

**SEN17D019**

**Title:** Report from Assembly  
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**Date:** 28/09/2017  
**Circulation:** Senate 8 November 2017  
**Agenda:** SEN17A001  
**Version:** Final  
**Status:** Open

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**Issue**

To inform Senate of the discussions that took place at the meeting of Assembly on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2017 including details of motions proposed by staff members, the discussion of these and comments from members of the Executive Team.

These minutes are being brought to Senate in light of its role in overseeing administrative efficiency and academic performance.

Of particular relevance to Senate will be the discussion of Motion 1: *Assembly calls on the Executive Team to consider the impact of the proliferation of administrative tasks and lack of research only time on the research capacity of the university and the ability of the ATR staff to perform the research element of their duties.*

**Recommendation**

Recipients are invited

To receive the minutes of the Assembly meeting on 24.5.17 detailing the motions proposed and the discussion that took place.

To note the discussion of administrative efficiency and research performance.

**Resource Implications**

Dependent on any agreed action to be taken based on motions – please see attached minutes.

**Risk Implications**

Dependent on any agreed action to be taken based on motions – please see attached minutes.

**Equality and Diversity**

Please see discussion of individual motions in attached minutes.

**Timing of decisions**

Dependent on any agreed action to be taken based on motions – please see attached minutes.

**Further information**

For further information about the content of this paper please contact Becky Price (rebecca.price@uea.ac.uk, x3615)

## **Background**

The Assembly is a discussion forum at which all members of staff may 'discuss and declare an opinion on any matter whatsoever relating to the University'.

## **Discussion**

The most recent meeting took place on Wednesday 24 May 2017. The meeting was quorate; 89 attendees signed in with Professor David Richardson, Vice-Chancellor and Professor Neil Ward Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) also in attendance.

The following motions were made, discussed and were carried by the members of Assembly.

### **Motion 1** - From Professor Mima Dzamonja (SCI)

*Assembly calls on the Executive Team to consider the impact of the proliferation of administrative tasks and lack of research only time on the research capacity of the university and the ability of the ATR staff to perform the research element of their duties.*

### **Motion 2** - From Dr Gareth Edwards (SSF)

*Assembly is pleased that the University now allows non-British staff to use their relocation allowance to help defray the cost of their visa. However, in view of the high cost of visa applications and renewals and to ensure the University is able to continue to attract and retain the best international staff, Assembly calls on the University to institute a policy to reimburse visa application and settlement charges for non-British staff.*

### **Motion 3** - From Dr Nicolas Walsh (SSF)

*Assembly calls upon the University to consider whether the food available on campus is of a sufficient quality for staff.*

An extract from the Minutes in relation to motion 1 is given below and full details of the discussion of other items can be found in the attached minutes.

### **Extract from the minutes of the meeting of Assembly 24.5.17**

*Assembly calls on the Executive Team to consider the impact of the proliferation of administrative tasks and lack of research only time on the research capacity of the university and the ability of the ATR staff to perform the research element of their duties.*

Professor Mima Dzamonja expanded on her motion with the following comments

- Research is a discursive and creative process requiring research only time.
- ATR staff are increasingly worried that the 40% of their time reserved for research is being impacted upon by the proliferation of administrative task due to frequent changes and additions to procedures, without clear benefit, including the increasing size and impact of committees and working groups.
- She called upon the Executive Team to
  1. Aim for more efficient processes
  2. Protect research only time in summer
  3. Treat research as a creative process rather than something to be managed

Neil Ward, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic) (NW), explained that this is thought and talked about regularly by the Executive Team (ET), for example as part of the REF preparedness strategy and that they would continue to consider the issue carefully. He explained that

- Over last 8-9 years, UEA has made significant investment to increase its number of academic staff, £12.5 million additional spend, and seen considerable improvement in its Student Staff Ratio up to 13.5 to 1. On this basis, the university has more academic staff compared to its competitors sharing administrative roles.
- There has also been a shift in balance between proportions of ATR and ATS staff with ATS roles taking on more teaching and administration as part of their portfolio in order to shift the burden and protect research time.

- That administrative tasks are not thought up for the sake of it and that pressures from the sector and compliance regulations for both research and teaching are a significant part of the reason for the increase including
  - The drive to ensure completion rates for PGR students.
  - The data collection required by REF's monitoring of impact.
  - The introduction of £9k fees for undergraduate students and the government empowering students to shape their education
  - Competition and Marketing Authority regulations

Members of Assembly raised the following additional points

- Pressures on research time caused by the manual attendance monitoring and requests for this to become swipe card.
- Pressures caused by numbers of resits due to BIM regulations

NW responded that LTC have agreed a move back to some constrained condoned failure which should reduce numbers of resits and acknowledged the importance of development of IT systems to reduce administrative burden.

