

Council effectiveness action plan

RECOMMENDATION		ACTION		TIMESCALE
1	Council is high functioning with many strengths to maintain and build upon			
1.1	Complete comprehensive review of University Statutes and Ordinances and enact a revised accountabilities in order to modernise the University's governance framework.	Resolve resourcing issue then bring resource plan and timescales to Council for February 23 meeting.		Plan to Council in February 2023
1.2	Continue programme of Committee evaluation and development	a	Programme to be run biennially – next round in 2023/24. Governance team will ensure that this process is synchronised with the external Council review timetable, so that the information from the committee evaluation can feed into the external review each time.	Begin next formal review January 2024
		b	Informal discussions on effectiveness to be carried out in committees in their last meeting of the year in alternate years.	May – July 2023
1.3	Improve Council visibility with explicit decisions as to which communities and groups would benefit from increased visibility and which practical options are most appropriate. To do this, Council can repurpose and make more use of existing forums, such as the Academic Assembly and	a	Council to publish web summaries after its meetings, as is current Senate practice. Head of Governance to liaise with Director of Communications after each meeting to identify suitable news stories for the website.	22/23
		b	Council to share its agenda (but not the papers or any reserved business) with all members of Senate and UEB on Decision Time before each meeting.	22/23

	Senate 'Ask Me Anything' events, the weekly all staff bulletin, staff Town Halls, the Council blog and use of a summary of Council meetings on the University website (similar to that done for Senate).	c	Council to issue a standing invitation to interested members of Senate to attend an informal meeting with a group of Council members prior to each Council meeting to aid dialogue and exchange of views on the Council agenda.	22/23
		d	Senate members to be offered a session with the Chair of Council on the role of Council as part of their induction.	22/23
		e	Council meetings to be held in different University locations on occasion (e.g. IAAPS in March)	22/23
		f	Council to consult both Senate and Academic Assembly using the AMA or alternative forum to understand the areas in which increased visibility would be most useful, and to what end. On the basis of that, the governance team will bring back further actions.	22/23
		g	Council to ask Deans to work with Heads of Department to ensure that the Links scheme supports the objective of increasing the familiarity of members of Council with sections of the University.	22/23
1.4	Share this review and evaluate progress as part of continuing self-evaluation.	a	Action plan to be agreed by Council	24/11/22
		b	If action plan is agreed, report and action plan to be circulated to Senate and UEB, and the report and action plan to be published on the website.	Publication by end of 2022
		c	Council to assess itself against same set of questions at end of 23/24	July 2024
2	Council should adopt and encourage a more ambitious and collective approach to delivery of strategy, performance, and governance.			

2.1	Building shared understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of the different governance bodies e.g., Council's role in developing and endorsing strategy and Senate's role in strategic development of academic activities and providing academic assurance.	a	Governance team to articulate a clear overview and share it with each of the three main branches (Council, Senate, UEB) for comments and questions. At the end of this process, website to be updated to more clearly articulate and structure this information.	By end May 2023
		b	Governance team to use this as the basis for a series of illustrative case studies.	By end December 2023
		c	Subsequently, this information to be used as part of election and recruitment process, induction, training and Terms of Reference review at the start of each new academic year.	By end December 2023
			N.B. The information may need updating in light of the Senate project underway this year.	By end December 2023
2.2	Focus Council on strategy development and performance against plan, reduce items for information by e.g., explicitly assuming they have been read in pre-read and/or grouping them together, and provide more opportunities for Council to discuss and shape University strategy.	a	Continue to progress use of Decision Time to better structure information, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decisions taken outside meetings - Members invited to note items for information on DT in advance of the meeting, or signal if they have a question - Committee reports to Council to replace minutes in body of the meeting Purpose of items (i.e. discussion/decision) is already clearly articulated on the face of the agenda, within DT and in papers themselves.	Immediate and continuous improvement based on feedback
		b	In relation to strategy, Council's formal role in shaping "The Strategy" is clear. To provide opportunities to shape strategic thought:	Immediate and continuous

