

Dear Dr Meade,

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL - CONSULTATION

Following the invitation to participate in the consultation issued through the 'Cambridge Society' I comment as follows.

The University projects itself well as an English University and as an international one. Post devolution it does less well portraying its role as a UK institution. I have met a number of excellent potential candidates in Scotland who have never even thought about applying to Cambridge. When the subject is broached, these candidates do not feel it is for them, or that they would feel comfortable there or that the University and colleges are even interested in applications from Scotland. The majority who do 'Highers' usually feel that their qualification will not be accepted. or understood.

Having some representation on the Council from Scotland and Northern Ireland might heighten the awareness of the University of this talent pool, and help it to project itself as a desirable and welcoming institution to candidates from Scotland. Provincial alumni may have a role here.

In the journal of the Cambridge Society and CAM, coverage of alumni naturally tends to focus on munificent benefactions. However the majority of graduates will never be in this category, but have time and talents that they would be happy to deploy for the University. Having representation on the University Council might bring this potential resource into focus and lead to its greater exploitation.

There are potential benefits to external representation of alumni and I commend the idea for further thought.

Yours sincerely,

Anthony Andrew
Downing 1972

From Mr A. Bowen

Dear Registrar,

I write in response to the Consultation Paper on the University's governance, published in the Reporter for 6 February. I have selected a few paragraphs for comment.

7.3 Why so few as three? Why not say no fewer than three and no more than five (or some other figure)? I doubt the wisdom of a body appointed by Council nominating them. Could we not invite bodies such as Oxford University and London University to nominate (no doubt with consultation)?

7.4 I would not commit myself to any such arrangement on paper. It might work out so, but Council itself should be master of such things.

7.5 Why?

9. Regent House badly needs Standing Orders for control of its proceedings. Perhaps Council should have some too, in case. May I recommend that you ask to see those of Cambridgeshire County Council rather than invert? I have served on two County Councils for a combined total of 13 years by now, and Standing Orders work well.

Yrs. sincerely,

Anthony Bowen

From Dr S. Bragg

Dear Tim,

University Government

When I was at Brunel, the Vice-Chancellor's official title was Vice-Chancellor and Principal: and the Charter also created the office of Vice-Principal. The first Vice-Principal had held that post as a permanent appointment – a continuation of his position in the preceding College of Advanced Technology. After he retired, however, the position was filled by a succession of senior professors who each held the office for two years. They were appointed by the University Council on the recommendation of the Vice-Chancellor, after informal consultation with senior academics.

After some years of proceeding in this way the academic body included a number of senior professors who had spent a period as Vice-Principal: as a result of that experience they understood how the university administration worked and were sympathetic to its problems. I suggest that this increase of understanding between academics and administrators could develop in Cambridge when the academic body contained more people who had served a term as pro-vice-chancellor: and that this is one of the reasons for advocating an increase in their number.

With best wishes

Yours ever

Stephen

From Sir Adrian Cadbury

12th February 2002

Sir Alec Broers
Vice-Chancellor
University of Cambridge
The Old Schools
Cambridge CB2 1TN

Dear Alec,

Many thanks for your letter and for sending me the Consultation Paper on the Reform of the Governance of the University. I read it with great interest and I am delighted that you have been able to press on with this matter in spite of all the difficulties which it presents.

I was particularly pleased to see the proposal for statutorily defining the office of the Vice-Chancellor and enhancing its authority. I hope, too, that you will be provided with the necessary staff support in addition to the appointment of more Pro-Vice-Chancellors. I think the timing of the proposals are excellent and I am sure that the great majority of members of the University will appreciate how necessary the suggested reforms are.

We should take heart from Prince Albert's success in introducing science into the curriculum. Dr Whewell told the Chancellor that it would take one hundred years to bring about any significant change. This drew a letter from one of Prince Albert's supporters within the University which read, "*The Dr's assumption that a century should pass before our discoveries in Science were admitted to the course of Academical Instruction exceeds in absurdity anything which the bitterest enemy of University Education could have imputed to its advocates.*"

I appreciate that the attitudes of some at Cambridge have not changed significantly since the Nineteenth Century but the fact remains that Prince Albert won!

While I am writing, may I thank you most warmly for your kind comments in your Address to the Regent House. I was especially pleased to see your mention of Anna and Anthony's splendid work at the Development Office. They really have done admirably and I hope that the new Director will be able to take some of the burden off your shoulders.

