Academic Board & Sub-Committees Elections

A Staff Guide 2023-24

1   Contact Details

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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) for elections of more than 2 candidates. Where there are two candidates only the University will adopt First Past the Post (FPTP).

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.

What is FPTP?

FPTP is a preferred method of voting where there are two candidates and helps determine a clear winner, where STV is more likely to lead to a draw.

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:

- **Michaela Boryslawskyj, University Registrar and 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, Governance Services Manager**

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. 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

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

Elected

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

These are members nominated from specific committees or boards or constituencies within

the University. Nominated members are chosen because of the specific expertise they bring to the work of the committee. These also includes representatives from the Students' Union.

Co-opted
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: Emeritus and Visiting Professors and those on senior management contracts. Directors of Research are not classed as senior management and therefore are eligible within this constituency.

(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 BAME Ambassadors of the Students' Union. Research Students are

recognised as a distinct constituency on the Research Committees, as registered within the Graduate School.

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

A report from 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 University Secretary's Office 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. Terms of office for the sabbatical officers of the Students' Union will be 01 July to 30 June in line with the Students' Union terms of office.

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). Individuals will be subject to a one term hiatus (3 years) following three successive terms before being eligible for re-election.

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 a call for nominations to the relevant members of staff.

Members whose term of office is due to end will be contacted directly prior to the opening of the elections to confirm that their term of office is due to expire and confirm they are eligible for re-election.

The call for nominations should include:

(a)   A title stating the nature of the election and the type of vacancies.
(b)   The vacancies available.
(c)   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.
(d)   A schedule for the election, giving the opening and closure of nominations and polls and the date of the declaration.
(e)   Information on how to nominate, propose and second. Before acceptance of any nomination, proposers and seconders will be identified within the constituency. For Research students, the proposer and seconder may include academic staff. A clear statement of where, and by when, the nomination should be returned.

Nomination papers should be dispatched on, or before, the date established for the

opening of the nomination period. Eligible constituencies will be emailed prior to the opening of the nomination period using constituency lists obtained from HR) .

When nominations are received, the Deputy Returning Officer shall check the nominee, proposer and seconder against the constituency lists and a return email shall be sent to confirmation if the nomination had been accepted. 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 unless in exceptional circumstances

When 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 will be sufficient.

Calls for nominations should 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 communication by team leaders, supervisors or any colleague at manager level within the 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 Nomination Period

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 a minimum of two weeks or ten working days each. 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 distribution of the ballot email 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.

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 University Secretary's Office 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 will be distributed by email with a web link to the voting web service so that the electorate can access 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 voter's 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 the University Secretary's Office

When the poll closes it is the responsibility of the Returning Officer or Deputy Returning Officer to review the conduct the count as collated by Opavote and prepare the declaration.

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.