Academic Board & Sub-Committees Elections

A Staff Guide 2018-19

Further Information

Any inquiries regarding the Guide to Elections should be addressed to Governance & Legal Services:

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1   Contents

2   Introduction

This booklet provides information and guidance on the electoral system employed by Leeds Beckett University to fill vacant positions on Academic Board and its Sub-Committees.

The electoral system employed is the Electoral Reform Society 1997 (ERS97) Single Transferable Voting system (STV).

What is STV?

STV uses preferential voting in multi-member constituencies. Each voter gets one vote, which can transfer from their first-preference to their second-preference and so on, as necessary. To be elected, candidates require a known 'quota', or share of the votes, determined by the size of the electorate and the number of positions to be filled.

If your preferred candidate has either no chance of being elected, or has enough votes already, your vote is transferred to another candidate in accordance with your instructions. STV thereby ensures that very few votes are wasted.
Further information on the STV system can be found on the website of the Electoral Reform Society: http://www.electoral-reform.org.uk

3   Returning Officer

The University's Returning Officer oversees all elections to the Academic Board and its Sub-Committees. The current Returning Officer is:

- **Caroline Thomas, University Secretary**

The Returning Officer may appoint a Deputy Returning Officer to act on their behalf and conduct any elections.

The current Deputy Returning Officer is:

- **Kate Harvey, Executive Officer**

4   Cycle of Elections

Elections for vacant positions (where members are coming to the end of their term of office) on the Academic Board and its Sub-Committees are normally held each year.

In order to avoid delays in successful candidates taking up their positions, elections will normally be held in the second half of the academic year between February and April. This allows the Academic Board committees to have newly elected members in place for the start of a new academic year.

5   Constituencies

5.1   Types of Member

The Academic Board and its Sub-Committees are comprised of four types of member:

Ex-Officio Member

These are members appointed by virtue of the position they hold in the University. This includes the Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellors, Pro Vice Chancellors and members drawn from Senior Management and Deans of School.

Elected Member

The Constituencies of elected members vary depending on who they represent e.g. Academic Staff members are elected by academic staff, Research Staff members are elected by staff such as Readers, Research Assistants and Research Fellows, and Professional Service Staff members are appointed by all professional services staff.

Nominated Member

These are members nominated from specific committees or boards within the University. Nominated members are chosen because of the specific expertise they bring to the work of the

committee. These include representatives from the Students' Union.

Co-opted Member　　　co-options may be used to incorporate a member with specific expertise of value to the committee and/or to provide a balanced membership with respect to underrepresented groups within the University.

5.2　Main Constituencies drawn from elected academic and professional services staff

The main constituencies are:

(a)　**Academic staff**: all members of staff employed on academic conditions of service who are not on senior management contracts. This category includes heads of subject, principal lecturers, senior lecturers, lecturers, teaching fellows and other miscellaneous academic contracts.

(b)　**Professional Services staff**: includes all staff on support staff conditions of service; excludes staff on senior management contracts.

(c)　**Professors**: includes all professors in the University but excludes those on senior management contracts.

(d)　**Research staff**: includes readers, research assistants, research fellows, senior research fellows, principal research fellows, research officers. Excludes professors and teaching fellows.

(e)　**Course Directors**: includes all those members of academic staff appointed as Course Directors.

(f)　**Student representatives**: includes Students' Union sabbatical officers and members of the Students Union Council.

A member of staff's classification is as determined by the iTRENT system, based on HESA classifications. In the event of discrepancies, the University Secretary will be the final arbiter.

A report off the iTrent system should be requested as close as possible to the nomination stage to ensure that the constituency lists are as up-to-date as possible.

A definitive list of committee members and their periods of office is maintained by Governance & Legal Services who can be contacted by email on governance@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

5.3   Terms of Office

The standard term of office for all elected positions is a term of three years. Terms of office normally begin on the 01 September and finish on 31 August.

