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**Meeting:** **ACADEMIC ASSEMBLY**

**Date and time:** **Wednesday 8 November 2017 at 1.15 pm**

**Venue:** **6 West 1.2**

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**Present:** Dr A Salo (Chair)  
and 43 members

**Attending by invitation:** Ms L Humphreys, Mr D Stacey, Mrs E Stuart-Edwards

**In attendance:** Mr P Eley, Deputy Director of Human Resources (for minute no. 643)  
Dr C Harris, Secretary to Academic Assembly  
Ms A Pater, Head of Secretariat  
Ms A Vallender, HR Operations Manager (for minute no. 643)

## ACTION

### 637 WELCOME

The Chair welcomed members, particularly those who were new to the University. The Chair also welcomed Faculty Librarians who were invited to attend meetings and participate in debates but did not have voting rights.

### 638 MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Academic Assembly noted membership and terms of reference as set out on the web page: <http://www.bath.ac.uk/statutory-bodies-committees/academic/index.html>

The Chair advised that he can be contacted on: [academic-assembly-chair@bath.ac.uk](mailto:academic-assembly-chair@bath.ac.uk) and that he was willing to meet with any members, which should be arranged by e-mail.

The Chair informed members that his term as Chair would cease in July 2018 and an election would be held for a new Chair in due course. He would be happy to advise interested candidates on the role.

### 639 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 May 2017 (Paper AA17/18-1) were approved and signed by the Chair.

## **640 ELECTIONS**

Members of Academic Assembly noted the election of representatives to serve on Council, Senate and Awards Committee, as set out in Paper AA17/18-2.

The Chair reminded members that the election for three members to sit on Court was currently open, closing on 15 November.

## **641 RELEVANT DECISIONS OF SENATE**

The Chair reminded members of Academic Assembly that reports of the meetings of Senate could be found at:

<http://www.bath.ac.uk/statutory-bodies-committees/bodies-and-committees-senate/Senate/minutes/index.html>

He drew attention to:

- (1) Academic Awards 2017
- (2) Approval of a revised Code of Good Practice in Research Integrity.
- (3) Approval of revisions to the Career Progression in the E&R job family document relating to research-only staff.
- (4) Additional measures to support UG and PGT students with refugee status.
- (5) Approval of changes to the On-line Unit evaluation survey; ULTQC to undertake a review of the changes in a year's time.
- (6) Agreement in principle to transformation of the University's curricula and assessment to meet the Education Strategy, based on ULTQC's recommendations.

## **642 CURRICULUM TRANSFORMATION**

The Academic Director for the Centre for Learning and Teaching, gave a presentation on curriculum transformation. He reported the negative comments in the National Student Survey 2017 about workload, assessment and feedback, course design and library overcrowding and that staff had indicated that they wanted to enhance their teaching but did not have time to do so.

The Academic Director explained the key points for transformation as:

1. Focusing on student experience of the programme as a whole. Within this focusing on fewer units that form part of a more coherent programme.
2. Assessing less and in a smarter and more meaningful way.
3. Embedding the knowledge and skills that academic staff, employers and the students themselves believe graduates of our programmes should have.

4. Facilitating more creative approaches to teaching and modes of delivery, including greater use of blended learning.

He went on to discuss the modular system in comparison with a programme based system. He explained that some departments would be vanguards, with the new system being phased in totally only by 2025.

During questions the following points were made:

- If students only had one examination there would be too much weight on it so a balance would be sought in the future; other institutions have less examinations than currently held at the University;
- It was queried how developing a new system between now and 2025 whilst teaching under the 'old' system would reduce the staff load. The Academic Director explained that the new system would come through slowly and there should not be 'double teaching' at any cohort level. Thus, once the new 1<sup>st</sup> year was being taught (and in subsequent years) the staff load would reduce;
- Concern was expressed that contact time would reduce, which would be visible to applicants. The Academic Director clarified that contact time would not be reduced but that the HEFCE definition of contact time would be studied; this included watching online or doing a project. Weighted contact time (the number of academics/students at the same time) may be used in the future;
- Changing to the CATS (Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme) system could reduce the number of units but we should not rely exclusively on this to reduce the number of assessments;
- Comparisons had been made with Bristol, Warwick, Imperial College, Exeter and Loughborough universities;
- Concern was expressed that reducing the number of formal assessments would result in requests for more informal assessments, which would still have to be marked;
- It was reported that some other universities do not have long lectures in large rooms, rather they have shorter lectures and more seminars for a few students at a time. It was noted that space was a consideration;
- Concern was expressed about imposing a programme level assessment approach on a semester-based system without assimilation time before the final examinations; it was clarified that assimilation time could be included by reducing the weeks where there were traditionally taught classes, and using alternative approaches to delivery and assessment;
- It was pointed out that assuming that lecturers thought only about units was not the reality; themes were developed which led to a career;
- Concern was expressed that the drive for making the changes may be because everyone else was doing it rather than that it was addressing a problem.

The Chair thanked the Academic Director of the CLT for his presentation and summarised by saying that while this was a challenging issue, it was also an opportunity if done with an open-mind and thinking about students' learning.

#### **643 HUMAN RESOURCES PREPARATION FOR BREXIT**

The Deputy Director of Human Resources (HR) and HR Operations Manager attended for this item to provide information on Brexit and what the University is doing to support EEA staff.

The Deputy Director of HR explained that Brexit was a major challenge impacting on both students and staff and created a high level of uncertainty. He emphasised HR's role in supporting staff affected by Brexit. HR were working hard to obtain the most up-to-date information and make it available to staff.

He provided data on staff: currently 15% of staff by headcount and 16% of FTE staff are from the EU/EEA, with concentrations in the Education & Research job family (18/19%) and in Grade 2 of the Operational and Facilities Support job family (18%). The proportion went down slightly from 16% of staff by headcount in November 2015, before Brexit, to 15% in November 2016 but has remained at that level since then.

The HR Operations Manager outlined the support that had been put in place by the University to demonstrate the value placed on international staff:

- Online content and general staff communications – Brexit pages set up for current and prospective staff providing up-to-date information about the support and guidance available, including directing staff to external sources of information: <http://www.bath.ac.uk/collections/guidance-for-staff-on-the-uks-exit-from-the-eu/>; Supportive e-mails from the Senior Management Team;
- Facilitating immigration presentations and individual consultation sessions by a specialist immigration law firm, which had been well received and provided good advice;
- Advertising – the inclusion of positive statements on job advertisements welcoming diversity, to encourage international staff;
- An increase to the University's relocation allowance for newly appointed non-EEA staff who required permission to work in the UK and were relocating from outside the UK;
- A reimbursement scheme for the application fee for Registration Certificates and Permanent Residence Documents for employees whose right to live and work in the UK arose either as a result of their EEA or Swiss Citizenship or because they were a family member of an EEA or Swiss citizen
- HR and Payroll supported staff with any documents needed to support visa and other applications, for example, employment confirmation letters, stamping payslips etc.;

- Monitoring – recruitment, retention and staff satisfaction levels, developments via immigration networks, reviewing policies and procedures etc.;
- Offering the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) for support;
- Reviewing and updating the University's jobs site as part of a project looking at employer branding and the internationalisation agenda. As part of this, HR will be investing in social media and looking at what support and guidance the University can offer to current and prospective staff.

During questions the following points were raised:

- Recruitment and retention rates may be affected though no prospective staff member had turned down a job offer due to Brexit. However, the value of the pound and cost of living increase resulting from Brexit may make it difficult to define Brexit effects;
- There was a reduction in applications from the EU/EEA, but no reduction in job offers. There were anecdotal reports of leavers citing Brexit as the reason for leaving;
- Once clarity was received from the Home Office on further changes, support would be provided to members of staff and further information sessions offered if appropriate.

Members of staff were advised to contact [hr-visas@bath.ac.uk](mailto:hr-visas@bath.ac.uk) with any queries, concerns or suggestions in relation to support for EEA and non-EEA staff.

