



University of Sussex

## CHAIR OF COUNCIL

### ROLE DESCRIPTION and PERSON SPECIFICATION

## 1. About the University

- 1.1 The University of Sussex was the first of the new wave of universities founded in the 1960s, receiving its Royal Charter in 1961. Over the following years, the University has become a leading research and teaching institution, ranked in the top 15 universities in the UK, and the top 100 in the world<sup>1</sup>. We currently have over 13,000 students, 2,200 staff and turnover of £180 million a year. Sussex has developed a reputation for innovation and inspiration, attracting leading thinkers and researchers.
- 1.2 The University has counted three Nobel Prize winners, 14 Fellows of the Royal Society, six Fellows of the British Academy and a winner of the prestigious Crafoord Prize among its faculty. Sussex has academic links with every continent, over 3000 international students from 120 countries and teaching staff from 40 nations which gives the University a strongly international feel. Sussex is the only university campus in England that is entirely surrounded by a national park, set on the edge of the South Downs. The lively, friendly seaside city of Brighton & Hove is just a few minutes away, with its great leisure facilities and its rich cultural life.

## 2. Strategic Plan

- 2.1 The University published its Strategic Plan *[Making the Future](#)*<sup>2</sup> in March 2009 which sets out the strategic direction of the University over the period 2009-2015. The plan identifies eight goals:
- Inspirational teaching and learning; (see 3 below)
  - Innovative research and scholarship; (see 4 below)
  - Enhancing the student experience;
  - Engaging with business and the community;
  - Developing excellence in our staff;
  - Working with the best;
  - Managing effectively;
  - Operating sustainably.
- 2.2 The 2009 Strategic Plan sought to grow University activity by 20% by 2015, and set specific targets for each goal. Progress against this plan has been so rapid (e.g. the student population has grown by 2000 students since 2010) that the University is currently developing a new strategic plan for the period to 2018, to present for Council's approval in 2013.
- 2.3 The current Strategic Plan defines the mission of the University as follows:
- “to deliver innovative and inspiring research, scholarship, teaching and learning that leads to positive change in individuals, organisations and societies”*
- 2.4 In pursuing the mission, the University – staff and students- share the following values:
- *Excellence*, through a commitment to delivering the highest standards of research, scholarship, teaching and learning in order to provide a dynamic and stimulating environment for students and staff and to maximise their social and economic contribution to societies;

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<sup>1</sup> Times Higher Education *World University Rankings* 2011-2012

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/strategicplan/>

- *Interdisciplinarity*, through tackling multidimensional problems, while maintaining a strong, broadly based set of disciplines across the arts, social sciences and sciences;
- *Engagement*, by actively seeking and considering an external perspective on all our activities, including an international perspective;
- *Challenge*, in which all members of the Sussex community are prepared creatively to explore the status quo and alternatives, within the context of excellence and professionalism, and seek to make positive change;
- *Partnership*, by developing long-lasting relationships that bring together complementary skills and resources to create mutual benefit and to deliver impact that cannot be achieved by either partner alone;
- *Professionalism*, by upholding freedom of academic enquiry, undertaking activities in a responsible manner using robust, transparent processes and maintaining professional ethical standards in the conduct of all academic and support activities;
- *Equality and diversity*, by developing entry routes based on educational merit and valuing the strength derived from contributions to our mission by people from different backgrounds, traditions, cultures and perspective;
- *Service*, in which members of the Sussex community use their skills and talents to contribute to local, national and international communities.

### **3. Teaching and Learning at Sussex**

- 3.1 Maintaining and growing our international student body is an important element of the University's strategic plan, as is the delivery of courses which are informed by current research, are attractive to students from all socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds and which deliver skills for life. While retaining our broad academic base, we will expand academic areas of demand in order to drive institutional growth.
- 3.2 The University recognises the need to continuously strengthen the Sussex student experience. Our National Student Survey results are generally good, particularly in relation to teaching quality, but there is room for improvement in the areas of academic assessment and feedback, and student employability indicators. The University intends to grasp the opportunity offered by a major re-organisation of the teaching year and credit framework in 2012/13, to help address these challenges.
- 3.6 The range of Sussex courses can be seen via the [undergraduate](#) and [postgraduate](#) prospectuses<sup>3</sup>.

