5. The same five questions as the survey were used as the structure for each focus group, with a further question on specific aspects of the remuneration package for the role. Each focus group was facilitated by a member of University staff, with 35% being led by lay members of Council.

6. Annex B contains the presentation material used. Results were captured on flipchart/whiteboard which were subsequently captured electronically for analysis.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR BATH TO BE A SUCCESSFUL UNIVERSITY IN THE NEXT TEN YEARS?

8. Underlying all of the specific answers to this question is a wish for a clearer vision for the University for the next ten years. This is supported by phrases such as distinctive values, creativity, confidence and ambition. There appears to be a desire to build the University as something different and individual - different from others in the sector. Perhaps redefining what a University is in the 21st century, where people can have continuing pride in being members (not employees) of the organisation.

9. There are three consistent themes which those consulted see as important to success: student satisfaction (though this does not necessarily equal NSS), graduate employability (with particular mention of placements) and research excellence. These might be perceived as the outward brand of success, but being a good employer is a foundation which those consulted recognise as a critical driver of the other three measures.

10. Many recognised the aspiration to be more international, partially in response to Brexit, and particularly to figure more highly in international league tables. Although the student voice emphasised the importance of league tables in recruitment, there was a much stronger view from staff that the University should be *cognisant* of league table positions, but not *driven* by them.

> "Research excellence played a huge role in deciding where I wanted to go to university, and it's essential for recruiting the best researchers/lecturers"

11. Research excellence and research impact probably need to be unpacked more. For many, research-led teaching is part of the Bath brand – what it means to be a Bath student. Yet it is not clear what success in research looks like and there is a feeling that it needs to be more embedded across University processes and culture.

12. A number of observations are made about the campus, and the need to maintain, improve and refresh it to deliver the right amenities for staff and students. This reaches particularly into the digital domain, where respondents are looking for a more technologically aware and digitally capable approach.

13. While community relationships do not receive the highest priority in the survey, some recognise that more could be done with the campus to create improved community links, managing both perceived detachment from the city and the challenges of student accommodation.

What does it mean for Bath to be a successful University over the next ten years? (all respondents)
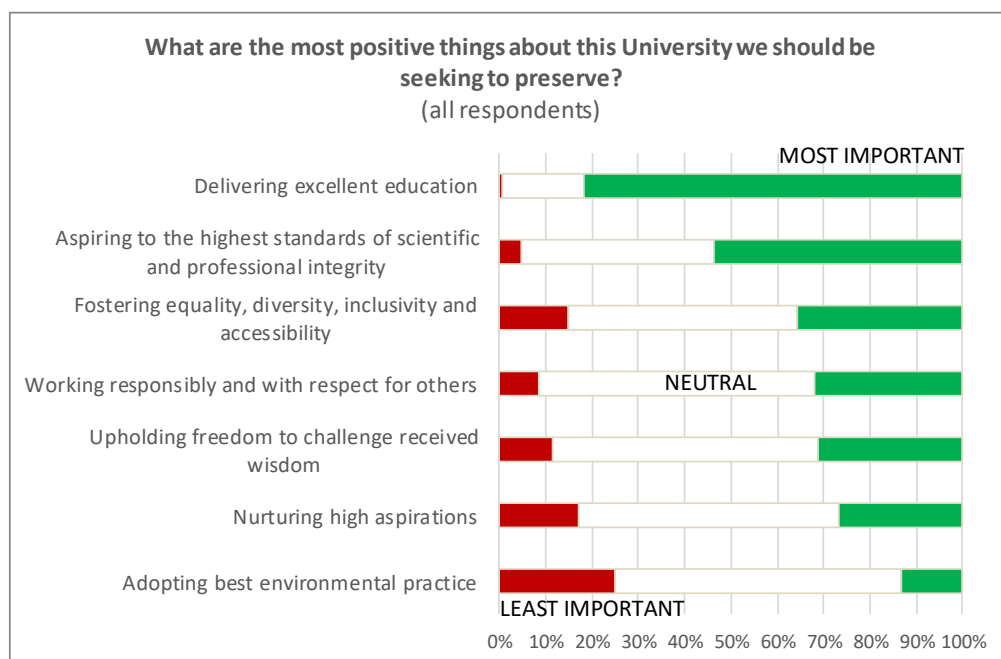
WHAT ARE THE MOST POSITIVE THINGS ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY WE SHOULD BE SEEKING TO PRESERVE?