I am looking forward later this month to coming to speak to Brian Cheffins' law students and to seeing Sandra. I was delighted to see how well the Judge Institute came out in the Financial Times' League Table.

With best wishes

Yours ever,

Adrian

Comments on “University Governance: A Consultation Paper”

I have carefully read and considered the Consultation Paper (Reporter 6 Feb. 02) on University Governance. I found the paper confused and confusing, repetitive, and lacking in clarity about the current powers of the Regent House, the Council and some other bodies. For example, the paper says under section 2.4 “There is a second central executive body, the General Board.” In fact, according to the current Statutes (Statute C 1(a)), the General Board is not shown to have any executive powers at all. Another example is related to the membership of the Regent House. Under section 9.1 it is said “However, a significant proportion of the academic staff of the University are presently excluded: unless they qualify under certain special categories (e.g., as Fellows of Colleges), research staff who are employed on ‘unestablished contracts’ are simply ineligible.” It will be seen that under Statute A III 7 (e) Research Professors, Senior Research Associates, Research Associates, Readers (unestablished), Lecturers (unestablished) and Assistant Lecturers (unestablished) are eligible for the membership of the Regent House.

The Consultation paper does not present convincing arguments in support of the proposed changes, or why there is a need for change. To say that the current University System lacks accountability and transparency and that it does not adapt quickly to changing circumstances, does not mean that the current system is the origin of the troubles (see, for example, in the case of the CAPSA Project). In fact, the current Statutes lay down quite clearly how the University is supposed to run and who is responsible for what. Whether this is the case in practice needs to be looked into and commented upon.

It has been implied in the Consultation paper that the failure of the CAPSA is due to some inherent defects in the current Statutes. However, the two recent reports (Reporter 2 Nov. 2001) on the problems faced by the University in relation to the CAPSA clearly state that Cambridge did not have the resources either centrally or in the departments to implement such a large project. One of the reports says, “There was no one in the Centre of the University who had the background and experience to undertake the installation of the new financial system.” The question is why this was not identified before embarking on the project?

I think that if the current Statutes had been properly adhered to, CAPSA probably would not have failed. It has never been made clear why such a large software-based system was undertaken in such an unprofessional manner. Why was the Council not able to foresee the enormous difficulties?

It is proposed in the Consultation paper that in order to increase the efficiency and accountability of the University, major changes are needed in respect of (1) The Council, (2) the Vice-Chancellorship, and (3) the Regent House. I shall give below my comments on each of these three items separately.

(1) The Council

The Consultation paper proposes that in order to increase the efficiency of the Council and its expertise, three external members should be nominated. Moreover, one of these three external members would then become the Chair of the Council, and another one of the three would become the Chair of the Audit Committee. In addition,

there will be eight *ex officio* members. Thus out of a total of twenty six members of the Council, eleven (40%) will be unelected members. Such a situation will be quite undemocratic and, therefore, unacceptable. At present, out of a total of twenty one members, only two are *ex officio* members. I would like to suggest that in order to increase expertise available to the Council, external expert advice should be sought. Futhermore, I would like to suggest that important decisions of the Council be arrived at through a secret ballot. Of course, it should be clearly stated that all members of the Council will be equally responsible for the decisions taken by it.

(2) The Vice-Chancellorship

The current Statutes give the Vice-Chancellor a very prominent position as the Chair of the Council, the Chair of the General Board, and the Chair of any other body of the University, of which he/she is an *ex officio* member. In my opinion the Office of the Vice-Chancellor has the power and influence quite appropriate to his/her position in the University. In other words, I do not think there is a need for giving the office of the Vice-Chancellor any further powers or administrative burden.

(3) The Regent House

The Regent House is the Governing Body of the University and consists of academics as defined in Statute A III 7(e). The Consultation paper proposes to increase the membership of the Regent House. To do this, I would like to suggest that all the MAs of the University, residing within the University specified limits, be made members of the Regent House. To increase the transparency and accountability of the University, the Council must make readily accessible to all members of the Regent House all its reports and all reports of its committees.

As regards the number of signatures of the members of the Regent House required for calling a Discussion or an amendment of a Grace, I think that the proposed number of 50 is far too high. I would suggest that with increasing membership of the Regent House, the number of signatures required be increased to 20, and no more. If, on the other hand, there is no increase in the membership of the Regent House, then there should be no change in the number of signatures required for the above purposes.

