

Executive Summary of Business for Senate



Title	Composition of Senate from 1 August 2009
Author	Professor P Layzell (T) 01273 678546 (E) P.J.Layzell@sussex.ac.uk
Type	Report for approval
Date	June 2009
Strategic context	Senate, at its last meeting, considered a paper on the principles for the future composition of Senate and agreed to set up a small Working Group to consider options and to make a recommendation to Senate.
Summary	This paper sets out a proposal from the Working Group for the future composition of Senate from 1 August 2009.
Risk analysis	Regulation 2 of the <i>Regulations for the election of members of Senate</i> specifies that should a School cease to exist then the members of that School on Senate shall cease to exist. It is important therefore that a composition is agreed to ensure that members of Senate are duly elected from 1 August 2009.
Consultation	The proposals have been circulated for consultation to all staff and students. The Working Group have taken into account the comments received in the formulation of this paper.
Effective date of introduction	1 August 2009
Recommendation	Senate is asked to APPROVE the proposals

Background

1. Senate, at its last meeting, considered a set of principles for the composition of Senate from 1 August 2009 following the establishment of the new organisational structures. The main principles proposed were the inclusion of the new Heads of Schools and a change to the relative balance and numbers between *ex officio* and elected members by reducing the number of elected members to be approximately in balance with the number of *ex officio* members. In putting forward the principles, account had been taken of an analysis of the composition of the Senate (or equivalent body) of institutions in the 1994 Group of Universities, it being noted that Sussex had one of the largest Senates of the group (50% bigger than the median) and had a much higher proportion of elected members than those who are members on account of the academic management role they hold.
2. In discussion at the last meeting, Senate considered that a majority of elected members over the number of *ex officio* members was an important principle to retain in the future composition of Senate in order that Senate commanded the full confidence of the academic community. Although it was difficult to cite evidence of any causal relationship between the size of Senate and its effectiveness, several members agreed that the current body was too large, particularly so once the complement of the new Heads of School was included from August. It was noted that in comparison with peer universities, the Sussex Senate was now significantly out of line with the median size at other institutions and it also noted that, on average, about one-third of the membership did not attend Senate meetings. Several members of Senate, both students and academic staff, spoke in favour of retaining the existing proportion of student representation on the new Senate.
3. Senate agreed to set up a small Working Group within the Governance Workstrand for the Schools restructuring project with a membership drawn from Senate and with terms of reference focussing on the immediate necessary task of developing proposals and recommending a model for Senate's composition at August 2009 in light of the Senate discussion.

Working Group

4. The Vice-Chancellor, as Chair of Senate, approved the following as members of the Working Group:

Professor P Layzell, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Chair) (*ex officio* member of Senate);
Professor J Bacon, Dean of the School of Life Sciences (*ex officio* member of Senate);
Dr A Chitty, Lecturer in Philosophy (elected member of Senate);
Dr P Harvey, Registrar and Secretary (Secretary to Senate);
Mr J Maris, Computer Manager, Life Sciences (UNITE observer on Senate);
Dr H Prance, Reader in Electronic Engineering (elected member of Senate);
Ms L Tazzioli, President of the Students' Union (*ex officio* member of Senate).

Ms A Pater and Dr J Knapton (members of the Governance Workstrand) and Mr A Soutter (Lead, Governance Workstrand and Secretary to the Group) were in attendance.

The Terms of Reference of the Group were:

"to consider the composition of Senate from 1 August 2009 taking into account the new organisational structures and the composition of the Senate of peer institutions in the sector".

5. The Working Group has met three times. At the first meeting it set the parameters for the review and agreed the following:
 - (a) that, in principle, the current composition of Senate was too large and should be reduced to be more effective;
 - (b) that the revised composition of Senate should have a majority of elected members;
 - (c) that the proportion of students should remain roughly as at present;
 - (d) to review literature on best practice in the sector;
 - (e) to seek to provide a summary of the role of elected members on Senate and their relationship to their constituency;
 - (f) that the Governance Workstrand should formulate a draft proposal on the composition of Senate with a view to agreeing a model for consultation in the University prior to the meeting of Senate.
6. At the second meeting, the Working Group received a paper from the Governance Workstrand which set out:
 - a number of possible models for the composition of Senate;
 - a proposal for student representation;
 - a suggested role for members;
 - a change to the timing of the meetings;
 - the reporting relationship from Departments to Schools to Senate.
7. At the third meeting, the Working Group considered the responses received as a result of the consultation exercise. The Working Group would like to thank all those who submitted comments. In total, 22 individuals responded. Of these, many were generally positive about the proposals and indeed 3 responded simply to say that they supported the model proposed. Others welcomed the methodology and the rationale behind the report but had minor suggestions about how the model could, in their view, be improved. Some of these were simple presentational points while others suggested amendments or additions to the composition. A small minority of respondents were unhappy with the proposals, in whole or in part, which they felt diluted the democratic basis of Senate. The Working Group's report now presented to Senate takes account of the comments received.

