



UNIVERSITY
OF SUSSEX

COUNCIL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW

SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK FROM STRATEGY SESSION HELD WITH ANDY SHENSTONE OF ADVANCEHE ON 27 NOVEMBER 2019

THIS DOCUMENT CONSIDERED BY COUNCIL AT ITS MEETING HELD ON 24 MARCH 2020

(PAPER C/250/19)

In 2019 AdvanceHE was commissioned to undertake a Council Effectiveness Review. All current Council members were invited to take part in an on-line questionnaire, developed by AdvanceHE. 20 members of Council took part in the questionnaire.

The results of the Review, in the format of the presentation given by Andy Shenstone of AdvanceHE to Council at a briefing held on 27 November 2019, are attached at the end of this summary.

Following the AdvanceHE presentation, Council members were invited to comment on the question: "Given the results of the survey, what area (or areas) do you think the governing body should give priority to as regards further development?"

The following points were raised, with responses considered and agreed by Council at its meeting held on 24 March 2020.

1. Need to focus on induction, training and support for staff and student members of Council as this can be a difficult role, particularly for the two student members of Council whose tenures are for a one year period only.

Response: Noted, a revised programme of review and support for all Council members has been planned and additional thought will be given to the induction for staff and student members to ensure that they feel supported to carry out their roles. Additionally exit meetings are being offered to student members after their one year tenure to capture any learnings from the way in which we support those members to contribute in the most effective way during their year on Council.

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2. Keep size of Council under review, no thought to decrease or increase size at present, but acknowledgement that generally smaller boards are considered to be more effective.

Response: Noted but agreed no further action to be taken at this time. This will be kept under review.

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3. Need to try and increase visibility of Council and its role with the University community.

Response: Noted, this is a work in progress with a report from the Chair of Council being shared with the University community after each meeting to highlight key issues and decisions that have been made. Additionally the Chair of Council has visited each of the

Schools and several other business areas as part of her ongoing engagement with the University. Care is taken to ensure that presentations at Council Strategy and Briefing events include non-Council senior staff members so that Council members can hear from a range of voices. Council members are invited to attend a range of events during the year including Graduation, the Sussex Awards, and the Sussex Annual Forum. Further consideration will continue to be given to ways in which visibility of the role of Council can be increased.

4. Need to raise Council's understanding of the four University level strategies and in particular relating to academic governance.

Response: Noted, consideration will be given to the way in which Council agendas and presentations are shaped to ensure that they reflect and align with the four University level strategies.

5. Council will need to remain briefed on the Office for Students Regulatory arrangements and how assurance will be provided to Council on this on an ongoing basis.

Response: Agreed, a presentation has been planned during 2019/20 to increase Council's awareness of this.

6. The importance of maintaining diversity of Council, not just in terms of protected characteristics but also diversity of thought and experience.

Response: Agreed, and this will inform the decisions and recommendation to Council regarding new independent members being recruited during this current recruitment round.

7. Consideration should be given to the way in which Council has oversight of performance of Schools and Professional Services Divisions.

Response: Noted, this will be considered as part of the information that Council receives on other financial and KPI performance related papers.

8. Keep under review the format, length and summaries for papers to ensure that their purpose is explicitly clear, and length is manageable

Response: Noted, this is kept under close consideration to see if improvements can be made to the quality and relevance of papers received by Council. This should include further focus on effective, short executive summaries as part of the cover papers.

9. Agreed that there is no need to set up an additional online discussion forum for use by Council members in-between meetings.

Response: Noted and agreed.

10. Agreed that Council members would welcome the opportunity for external benchmarking, to learn where possible from other Universities.

Response: Noted and agreed will be reflected when commissioning the Council Effectiveness Review due to take place in 2022. Benchmarking is included where practicable in reports to Council i.e. within the internal audit reports provided by KPMG