14. Most survey respondents found it difficult to differentiate among the University values used as a framework for responding. However, there is little doubt, from all feedback, that the excellent education currently provided at the University draws in students and investment. While it may not be unique, it plays to our primary market and is something we should ensure is not compromised.

> *"I am proud of my university in regards to its incredible education and being a top academic university - this should never change"*

15. The size and scale of the University, some describing it as having a 'village' feel is seen as a real advantage in encouraging collaboration and cross-faculty working. This extends into issues such as community, citizenship and non-curricular activities (sports, arts) with real opportunities for students to develop these and become a more rounded individual upon graduation.

16. Continuing the student theme, a number of observations have been made about the level of student service support, particularly around wellbeing. This is augmented by the excellent, supportive staff/student relationships. Indeed staff seem to particularly value working with the high quality of students maintained at the University.

17. In addition to the above areas, staff also welcomed the flexible working practices and employment stability at the University. A range of comments were made by staff about the freedom to challenge received wisdom - positively in respect of academic thought, less so in respect of management.

18. The above were all substantial themes. Other issues raised by a smaller number of respondents include our stable financial situation, respecting our heritage and the impact of our research on society.

> *"Delivering excellent education is the most important and we need to run to stand still in this area. #Learning technologies"*

What are the most positive things about this University we should be seeking to preserve?
(all respondents)

MOST IMPORTANT

- Delivering excellent education
- Aspiring to the highest standards of scientific and professional integrity
- Fostering equality, diversity, inclusivity and accessibility
- Working responsibly and with respect for others — NEUTRAL
- Upholding freedom to challenge received wisdom
- Nurturing high aspirations
- Adopting best environmental practice

LEAST IMPORTANT

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

WHAT ARE THE KEY THINGS WE SHOULD BE SEEKING TO CHANGE?

19.   There is a consistent theme through the whole of this exercise about control. It reveals itself in a desire for more empowerment and delegation of authority; more transparency around decision making; more democracy and respecting of the expertise of individuals. Some recognise that the current strong position in which the University finds itself has been achieved using the mechanisms and structures currently in place. But the trust of the different stakeholder groups consulted has been affected and there is a belief that a different control regime is necessary for the University to continue in its success.

> *"The University is currently well run, in a strong financial position. And yet, there is a strong sense of malaise amongst staff due to a hard, top-down management style.*
>
> *I wish that the new VC and leadership team can combine effective management with a meaningful engagement with staff, defusing some of the tension accumulated over the years, allowing us to take full advantage of the great foundation laid by the current leadership"*

20.   The governance structures which support the current control systems also face criticism. From the structure of Council and its appointment processes, the apathy of many towards Academic Assembly and the lack of a voice for many staff in decision making, there is a perception that some structural change is necessary to change the control regime. The more positive view on these criticisms is that renewal could lead to an era of greater agility and responsiveness within the University and a greater feeling of engagement and ownership amongst staff and students.

21.   There is a perception that the University is being run as a 'business', with too much emphasis on finances rather than as an academic institution. This connects strongly with the earlier comments being made about a more confident University not afraid to challenge (in particular the perceived ongoing marketization and commercialisation of HE).

22.   The way the University approaches 'digital' also appears frequently in comments. While some of these are operational comments about the flexibility and usability of systems, there is a more persistent theme about making better use of digital technologies, to maximise the use of digital systems to be more efficient and create a better experience for staff and students.

> *"We need to rebuild the University's reputation as a centre of integrity as well as excellence"*

23.   These are all big themes. Respondents also had a wide range of more operational matters where they thought that change would be beneficial, including:

- relations with the local community, to be more inclusive and supportive, reducing the perception of a division between town and gown;

- the use of space on campus, providing better amenities for the number of people using the space, and perhaps limiting growth;

- pay transparency and equity (particularly use of pay ratios);

- a greater focus on diversity in both the student and staff communities;

- continuing to change and improve, but managing this in a more consultative manner.

> *"Why isn't it called 'Let's Listen' instead of 'Let's Talk'?"*
>
> *"Why isn't there a Professional Services Assembly where non-academic voices can be heard?"*

WHAT WILL BE THE GREATEST CHALLENGES FOR THE NEXT VICE-CHANCELLOR?

24. Common opinion seems to be that one of the greatest challenges for the next Vice-Chancellor will be prioritising their time and deciding which challenges need their personal intervention. Underpinning this is the need to build confident, capable leadership in the University who can work together as a team to meet the varied challenges ahead.