### **4. Research at Sussex**

- 4.1 One of the University's main priorities is to develop the international renown of Sussex as a research-intensive centre of critical thinking, learning and discovery, where excellence and innovation flourish and staff are encouraged to make a lasting contribution to scholarship, knowledge and society.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.sussex.ac.uk/ugstudy](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/ugstudy) and [www.sussex.ac.uk/pgstudy](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/pgstudy)

- 4.2 Sussex submitted the work of over 500 staff to the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), nearly 90 per cent of those eligible, with over 480 presenting work that is internationally recognised or better. Taking account of all staff who could have been submitted, Sussex is at 16<sup>th</sup> place overall - a measure of the research intensity of the institution. Eighteen subjects at Sussex rank in the top 20 in the UK, across the arts, sciences and social sciences, with the American Studies department rated number 1 in the UK, Politics rated at number 2 and Art History at number 3.
- 4.3 The priorities set out by the research strategy are: to build strength in recognised centres of research excellence; to demonstrate research of international standing in all subject areas; to develop an infrastructure and culture that supports research quality; and to work to exchange knowledge and ideas nationally and internationally. The most significant challenge and goal of the research strategy will be to increase the research income base of the University – looking to double our income by 2015.
- 4.4 A number of cross-disciplinary research themes have been developed, building on existing Sussex research strengths, encompassing a number of different disciplines, and address important, real-world issues of international significance. The themes will help the University focus future investment and development for research, as well as identifying some of the areas of international research excellence. The research themes, which have been identified in the new strategic plan, are:
- Security and Social Justice
  - Culture and heritage
  - Digital technologies
  - Global transformations
  - Mind and brain
  - Environment and health
- 4.5 More information about [Sussex research](#)<sup>4</sup> is available on the University's website.

## **5. Leadership role of the Chair of Council**

- 5.1 The Chair is responsible for the leadership and effectiveness of the Council in the delivery of its business. As Chair of its meetings, he/she should promote its efficient operation, ensuring that its members work together effectively, take collective responsibility, and have confidence in the way that its business is conducted. The Chair will receive feedback on his/her performance via the annual effectiveness review process for members of Council.
- 5.2 The Chair should take particular care that the Council observes the principles for the conduct of public life and that the committees which play a central role in the proper conduct of the Council's business report back appropriately. The Chair is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the Council operates effectively, discusses those issues which it needs to discuss and dispatches its responsibilities in a business-like way. This involves the exercise of careful judgement about good procedural practice, to avoid any apparent or actual conflict of interest in the conduct of Council business, in general and in particular where this relates to the Chair's role.
- 5.3 Through leadership of the Council, the Chair plays a key role in the business of the University, but should not be drawn into the day-to-day executive management which is the responsibility of the Vice-Chancellor. The Chair maintains a constructive

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/about/research>

working relationship with the Vice-Chancellor, the Registrar and Secretary and secretary to Council. The roles of Chair of Council and Vice-Chancellor are formally distinct. The relationship is both mutually supportive and incorporates the checks and balances imposed by the different roles each has within the University's constitution.

## **6. Role of the Vice-Chancellor in relation to the Council**

6.1 The Vice-Chancellor is responsible for the executive management of the University and its day-to-day direction.

6.2 The responsibilities of the Vice-Chancellor in relation to Council business include:

- The good management of the University including, where appropriate, consultation with the staff and the Senate, and bringing to Council proposals for development or change affecting the institution's future development, where it is necessary and/or appropriate to do so;
- implementing the decisions of the Council or ensuring that they are implemented through the relevant part of the institution's management structure;
- fulfilling the duty, as the officer designated by the Council under the terms of the Funding Council's Financial Memorandum ('the designated officer'), to alert the Council if any actions or policy under consideration would be incompatible with the terms of the Financial Memorandum. If the Council nevertheless decides to proceed, then the Vice-Chancellor has a duty to inform either the Chief Executive of the Funding Council or other appropriate officer.

## **7. Key responsibilities of the Chair of Council**

The key responsibilities are to:

7.1 chair the meetings of Council, in accordance with the provisions laid down by the [Charter, Statutes and Regulations](#)<sup>5</sup> and to ensure that it contributes effectively to the development of the University;

7.2 be involved in recruiting new members of Council and ensuring that members work together effectively, take collective responsibility, and have confidence in the way that business is conducted and the application of Council's [Code of Conduct](#)<sup>6</sup>;

7.3 ensure the quality of support arrangements to enable Council members (particularly independent members) to contribute effectively, including an effective process for regular review of members' performance, and the promotion of training opportunities;

7.4 act in accordance with delegated authority granted by the Council;

7.5 chair, contribute as a member, or attend, Committees as specified in [The Organisation of the University](#) document or other meetings. In particular, as Chair of Remuneration Committee, to oversee the remuneration of the members of the Vice-Chancellor's Executive Group, and to conduct the annual appraisal of the Vice-Chancellor. Also, as Chair of Nominations Committee, to appoint or recommend candidates for membership of Committees Council and Court.