No individual may serve for more than three successive terms of three years each in the same elected position (i.e. a total of nine years).

5.4   Electoral Principles

The following principles apply to all staff elections:

(a)   To ensure maximum staff participation, calls for nominations, ballots, profiles of candidates and the role of the bodies concerned should be publicised as widely as practicable and relevant and in a timely fashion, principally via email and the University website.

(b)   General staff elections that are contested are decided by secret ballot.

(c)   Results are determined by the 'single transferable voting' system.

(d)   Each election is administered by a 'returning officer' or 'deputy returning officer' nominated by the University Secretary. All rulings of the University Secretary or nominee on the conduct of an election are final.

6   Nomination

6.1   Process

Nomination is the process by which candidates for election to a vacancy on the Academic Board or its Sub-Committees are identified.

6.2   Administration

The Returning Officer or Deputy Returning Officer initiates the nomination process by issuing nomination papers to the relevant members of staff.

The nomination paper should include:

(a)   A title stating the nature of the election and the type of vacancies.

(b)   The vacancies available.

(c)   A statement that all incumbents are (where appropriate) eligible for re-election.

(d)   The membership and terms of reference of the Committees where there are vacancies. An indication as to where this information can be accessed is sufficient.

(e)   A schedule for the election, giving the opening and closure of nominations and polls and the date of the declaration.

(f)   Space for nominees, proposers and seconders to be identified and for the date and time of receipt of the nomination to be recorded.

(g)   A clear statement of where, and by when, the nomination should be returned.

Nomination papers will be dispatched on, or before, the date established for the opening of the nomination period.

The nominee, proposer and seconder should ensure their eligibility within the constituency stated. Academic Board has also determined that nominees, proposers and seconders should work at least 0.5 FTE.

When nominations are received, the date of receipt will be clearly marked on the nomination paper and logged, by the Returning Officer or Deputy Returning Officer. This is particularly important in order to determine whether a valid nomination has been made within the specified time. No nominations should be accepted after the end of the nomination period.

Where no nominations have been received during the designated period, the Returning Officer or Deputy Returning Officer may extend the nomination period. To do this all members of the electorate must be contacted again. It is not necessary to re-issue nomination papers. A communication advising of the extended period with adequate notice.

Calls for nominations should all be issued by email to relevant groups of staff. However, in recognition that some colleagues do not have regular access to email, calls for nominations will also be issued to them, where necessary, by means of hard copy memos distributed via the internal mail. It should be made clear that nominations forms can be made available in alternative formats, to ensure that they are accessible for all members of staff, on request from Governance & Legal Services.

Identities of nominees must not be divulged by the election officers to other potential nominees or members of the relevant staff constituency ahead of the ballot stage (or declaration of the result where only one nomination is received).

6.3 Information about Candidates

Where a ballot is to be held all candidates should be asked to submit a personal profile ('election statement') of up to 200 words based on a pro-forma which includes their job title, department, location and names of their proposer and seconder. These should be published unedited on the University website as soon as the ballot process starts. Information on how to access the election statements should be provided on the ballot papers.

Any election statement submitted after the deadline for publication should not be published, to prevent a candidate from benefiting from seeing other candidates' already-published profiles.

Neither the election officer nor any other member of staff involved in the process should give any candidate or their proposer / seconder any specific advice on the

content of an election statement. Only general guidance is permitted. Election statements should be checked to ensure that their contents are not defamatory or contrary to any University policy, though ultimate responsibility for content lies with the author.

6.4 Periods for Nominating

The minimum period for nomination of candidates is five working days, although the recommended period is ten working days in order to allow enough time to gain an acceptable level of nominations.

Where the number of candidates nominated for a committee matches the number of vacancies on that committee then these candidates are deemed to have been elected unopposed. It is not necessary to hold a ballot.

Where the number of candidates nominated for a committee exceeds the number of vacancies on that committee then a ballot must be held.