> *"Competition among the leading Universities is likely to increase, especially as Brexit will be bringing a significant change for higher education in the UK. Preserving and furthering of Bath as a both young and excellent University will require a Vice-Chancellor that is able to tackle a very varied bouquet of challenges"*

25. Building on the themes regarding what needs to change, a common perception is that one of the new Vice-Chancellor's first challenges will be building trust with a range of stakeholders: staff, students, Court, Council and the local community. While some of this is a reaction to recent media attention, it also reflects on the need to develop a new vision for the University, and gain the support of these groups to deliver that vision.

26. Perhaps one of the most acute observations is the need for the new Vice-Chancellor to be able to effectively lead the delivery of the current programme of change. From transformation of the School of Management with its new building, through curriculum reform to the pioneering approach to automotive research through IAAPS, this University has an innovative and challenging programme to deliver.

> *"The National financial and political climate will be a huge challenge. Among them, some of the most challenging will include navigating potential changes to the fees structure, the impact of Brexit on EU students and ability of research funding, and the consequences for the global attitude towards British universities"*

27. Little has been made so far in this feedback about the external challenges facing the University. However, many do recognise the need to maintain our performance rankings, the challenges of the next REF exercise, the promise of change to student fee structures, UK repositioning itself in the world through new trade deals etc. Developing a confident University strategy to respond to these issues, and forming the right external networks to have influence will be personal challenges for the Vice Chancellor and their team.

28. Many recognise the strong national standing of the University, yet its relatively weak international standing compared to a number of UK competitors. So, as well as maintaining or improving the position in UK rankings, there is the challenge of overseas profile in an increasingly competitive market.

> *"There may be a temptation to "turn everything upside down" given the amount of negative press, but one of the greatest strengths of the University has been a consistency of approach in recent times. Managing the balance between maintaining and valuing what we do well as well as changing what is needed will be particularly difficult and will require a degree of experience"*

29. Respondents also comment on a range of more operational issues where the Vice-Chancellor may be challenged: financial sustainability; increasing demand for mental health support for students; recruiting and retaining high quality staff as the sector changes nature.

WHAT CHARACTERISTICS SHOULD WE BE SEEKING IN THE NEXT VICE-CHANCELLOR?

30. There is a tendency in responding to this question to list so many required characteristics that any resulting specification becomes undeliverable. The data at the bottom of the page shows how respondents prioritised a range of suggested characteristics. Further to this there has been a strong emphasis on:

> *"The new VC must be ambitious! Ambitious to improve every single factor of the university. From campus life, to entry standards. From quality of lecturers employed by the university to the structuring of culture at the university. We need a VC who can foresee the next 100 years for the University of Bath. We need to be the best at everything and the VC must have the energy, dedication and the ideas that are required for establishing the University of Bath as one of the best universities of the world"*

- Engaging with people : visible, approachable, inclusive, listens

- Personal values: integrity, humility, public-service ethos, diversity, transparency

- Leadership style: global, working in partnership, entrepreneurial, visionary, confident

31. A number of observations have been made about people being 'members' of the University as opposed to 'staff'. A similar comment was that people want change done 'with us' rather than 'to us'. Recognising that change in the sector is inevitable, and a leader will have to manage a degree of uncertainty and volatility, there is a real desire for someone who can make this a shared journey.

32. While many react against the concept of a 'hero' leader, there does appear to be a demand for someone who can develop (collaboratively) a clear and ambitious vision for the University, build a team to deliver it and project that vision confidently both internally and externally. There is a confidence among staff and students that Bath is something special, and offers something different, and the right leader will be one who is values-led and extols this.

33. One of the most interesting responses regards the need to have academic credentials. All the main groups of respondents (staff, students, alumni) are divided on this. Even amongst staff in the Education and Research job family, only 36% assessed this as high priority; 17% as low priority. Some suggested that 'credibility with academics' might have better resonance.

