

The Chairs of the Councils of the Schools

The proposed enhancement of the roles of the Chairs of Councils seems sensible since it will help provide a structure in which more decisions can be delegated effectively from the centre of the University to the Schools.

However, the terms of reference of the Chairs needs to be carefully considered in the context of the likely willingness of suitable senior academics to take on the role. The commitment of a day a week, with powerful back-up via an office of each School, staffed with outstanding officers, is likely to provide a scenario which will be acceptable to a suitable senior academic for (say) three years. The need to spend 50% time and incidentally to serve on both Council and General Board (see below) is not. The sort of senior officer willing to give up so much time is less likely to be in the ranks of international scholars (since international scholars will not be likely to be willing to give up so much of their research time). As a result the Chair is less likely to be someone with an international reputation and therefore will be less well placed to lead the work of the School and to receive the support and respect of all Heads of Department.

Pro-Vice-Chancellors and Chairs of Schools

Taken together, the proposals under the above heads will result in up to eleven senior officers, up to five working two-thirds time and the other six working half time. This is overkill. How will these 'barons' deploy their time? Will their role be consistent with a democratic University or will they see themselves more in the nature of Directors managing their academic colleagues? If the latter, diminution of the sense of 'ownership' of the academic community by its members will be counter-productive and damaging. Academics who currently work beyond the call of duties in an academic 'partnership' will see themselves as cogs in a central managed wheel, and may increasingly adopt a 9-5 attitude.

The influence of the Colleges in the policy and direction of the University will also be diminished by the proposed increase in numbers and powers of central Pro-Vice Chancellors and Chairmen of Councils. These senior figures will be unlikely to have strong links with Colleges. The time that they deploy on University matters will leave them little opportunity for involvement in College, whereas currently pro-Vice-Chancellors and Chairmen frequently have strong College links and responsibilities.

The University Council

The representation of the Colleges is to be reduced from four Heads of House in a Council of 20 (including the V.C.) to three Heads of House in a Council of 26. This is bound to diminish the influence of the Colleges in the development of University policy and strategy. The reduction of Regent House membership from 12 to 6 will also diminish the