

School of Technology

Council of the School

2.00 p.m. on Friday, 23 October 2015

Board Room, Department of Engineering

UNRESERVED MINUTES

- Present: Professor Richard Prager (Chairman)
Professor David Cardwell
Professor Andy Hopper
Professor Christoph Loch
Mrs Polly Courtice
Professor Lisa Hall
Professor Peter Robinson
Professor Gishan Dissanaiké
Professor Sir Mark Welland
Professor Robin Langley
Professor Bill Byrne
Professor Andy Neely
Dr Alice Hutchings
Mr Max Conway (Graduate Student Representative)
Dr James Moultrie (School observer)
Dr Claire Barlow (School observer)
Dr Shui Lam (Secretary)
Mr Matt Burgess (School Finance Manager)
Ms Rachael Tuley (Assistant Secretary)
Miss Grace Parker (School Administrator)
Miss Yi-Jun Lin (Administrative Secretary)
- In Attendance: Ms Sarah Botcherby
- Apologies: Professor John Dennis, Professor Stewart Cant,
Professor John Robertson, Professor Robert Mair,
Professor Ross Anderson, Mr Nsikan Essien
(Undergraduate Student Representative), Professor Mark
Blamire (School observer), Professor Richard Penty
(School observer) and Dr Mark Thompson (School
observer)

Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Co-option to the Council of the School

At the meeting, it was reported that Professor Sir Mark Welland has appointed the Head of Engineering Division B from 1 October 2015. In keeping with normal practice, the Council of the School agreed to co-opt Professor Welland, replacing Professor Robertson, to the Council to the end of September 2016.

Professor Welland then joined the meeting. The Council of the School noted the revised membership as detailed in Paper **T/15/36**.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 May 2015 were approved and signed.

The Chairman cancelled the meeting scheduled for 5 June 2015, a note of the items approved by circulation is attached as Paper **T/15/37**.

Matters arising

There were no matters arising other than those minuted here.

Chair's report

The Chairman had nothing additional to report at this meeting.

2. Starred items

The starred items were approved.

3. Principal business

3.1. Employer Justified Retirement Age (EJRA)

At the meeting, it was noted that the Council and the General Board have agreed that the HR Committee should appoint a group to review the operation of the current EJRA to determine whether it has been successful in meeting its aims, and review the terms of the University's current Retirement Policy (Paper **T/15/38**) to establish whether they remain fit for purpose. In particular, the Council of the School were asked the following questions:

1. Should the University maintain its current EJRA? If possible, please provide reasons.
2. In your experience, are there any improvements that could be made to the process by which extensions of employment beyond the age of 67 are currently managed?

Views expressed by members of the Council of the School are attached in Paper **T/15/39**. Comments from Departments are attached in Paper **T/15/40**.

The Council of the School is unanimous that any retirement policy that the University may adopt does not threaten the School's ability to recruit talented young academics that we need. However, it is recognised that most academics still have a lot to offer at age 67, and automatically forcing retirement at this age is a crude policy that harms our competitiveness.

As to whether the University should maintain an EJRA, options differ. There is no explicit support to maintain the EJRA at the age of 67. However, some have declared a preference for maintaining a fixed retirement age, but possibly changed to 68 or 69 and extension of employment for strategic reasons should be permitted. The argument for retaining a fixed retirement age is well documented in Professor Hopper's response.

There are others who are not convinced that an EJRA is needed currently, but recognising that this may become more necessary after the changes to USS next year. Suggestions for making the current system (with an EJRA) work better are detailed in Professor Anderson's response. Consideration of extension to work beyond a retirement age should be done on a case by case basis, with flexibility to accommodate funding from different sources.

There are views expressed by individuals in the JBS, included in Paper **T/15/40**, but not discussed at the meeting of the Council of the School, that they are against setting an EJRA.

It is clear that there are issues concerning the underlying principles and processes for VRA under the current system. Points of concern are detailed in Professor Anderson's response.