What characteristics should we be seeking in the next Vice-Chancellor? (all respondents)
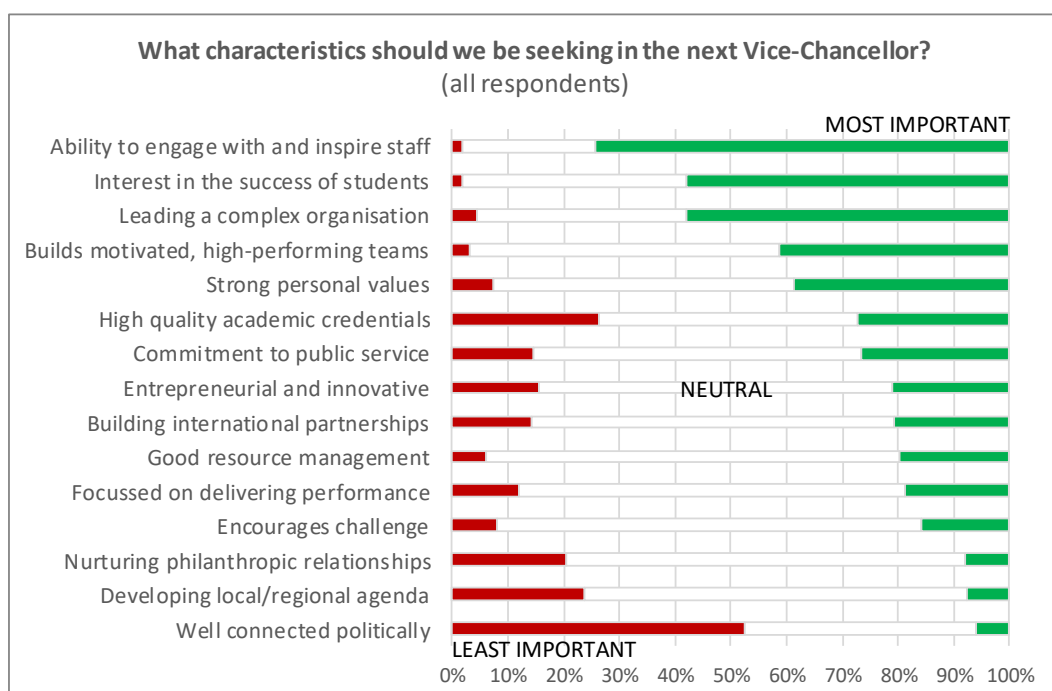
REMUNERATION OF THE NEXT VICE-CHANCELLOR

34.   This topic, although not specifically pursued in the survey has received many comments. The focus groups were asked to offer their observations on this subject, recognising that it will inevitably attract comment, lifting from an operational issue to one which could have strategic effect on the University's future.

35.   Basic salary. While there were comments at the extremes, the most frequent responses were that the University should expect to pay a salary commensurate with market rates for the right quality of individual. While recognising that the market is changing following recent events, many spoke of a salary which is around the median of our obvious competitors/ comparators but that there does not need to be a direct correlation between University ranking and salary. More discussion was around the governance of salary changes: salary uplifts in line with what staff receive; monitoring and maintenance of salary ratios (particularly to the lowest paid); transparency and justification for anything outside this are all important issues to stakeholders.

36.   Remuneration and performance. There are respondents who recognise that a carefully designed performance-related pay scheme can drive improved organisational performance. However, the complexities of what 'good performance' looks like in this sector led many to believe that it was equally likely to drive unintended behaviours. Staff in particular were keen to see a structure by which, if the Vice-Chancellor benefited from improved corporate performance, the staff who have delivered it should also be recognised. This was not a call for an all-staff individual performance-related pay scheme, more for something which reinforced collective, cooperative behaviours.

37.   Non-financial aspects. The general principle espoused in discussion groups was that, if the Vice-Chancellor is offered the opportunity to benefit from non-financial reward (a) they should be paying for it; (b) the same opportunities should be offered to all staff (this was particularly focussed on issues such as a car loan or private health insurance). Provision of accommodation for a Vice-Chancellor (as long as they were paying a market rate) was seen as beneficial if it reinforces engagement with the community – at the University or in the town. Many did recognise the need for a venue for entertaining/hosting, but felt that this need not be coincident with the provision of accommodation.

38.   The final observation on this issue regards the term for which the Vice-Chancellor is expected to serve. While many recognise that it will take a period for the leadership of a new Vice-Chancellor to take effect, they believe that having some form of fixed-term will provide focus, incentivise performance and provide opportunity to refresh. There is a very strong desire for the Committee to consider means to deliver this.

Richard Brooks
Director of Human Resources
Mar 18

Page 2: What does it mean for Bath to be a successful University over the next ten years?

This part of the survey uses a table of questions, view as separate questions instead?

What are the important factors we need to enhance over the next ten years. Please select up to three most important and three least important factors.

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

Please don't select more than 3 answer(s) in any single column.

	Most important	Least important
Research excellence	■	■
Research impact	■	■
Student satisfaction	■	■
Graduate employability	■	■
International engagement and outlook	■	■
Relationships with our local community	■	■
Enterprise and innovation	■	■
Our friendly, welcoming culture	■	■
Being a good employer	■	■
The campus	■	■

Can you elaborate on your selections or are there any other factors you would like to add?

