
Meeting: ACADEMIC ASSEMBLY
Date and time: Wednesday 30 October 2019 at 1.15 pm
Venue: CB1.12

Present: Dr J White (Chair)
and 42 members
Attending by invitation: Ms L Humphreys, Ms H Rhodes, Ms H South
In attendance: Mrs P Chesters, Chair of Council
Mrs E Commander, Head of Strategic Governance
Dr C Harris, Secretary to Academic Assembly

ACTION

687 WELCOME

The Chair welcomed members, particularly those who were new to the University, and senior Library staff who were invited to attend meetings and participate in debates but did not have voting rights. She clarified that the meeting was only for those who had received an e-mail about it from herself or the Secretary.

688 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 she could be contacted on: academic-assembly-chair@bath.ac.uk and had been appointed as Chair until 31 July 2021.

689 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 May 2019 (Paper AA19/20-001 refers) were approved and signed by the Chair.

690 MATTERS ARISING

Minute 679(1), Probationary Staff Project

The Chair advised that two focus groups had met during 2018/19 with consistent messages emerging. A report for the Academic Staff Committee in late November was in preparation. An update would be circulated to members by e-mail.

CHAIR/SEC

Minute 679(2), Proposed Motion on Early- Career, Post-Doctoral Staff

The Chair reported that a revised Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers was published in September. The PVC (Research) had stated that the University was scrutinising the details and would revert to the Assembly and Senate on the way forward, in due course.

691 ELECTIONS

Members of Academic Assembly noted the election of representatives to serve on Council, Senate and Awards Committee, as set out in Paper AA19/20-002. Members were encouraged to stand as candidates in future elections.

692 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>

She drew attention to the following Senate approvals:

- (1) June:
 - REF 2021 Code of Practice
 - Disabled Students' Policy
 - Revised Career Progression in Education & Research job family document
 - Creation of a Research Institute of Advanced Automotive Propulsion Systems, subsequently approved by Council
- (2) September – Suite of policies & procedures [Student Complaints Procedure, Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedure \(Regulation 7 and 8\) and the Dignity and Respect Policy and Procedure](#)
- (3) October – Curriculum transformation: assessment regulations broadly approved, subject to some final modifications/agreement.

A member requested an update and timeline for the changes previously agreed by Senate whereby Teaching Fellows would become Lecturers and Senior Teaching Fellows would become Senior Lecturers.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost responded that a meeting had been held that morning to discuss these changes. Progress was being made and the intention was to implement the changes as soon as practical.

693 EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW OF SENATE

Members of Academic Assembly noted the update on the Effectiveness Review of Senate, as set out in Paper AA19/20-003.

Professor David Bird, a member of the Senate Effectiveness Review Group, gave a presentation (attached to the minutes) explaining that it was six years since the last full review and the decision had been made to have a large-scale review of Senate with an external chair. He described the membership and terms of reference of the Group. He explained that all the committees of Senate would be looked at including their effectiveness, terms of reference, membership, induction, meeting schedule and how they engaged. He described the current membership of Senate and pointed out that there should be one more member elected by the Assembly following the co-option of the Vice-President (Student Experience) to Senate (one third of the total Senate membership was elected by Academic Assembly).

During questions the following points were made:

- Council members were not representing their electorate but for Senate it was less clear and members were unsure if they were representatives or not;
- When asked to define “effectively”, Professor Bird stated that the review would help define this and that both representation and whether Academic Assembly and the Education & Research job family were consulted enough would be considered;
- The Chair advised that the sub-groups would look at the terms of reference of committees and map where minutes were submitted to check responses.

Members were encouraged to input into the questionnaires and focus groups that were being organised.

694 COUNCIL UPDATE

Mrs Pamela Chesters, Chair of Council, introduced herself explaining her background, that she was interested in governance, and the make-up of the panel that had appointed her. She pointed out that Council currently has 19 members but could have 21; one member was due to start in January 2020 and the last place would be filled in due course. Seven members had started since April so it was a new team. She emphasised that Council was obliged to work as a team and that the members were not representatives.

The Chair of Council reported that there were two issues outstanding from the Halpin review of Council with everything else now signed off. These were Council’s relationship with Court and KPIs; the new institutional Strategy would lead to new KPIs.

Council was working to improve governance such as the legalese Standing Orders, the terms of reference of committees and more transparency on the website, for example, with redacted Council minutes being posted in a timely manner. All members of Council were expected to gain an understanding of the organisation so that they could provide 'check and challenge' to the Executive and question student and staff experience. The Chair of Council explained that when she had started at the University the culture was difficult with a breakdown of trust but that Council was endeavouring to improve transparency.

A member asked how Council members were involved in the life of the University. The Chair of Council responded that the Vice-Chancellor was supportive of Council engagement in university life, that lay and elected members would be linked with parts of the institution (though not to intrude on decisions), and a buddy system would be set up for new Council members.