Recommended model for the composition of Senate

8. The results of the consultation exercise indicated overall support for the following model recommended by the Working Group.

Ex officio members

The Working Group **recommends** that the *ex officio* membership from 1 August 2009 comprise:

Vice-Chancellor (Chair)
Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Pro-Vice-Chancellors
Heads of Schools and Dean of BSMS
Librarian
Director of IT Services
Total = 20

* see paragraph 13

President of the Students' Union
Education Officer of the Students' Union
Total=2

Elected academic members

The discussion at the last meeting of Senate indicated that the number of elected members should be in the majority over the number of *ex officio* members so that the overall composition of Senate reflected its status as the principal academic body of the University comprised primarily of elected members of the academic community.

The Working Group considered three possible models for the composition of Senate which reflected (a) members elected from each School with an equal number from each School (b) members elected from each School by proportional representation by size of School and (c) members elected from a group of cognate disciplines.

The Working Group considered that the role of the elected members would depend on their constituency for election and there were two possible (and different) roles for elected members:

- (i) elected members drawn from each School. Such members being informed by discussions at School meetings and responsible to their electorate.
- (ii) elected members drawn from the three cognate groups of Schools, i.e. Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences and Sciences (including BSMS). Such members would speak on behalf of the academic community in its broadest form (i.e. a group of academic faculty engaged with the academic business of the University).

The Working Group concluded that elected representation from each School was the most appropriate model and would be acceptable to Senate. The Working Group agreed that an important principle for the elected membership was that, whatever the size of a new School (in terms of staffing), all Schools should be considered of equal importance and should have an equal voice on Senate. To address the view of Senate that there should be a higher number of elected members than *ex officio* members combined with the desire to have an overall reduction in the size of Senate, the Working Group **recommends** that each School should have two elected members making a total of 26 elected members.

The Working Group noted that Ordinance VII currently makes provision for at least half the number of those elected holding senior positions (with senior being defined as Professor, Reader or Senior Lecturer). The Working Group considered whether this rule should be maintained, for example by stipulating that there should be one senior and one junior member from each School or whether the rule should be discontinued and there should simply be two members from each School. The Group considered that the maintenance of the rule would maintain a balance of experienced

and less experienced voices on Senate but also considered whether the definition of senior/junior was correct or indeed whether it might be further refined so as to define senior as only the Professoriate (which is a model adopted elsewhere in the sector). The Group concluded, however, that on balance there were insufficient grounds for limiting faculty members' electoral choices through such a rule and accordingly it **recommends** that the senior/junior rule should be abolished. The Group considered that, if the abolition of the rule were approved, both senior and junior members of faculty would be encouraged to put their names forward for election.

The Working Group noted that a member of Senate had pointed out that the abolition of this rule might be problematic when filling Committees which required persons of seniority and might therefore be restrictive. The Working Group **recommends** that this be reviewed in a year's time to examine if there had been unintended consequences of the abolition of the rule.

Elected Student Members

The current provision for School Student Elected Members (i.e. in addition to the *ex officio* members of the President and Education Officer of the Students' Union) is for seven members (i.e. one from each School and one from SPRU). With thirteen Schools, it was clear to the Working Group that it would not be possible to seek student elected members from each School as this would result in a minimum of 15 student members and change significantly the existing proportion of students on Senate. Bearing in mind the desire to maintain student elected members at roughly the same proportion it is proposed that there should be five student elected members, in addition to the *ex officio* members, as follows:

Currently on Senate, there is no provision for postgraduate elected members and the process for the election of student members may or may not result in a postgraduate student being a member of Senate. The Working Group **recommends** therefore that such representation be strengthened in future by including the Taught Postgraduate student member on Teaching and Learning Committee and one of the Research Postgraduate Student members on Doctoral School Committee on Senate. In this way, these student elected members attending Senate will have knowledge of discussions at the principal Senate Committees dealing with the Teaching and Learning and Research agendas.

For undergraduate student elected members, the Working Group **recommends** that one student be elected from each of the group of Schools comprising the Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences, and Science (including BSMS). The undergraduate student elected members, drawn from School Student Representatives, will have experience as members of School Committees and will bring experience of their own School to Senate but also would be asked to consult with the other School Student Representatives (either by a short meeting or by email) in their group of Schools so as to bring to Senate a collective (but not detailed) overview of their group of Schools.

