

**COU14D045**

**Title:** Report for UEA Council on student representation on Committees  
**Author:** Richard Jewson, Chairman  
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I undertook to Council, during consideration of this matter at our January meeting that I would consult with members of council and make a recommendation. The paper submitted to council is attached.

Council agreed to await the revised “Higher Education Code of Governance” (recently circulated) to consider whether this would offer a particular insight on student representation on the two committees. The new code appears not to be prescriptive either way, and arguably it does not signal a particular change in emphasis from the document it replaced and which has been the “model” used to date.

- The previous code established Council as the supreme executive authority and defined its primary responsibilities. It stated that “reserved” business (not involving all members of Council) should be kept to a minimum (Part I and Part II, para 2.6). The new code makes similar provisions and observes that student and staff members should not be routinely excluded from discussions (1.1, 1.4 and Appendix I). The primary responsibilities of Council do not make direct reference to the concerns of Remuneration Committee or Finance group.
- The previous code provided that the Remuneration Committee should include the Chair of the governing body, the Treasurer and other independent members (not necessarily members of Council). It allowed for the Vice-Chancellor to be a member of the committee, but not for the discussion of his/her own remuneration. It did not preclude membership from other groups or make reference to it (Part II, para 2.47). The new code requires that the Remuneration Committee includes the Chair of Council and a majority of independent members. It allows that the Vice-Chancellor or other senior staff may also be members but should not attend for consideration of their own salary (3.14).
- Neither the old or new codes make reference to membership of any Finance and General Purposes Committee or its equivalent.

The students are an important constituency within our community, and at all times their views should be understood and taken account of. A number of their proposals have been accepted. The two committees on which they still seek Student Union representation have been established by Council to carry out particular functions. In both cases continuity and relevant experience are important.

I have discussed the matter with council members during recent ‘one to one’ meetings and find no support for acceding to the Students request from the independent members. Accordingly, I do not recommend that the membership of the committees be changed at this time, as discussed below.

## **SENIOR OFFICERS REMUNERATION COMMITTEE**

### Membership

Ex officio                      The Chairman of Council (Chair)  
   The Treasurer  
   The Vice-Chancellor (*except in respect of his or her own remuneration and conditions of appointment*)

One Independent member of the Council, appointed by the Council

### Terms of Reference

To review and determine the salary and terms and conditions of appointment of senior officers, viz the Vice-Chancellor, the Pro-Vice-Chancellors and Registrar and Secretary.

### RJ comment:

The committee has worked effectively. The university has been able to recruit and retain high calibre people who have driven the success of the institution, without paying remuneration which has attracted criticism.

In doing their work as well as considering facts about within UEA and within the university market place which are widely understood, they necessarily have to discuss performance and appraisal of individuals. I do not believe that the student representatives would add particular value to the process, owing to lack of experience, and that they would only be able to take part in the discussion for one or two years. Whilst their ability and willingness to respect the confidentiality of the discussions should be accepted, it would be impossible for the knowledge gained not to influence their relationships with very senior staff in their ordinary dealings with them.

If the student union wished to submit generic or ad hominem views relevant to the terms of reference, they would of course be considered.

## **FINANCE GROUP**

### Membership

*Ex officio*                      The Vice-Chancellor (Chair).  
   The Treasurer  
   The Registrar and Secretary  
   Director of Finance (Mr S. Donaldson)  
   Two Independent Members of Council (Mr M. Williams and Dr K. Skoyles)

### Terms of Reference

- a) consider the budget for the coming financial year prior to consideration by Senate and its submission to Council for approval
- b) monitor the estimated outturn for the year (revenue, capital and cash) periodically (probably at four times in the year);
- c) be informed of and discuss any issues which arise which will be material to the University's finances;
- d) approve acquisition or disposal of property at values of less than £500,000;
- e) approve tuition, residence and nursery fees;
- f) approve borrowing of less than £500,000;
- g) advise the Chairman of Council, should the Chair be asked to act on material issues (particularly those with financial impact) on behalf of Council;

h) monitor the University's cash position and compliance with banking covenants.

RJ Comment

This group was formed at the beginning of the academic year 2010/11, following a review which led to a near halving of the size of council and the end of the F&GP Committee, specifically to ensure that the Treasurer was at all times fully briefed about financial issues affecting the university. It has taken on very limited decision making responsibilities – the important one of fees being one in which the Students would be conflicted. Students inevitably have limited experience of financial issues of the scale and variety faced by the university, and given that they serve for only one or two years, cannot bring an understanding of the background to the briefings which take place. There is ample opportunity for Student Union Representatives to consider the issues in detail and make their views known at Council meetings.

**Title:** *Student Representation on UEA Committees, Executives and Groups*  
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## **Confidentiality**

It is not proposed that this paper or the resulting minute should be considered confidential.

## **Issue**

The Students' Union recently submitted papers to the Executive Team (ET) proposing a more comprehensive student representation on the full range of University Committees, Executives and ad hoc working groups. ET accepted that there are a number of instances where student representation was evidently appropriate and would add value (for example Honorary Degrees and Awards Committee, where the principal impact of the decision is to enhance the experience of students and their families at Congregation) and these have been implemented.

ET did not support the proposals for student representation on two Council Committees; Senior Officers Remuneration Committee (SORC) which determines issues of pay and conditions for the Executive Team, and Finance Group. The Students' Union has asked that that decision be reviewed, and the Chairman and Vice-Chancellor felt that it would be appropriate to put the matter before Council.

## **Recommendation**

Council is invited to consider the proposals from the Students' Union and the reservations of ET and to determine whether the membership of SORC and Finance Group should be amended.