Page 3: What are the most positive things about this University we should be seeking to preserve?

This part of the survey uses a table of questions, view as separate questions instead?

Please select up to three most important and three least important factors

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

Please don't select more than 3 answer(s) in any single column.

	Most important	Least important
Delivering excellent education	■	■
Nurturing high aspirations	■	■
Upholding freedom to challenge received wisdom	■	■
Aspiring to the highest standards of scientific and professional integrity	■	■
Working responsibly and with respect for others	■	■
Fostering equality, diversity, inclusivity and accessibility	■	■
Adopting best environmental practice	■	■

Can you elaborate on your selections or are there any other issues you would like to add?

Page 4: What are the key things we should be seeking to change?

Please enter your comments below

Page 5: What will be the greatest challenges for the next Vice-Chancellor?

Please enter your comments below

Page 7: Who is responding to this survey?

Would you categorise yourself as.... (you can tick more than one box) ✳ *Required*

Please select at least 1 answer(s).
- Current student
- Current member of staff (E&R job family)
- Current member of staff (MSA, OFS, T&E job families)
- Alumnus/Alumna of the University
- Member of a grant funding body
- Member of a regulatory body
- Collaborator with the University
- Supplier to the University
- Employer of students from the University
- Member of the public
- Prefer not to say
- Other

If you selected Other, please specify: *Optional*

Page 6: What characteristics should we be seeking in the next Vice-Chancellor?

This part of the survey uses a table of questions, view as separate questions instead?

Please select the up to five most important and five least important qualities

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

Please don't select more than 5 answer(s) in any single column.

	Most important	Least important
High quality academic credentials	▪	▪
Leading a complex organisation	▪	▪
Building international partnerships	▪	▪
Nurturing philanthropic relationships	▪	▪
Developing local/regional agenda	▪	▪
Entrepreneurial and innovative	▪	▪
Builds motivated, high-performing teams	▪	▪
Ability to engage with and inspire staff	▪	▪
Interest in the success of students	▪	▪
Strong personal values	▪	▪
Commitment to public service	▪	▪
Good resource management	▪	▪
Focussed on delivering performance	▪	▪
Encourages challenge	▪	▪
Well connected politically	▪	▪

Any other qualities you would like to add

1.

UNIVERSITY OF BATH

Four stages

1. Defining the need
2. Search
3. Selection
4. Bringing on-board

Being a successful University

What we should preserve

What we might seek to change

Challenges

Characteristics of the next VC

2.

UNIVERSITY OF BATH

Engaging a wide range of stakeholders

- Focus groups
- Online questionnaire
- Direct letters

Suppliers · Employers · Alumni · Public · Students · Staff · Grant funders · Regulators · Collaborators

3.

UNIVERSITY OF BATH

Guidance

- Try and keep your interventions brief and focussed
- Show respect towards others
- Its alright to challenge or disagree with others
- Ask questions of others to seek clarity
- Keep it constructive
- No separate conversations

Note-taking

4.

UNIVERSITY OF BATH

What does it mean for the University of Bath to be successful over the next ten years?

- Success
- Preserve
- Change
- Challenges
- Characteristics

5.

UNIVERSITY OF BATH

What are the most positive things about this University we should be seeking to preserve?

- Success
- Preserve
- Change
- Challenges
- Characteristics

6.

UNIVERSITY OF BATH

What are the key things we should be seeking to change?

- Success
- Preserve
- Change
- Challenges
- Characteristics

7.

UNIVERSITY OF BATH

What will be the greatest challenges for the next Vice-Chancellor?

- Success
- Preserve
- Change
- Challenges
- Characteristics

8.

UNIVERSITY OF BATH

What characteristics should we be seeking in the next Vice-Chancellor?

- Success
- Preserve
- Change
- Challenges
- Characteristics

9.

bonus question

UNIVERSITY OF BATH

Remuneration for a Vice-Chancellor

Financial
Basic salary — where in the market?
Pension (or contribution)
Performance bonus — ?

Non-financial
Car
Accommodation
Private health insurance

10.

UNIVERSITY OF BATH

Stakeholder engagement
Appoint recruitment agent
Appoint search & selection committee

Specification

Advertise
Targeted search

Down-select → Engage with candidates → Select → Onboard

Jan/Feb 18   Apr/May 18   Jun – Sep 18