This model will therefore enable student elected members from across the groups of undergraduate disciplines and enables guaranteed elected members from both taught and research postgraduate student community which has not been the case hitherto.

Elected Professional Services members

The Working Group noted that the composition of Council included provision for representation from the Professional Services while the composition of Senate did

not and it was agreed that it was important to have elected members from the Professional Services on Senate as many of the decisions made at Senate equally impact on the whole community – academic and the Professional Services. The Working Group therefore **recommends** that two members be elected from the Professional Services (i.e. any member of staff in the University who is not a member of academic faculty).

The Working Group noted that a comment had been received that the number of Professional Services staff might be too few to represent their constituency adequately. The Working Group agreed to keep the number at two for the time being but that this should be reviewed in a year's time.

In summary, the Working Group **recommends** the following model for the composition of Senate from 1 August 2009:

Ex officio members

Vice-Chancellor (Chair)
Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Pro-Vice-Chancellors
Heads of School and Dean of BSMS
Librarian
Director of IT Services
Total = 20

Elected academic members

Two members from each School
Total = 26

Elected Professional Services members

Two members
Total = 2

Student ex officio members

President of the Students' Union
Education Officer of the Students' Union
Total = 2

Student elected members

One undergraduate from each of Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences and Science (including BSMS)
The Postgraduate student member on Teaching and Learning Committee
One Postgraduate student member from Doctoral School Committee
Total = 5

Observers

One from each of the three trade unions

OVERALL TOTAL = 55 (current total 73) plus 3 observers.

9. The Working Group is not proposing any change to the electorate as currently set out in the Regulations but agreed that, as part of the proposed review at the end of the academic year 2009/10, the inclusion of other categories of staff such as research staff and other teaching staff such as Teaching Fellows should be considered. The Working Group noted a request that there should be special provision for BSMS students as it was not clear that BSMS or science students could adequately represent each other's constituency. The Working Group agreed that it was important that the medical school was seen as an integral part of the University and agreed that a student representative working across both the Sciences and BSMS would help that integration. The Working Group agreed that this should be reviewed in a year's time.

The Working Group also noted a proposal to include additional side-rules to restrict the electorate in multi-department schools to departments other than department of the Head of School. The Working Group agreed that there should not be restrictions on the electorate and re-confirmed its support for the simple model of two elected members from each school; although it agreed that it was desirable to have wide representation from multi-department schools and that the Head of School should be proactive in encouraging individuals from different departments to put themselves forward for election.

Term of Office

10. Regulation 1 of the *Regulation for the election of members of Senate* makes provision for the tenure of elected academic members to be for periods of three years. The Working Group considered that with two elected members from each school, a tenure of three years would result in one year in every three when the membership did not refresh and the Working Group considered that it was important for an effective Senate for part of its membership to refresh every year. The Working Group therefore **recommends** that the period of office be two years and that, to ensure turnover of membership, for the first election, one member be elected for one year and one member be elected for two years from each School.

Other models considered

11. In addition to the above model, the Group also considered that members might be elected by proportional representation (based on staff numbers in Schools) with members allocated on a formula basis by a census of staff numbers at a given time (Senate has currently a quinquennial census) but agreed not to pursue this model as it was unnecessarily complex and inflexible. It also undermines the fundamental principle of the restructuring process that the prime organisational unit of the University will be the School and that all Schools should be regarded as equal. The Working Group did not pursue this option further.
12. The Working Group also considered whether the elected membership should be drawn entirely from groups of Schools or whether a combination of School elected and group elected representatives might be appropriate. Elected members drawn entirely from a group of disciplines would form a general body of academic faculty speaking on behalf of the academic community. Their role would be to express their own views about any issues affecting the University that are brought to Senate but, in addition, bringing to Senate experience of their own School. The Working Group considered that, whereas representation from a School enabled the elected representatives to have a forum for discussion at School level, there was not a similar foci for such discussions within a group of disciplines and depending on the

outcome of the election not all Schools would have a member on Senate. The Working Group did not pursue this option further.

CCE and SLI

13. The Working Group received several comments as a result of the consultation exercise requesting that both CCE and SLI have a representative on Senate. The Working Group noted that the Governance workstrand of the new Schools restructuring project was currently considering the position of both CCE and SLI within the new Schools structure and decisions on its proposals would be taken shortly by VCEG and reported to the Programme Management Board in July. The Working Group recommends that the issue of representation on Senate from CCE and SLI be explored as part of the one year review of the composition recommended at para 19 below, and in the light of the decisions to be taken regarding the place of CCE and SLI in the new Schools' structure.

