
Meeting: ACADEMIC ASSEMBLY

Date and time: Wednesday 31 October 2018 at 1.15 pm

Venue: 5 West 2.3

Present: Dr J White (Chair)
and 41 members

Attending by invitation: Mrs K Bradshaw, Mrs K Jones

In attendance: Mrs R Foreman, Acting Chair of Council (for minute no. 675)
Mrs D Griffin, Learning & Organisational Development Manager
(for minute nos. 666-72)
Dr C Harris, Secretary to Academic Assembly
Dr J Müller, Academic Staff Development Manager (for minute
nos. 666-73)
Mr J Preston, University Treasurer (for minute no. 675)

ACTION

666 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.

667 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 can be contacted on: academic-assembly-chair@bath.ac.uk and that she was willing to meet with any members.

668 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 25 June 2018 (Paper AA18/19-001) were approved and signed by the Chair.

669 MATTERS ARISING

Minute 664, Halpin Review

The Chair advised that in response to the discussion on the Halpin Review she had invited the Acting Chair of Council and University Treasurer to attend this meeting.

670 ELECTIONS

The Chair apologised for the two inaccuracies on Paper AA18/19-002. The Council representative was Dr M Carley of the Department of Mechanical Engineering until 31 July 2019 and Dr McManus's place on Senate had been taken by Dr S Gamsu of the Department of Education until 31 July 2019.

Members of Academic Assembly noted the election of representatives to serve on Council, Senate and Awards Committee.

671 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:

(1) Curriculum Transformation

Senate approved the following on June 6 2018:

- the main principles and success criteria
- to establish a Curriculum Transformation Committee (CTC) which would *inter alia* consider/approve the outcome of Phase 2&3 for the vanguard courses;
- changes to the terms of reference and membership of PAPAC to be renamed Courses and Partnerships Approval Committee;
- to start work on changing to a 50% pass mark all master-level units for cohorts starting in 2020 on courses re-designed under curriculum transformation.

At its meeting on October 17 2018 Senate noted and/or approved the following:

- That courses designed under the principles of Curriculum Transformation would remain modular in nature i.e. there would be no disaggregation of study units and assessment blocks at least for now due to problems with HESA reporting;
- All Vanguard programmes received Phase 2 approval (although some subject to redesigning assessments within a modular structure);
- The majority of UG courses will now launch in 2021; PGT courses have an anticipated launch of 2020.

During discussion the following points were raised:

- Concern was expressed that the problems with HESA reporting had only recently been raised;
- Academic Registry was aware of the issue that the pass mark for the master's elements of undergraduate master's degrees would be 50%.

(2) Reserved Business

In the spirit of the recent Halpin Review, student members were invited to stay during reserved business at Senate. Further guidance was requested about student participation in reserved business at Faculty and Departmental level.

672 PROBATIONARY STAFF PROJECT

The Learning & Organisational Development Manager explained that the project to look at the experience of probationary staff had been developed following Academic Assembly raising concerns over inconsistencies and inadequacies of the probationary staff system. The data indicated no problems, with staff successfully passing probation and not leaving. However, anecdotally staff were struggling and found the system over-bureaucratic.

A report would be provided to Senate but some of the actions were already in place such as an Induction Workshop. This was a supportive and developmental process covering probation, what was expected, support available and career plans. Focus groups, for staff on probation and those who had recently completed probation, were being set up and other views sought. The ideas from these sources would be tested by a survey prior to the results being reported to Academic Staff Committee. An outcome should be available for the May meeting of the Assembly.

SEC

During discussion the following points were raised:

- Induction varied by department hence good practice guidance for departments could be helpful;
- The relevance of the Bath Course generally and for teaching fellows was queried and it was noted that the course content was being modified to be more relevant for probationary staff;
- One member mentioned that a departmental academic mentor had been very beneficial for him.

Any further comments would be welcomed by the Learning & Organisational Development Manager or the Academic Staff Development Manager. The Learning & Organisational Development Manager was thanked.

673 RESEARCH STAFF WORKING GROUP

The Academic Staff Development Manager gave an overview of the Research Staff Working Group (RSWG), which had been in existence since 2004 and in its current format since 2013. The Group represented research staff and worked to improve their working environment and career management. It promoted implementation of the Code of Practice for the Employment of Research Staff as well as the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Research Staff and their action plans. It managed the Implementation of the Universities HR Excellence in Research Award strategy and identified issues arising from the Career in Research Online Survey (CROS) and other consultations.

Projects undertaken by the Group included developing promotion criteria for research staff from grade 7 to grade 8, the Vision for Research Staff endorsed by the University Research Committee, induction of research staff including developing an induction guide, and representing research staff on University Committees.

The Academic Staff Development Manager was thanked.

674 PROPOSED MOTION ON EARLY-CAREER, POST-DOCTORAL STAFF ON SHORT-TERM AND CASUALISED CONTRACTS

The proposed motion, detailed in Paper AA18/19-003, was proposed by Dr S Gamsu.

In Dr Gamsu's absence the motion was introduced by Mx D Teggi, who thanked the RSWG for their work and explained that the motion highlighted areas of concern. The motion cited that the 2017 CROS survey found that only 18% of research staff had completed 10 days or more training in 12 months as there was not enough time for training and development with large workloads. The motion requested that the University implement the findings of the review of the Concordat, in particular widening the scope of the definition of researchers and protecting one day a week for researchers to undertake their own research. Concern was also expressed that many researchers were on fixed-term contracts and were not permanent staff.