Summary

To summarize, although I believe that there is always room for improvement, the changes proposed in the Consultation paper are not particularly beneficial. In fact, the current Statutes give much more democracy to the Governance of the University than will be given by those proposed in the Consultation paper. I would like to suggest, therefore, that the proposals put forward in the Consultation paper be turned down entirely and that efforts should be made to improve the Governance of the University through the existing Statutes.

M. Munawar Chaudhri
Cambridge
18 March 2002.

19 March 2002

Dear Dr Mead

Membership of the University Council

I am writing to comment on the current proposals for reform of the membership of the University Council.

My chief concern about these proposals is that they contain no provision for representation of the University's non-Regent graduates, or "alumni", on the Council. Cambridge is, as I understand it, almost alone among the pre-1992 universities in the absence of any real alumni representation in its governing body; as I am also a graduate of London University, I have, for example, become particularly aware of the difference between the two Universities in this respect. Shortly after I received my London degree, a proforma letter arrived from the Chairman of Convocation, inviting me to join that body. Having done so, I am represented on the London Council by six members nominated by Convocation, and also by the elected Chairman of Convocation who sits on the Council *ex officio*. As that letter from the Chairman of Convocation said, 'membership of the University ... is both a life-long opportunity and a life-long responsibility'.

There thus appears to be a clear contrast between the two universities. London, it seems, values its graduates and invites them to take their part in the governance of the University; Cambridge appears to think that it sufficiently involves its alumni in the University's affairs by merely asking them for money every so often.

I would, therefore, urge that provision be made for a number of representatives of the University's non-Regent graduates, elected by those graduates, to be full members of the University Council. This would allow the University not only to bring itself into line with the practice of the other older universities, but also (more importantly) to avail itself more fully of the abilities and experience of those whom it has nurtured.

Yours sincerely



Andrew Connell MA
Trinity, 1986

Dear Registry,

University Governance

I regret that it has not been possible for me to meet your suggested submission date, and indeed I presume that the forthcoming Discussion is actually the appropriate place for members of the Regent House to respond to the Change Proposals. However given the delay before the next Discussion, and the request for rapid responses to the consultation paper from all interested parties, here is some preliminary elaboration on the web form response, given that most of the questions there were impossible to answer meaningfully. I shall expand on this at the Discussion.

First I wish to comment that a synthesis such as this paper should follow careful analysis; and what little of the latter is explicated in this document appears to have little to do with the weaknesses exposed in the CAPSA reports which will also need addressing in revisions of our governance. Nor indeed is there any clear indication of how the proposed solution actually addresses the identified problems. The most obvious instance of this is the proposal in 9.2 that "the number of members of the Regent House required to call for a ballot on a Grace, or for an amendment to a Grace, or for a request for a Discussion, should be increased to 50". Of course this particular proposal could be dropped without greatly altering the tenor of the whole, but it seems to me symptomatic of the approach as a whole. I hope, therefore, before any solution be put before the Regent House for its consideration that a clear statement of the issues be presented for Discussion.

Second, the proposal appears to achieve the dubious honour of being at once too tame and too wild. It accepts the current School structure (both arbitrary and dysfunctional) while radically changing that of a Council chaired by the Vice-Chancellor (which could be made to work properly). I regard the implicit motive of making Cambridge just like any other University (see eg 7.2) with deep suspicion.

Third, I deem that even those goals I would endorse (including openness, accountability and greater representation) are hardly likely to be met by the model of a small powerful group running the University on behalf of a Regent House simultaneously enlarged and emasculated. I fear that, in the words of a friend of mine, the proposals presented to us are not just wrong, but wrong-headed.

Yours sincerely,



(Dr DR de Lacey).

I wish all my remarks in Discussions bearing on governance matters, any comment or question at the roadshow consultations and all postings on the interactive website ucam.change.governance please to be deemed part of my 'response' to the Consultation, also any comments made by or attributed to me in the press.

1. May I know whether the archive which is being formed is going to be deposited in the University Library, like the Wass Archive?

2. Are all email or paper contributors being asked for their consent to the processing of their comments by publication or otherwise, so that the University may know exactly what has been said in the 'consultation'?