			- Council to ask UEB to suggest and bring “strategic” items for discussion in the first part of each Council meeting, with the role Council is being asked to play made clear in each case.	improvement based on feedback
		c	Head of Governance to take Council agenda to UEB in advance of each Council meeting, with an indication of priorities for the meeting.	Immediate and continuous improvement based on feedback
		d	Council to ask UEB to suggest a programme for its development sessions over the course of the academic year	Immediate and continuous improvement based on feedback
		e	Council to ask UEB to focus more on the future in the items it brings	Immediate and continuous improvement based on feedback
2.3	At a tactical level, start and end Council meetings with a reminder of areas for Council focus.		Chair to begin each meeting with articulation of priorities (including rationale).	Immediate
2.4	Improve delegation and open discussion of options (not just one proposal) across the elements of the governance system: Council, Senate, Executive Board, within the Senior Leadership Team.	a	Where items are brought to Council for simple approval, governance team to ask proposers to include a summary of options considered and reasons for choice made. In each case, consideration should be given to whether, in future, any “rubber stamp” items could be approved under delegated authority, or whether there is a compliance reason for bringing them to Council.	Immediate

		b	Council to ask UEB proactively to identify business on which Council input would be helpful at an earlier stage, to shape thinking.	Immediate
			N.B. Work on Scheme of Delegation will support this	Draft SoD by end of academic year
2.5	Improve collaborative working between Council and Senate including shared goals, joint working (in addition to current joint committees) and assurance.	a	The assurance role should be clarified by work being carried out by Senate this year.	Senate work – end of academic year
		b	<p>Council to share report with Senate and ask it how it would like to work together. Options for consideration could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A facilitated joint workshop, which could form part of Senate’s work on its own role - Joint development day / half day each year - Invitations for Senate members to observe Council meetings, and vice versa - Invitations to Senate members to meet with Council members before each Council meeting (see 1.3) <p>Increased use of development sessions for informal joint working on specific issues</p>	Share report and action plan– before end of calendar year. Paper to Senate for its February meeting (agreed by Council by DT in advance)
3	Council needs to rebalance its relationship and interactions with UEB and Senate.			
3.1	Council agree an outline delivery plan with UEB for the provision of strategic implementation plans, KPIs, risk appetite, etc. (We understand that such a roadmap has now been initiated by the Chair and	a	The “master planner” begins this work but the approach can be further refined for future iterations.	Continuous improvement
		b	Quarterly performance reporting is another element. UEB will bring forward a refined format for the February meeting of Council.	Continuous improvement

	Governance Team, but more work is needed.)	c	Council to ask UEB to update it on its work on risk appetite, its review of the KPIs and the milestones that it tracks.	Continuous improvement
		d	Council to ask UEB to suggest topics for the main strategic item at the start of each agenda.	Continuous improvement
3.2	Council should engage the Executive Team in more rigorous challenge of plans and performance, adopting a high challenge / high support model. In parallel, informal engagement at 'deep dives' or with 'buddies' should continue.	a	Continuation of the Council Links Scheme ('buddies'), with a light touch review of its effectiveness at the end of 22/23, taking into account feedback from members of UEB.	Links: review end 22/23
		b	Continuation of inform development sessions to enable deep dives, but Council to invite UEB to propose a programme for the year based on the priorities it has identified.	Next available opportunity
		c	Governance team to identify suitable "critical friend" training and invite UEB Standing Group to participate in it as a joint exercise	By Feb 22/23
3.3	Delegation of roles and responsibilities across UEB should be transparent to Council members and informal follow-up encouraged.	Scheme of Delegation review should clarify this		End 22/23
3B	Council should work to develop its visibility and assurance relationship with Senate.			
3.4	Build shared understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of the different governance bodies e.g., Council's role in developing, approving and endorsing strategy and Senate's role in strategic development of academic activities and providing academic assurance.	See 2.1		