The Vice Chancellor (VC) also addressed the issue of research administration. He outlined that the Research Excellence Framework (REF) has to operate within the rules set by HEFCE with rules for the next REF being released shortly. He stressed and that it is in the interest of university to work hard towards a positive REF outcome but that careful work was being done to ensure that this was done as efficiently as possible.

A member of Assembly queried how the institution defines efficiency and whether administrative changes are costed taking into account academic staff time. The VC explained that consideration is continually given to what work is most appropriately carried out by the professional divisions or academics.

Assembly also raised the issue of the pressure of increasing requirement for academic representation on committees and working groups. NW acknowledged that this is a tricky balance but explained that one of the prompts for this was the need to ensure input from across different disciplines as things are done differently in different Faculties etc. NW stressed that the Committee structure is not set in stone and changes for efficiencies were always looked for. The VC also acknowledged the potential issues of not stopping committees/ working groups once their job was done and committed to looking at this further.

Members of Assembly also raised

- A suggestion that the University should have a one in two out approach to new regulations.
- Whether as much academic involvement as is currently the case is needed in the consideration of extenuating circumstances.

ET committed to consider these suggestions further.

## **Attachments**

Minutes of the Assembly meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2017.

# THE ASSEMBLY



## Minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2017

Present: The Chair of the Standing Committee of the Assembly (Mr K. Harper) (in the chair), the Vice-Chancellor (Professor D. Richardson) (VC)

With: The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Professor N. Ward) (NW)

Attendance: *Those who signed the attendance list and can be transcribed are as follows: Brigitte Nelson (FMH), Tracy Moulten (REN), Rachel Henderson (LIB), Rob Walker (CSED), Amanda Giles (CSED), Gareth Edwards (DEV), Martin Scott (DEV), Sarah Jenkins (DEV), Nicole Gross-Camp (DEV), Irkine Rodrigues (DEV), Paul Clist (DEV), Maria Abranches (DEV), Emma Gilberthorpe (DEV), Robert Gray (DEV), Laura Camfield (DEV), Edward Anderson (DEV), Catherine Jere (DEV), Verity Burton (DEV), Alan Finlayson (PPL), John McDonagh (DEV), Peter Lloyd-Sherlock (DEV), Ulrike Theuerkauf (DEV), Michael Frazer (PPL), Petra Rau (LDC), Ben Jones (DEV), Adrian Martin (DEV), John Street (PPL), Julia Warner (REN), Oliver Springate (DEV), Alison Winch (AMA), Sanna Inthorn (AMA), Lauren Lessiter (REN), R Smith (CMP), Karen Heywood (ENV), David Stevens (MTH), M Rimmer (AMA), Yuli Shan (DEV), Jing Meng (ENV), Yann Lebeau (EDU), Brian Maddox (DEV), Hayder Salman (MTH), Simon Dell (AMA), Ben D'Exelle (DEV), Steve Russell (DEV), Davide Proment (MTH), Vanessa Miemietz (MTH), Mark Cooker (MTH), Natasha Gales (CAT), Joel Halcomb (HIS), Helen Pallett (ENV), Dylan Edwards (MED), Dabo Guan (DEV), Hazel Marsh (PPL), Brett Mills (AMA), Lucy Barnes (SSF), Brook Newton (ARM/SAO), Avidan Kent (LAW), Claudina Richards (LAW), Joseph Grant (MTH), Georgina Hallsworth (BIO/ SCI LSO), Emilian Parau (MTH/SCI), Jo Drugan (PPL), Shaun Stevens (MTH), Grant Young (Lib)*  
*Plus at least 15 further attendees*

### 1. MINUTES

Confirmed

the Minutes of the meeting held on 4 June 2014.

The minutes could be found online at:

<https://portal.uea.ac.uk/committee-office/uea-committees-and-boards/assembly>

### 2. STATEMENTS BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

The Vice Chancellor shared with Assembly

- Reflections on the terror attack in Manchester including fundraising initiatives for the victims taking place across campus and Norwich.
- An update on progress towards UEA's 15 year Vision and financial plan including on plans for growth and for updating UEA's campus to be fit for today's HE. Plans include:
  - Growth of student numbers by 3000 students with 1000 already having been achieved.
  - New buildings and repurposing existing space including teaching space, labs and student accommodation.

