

Governance in practice – ‘Investing in Chemistry’

In the mid-’90s it became clear that if the University wanted to remain a leading centre for Chemistry teaching and research, it would have to invest in buildings and facilities that were fit for purpose. In late 1999 the award-winning Synthetic Chemistry Building was completed. The refurbishment of the research laboratories in the South Block followed in 2002.

The opportunity to continue the transformation of Chemistry by tackling the shortcomings of the West Block arose in 2004 when the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) announced a national fund to help establish Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs). The School of Chemistry bid for money from this source to offset the cost of refurbishing the inside of the West Block for teaching use. At the same time, the Bursar’s team assessed the additional cost of restoring the outside of the building.

A business case was put to the University’s Sifting Group (which evaluates all proposals for capital expenditure), proposing that if the bid to

HEFCE for help with the cost of the internal works succeeded, it would make sense for the University to proceed with the external works too. The Sifting Group gave in-principle approval, so the Dean of Science and the Bursar were free to take the proposal to the University Planning and Resources Committee (UPARC). UPARC consented, and the project was referred to University Council for consideration as part of the overall capital programme. Council also gave its consent.

The key to success was the fact that the Department had a long-term plan and had won widespread support for it. Thus when the CETL opportunity arose, Chemistry was ready to seize it, put it in a wider context and move forward with a more ambitious but thoroughly coherent project. The Department had even worked out well in advance how to minimise disruption to teaching during the works. The builders started on site in February 2006.

When work on the West Block is complete in January 2007, virtually the whole of Chemistry will have been refurbished and Bristol’s reputation for excellence in this field of teaching and research will be safeguarded.



‘How can I influence the way the University is run?’

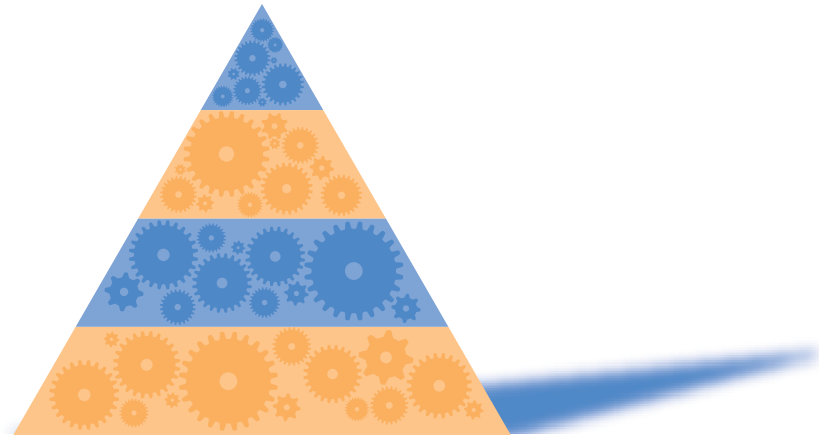
Council and Senate both include members of staff from various categories, usually elected for renewable three-year terms. Whenever a vacancy arises, all staff in the appropriate category are notified and invited to stand for election.

All staff members who are elected to Council and Senate automatically become members of Court at the same time. Court also includes a further 15 members of the non-academic staff who are elected for renewable three-year terms. Again, all staff are notified when these vacancies arise.

Staff are also invited to apply to serve on various committees of Council and Senate, such as Campaigns, Equality and Diversity, Estates, Ethics of Research, and Health and Safety. To encourage as wide a pool as possible of suitable staff to apply for vacancies on these committees, the University is proposing (at the time of writing) to create a web page listing all the relevant positions and the date they are likely to fall vacant. You would be able to express an interest online in particular positions. The University Secretary’s Office would subsequently contact you and advise you how to proceed. A Search Committee would be established to consider the vacancies and decide who should be asked to fill them. Staff will be told once this system is up and running and details will be posted on the Secretary’s Office web site: www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/Secretary/

How the University is run: a guide to governance

If you need all or part of this publication in an alternative format,
eg in Braille, in larger print or on tape, please call 928 7776.