3.2. Review of Postgraduate Taught Courses and PTES

During the academic year 2014–15, the Technology Graduate School undertook a comprehensive review of all its postgraduate taught courses, as requested by the General Board's Education Committee.

The Director of Graduate Education and the Secretary of the Graduate School Committee met with Course Directors/academic representatives of each course during the Lent Term 2015. They also met with groups of students from each course, during the same period, and asked them to comment on specific aspects of their course. Each Department convened a panel to review the courses under its jurisdiction. Each panel produced a short report for each programme and an overall report summarising key issues raised and remedial

actions. The panel meetings were attended by the Director of Graduate Education and the Graduate School Committee Secretary.

Paper **T/15/41** contains the report produced by the Director of Graduate School and the Graduate School Committee Secretary. The Director of Graduate School highlighted the key findings and recommendations (Pages 9 and 10 of Paper **T/15/41**)

- Issues relating to the timeliness and usefulness of the feedback and assessment have been identified for some years and need to be addressed.
- Expectation setting, with regards to course content and assessment), is essential.
- There is a need for Departments (with the exception of JBS) to give great acknowledgement and recognition of graduate teaching load.
- Over-reliance on generic modules shared with undergraduates (as opposed to a solid set of core courses) can be problematic.
- It might help to resource management modules at the postgraduate level separately.
- There may be merit in introducing a “code of practice” for taught Master’s courses.

The Council of the School approved the report to be submitted to the General Board’s Education Committee.

Regarding the results of the PTES, the School has been proactive in encouraging student participation in the recent PTES survey which yielded a response rate of 90%. The survey showed that some courses were considered excellent but some significantly below the Russell Group average (see Paper **T/15/42**).

While Professor Loch was generally supportive of the approach, he was slightly cautious that only one indicator (comparison with the Russell Group) was being used to measure achievements. In particular, some surveyed areas are more important to the Business School than others.

Professor Cardwell commented that it was important to address the key areas of assessment and feedback which have come up as below standard for a number of years.

The Head of School reported that while some course directors were of the opinion that the suggested targets were difficult to achieve, the preliminary response from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) was that the proposed programme of improvements may not deliver competitive performance in time for a possible future Teaching Excellence Framework. Therefore, it was important for course directors to come up with a plan to move forward in addressing the identified issues, in time for the submission of the School’s Strategic Plan.

3.3. BusD

The Faculty Board of Business and Management has recommended a proposal to create a new professional doctorate degree for high-level experienced managers, provisionally named “BusD”. The Technology Graduate School Committee has considered the proposal at two meetings (minutes attached as Paper **T/15/43**), and approved the proposal subject to the incorporation of some specific and detailed changes. The Judge Business School’s Advisory Board has considered the proposal, their minutes are attached in Paper **T/15/44**. A revised proposal (Paper **T/15/45**) has been produced.

At the meeting, the Council of the School considered the revised proposal and, given the detailed consideration by the Graduate School Committee, agreed to approve it for submission to the General Board’s Education Committee.

3.4. UKCRIC Building with Civil Engineering: Registration of Opportunity

At the meeting of the Council of the School on 1 May 2015, the registration of opportunity for the National Research Facility for Infrastructure Sensing (UKCRIC) was approved to be forwarded to the Planning and Resources Committee. It now transpired that it would be of the strategic interest of the Department of Engineering to register a larger building which will accommodate both the UKCRIC and part of Division D. Therefore, a new Registration of Opportunity (Paper **T/15/46**) has been prepared by the Department of Engineering, with an increased capital cost of £36m.

The Chairman reported that, because of the timescale, the proposal has been considered and approved by the Engineering Moving West Project Board and the Planning and Resources Committee, subject to the approval of the Council of the School. Therefore, the Council of the School approved the proposal at the meeting. It was noted that the cost of fitting out the building (apart from the part of the building relating to the UKCRIC project), would be funded by the Department of Engineering.