- Growing numbers academic staff to maintain strong staff student ratio.
- Protecting existing high levels of staff and student experience and quality and maintaining strong league table position, including in metrics important to students such as retention, good honours and graduate prospects.
- His thanks for all the work that has led to UEA's highest ever league stable standing achieved in the Complete. In changing times, including the unknown impacts of Brexit, Trump, the UK General Election and the Higher Education Act (TEF, changes to Research Councils), it will be important to continue to look hard at the things important to students but we can go forward with confidence.

3. STATEMENTS BY THE CHAIR OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE ASSEMBLY

No statements made.

4. MEMBERSHIP OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE ASSEMBLY

Reported

- (1) that the membership of the Standing Committee of the Assembly was:

Ex-officio – VC & PVC's

Members elected by the Assembly:

Ms L. Dack (2017) (S&C)

Ms N. Gales (2017) (S&C)

Mr K. Harper (2019) (LTS) (Chair) (S&C)

Ms T. Moulton (2019) (ALC)

Mrs B. Nelson (2018) (ALC)

Ms C. Richards (2017) (ATR)

Mrs A Williams (2017) (ATS)

1 Vacancy

Secretary: Mrs Rebecca Price

- (2) that there was 1 current vacancy on the Committee.
- (3) that the membership of the Standing Committee of the Assembly provided for 8 members elected by the Assembly;
- (4) that nominations were invited for the vacancy arising for 2016-17;
- (5) that the following nominations were received.

**Mrs Jennifer Lawrence (LTS) (S&C)**

Front Desk Supervisor, L&T Hub (Zicer)

**Dr Usha Sundaram (NBS) (ATR)**

Lecturer in Business Management and Marketing, Senior Academic Advisor / Fellow of the Higher Education Academy

- (6) It was noted that four members of SCOTA's terms of office finished in 2017, potentially leaving 5 vacancies.

- (7) it was noted that Ms N. Gales and Ms L. Dack confirmed that they would continue as a member of SCOTA for another 3 years and Mrs A. Williams and Ms. C Richards would not be continuing as a member of SCOTA after end July 2017.
- (8) Therefore, the two proposed nominees will be declared a member of SCOTA without a ballot being required and is reported to the Assembly meeting.
- (9) Therefore currently for 2017/18 there would be 7 members and 2 vacancies.

5. ITEMS PROPOSED

**From Professor Mima Dzamonja (SCI)**

***Which area/s of the University would you like to pose your question to?*** The Executive Team.

*Assembly calls on the Executive Team to consider the impact of the proliferation of administrative tasks and lack of research only time on the research capacity of the university and the ability of the ATR staff to perform the research element of their duties.*

Professor Mima Dzamonja expanded on her motion with the following comments

- Research is a discursive and creative process requiring research only time.
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- She called upon the Executive Team to
  4. Aim for more efficient processes
  5. Protect research only time in summer
  6. Treat research as a creative process rather than something to be managed

Neil Ward, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic) (NW), explained that this is thought and talked about regularly by the Executive Team (ET), for example as part of the REF preparedness strategy and that they would continue to consider the issue carefully. He explained that

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- There has also been a shift in balance between proportions of ATR and ATS staff with ATS roles taking on more teaching and administration as part of their portfolio in order to shift the burden and protect research time.
- That administrative tasks are not thought up for the sake of it and that pressures from the sector and compliance regulations for both research and teaching are a significant part of the reason for the increase including
  - The drive to ensure completion rates for PGR students.
  - The data collection required by REF's monitoring of impact.
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Members of Assembly raised the following additional points

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- Pressures caused by numbers of resits due to BIM regulations

NW responded that LTC have agreed a move back to some constrained condoned failure which should reduce numbers of resits and acknowledged the importance of development of IT systems to reduce administrative burden.

The Vice Chancellor (VC) also addressed the issue of research administration. He outlined that the Research Excellence Framework (REF) has to operate within the rules set by HEFCE with rules for the next REF being released shortly. He stressed and that it is in the interest of university to work hard towards a positive REF outcome but that careful work was being done to ensure that this was done as efficiently as possible.

A member of Assembly queried how the institution defines efficiency and whether administrative changes are costed taking into account academic staff time. The VC explained that consideration is continually given to what work is most appropriately carried out by the professional divisions or academics.

Assembly also raised the issue of the pressure of increasing requirement for academic representation on committees and working groups. NW acknowledged that this is a tricky balance but explained that one of the prompts for this was the need to ensure input from across different disciplines as things are done differently in different Faculties etc. NW stressed that the Committee structure is not set in stone and changes for efficiencies were always looked for. The VC also acknowledged the potential issues of not stopping committees/ working groups once their job was done and committed to looking at this further.