How the University is run: a guide to governance

It's not easy for newcomers (or older hands, for that matter) to work out how the University is run – the organisation is wonderfully diverse and inevitably complex. This short guide to University governance should help. You can find out more at www.bristol.ac.uk/governance/

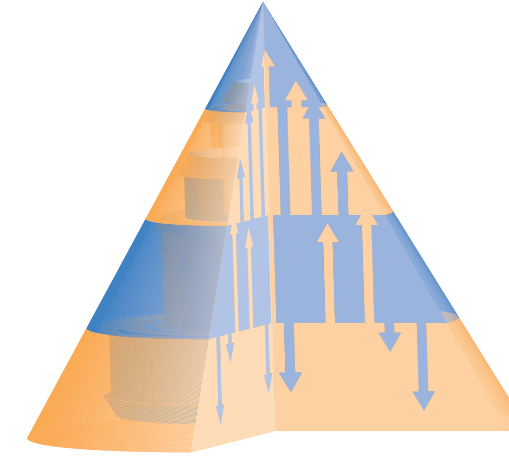
Council is the University's 32-strong governing body. It normally meets six times a year and is responsible for policy, financial affairs and a wide range of other business. It includes members of the academic and support staff, students and lay people. The lay members are in a majority and most of them are elected by Court (see below) or appointed by external bodies for renewable three-year terms. The chair is elected from the lay membership. The minutes of Council meetings are available to members of the University via the above web address, which also gives access to information about the specialist committees that advise Council on finance, estates, student affairs and other matters.

Senate is the University's principal academic body, responsible to Council for teaching and learning, examinations, research and enterprise. It comprises more than 100 members of the academic staff, including deans and heads of department, together with student representatives, and is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor. Senate normally meets

five times a year. The minutes of its meetings are available to members of the University via the above web address, which also gives access to information about the committees that advise Senate on research, education and so forth.

Court has about 550 members. They include members of Council and Senate, representatives of local and national bodies, benefactors of the University, staff, students, local MPs and members of Convocation (see below). Court usually meets once a year to consider the annual accounts and the strategy and management of the University. It has the right to comment on the affairs of the University, advise Council on any matter and invite Council to review a decision. The Chancellor presides at meetings of Court.

Convocation has many thousands of members, including all of the University's graduates and honorary graduates. It manages its affairs through a Standing Committee and holds an annual general meeting. Convocation elects 100 members of Court and one member of Council.



It has the right to give an opinion on any matter relating to the University and may communicate directly with Council, Senate and Court.

Faculties. The University has about 50 academic departments, grouped into six faculties (Arts, Engineering, Medical and Veterinary Sciences, Medicine and Dentistry, Science and Social Sciences and Law). Each faculty is headed by a dean. He or she chairs the faculty board (which manages the faculty's affairs) and advises Senate and other bodies on academic policy. Deans normally serve for four years. There is more information at www.bristol.ac.uk/faculties/.

Within this overall set-up there are a number of especially prominent figures. The **Chancellor**, who is elected by Court on the nomination of Council for an initial period of ten years, is the ceremonial head of the University, presides over meetings of Court, confers degrees and is a source of advice. There are currently three **Pro Chancellors**, elected by Court on the nomination of Council for an initial three-year

term, who carry out certain of the Chancellor's functions in her absence. The **Vice-Chancellor** is the academic leader and chief executive of the University, appointed by Council after consultation with Senate. Supporting him are four **Pro Vice-Chancellors**, appointed by Council after consultation with Senate for an initial four-year term. Each Pro Vice-Chancellor has responsibility for particular faculties and policy areas. Working alongside the Pro Vice-Chancellors and, like them, reporting direct to the Vice-Chancellor is the **Registrar**. He is responsible for all the University's professional and support services, which are delivered through 13 divisions (see www.bristol.ac.uk/supportservices/).

The University is a huge operation with over 5,400 staff, 17,000 students, 370 buildings and a revenue budget of around £300 million. Running it is bound to be complicated. Overleaf is one example of how the decision-making system has worked in practice, and an indication of how you can influence the way the University is run.