7.6 in the *ex-officio* capacity of Senior Pro-Chancellor, to perform the functions of the Chancellor in the absence of the Chancellor (except for the conferring of degrees);

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/oqs/governance/govdocuments>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/oqs/committees/council>

- 7.7 attend graduation ceremonies of the University and other University events;
- 7.8 act as an ambassador for the University, and represent the University at external meetings, e.g. HEFCE Annual Meeting for Chairs of Governing Bodies, or the Committee of University Chairs;
- 7.9 attend training and induction as required to carry out the role.

## **8. The role, composition, powers and functions of Council**

### **8.1 The general role, composition and powers of Council in Charter and Statute**

[Statute V](#) sets out the general powers of Council as follows:

1. The Council shall be responsible for the revenue and property of the University, its conduct and activities and shall exercise all the University's powers, which shall include without limitation the powers and functions set out in the Regulations.
2. The Council shall be entitled to delegate all or any of its functions, powers and duties to any person or body, subject to Statute V.3.
3. The Council shall prescribe in Regulations the matters for which it shall not delegate responsibility, including:
  - (1) appointing the Vice-Chancellor;
  - (2) the variation, amendment or revocation of the Charter or Statutes;
  - (3) the approval of the University's annual audited accounts;
  - (4) appointing the Auditors of the University.
4. The Council may review, amend, refer back, control or disallow any act of Senate required under the Statutes or the Regulations to be reported to Council, and to give directions thereon to Senate; provided that any such act of Senate which is amended by Council shall be referred again to Senate for consideration and report before such act (so amended) is put into effect.

### **8.2 The specific powers and functions of Council** are set out in [Regulation 5 \(24\)](#):

- (a) To institute, after report from the Senate, Professorships, Readerships, Lectureships and other academic offices and to appoint persons to fill the same.
- (b) To make provision for research within the University.
- (c) To establish, after report from Senate, such Schools of Study or units of academic organisation as may be deemed necessary from time to time; to prescribe their constitution and functions, and to modify, disestablish or revise the same.
- (d) To appoint a Librarian who shall be responsible to the Vice-Chancellor for the administration of the Library.
- (e) To confer, after report from Senate, the title of Emeritus Professor or Honorary Professor or any other Honorary Title.
- (f) To fix all University fees but in the case of academic fees charged to students only after consultation with Senate.

- (g) In consultation with Senate, to institute, subject to any conditions made by the Founders, Fellowships, Scholarships, Studentships, Exhibitions and Prizes.
- (h) To make provision for the welfare of the students.
- (i) To determine the complement of the Professional Services staff, to prescribe their conditions of employment and to appoint persons to, and to remove persons from, employment as members of the Professional Services staff.
- (j) To govern, manage and regulate the finances, accounts, investments, property, business and all affairs whatsoever of the University.
- (k) To invest any moneys belonging to the University, including any unapplied income, in such stock, funds, shares or securities as it shall from time to time think fit, whether authorised by the general law for the investment of trust moneys or not, and whether within or outside the United Kingdom, or in the purchase of freehold or leasehold hereditaments in the United Kingdom, including rents, with the like power of varying such investments from time to time.
- (l) To sell, buy, exchange, lease, and accept leases of real and personal property on behalf of the University.
- (m) To provide the buildings, premises, furniture and apparatus, and other means needed for carrying on the work of the University.
- (n) To borrow money from time to time on behalf of the University and for that or any other purpose, if Council think fit, to mortgage or charge all or part of the property of the University, whether real or personal, and to give such other security as Council shall think fit.
- (o) To enter into, vary, carry out or cancel contracts on behalf of the University.
- (p) To make provision for schemes of superannuation, pensions or retirement benefits for members of the staff of the University, or their dependants.
- (q) To recognise any association as representing the interests of former students of the University and to withdraw or vary such recognition.

### **8.3 The Vice-Chairs of Council**

A Vice-Chair (Finance) and a Vice-Chair (Performance) are appointed from among Council's independent members. Chairing the Finance & Investments Committee and the Performance Committee respectively, the Vice-Chairs hold office for three years and are eligible for reappointment.

### **9. Person specification**

The person appointed as Chair of Council will command personal and professional respect, have personal integrity and be willing to devote the necessary time to carry out the role (see 10.3 and Appendix). The Chair will have a strong personal commitment to higher education, and the values, aims and objectives of the University.

