

Constitution of Committees

(S.28 Sept.67/3; Statute 17; S.70/461; S.71/134; S.73/22;
S.80/113; S.83/100; S.83/142; S.86/102; S.87/129;
advice given by the Steering Committee, 19 June 1987);
CO.97/33; S.97/47; CO.97/62; CO.2002/04; S.2002/44)

GENERAL

- (a) Principles of the committee structure of the university
- (i) As instruments of decisions committees should be as small as possible and should not be required to decide matters which are of no great importance and could be decided by an individual.
 - (ii) Two kinds of committees have to be distinguished: the committee which is part of the representative process in which views and sentiments are brought together and in which the best supported view or sentiment prevails, and those committees in which judgement should be based on an objective assessment of facts, figures, claims, desires. The first kind of committee is ideally reasonably large, the second preferably very small.
 - (iii) No appointed members of committees of the Senate other than disciplinary committees (including the Standing Academic Committee) and the faculties and syndicates of colleges (in so far as they are committees of the Senate) may serve on the committees for more than two consecutive terms of office and a full term of office must elapse before they again become eligible for appointment.
 - (iv) The membership of committees should be so prescribed that they do not unnecessarily call on the time of persons with heavy administrative or external commitments, such as heads of departments. However, it will normally be advantageous to have senior persons among the membership of committees in which experienced judgement, separated from departmental interest, is required.
 - (v) Where the constitution of a committee provides for the appointment by the Senate of persons representing the wide academic groups of the four faculties, the departments etc., from whom the representatives may be chosen will be grouped as follows:
 - Arts and Social Sciences:* Educational Research; English and Creative Writing; Languages and Cultures; History; Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts; Law; Linguistics and English Language; Politics, Philosophy and Religion; Sociology;
 - Health and Medicine:* Biomedical and Life Sciences; Health Research; Lancaster Medical School; Centre for Training and Development;
 - Management:* Accounting and Finance; Economics; Entrepreneurship, Strategy and Innovation; Lancaster Leadership Centre; Leadership and Management; Management Development Division; Management Science; Marketing; Organisation, Work and Technology;

Science and Technology: Chemistry; Computing and Communications; Engineering; InfoLab21; Lancaster Environment Centre; Mathematics and Statistics; Natural Sciences; Physics; Psychology.

- (vi) It saves time if the terms of reference of committees are broadly drawn and between them cover all the main areas of university discussion, so that matters arising unexpectedly can be routed to a standing committee instead of waiting for the creation of a committee *ad hoc*.
 - (vii) All committees should have stated times at which their continued necessity is considered and their membership reviewed.⁽¹⁾
 - (viii) The pro-chancellor is *ex officio* a member of all committees of the Council except the Audit Committee and the vice-chancellor is *ex officio* a member of all committees of the Council and of the Senate except committees with the power to exclude students and the Audit Committee.
 - (ix) Members of the academic staff who are appointed members of committees and go on to leave should, in good time, inform secretaries of the bodies that appointed them whether they will attend meetings of the committee during their leave or would wish the appointing body to provide a temporary or permanent replacement.
 - (x) A person whose contract with the university expires before the end of the period which attaches to a nomination for service on a committee should not be eligible for nomination, except in those cases in which the person has an expertise that is not found elsewhere in the university but is essential to the appointment.
 - (xi) Elected members of committees can be drawn, as appropriate, from a wide range of academic staff and from lay members of Council and Court.
- (b) Procedure
- (i) The chairperson and the deputy chairperson are designated by the Senate in some instances; in others they are to be elected by the committee.
 - (ii) The chairperson of each committee has the power to ask members to withdraw when their presence at a discussion is not appropriate.
 - (iii) Unless a specific proposal to operate otherwise is made to the Senate, years of membership of senior members of committees commence on 1 August.
 - (iv) The Senate reviews the committee structure of the university annually in May or June; the vice-chancellor makes proposals after discussing the structure with a sub-committee of the Steering Committee.

⁽¹⁾ The Senate reviews its committees annually.

- (v) The Senate approves the calendar of meetings for committees for the following academic year annually in the summer term.
- (vi) Each non-statutory committee of the Senate is given the power to co-opt lay members, such co-optation being for one year at a time from 1 August and being reported to the Senate in the previous term when it reviews the membership of the committee for the following year.
- (vii) Committees that contain student members should not meet out of term unless a meeting then is unavoidable. A student member who is required to incur expenses to attend a meeting that has been called out of term may ask to be reimbursed by the university.

(c) Conduct of meetings

- (i) Each university body at the beginning of the academic year lists the tasks to which it intends to give priority and the means by which these will be accomplished.
- (ii) Each body reviews at the end of the year whether the objectives set at the outset have been achieved or have reasonably been varied; and whether it has fulfilled its terms of reference, including by means of questionnaires and other user feedback.
- (iii) Members of committees expect to participate fully in the work of the committees on which they sit.
- (iv) New chairpersons of committees and deputy chairpersons are as appropriate inducted and trained prior to taking up their appointments.
- (v) Each meeting has clearly stated times for the beginning and the end.
- (vi) Secretaries of committees do not normally accept late papers, especially if no notice has been given of the nature of the business by the stated deadline.
- (vii) Papers are not to be tabled.
- (viii) Minutes include, where appropriate, a record of dissenting views, material for audit trails, and reasons why decisions were reached. A clear statement of action to be taken, and by whom, is to be given.
- (ix) Chairpersons and secretaries of committees fulfil their separate responsibilities *inter alia* by considering not only vertical reporting lines but also horizontal information flows.
- (x) Chairpersons and secretaries of committees have the above points drawn to their attention.
- (xi) Gender-free language should be used and adherence to this policy noted, as a minimum, in appropriate footnotes.
- (xii) Meetings are cancelled if there is insufficient business to justify them.

(d) Working parties; guidelines

(i) The Council, the Senate, or relevant standing committee shall agree the broad outline of the remit and membership of working groups, and delegate to named parties:

- the definition of the exact terms of reference;
- the composition of the group, including the co-option of persons brought in for their expertise, and persons in attendance;
- the arrangements for the servicing of the group and of writing a report;
- the possible implications of any changes in membership during the period of the group's meetings;
- the *modus operandi*, including the timescale for a report and recommendations.

A progress report on these matters shall be made to the next meeting of the Council, the Senate, or relevant standing committee, but in the meanwhile the working group shall be able to commence its work.

(ii) If a working group requires expert advice, it may invite a person or persons, depending on the nature of the issues posed, to become co-opted members (but without a vote), or to be in attendance, or to make themselves available for consultation. Such arrangements shall be made at the outset of the working group's activity and confirmed in writing.

(iii) The level of confidentiality of the material for each working group, the discussions at it, and the consequent report and recommendations, shall be agreed at the outset of the working group's activity and form part of the progress report back to the Council (or relevant working group).

Depending on the agreed level of confidentiality, student members who are bound by undertakings may not be able to consult the student body but only offer their personal advice.

(iv) Wherever possible, working groups should consider the implications of any proposed changes in policy or practice for students, staff or other groups, and either carry out a process of consultation, or recommend as part of their report what process should be undertaken at as early a stage as possible of the decision-making process.

The requirement for confidentiality, where appropriate, shall be considered in the context of the need for consultation about decisions that might materially affect students, staff or other groups.

(v) If the terms of reference of a working group involve (or could involve) sensitive negotiating issues, care should be taken not to involve as secretary of the group any person who is substantively involved with the negotiations.