3.5	Identify key topics where Council, Senate and UEB must work together e.g., University research strategy, and use these as case examples to think through and communicate the role that each body plays and what is needed by way of structure, information, behaviour and support to make this work effectively.	This recommendation concerns the development of a series of case studies to help clarify roles – for an action related to this, see 2.1.		
3.6	Council and Senate work together to redesign the approach to providing academic assurance including the information required, how Council requests and feeds back to Senate and space to elevate and discuss academic assurance from Senate in Council meetings.	Council to share report on its effectiveness with Senate. Senate is undertaking a review this year, in which it will consider the issue of academic assurance. Governance team to work with Council, Senate and ARAC to clarify the processes by which Council receives academic assurance from Senate, and the role of ARAC in this process.		Paper to Senate in February 2023
3.7	Council to take the lead in building alignment around a compelling vision with key objectives through e.g., joint working on clear priority topics, joint strategy days and development events, shared dinners and training, clear communication, and information flow.	No separate action needed as this is covered by the actions above		
4	Council can update and improve some of its ways of working.			
4.1	Reduce Council size to circa 15 members with clarity around collective (rather than representative) responsibility, while also	a	Council to consider formal proposal at its meeting in November. Proposal should include supplementary measures in relation to the academic voice, such as:	Proposal in November 2022

	<p>putting in place mechanisms which ensure the academic voice will be sufficiently heard (see also section 3b. relationship with Senate).</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased invitations to non-members to participate in relevant working groups - Discussions with interested Senate members before Council - For relevant items, Council to ask UEB to include summary of union position within papers - Council to suggest Council and Senate members observe each others' meetings - Circulation of Town Hall feedback to Council via the weekly digest 	Implementation depending on project timescales
		b	Communicate Council decision to Senate and AA	Early 2023
		c	Necessary Statute amendments to be considered at an early stage as part of governance framework review.	By end of calendar year
		d	Generic role descriptions (lay members etc) to be included on the Council website and in recruitment and election material for Council. This should include information on the distinction between representation and collective decision-making.	By end of calendar year
4.2	Consider appointments that increase access to specialist skills/experiences and options to access additional Higher Education experiences.	Nominations Committee already considers appropriate skills mix as part of its annual review of the skills matrix and associated recruitment needs. This recommendation to be given specific consideration at next meeting.		January 2023
4.3	Provide structured opportunities in informal settings to build understanding of individual Council member roles, experience, and expertise.	Development sessions to continue to give space to this informal relationship building. Further consideration will be given to separating out development sessions from dinners, where the purpose is different.		Continuous

4.4	Reconsider the role of Senior Independent Director as Council numbers decrease.	Update the job description for the SID to clarify role	End of calendar year
4.5	Complete comprehensive review of University Statutes and Ordinances and enact revised accountabilities. Until the review is enacted, take mass of administrative items at committee or by email.	See 1.1 and 2.2	
4.6	Engage Council and Executive Team in more rigorous challenge of plans and performance, adopting a high challenge / high support culture.	See 3.2	
4.7	Focus Council on the few major issues, reduce items for information and provide more opportunities for Council to discuss and shape University strategy. Minimise 'pre-decided' recommendations at Council meetings and include opportunities for open discussion of options.	See 2.2 and 2.4	
4.8	Develop an annual workplan showing when key issues will be on the agenda with sufficient time.	Already available and shared – governance team will continue to work on improving it, including UEB input into it, with clearer identification of priority items	Immediate
4.9	Improve delegation across the elements of the governance system: Council, Senate, Executive Board, within the Senior Leadership Team.	See 3.3	
4.10	Encourage brief upfront recommendations from presenters (especially when already	This is already in place in the template used – paper training in development to support better use of this	Immediate

	covered in advanced reading) and invite challenge and meaningful discussion.	Governance team to provide clearer set of expectations to those presenting items in person to Council	
4.11	<p>Develop and keep live a Council Charter which sets out aspired behaviour and ways of working together (e.g., adopting a collective rather than a representative philosophy, commitment to constructive challenge), which can be used</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in Council, pre-reading as a reminder of Council's purpose and role - referred to during Council meetings if needed - after Council meetings to reflect on and evaluate meetings, perhaps with a 1-2 minute summary by a designated member on a rotating basis - as part of the recruitment process for new elected members 	<p>Council to agree a succinct set of values to be used to support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The process for elections to Council - Job descriptions for Council members - Recruitment material - Induction - Annual appraisals of Council members 	Approval May 2023