**644 PROPOSED MOTION TO SENATE - AMENDMENT OF POLICY ON HONORARY ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS: EMERITUS PROFESSOR**

The motion to Senate, detailed in Paper AA17/18-3, was proposed by Dr Michael Carley and seconded by Dr Sabina Gheduzzi.

The proposer explained that very few Emeritus Professors had been appointed recently; none in 2016-17, seven over the period 2013-17 compared to 26 over the period 2008-12. Honorary Professors had been appointed but they did not sit on Court.

There was no proposal to change the authority of Senate to appoint Emeritus Professors. Currently all nominations to Senate were from the Vice-Chancellor, with proposals submitted by a Dean of Faculty/Head of School to the Vice-Chancellor. The proposal was to allow nominations to Senate from either the Vice-Chancellor, a Dean of Faculty/Head of School or from Academic Assembly (after appropriate consultation).

During discussion the following points were raised:

- The Emeritus title had more status than the Honorary title;

- This issue had been raised at Senate previously and two Emeritus Professors were appointed at the last meeting of Senate;
- This proposed change would also require a change to the Ordinances, hence it was suggested that time be taken to prepare a properly researched paper with a robust case for Senate, as it may be difficult to gain Senate's approval;
- The Chair suggested a working group drawn from the Senators to research and prepare a paper for a future meeting of Senate (the next meeting of Senate on 22 November 2017 not providing enough time for this process). The paper would provide background information including processes from other universities. He also suggested a potential online survey to gauge support for the paper prior to the Senate meeting, which may give more weight than the number currently attending the meeting;
- It was not known whether the Deans/Head were currently putting forward names to the Vice-Chancellor;
- Academic Assembly had no nominative powers hence this aspect of the proposal required careful thought, but the principle remained that Academic Assembly wished to be able to demonstrate esteem.

AGREED that Academic Assembly:

- (1) expressed concern that colleagues were not being recognised at their retirement; and
- (2) delegated to the Chair to set up a working party to look at the issue. The working party to research background information for the paper, for request ideally for inclusion at the February meeting of Senate, following an online survey to demonstrate support for it (if this can be securely organised).

**CHAIR**

The proposer and seconder withdrew the motion with the consent of the members present.

#### **645 UNIVERSITY COMMITTEES**

The Head of Secretariat encouraged members to put themselves forward for election to central University committees such as Senate, Council or Court. She suggested that if members required more information they should contact herself, the Chair or any of the current Senators. The Chair reminded members that voting for the election to Court was open until the following Wednesday.

**646**     **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

A member of Academic Assembly raised the issue of probation. He expressed concern about how probationers were guided, inequalities across departments and inadequacies in the system, and he questioned whether best practice was followed in all departments. He felt that there may be a systemic problem at some parts of the University and that it showed a lack of professionalism. If probationers were not transferred then it impacted on the workload of other staff. He suggested alerting Senate that there was an issue that needed to be investigated.

During discussion the following points were raised:

- A member of the Academic Staff Committee (ASC), agreed that best practice was not followed everywhere but he confirmed that once probation reviews came to ASC the process was undertaken in a professional manner with standards as equal as possible across the University, allowing for disciplinary differences;
- A member currently on the Bath Course stated that there was a very wide range of support provided by departments and that what was detailed on paper was not all happening;
- Many probationers now see the ASC process as threatening, which needs to be addressed;
- It would be helpful to see a breakdown by department of the number of probationers who had passed probation, failed probation or left before completing probation;
- The investigation should calibrate the differences between departments and also ask probationers how they are supported.

The meeting AGREED that the Chair should ask to raise the issue under Any Other Business at the next meeting of Senate on 22 November, requesting the Deputy Vice-Chancellor to report back.

**CHAIR**

**647**     **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 8 May 2018 at 12.30 pm. This will include the Vice-Chancellor's statutory address.

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The meeting concluded at 2.50 pm

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