Guide to understanding the Governance Effectiveness Review

Governance, as with much of Higher Education, has its own terminology and acronyms. This document aims to support members of the community to read the Governance Effectiveness Review. The review was undertaken by Halpin, an independent Higher Education specialist consulting firm.

The review assessed the effectiveness of Council, effectiveness of Senate and the effectiveness of the relationship between the two bodies. This summary focuses on these key matters and should not be seen as a substitute for reading the whole review which provides additional context and information which informed their assessments.

Key terms and bodies referenced

Chair: The Chair provides leadership and direction to the committee and facilitates the committee's business.

Charter: Charter outlines the institution's primary charitable purpose and objectives.

Committee or Sub-Committee: A body within the governance structure that is established to look at a specific remit. They are an opportunity to discuss issues, share information, make decisions and recommendations to a superior body. Minutes from the meeting are kept as a part of the official institutional record of key decision and discussions. Committees report to parent body and the highest body, Council.

Constitutional role: The role set out in the University's constitution- Charter and Statutes. This is the founding document for the University it sets out why we exist and what we are required to do to fulfil our charitable objectives.

Council: The senior governing body of the University of Sussex. It has overarching responsibility for all University activity and its conduct. Council delegates its powers and responsibilities to individuals and bodies within the institution to ensure the effective operation of the University and delivery of its charitable objectives. Council is chaired by an independent member who is not employed by the University. Academic and Professional Services staff and student representatives sit on Council as equal members of the Board.

CUC Code 2020: The Higher Education code of governance developed by the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) to support governing bodies deliver the highest standards of governance across institutions.

Elected Senator: A member of Senate who has been elected by their peers within their School or Professional Services to sit on Senate. They are elected to Senate for a term of two years.

Ex-officio: Members whose place on a committee is prescribed by their role and their role aligns with the remit and responsibilities of the Committee.

Independent member: Individuals who are entirely independent Trustees of the University and not paid for their role. Individuals are vetted and interviewed before being formally appointed by Council. Individuals are recruited on the basis of their skills and experience which support the business of the University.

Member: Individuals who sit on a committee or Board. No matter what category of member individuals are, all members have the same duties to support the business of the committee.

Office for Students: The Higher Education Sector's regulator. All Higher Education Providers are required to comply with a set of conditions prescribed by the Office for Students. Prescribing to these conditions allows us to be a registered provider which means our students can access student loans, we can charge student fees, we can receive additional funding to support our business amongst other things.

Public Interest governance principles: Academic Freedom, Academic Governance, Accountability, Fit and Proper, Freedom of Speech, Governing Body, Risk Management, Student engagement and Value for Money

Regulations: Regulations are internal documents which provide further information about officers of the University and set out processes and procedures used to govern the University.

Schedule of delegation: Schedule of delegation sets out how the powers of Council (Supreme Body) are delegated to committees, Boards and individuals within the University**.**

Secretary: The Committee Secretary is not just a note-taker, they are a key individual who supports the Chair to manage the business of the Committee, ensure decisions are made and communicated to key stakeholders.

Senate: The senior academic body within the University's governance structure, responsible for academic standards and the direction and regulation of academic matters. Senate is chaired by the Vice Chancellor.

Senator: A member of Senate

Seven Principles of Public Life: Selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership

Statutes: Statutes provide more detailed information on the powers and responsibilities of Council, Senate and staffing procedures.

Student Representative: Individuals who are a current student or a Student Officer within the Students Union.

Vice Chancellor: The Vice Chancellor is responsible for the day-to-day management and decision making of the University. They are the chief academic and administrative officer of the University.

Summary of findings

Council

Halpin identified that the governance exercised by the Council to be good and effective. They identified that if Council implemented their proposals, on top of existing good practice, Council could achieve its objective of becoming an exemplar. Halpin believed it already displays some exemplary characteristics.

Senate

Halpin identified that cultural and organisational change was required for Senate to reclaims its rightful and constitutional place as an academic authority of the University. At present, levels of

trust between ex-officio and elected members were low. Halpin make recommendations to reform and relaunch Senate as an academic space.

Relationship between Council and Senate

Halpin outlined that the relationship between Council and Senate is not where it needs to be. Institutional culture and atmosphere both need to improve, and Council and Senate need to ensure they are both fulfilling their constitutional role to enable them to improve their relationship together.