Members of Assembly also raised

- A suggestion that the University should have a one in two out approach to new regulations.
- Whether as much academic involvement as is currently the case is needed in the consideration of extenuating circumstances.

ET committed to consider these suggestions further.

#### **From Dr Gareth Edwards (SSF)**

***Which area/s of the University would you like to pose your question to?*** The whole University and The Executive Team.

*Assembly is pleased that the University now allows non-British staff to use their relocation allowance to help defray the cost of their visa. However, in view of the high cost of visa applications and renewals and to ensure the University is able to continue to attract and retain the best international staff, Assembly calls on the University to institute a policy to reimburse visa application and settlement charges for non-British staff.*

Dr Gareth Edwards expanded on his motion with the following comments and the chart included at the end of these minutes.

- As context, Dr Edwards shared statements from the HE sector and UEA ET highlighting the importance of, and support for, international staff and outlook including statements that international staff have always been welcome and always will be.
- Cost of visa and right to remain applications has been rising and has reached critical levels – see attached chart. Cost is per person so staff have to pay for family members.
- There is the risk of this have a disproportional impact on junior staff
- Potential competitive disadvantage as some other Universities do pay
- The University allows staff to use their relocation allowance for initial visa applications but this does not go far enough.
- UEA has been publically vocal in its support for international staff in open but now it “needs to put its money where its mouth is.”

The VC explained that this is an issue on which ET have met and talked about before, including two discussions in summer 2016 either side of the BREXIT vote, it is an issue that ET very much recognises and that members of ET showed strong support for. However, it is a challenge as the government introduces the legislation but the University does not get more resource. UEA’s current approach is in line with other, if not all, universities. A decision was taken that UEA could not afford to fund visas at this stage with a potential annual cost of approximately £250,000. ET committed to look at the issue again when the outcome of the Brexit negotiations is known.

Members of Assembly commented

- That it could also be argued that the University would get greater returns from investing in international staff e.g. research income and/or reputationally.
- Requesting that the University should develop a stopgap policy whilst waiting for outcome of Brexit as a goodwill gesture.
- That the University seek clarification from the Research councils as to whether these costs can be included in a research proposal.
- Whether, as the initial visa costs have to be paid in advance before staff have even received their salary, the University could provide an interest free loan that could be paid back over time. Note that other members of Assembly found the idea of the loan morally problematic as it leaves staff indebted to the University.
- Whether, as costs rise with number of dependent children, UEA would consider making relocation allowance flexible based on dependent children.

The VC committed to consider this further with input from Ian Callaghan, Director of Finance Planning and Governance and the Research Service.

**From Dr Nicolas Walsh (SSF)**

***Which area/s of the University would you like to pose your question to?*** The Whole University

*Assembly calls upon the University to consider whether the food available on campus is of a sufficient quality for staff.*

Assembly were shown the following statement from Nicholas Walsh

Please accept my apologies for being unable to attend today’s Council session. My main motivation for contacting council was to highlight the poor quality of food served at UEA Psychology events involving PSY staff and the food served at UEA canteens.

ASM-M6  
24.05.2017  
Min. 5

Food left uneaten at these staff events is then taken to the PSY staff room, where again, it is left uneaten, and then it is thrown away. This to me is a great waste of both money and food, and disappointing considering the PR efforts UEA makes to appear a 'green' and environmentally friendly campus. In addition, I think the food at Vista, could be improved and is, in general too expensive. As a health psychologist, I am well aware of the importance of what we eat helps us to lead healthy and productive lives. In addition, I am well aware as the social benefits of eating together with colleagues at staff canteens.

I also surveyed opinion from my UEA colleagues about this matter via Facebook comments, these comments included the following:

"More leafy green salads"

"the range of choice is pretty poor"

"salads and healthy soups would be good"

"I agree that food at campus canteens isn't very varied and I also think it's too expensive. More salads, a larger range of (seasoned!) vegetables and less fried food would be excellent. My personal preference would be to eat at the canteen every day but have given up on Vista because I'm generally disappointed with what they serve and how much I end up paying. Food at INTO is, by contrast, generally very nice and not pricey (but too far away for regular lunch). I think it's great that someone is looking into this!

My hope is that by highlighting this issue, the situation could be improved for everyone at UEA. The VC confirmed that a review of catering has been carried out over last year has been is now complete so this is an active situation with changes currently being implemented.

A representative of Catering confirmed that menu changes have been made and that staff can provide feedback on catering at any time in person to staff members, on social media or to the dedicated feedback address.

**All of the above motions were carried.**

## 6. QUESTIONS

Reported  
that no question were received.