With speeches in the Senate this difficulty about making submissions available does not arise, of course.

3. Who apart from Grant and Mead will be able to see the full dossier?

G.R.Evans

From Mr P. Gosling

I have chosen not to respond via the web form provided at <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/cam-only/univ/change/form.html> as the only question I can provide a meaningful answer to is #5 (Generally, "no"). I believe the flaw that prevents meaningful answers to lie in the poor phrasing and constitution of the questions. For instance

- 1a) the phrase is ill-defined at best, in the absence of clarification of the responsibilities and accountability entailed.
- 1b) is one being asked to comment on the desirability of support, or the specific number suggested?
- 2a) what on earth is a "significant proportion"?
- 2d) why choose 3 as the pivot point?
- 2f) ditto
- 3a) clustering three separate issues together in a single question is not the mark of a neutral questionnaire. Those of us who would like to see such roles better defined, and could not see an objection to support being provided, might yet be concerned at ill-defined or unspecified proposals to "enhance" them.

The remainder of this email constitutes a set of responses to specific sections of the Consultation Paper on Governance at <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2001-02/weekly/5873/5.html>

Section 2.5 and
Section 4.1 (iii):

Both of these sections appear to emphasise a need for the colleges to be provided with mechanisms to secure their interests by additional involvement in the governance of the university.

I have yet to find any evidence of any implementation of this - the only change relating to college involvement in university governance is a decrease in the number of heads of house from four to three.

This doesn't disturb me other than in the lack of self-consistency in the Consultation Paper that it represents.

Indeed, were there to be proposals to increase the influence of the colleges in the running of the university, I would wonder what was to be the 'quid pro quo' in increasing the university's influence in the running of the colleges?

Section 5.1

It would be more plausible for members of the university to comment on the conclusions drawn and proposals made by the Consultation Paper, were there to be more detailed description of the problems being addressed. In particular, it is stated that the functions of the V-C are ill-defined, and yet the proposed fix "the principal academic and administrative officer of the University" does not provide me with any accurate definition of what the V-C's functions under this new definition would be.

Section 5.3

This section conceals a point of unhelpful vagueness. The message that it attempts to convey is that the import of the section is the fact of the V-C ceasing to chair the Council, whereas in fact the most important aspect of this section is the phrase "the V-C would be accountable to the Council". In the absence of any clarification (consisting of detailed mechanisms for this accountability, and an explanation of whether it is entirely after-the-fact (in the style of the Board of Scrutiny, with the limitations that implies)), this is a meaningless phrase.

Indeed, I fail to see why the alternative proposal - that the Council should explicitly (and revocably) delegate _it's_ responsibilities to the V-C as and where this is necessary, is any less effective in dealing with the problems claimed by section 5.1.

That is, I would vastly prefer to see Council maintain its authority and responsibility for the running of the university rather than see it transferred wholesale to the office of the V-C.

The clear solution to the problems of ill-definition of the V-C's functions, and the range of work "not all appropriate" that he is expected to do, is to start from a clear slate, and for the council to then clearly state what they expect the V-C to do.

Section 7.3

A minor risk (that I cannot see a workaround for) is that opposition to the Grace proposing an external member of council leading to a vote of the Regent House would not be an auspicious start to that individual's involvement in university governance, and indeed might repel them from accepting the role; I think this would be different in nature rather than degree from the elections held for members of the university for council posts, where a vote if it happens is for one person rather than another (a far more palatable affair) rather than purely for or against an individual.

Nevertheless, I cannot see it being appropriate for membership of council to be possible _without_ the consent of the Regent House, hence my failure to find a workaround for this problem.

Section 9.2

I see absolutely no basis whatsoever for this change. Analysis of the past five years business of the university provides no indication of any inappropriate use of calls for discussion on topics of concern, nor of inappropriate use of calls for votes on Graces.

I fail to see that any evidence has been put forward to justify this increase in the number of signatories required. The timescale for gathering signatures is in many cases very tight, and the difficulty of acquiring them does not increase linearly with number required, and does not decrease linearly with the size of the eligible constituency.

I am utterly opposed to this change.

If any change were required to deal with abuse, I believe this should be done after the fact, and after the university has had some experience of dealings with a differently constituted Regent House.

Patrick Gosling,
Computer Officer, Department of Engineering.
[and currently a member of the Regent House]