6.5 Election Timetables

For any election a simple clear timetable should be established well in advance, which sets out the dates for the beginnings and ends of the nomination and ballot stages in particular.

Election period: Both the nomination and ballot stages should last two weeks or ten working days each. The timetable should be agreed by the University Secretary. Once this has happened they may extend but not shorten any deadline in response to changing circumstances and only if this does not significantly disadvantage any elector or candidate. All communications with voters and candidates should state clearly any relevant deadlines. These should be adhered to, in line with the exceptions set out above.

Communication with candidates: the election officer should inform candidates promptly of any developments during or after the ballot stage that affect them (e.g. the withdrawal of another candidate).

Withdrawal of nominations: candidates who withdraw their nomination before the production of the ballot papers are issued, should not be announced or included on

the ballots.

If a candidate withdraws their nomination after the ballots have been issued, the votes cast for the candidate should be discounted, including where any second or third preferences have been marked on the ballot slip. No new ballot should be issued.

If possible all Academic Board & Sub-Committee elections should take place at the same point in the year, between 01 January and 31 March, to increase awareness and participation, facilitate induction and allow Academic Board to approve the membership profiles well in advance of the next academic year.

7 Polling

7.1 Polling Notices

The polling notice is the information provided by the Returning Officer or Deputy Returning Officer to the electorate. The polling notice should include:

(a)   A title stating the nature of the election and the type of vacancy(s).
(b)   The vacancies that are to be filled.
(c)   Instructions to voters on how to vote.
(d)   The times and dates of the opening and closure of polls.
(e)   Election statements of the candidates or a link to the Governance & Legal Services web-pages where the Election statements are published

Election Statements should be no longer than two hundred words and should address the candidate's suitability for the vacancy.

Polling notices must either accompany ballot papers or a web link should be included in the ballot papers so that the electorate can access them. Where members of the electorate do not have web access polling notices must always be sent to them.

7.2 Ballots

Where ballots are to be held for vacancies on more than one Committee, more than one election may be held concurrently. It is advisable to do this to save time and resources. Separate electronic ballots should be prepared for each election.

Electronic ballots must include the following:

(a)   A title stating the nature of the election and the type of vacancy(s).
(b)   The vacancies that are to be filled.
(c)   Instructions to voters on how to vote
(d)   Details of the candidates standing for election.
(e)   A box against each candidate's name where the voters preferences can be recorded
(f)   Information on how to access the candidates' election statements.

7.3   Electronic Voting

Elections should be conducted by means of an electronic ballot using the OpaVote online ballot software (https://www.opavote.com/).

Ballot papers can be made available in alternative formats, to ensure that they are accessible for all members of staff. If you require a different format please contact Governance & Legal Services.

When the poll closes it is the responsibility of the Returning Officer or Deputy Returning Officer to conduct the count and prepare the declaration.

8   Counting

Counting of votes in an STV election should be done by using the **STV- Software** package.

8   Declaration

When all vacancies are filled by the process above, the count is concluded and the declaration made.

The declaration should include:

(a)   A title stating the nature of the election and the type of vacancy(s).
(b)   All candidates that stood for election.

(c)   All votes recorded and transferred according to the rounds undertaken.

(d)   The total vote, total valid votes, the number of vacancies, the Droop Quota.

Results should also be reported to the committees onto which the candidates have been elected, as well as their 'parent' committees.

9   Record Keeping and reporting

Tracking: up-to-date clear records of the whole electoral process are essential. A simple record of nominations and votes cast should be kept in a single document that can be readily accessed at any stage and eventually become an appendix to a retrospective report.

Report: once the election process is complete, a short report on outcomes should be submitted to the University Secretary. Apart from being retrospective this should record lessons to be learnt for the future and include any firm proposals for reforms to the system.

Disputes: any dispute arising from the conduct of elections should be referred to the Returning Officer, the University Secretary, who shall be the final arbiter.