The Chair thanked the Chair of Council and noted that she would be invited annually to present to the Assembly.

695 CLIMATE ACTION FRAMEWORK

The Vice-Chancellor and Provost spoke on the recently announced Climate Action Framework, led by Professor Jonathan Knight, PVC (Research) who was unable to attend the meeting. The Framework covers 4 areas:

- Research – the University plays a role in reducing carbon emissions and increasing sustainability, with many researchers working in this field; for example, on policy, in psychology and IAAPS; research has had a global impact;
- Learning & Teaching – a significant number of courses already cover topics in this arena;
- Policy and Practice – can be improved and made more efficient;
- Campus emissions – since 2005 the campus emissions have reduced by 20% despite the significant increase in campus size; the carbon per square metre has reduced by 42%; this was due to the Energy & Environment Manager and his team; work was ongoing with the city and Bath and North East Somerset council.

A task and finish group had been set up to develop the vision into an operational framework. The Chair will be a 0.3FTE seconded academic and members of the group will be drawn from the Students' Union, the trade unions, Estates, ahs, communications and two experienced academics. Focus groups would be held to make the process inclusive so that everyone who wants to contribute will have an opportunity. The Sustainability and Carbon Management Steering Group and the Transport Strategy Consultative Working Group would be suspended for a year to be absorbed by this task and finish group.

696 **PROPOSED MOTION**

Dr Susan Johnson presented the proposed motion to declare a Climate Emergency, detailed in Paper AA19/20-004. She had proposed it and Dr Séverine Deneulin seconded it. She mentioned that she was pleased to hear about the Climate Action Framework in the previous item and the planned working together. She explained that the proposed motion was to put on record that the Assembly united behind the science of the issue and to pledge the efforts of the Assembly to address all aspects.

She read out the pledges, commenting that this led from the work of the COP21 Implementation Group, which had been meeting for the previous four years. She commended the pledges stating that it was the responsibility of academics both individually and collectively to take intellectual leadership and to promote these concerns at the University.

During discussion the following points were made:

- Academics worked under the expectation that they would hold workshops or invite speakers but these activities both increased travel requirements and hence damaged the environment;
- The issue of conferences and travel was not straightforward, but the net effect of research would benefit carbon emission for the rest of society;
- The university would not be the first to declare a Climate Emergency, about 15 had already done so; it may be the first Academic Assembly to do so;
- The motion seemed consistent with the Climate Action Framework;
- It was hard to pledge on behalf of colleagues to change their lives; they should be asked individually; all members had the opportunity to attend the meeting;
- The meeting was quorate so it was valid to ask those present to vote;
- The University had already pledged to make changes and the wording of this motion suggested moves in the syllabus; academics had the ability to affect research and teaching topics;
- The proposed Climate Emergency Response Working Group would be autonomous and work through the Academic Assembly with the Climate Action Framework task and finish group;
- The route for Academic Assembly motions was to Senate.

The Assembly moved to vote on the proposed motion, as one item, using Turning Point technology. AGREED by a vote of 28 in favour, 3 against and 1 abstention to pass the Climate Emergency motion. The motion will be reported to the next meeting of Senate on 20 November 2019.

CHAIR/SEC

697 **ACADEMIC ASSEMBLY ACCOUNTABILITY AND
TRANSPARENCY WORKING GROUP**

Dr Theo Papadopoulos, a member of the Accountability and Transparency Working Group (AA-ATWG), introduced Paper AA19/20-005, a report on the event Imagining a Democratic University: Moving the Agenda Forward organised by the AA-ATWG. He pointed out that the views expressed were not necessarily those of the AA-ATWG. The event had 34 participants with another 20 unable to attend but wanting to be kept informed.

There were 29 proposals identified at the event and a meeting was planned for 4 December 12.30-2pm to rank and evaluate these proposals. The proposals covered topics such as making the Assembly more effective, increasing the number of working groups, making the leadership of the Assembly more collective, increasing the staff voice and staff well-being. The report included the first draft of a diagram interpreting the formal governance structure to the workshop participants.

The Chair pointed out that the diagram on page 4 of the paper was incorrect as, for example, Council had student members. The Chair of Council offered to work with the AA-ATWG to clarify the institutional governance diagram.

The Assembly noted the report.

698 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chair mentioned that it was appropriate to look at the future of Academic Assembly, given that there were 50 people voting at meetings and one Chair, with a total membership of around 1,300. It was also timely with the ongoing effectiveness reviews of Council and Senate and the 'Our University, Our Future' consultation. An initial plan would be provided to members in due course.

It was suggested that any review of AA involve an external chair.

699 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 5 May 2020 at 12.30 pm. This will include the Vice-Chancellor's statutory address.

The meeting concluded at 2.35pm