Observers

14. The Working Group noted that there was provision in the Regulations for two types of Observers – one representative from each of the trades unions (speaking but not voting), one representative from each of the Library and IT Services (non speaking, non voting). The Working Group **recommends** that the observers from each of the trades unions continue to attend meetings of Senate. The Group proposes, however, that the proposal to include two members elected from the Professional Services obviated the need for maintaining observer status for members from the Library or IT Services. These units would be represented by their Directors. The Working Group therefore **recommends** that observers from each of the trades unions continue to attend meetings of Senate under the current arrangements.

Role of members

15. The Working Group considered that the role of the members was extremely important in ensuring that Senate worked as an efficient body with both *ex officio* and elected members sharing collective responsibility as members of Senate for the transaction of business for the common good of the University. Although members elected from a School would bring to Senate a viewpoint informed by discussions at Department and School meetings, they should exercise their responsibilities in the interests of the University as a whole rather than as a representative of any constituency.

The Working Group **recommends** that the role of all Senators (*ex officio* and elected) be as follows:

- to be aware of institutional objectives and issues;
- to speak freely on policies and proposals presented to Senate;
- to contribute to making and taking responsibility for Senate's decisions, taking into account of the needs and priorities of the whole University;
- to attend all meetings of Senate unless absence is due to illness, urgent personal reasons or teaching commitments;
- to be willing to be appointed as members of Senate committees or sub-groups;

Elected members should have the following additional roles:

- to attend School meetings;
- to comment on policies and proposals informed by discussions at School meetings and other meetings within the School as appropriate;
- in advance of Senate meetings, to read the papers and prepare for the business to be transacted, to consult their constituents for views on the scheduled business (this is facilitated by Senate papers being openly accessible to all members of staff and students via Sussex Direct). Consultation may take place by email or even by a parliamentary style 'surgery' as preferred;
- during Senate meetings, to contribute as necessary and to report the views of any constituents;
- after Senate meetings, to feedback to their constituents within the provisions of the Standing Orders of Senate bearing in mind that the only official report of the meeting is the Minutes of the meeting.

Timing of meetings

16. The Working Group considered that the timing of Senate meetings was not optimum for attendance at meetings with the current meetings taking place during core teaching hours which disadvantaged academic and student members alike. The Working Group was cognisant of the fact that Senate had been previously moved to Wednesday morning from Wednesday afternoon following representations that Wednesday afternoon meetings were difficult for Senators with child care responsibilities. The Working Group agreed that it was preferable to have meetings timetabled outside of core teaching hours and that meetings could be timed to start and end at a time which would be suitable for the majority.

The Working Group **recommends** that meetings of Senate be moved to Wednesday afternoons in week 10 of the Autumn and Spring terms (because of Examination Board meetings in the Summer term, the meeting in the Summer term will continue to be held on the Friday Morning of Week 10) commencing at 1:30 pm and ending by 4pm.

Reporting relationship between Schools and Senate

17. The Working Group **recommends** that the School Meeting is reconfirmed as the appropriate body for consultation to take place in the School and that it continue as an *advisory* meeting to the Head of School. The official reporting line from the School Meeting is via the Head of School which may be by written or oral report if *specific* issues are to be raised from the School. Otherwise, the Head of School and the elected members from that School may contribute to any of the substantive items on the Senate agenda from the perspective of their School. It was agreed that, if it were possible, School Meetings might be timed in order to discuss the draft Senate Agenda.

Timetable

18. Regulation 2 of the *Regulations for the election of members of Senate* states that should any School cease to exist, then the membership from that School will cease to exist on Senate. Therefore the current membership will cease on 1 August 2009.

The Working Group considered that to have an election immediately post 1 August would be problematic with many colleagues being on annual leave. The Working Group therefore **recommends** that the call for nomination of new members (who should be required to provide a manifesto) should take place in early September with a view to the elections taking place in Week 0 immediately prior to the start of the Autumn term. The Working Group considered that, should an event arise before the new Senate was in place which required discussion, the current Senate could be convened to act in an advisory capacity to the Vice-Chancellor as Chair of Senate.

Review

19. The Working Group **recommends** that the overall composition be reviewed after one year's operation.

Professor P Layzell
Professor J Bacon
Dr A Chitty
Dr P Harvey
Mr J Maris
Dr H Prance
Ms L Tazzioli

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12 June 2009