#### *Personal attributes*

The Chair will have:

- excellent interpersonal and communication skills, including the ability to establish good working relationships, the ability to listen as well as express personal views

and to influence and interact with all members of Council including independent members, students, and academic and professional services staff;

- diplomacy and sensitivity;
- demonstrable authority and personal adherence to high standards of conduct;
- the ability to deal with conflict in a constructive manner;
- skills of networking, influencing and advocacy;
- political awareness;
- the ability to represent the University to a range of stakeholders including ministers, civil servants, students, staff, the local community and potential funders and donors;
- the ability to absorb large quantities of complex information quickly;
- collaborative skills and the ability to work as a member of a team;
- an interest in the education and welfare of students and a desire to help them to thrive and succeed.

#### *Knowledge and experience*

- professional expertise and knowledge in matters relevant to the successful operation of a large, diverse organisation, e.g. commercial acumen, risk management, performance management;
- experience of chairing meetings and bringing matters to a satisfactory conclusion;
- awareness of the modern regulatory environment, so that legitimate scrutiny and accountability are respected and effectively discharged.

## **10. General information**

### **10.1 Term of office and tenure of membership** (from [Regulation 5](#)):

(14) Elected or appointed members shall be elected or appointed for periods of three years and shall be eligible for re-election or re-appointment for three periods up to a maximum of nine years service. The maximum period of tenure shall apply whether the member is an Ordinary member or an Officer.

(17) The Chair shall hold office for three years and shall be eligible for re-appointment.

(18) On the resignation, removal, non-reappointment or at the end of the maximum tenure of nine years, the Chair's membership of Council shall cease.

**10.2 Method of appointment:** under the provisions of the University Statutes, the Chair is appointed by Council from amongst its independent members. The normal process is for Nominations Committee of Council to make a recommendation to Council following consultation with members.

**10.3 Time Commitment:** this will average around 2 - 2.5 full time equivalent days per month. The University needs to be able to contact the Chair at all times, and the role includes both daytime and evening engagements. The attached Appendix sets out the full current set of commitments to Council, its sub-committees and other events.

**10.4 Remuneration:** the position is not remunerated but reasonable travel, subsistence and ancillary expenses will be reimbursed.

OMR  
September 2012

## Appendix: commitment of the Chair of Council to formal meetings and other events

### 1. Council meetings

Council currently meets four times a year, following this pattern:

<b>September</b> (mid)	A one day Strategy meeting (incorporating a short formal business meeting) to review progress and the key business of the year ahead.
<b>November</b> (late)	A one day business meeting at which Council exercises an important formal role in relation to signing-off annual compliance returns to HEFCE).
<b>April</b> (late)	A two day 'away day' meeting, focused on reviewing performance.
<b>June</b> (late)	A one day business meeting

The Chair may wish to arrange additional informal discussion meetings.

### 2. Council sub-committees in which the Chair is involved

#### 2.1 Chairs' Group

Key role: to co-ordinate the business to be transacted at Council Committees (i.e. Audit, Finance & Investment and Performance Committees) and see they are reflected in Council business via discussion and complementary papers.

Meetings: 3 per year, in advance of Council's November, April and June meetings.

#### 2.2 Nominations Committee

Key Role: to recommend and appoint members of Council Committees and Court.

Meetings: 3 per year, in advance of Council's November, April and June meetings.

#### 2.3 Remuneration Committee

Key Role: to determine the principles and strategy for the reward of all staff; to determine the framework for the remuneration of all senior staff and to oversee the remuneration of the members of the Vice-Chancellor's Executive Group.

Meetings: 3 per year, in advance of Council's November, April and June meetings.

### 3. Other University committees in which the Chair is involved

#### 3.1 Honorary Degrees Committee

Key Role: To make recommendations to Senate and Council for the award of honorary degrees, Gold Medals for Philanthropy and Fellowships of the University.

Meetings: 3 per year, mid-way in the University's Autumn, Spring and Summer terms

### 4. Other events that the Chair is expected / may be invited to attend

#### 4.1 Graduation Ceremonies and Commemoration events

**Winter Graduation** – currently two days of events in late January (although a move to having these events during December is under active consideration).

**Summer Graduation** – currently four full days of events in mid-July, including a Commemoration Dinner on one evening.

The Chair is expected to attend some, but not necessarily all of these events.

#### 4.2 Other public University-organised events and celebrations

The Chair will be invited with good notice to these (typically evening) events.