## **Resource Implications**

N/A

## **Risk Implications**

If indeed these are risks:

- on the one hand declining the proposal can give a perception of a lack of transparency and an unwillingness to fully engage the student body in the governance of the University, and a missed opportunity to enhance the effectiveness of these committees; on the other hand
- adopting the proposal may change the dynamics and effectiveness of these committees and question why other groups on Council are not also represented.

## **Equality and Diversity**

N/A

## **Timing of decisions**

N/A

## **Further Information**

N/A

## **Discussion**

The Students' Union's position has been authored by Chris Jarvis and is set out below in italics:

### **Introduction**

*This note proposes placing a student member (drawn from the student members of council), onto the Finance Group and Remuneration Committee. We believe this to be an uncontroversial step as student members already participate in a number of committees, selection panels and groups where the strictest confidentiality is expected, and have ample experience in the sensitivities of such arrangements. We have anticipated the potential issues, however, and sought to address these fully in the paper.*

*This proposal goes hand in hand with the conviction that the student voice is of vital importance and should be heard on all levels of UEA decision making. We trust that the council will agree this is a positive step forward and support these changes.*

### **Recommendation**

*We propose that one of the current student members of Council is made a full participant of the Remuneration Committee for a period of three years, after which their membership is reviewed.*

*We propose that one of the current student members of Council is made a full participant of the Finance Group for a period of three years, after which their membership is reviewed.*

### **Further Information**

*Chris Jarvis, Student Union Representative, Christopher.jarvis@uea.ac.uk*

### **Background**

*UEA is a successful institution with an impressive academic record. Senior Officers (the Vice-Chancellor, the Pro-Vice-Chancellors and Registrar and Secretary) are crucial to this and should be remunerated accordingly.*

*In a landscape of £9k fees and with fee income overall generating a large proportion of UEA income, taking student participation seriously is more important than ever.*

*UEA has an admirable commitment to ensuring student presence on all of the major decision making forums of the University, including Council, Senate, and Boards of School.*

*As well as their presence being symbolically important, students bring useful insights and contribute to sound outcomes.*

*Many of the committees, groups and panels that students sit on require the strictest confidentiality as they often deal with very sensitive information. Students' professionalism in this regard has never been questioned and we strongly adhere to the Nolan Seven Principles of Public Life, particularly those relating to objectivity and integrity.*

*Sabbatical officers have sat on interview and selection panels for the Vice Chancellor as well as for other staff.*

*One of the sabbatical officers directly line manages the Chief Executive of the Students' Union, as well as conducting their appraisal in addition to sitting on the Finance Committee of the Students' Union. They have experience in making HR and Finance decisions and understand the seriousness and importance of maintaining professionalism here.*

*Two of the Union officers are full and voting members of Council but have never sat on Finance Group or Remuneration Committee.*

### **Benefits**

*Putting a student representative on these bodies would demonstrate that the University recognises students as crucial stakeholders who should be involved in all decision making and would be roundly welcomed by the student body.*

*As representatives of key stakeholders, the student officers can bring valuable insight onto the bodies, and contribute to a robust and effective committee whilst simultaneously allaying any conspiratorial or unhelpful gossip around financial affairs or remuneration of senior staff.*

ET's reservations are as follows:

SORC: Members of ET would not have expected student representatives to be involved in the consideration of salaries and terms and conditions on a routine basis. Discussions on these matters are highly personalised and it is a reasonable expectation that the group considering these issues will be tightly drawn and it is helpful that members are not personally stakeholders in the University and will assess ET's performance solely against approved Council strategies, rather than any other agenda.

The general precedent in the University is that students are not involved in issues of salary, grading or promotion, and insofar as Council has reserved matters for which student colleagues withdraw they are primarily about names or identifiable members of staff.

Finance Group: The origins of the Finance Group arose from a previous review of Council effectiveness which resulted in a reduction in the size of Council from just over 30 members to its current 17. Previously there had been a Planning and Resources Committee (PRC) (a traditional Finance and General Purposes Committee (F&GP)) which was a subset of the various constituents of Council, with the exception of student representatives. PRC considered any issues which had resource implications and as a consequence issues were seen as well "baked" before coming to full Council. Members of Council who were not members of PRC were reluctant to re-open discussions which it had already taken place and they felt distanced from key decisions. With a smaller Council it was far more practical for there to be effective debate in that forum and PRC was abandoned.

There was a concern in Council, however, that the Treasurer would lose an opportunity to get "under the skin" of the budget and day to day financial performance, and that some issues where there might be a conflict for the student body (fees and rents) could helpfully be dealt with in a body separate from Council. With this in mind the Finance Group was set up comprising the Vice-Chancellor, Treasurer, Deputy Chair, Registrar & Secretary and Finance Director. Latterly a third independent member of Council has been added, in part with an eye to the inevitable turnover of members as they near the end of the normal six-year (exceptionally nine-year) full term of office.

The size of the Finance Group means that meetings are conversational in with no sense of asking too many detailed questions. That it very much how the group was planned to operate, mainly as a forum for the Treasurer to monitor, probe and challenge financial issues. If it is accepted that that is the purpose of the Finance Group, then it is not evident that additional members of Council should be added. Council might have to consider whether other constituencies should also be represented (that could also be true for SORC) and the nature and dynamics of the committee will drift towards an F&GP. The body will become more formal and less discursive and members of Council who are not members of Finance Group will again feel removed from some of the key decisions. If there are some matters which are being dealt with at Finance Group that Council would prefer to debate itself, that would simply be a matter of changing the terms of reference.