4. Other Substantive Business

4.1. Governance of Schools, Faculties and Departments

At the meeting, it was reported that the General Board was consulting on discussion paper on Governance of Schools, Faculties and Departments (Paper **T/15/47**). The Council of the School was invited to have a preliminary discussion of the paper at this meeting with another opportunity to discuss this at the meeting on 27 November 2015, by then the comments of the Faculty Boards and Heads of Department would be available.

The Chairman explained the main thrust of the proposal was to have one layer of “institution” below a School. Each institution would have one person taking the responsibilities of a Head of Department. The Council of the School was generally supportive of this principle.

On the detail of the proposal, the initial views expressed were as follows:

1. Faculty Boards: In the School of Technology, the Faculty Boards/Syndicate work to support the Heads of Department. In the School of Technology the role of Faculty Boards is to have oversight of the Faculty’s teaching programmes and to approve formal matters. This business aligns with items (i) and (iv) in section 7 of the document. It was not felt that Faculty Boards have a useful role in item (v), i.e. representation of staff or students because they are generally too formal in nature. The School is keen to maintain bodies that serve each Department and discharge duties of types (i) and (iv), as at present.
2. Degree Committees and Appointments Committees: The School has three of the former and four of the latter. The numbers are small and their processes different. In particular, the probation process is different in character in different departments and it would be difficult for a single appointments body to operate the various systems appropriately. The Council therefore did not see any merit in combining these bodies.

The Chair asked for further comments to be sent to the Secretary within the next fortnight.

4.2. School Risk Register

As part of the Planning round, the School is required to submit the School’s Risk Register. The Council of the School considered and approved Paper **T/15/48** as the School’s Risk Register, subject to any comments received within the next fortnight.

4.3. Planning round 2015: undergraduate student numbers

As part of the Planning round, the School is required to submit forecast undergraduate student numbers for 2016-17 to 2019-20. The Council of the School approved Paper **T/15/49**, which contains the planned student numbers from Departments, for submission to the Planning and Resource Allocation Office by 30 October 2015.

Professor Hopper queried if other Departments have had any experience of Stanford, or any other Ivy League Universities in America, creaming off the top undergraduate applicants with scholarships. This is becoming an issue.

4.4. Planning: postgraduate student numbers

The School is required to submit forecast postgraduate student numbers for 2016-17 to 2019-20. The Council of the School approved Paper **T/15/50**, which contains the planned student numbers from Departments, for submission to the Planning and Resource Allocation Office.

5. Straightforward business

5.1. *End of year accounts 2014-15**

The Council of the School noted the 2014-15 Year end accounts as detailed in paper **T/15/51**, dated October 2015.

5.2. HR Briefing

The Council of the School noted the HR briefing in Paper **T/15/52**. The Chairman requested Departments to be aware of the updates and banding changes in the Senior Academic Promotion exercise.

The HR Business Manager reported on good response rates in the staff surveys in three Departments.

6.3. Risk Assessment

The Council of the School was requested to assess the risks of any of the decisions made at this meeting and no additional risk was identified.

7. *Minutes of other committees**

The Council of the School noted the minutes below.

Needs Committee	13 October 2015	T/15/53
Graduate School Committee	26 June 2015	T/15/54
HR Committee	9 July 2015	T/15/55

8. Any other business

There was no other business.

9. Dates of Future Meetings 2015-16

2.00 p.m. in Room W2.01, Judge Business School:

Friday, 27 November 2015

2.00 p.m. in Board Room, Department of Engineering:
Friday, 29 January 2016

2.00 p.m. in Board Room, Department of Chemical Engineering and
Biotechnology:
Friday, 04 March 2016

2.00 p.m. in Board Room, Department of Engineering:
Friday, 06 May 2016

2.00 p.m. in FW11, Computer Laboratory:
Friday, 10 June 2016