During discussion the following points were made:

- The PVC (Research) confirmed that the University had signed up to the Concordat. The University will respond to the sector-wide consultation on the Review of the Concordat recommendations and he encouraged individuals to respond;
- There was general sympathy with the spirit of the motion;
- It was suggested that it was premature to submit the motion to Senate as it could disrupt the process of the consultation and occupy the time of the people involved without contributing to the response. If parts of the motion were actioned prematurely the University may then not be consistent with the changes to the Concordat;
- It was important to raise awareness of the Concordat in departments;
- It was noted that elements of the motion were not under the jurisdiction of the Assembly;
- The RSWG would develop an action plan after the Review was completed and would then be able to provide a more informed view.

It was proposed by Dr S Wharton and seconded by Dr S Gheduzzi 'that the matter do lie on the table' under Standing Order 12 (f) (iii), with the motion passed to both the PVC (Research) and the RSWG for feedback at the next meeting of Academic Assembly.

CHAIR

AGREED by a vote of 27 for and 1 against 'that the matter do lie on the table' as proposed.

675 HALPIN REVIEW

The Acting Chair of Council introduced herself to the Assembly giving an overview of her background. She explained that the Council Effectiveness Review Steering Group was working through the recommendations of the Review, some of which had already been approved by Council (such as taking forward a wider stakeholder review), some were in progress and some had yet to be considered. The Steering Group was exploring a reduced size of Council and she presented the 'straw man' proposal, which included three members from Senate, with one of these elected by Academic Assembly.

During discussion the following issues were raised:

- Concern was expressed that removing the Pro-Chancellors would remove the opportunity for Court to elect members to Council and result in less independence as 11 of 21 Council members would be appointed by Council; the Acting Chair of Council responded that the Pro-Chancellor role was a ceremonial role;
- Information on how Lay members on Council were appointed was requested, noting that they should be in the majority; they are appointed by Council;
- The process to decide on stakeholders was queried; the Institute for Policy Research and the School of Management were defining the process for the stakeholder review and a project plan would be developed;
- Clarification was sought about how the composition of Council would be agreed; the decision will be made by Council as Trustees of the University;
- It was pointed out that there would be a reduction of academic members from six to four with non-academic members increasing from one to two and student members remaining at two;
- The rationale for reduction of Council size was queried; the aim was to improve the efficiency of the Board of Trustees, improve communication and transparency across the University and to ensure that Council was listening to views. For example, the Chair of Council would come to a meeting of the Assembly each year;
- It was felt that a smaller Council would have a more limited perspective; the changes would be in line with the sector and other ways of listening would be put in place;
- It was pointed out that Council members were not in a representative role but were Trustees of the University with a responsibility to act in its best interests;
- Concern was expressed that the process for the appointment of Council Lay members was not transparent, that Lay members were not aware of what was happening in the University and there had been a breakdown of trust; Council were willing to be challenged, it was starting to identify skill sets and would develop more open recruitment;
- It was noted that formerly Lay members of Council were invited to be associated with departments; Council members would be encouraged to be more visible in the future;

- It was noted that 15 officers regularly attended Council meetings; the 'in attendance' would also be looked at as the total numbers could be unwieldy.

The Acting Chair of Council and Treasurer were thanked for attending for this item. The Acting Chair of Council stated that the Steering Group was keen to receive any further views or input.

Webpage: <https://www.bath.ac.uk/offices/council-effectiveness-review-steering-group/>

E-mail: councileffectivenesssteeringgroup@bath.ac.uk

676 ACADEMIC ASSEMBLY WORKING GROUP PROPOSALS

Professor S White introduced a proposal for an Accountability and Transparency Working Group (detailed in paper AA18/19-004(a)), an elected formal group to represent the interests and concerns of Academic Assembly members, with indicative terms of reference supplied in the paper.

The Chair of Academic Assembly proposed an alternative Culture and Communications working group (detailed in Paper AA18/19-004(b)) with more open participation covering issues beyond accountability and transparency. The two proposals were presented because it had not been possible to reach agreement on how the group should be set up.

During discussion of the proposals the following points were made:

- The first proposal was more structured and the comments from a more casual group may not be heard;
- Professors for Change were not formally constituted to take the reform agenda forward;
- It was suggested that the two proposers should come to agreement of the way forward outside the meeting;
- It was pointed out that the Academic Assembly was itself the vehicle for such discussions, that there was low engagement with the Assembly and that delegating responsibility further was not the way to improve engagement;
- It was thought that having five people on the first proposed group was not enough nor reflect diversity well and that other ways of communication or regular consultation with academics were more appropriate;
- Concern was expressed that the Assembly had no constitutional structure to elect representatives in this way.

The meeting moved to a vote on the first proposal, with 8 votes for it, 5 votes against it and 7 abstentions.

AGREED to set up an Accountability and Transparency Working Group as detailed in Paper AA18/19-004(a).

677 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 7 May 2019 at 12.30 pm. This will include the Vice-Chancellor's statutory address.

The meeting concluded at 3.10 pm
