**Recruitment of Statutory Professors: Guidance on the role of the Chair of electoral boards and on best practice for the recruitment process**

**Background**

Following a workshop on unconscious bias in Michaelmas term 2013, the views of all current electoral board Chairs, Heads of Division, the Vice-Chancellor, and the Registrar were sought on the role of statutory professors and the process for their recruitment. All those interviewed expressed dissatisfaction to a greater or lesser extent with the process for recruiting statutory professors. Greater clarity was also sought on the role of the Chair of electoral boards.

Based on the views expressed in the consultation, proposals were made by the Personnel Committee to Council in June 2014 to clarify the responsibilities and expectations of the role of the chair of electoral boards and to revise the recruitment process. These proposals were referred for detailed consideration to a meeting held in October 2014 of the Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellors (who regularly chair electoral boards), Heads of Division, and Divisional Secretaries. The conclusions of that meeting were endorsed by the Personnel Committee and the revised guidance was then referred to the Conference of Colleges, PRAC and Education Committee for comment. The final guidance, as approved by the Personnel Committee, is set out below.

**Role of the Chair of electoral boards**

The University aims to lead the world in research and education. In support of this aim, the Strategic Plan 2013 includes an aspiration ‘to recruit and retain the best academic staff and ensure that under-represented groups have equality of opportunity’.

A key contributor to this aspiration is the recruitment of statutory professors of global standing to lead the research and education strategies for their discipline. The role of the Chair of the electoral board is to provide leadership to the recruitment process to ensure that the University recruits the best possible academic staff and ensures that candidates from under-represented groups are sought out and considered. Specifically, the role of the Chair of the Electoral Board will include:

1. ensuring at the outset of the recruitment process that there is clear agreement between the University, Division, Department/Faculty and College on the main responsibilities of the statutory professorship and its contribution to the leadership of research and education strategies;
2. in considering the responsibilities of the statutory professor, to agree the balance expected between disciplinary and departmental leadership, research, teaching, graduate supervision, and administration;
3. agreeing essential selection criteria that reflect the agreed role;
4. as may be appropriate, ensuring that communication with donors of endowed chairs is managed in relation to the further particulars;
5. ensuring that a clear recruitment strategy and plan is agreed with key stakeholders;
6. ensuring that a rigorous search process is carried out so that all credible candidates, including those from under-represented groups, are considered and that the whole board has an appropriate level of involvement in the search stage;
7. ensuring that the selection process is fair and transparent throughout, and exercising vigilance to minimise and challenge bias in all aspects of the process including in the discussions of the electors and in the consideration of references;
8. building a common purpose amongst members of the electoral board to elect the best possible candidate - this to include ensuring that any differences of opinion are discussed and resolved, any special interests are made explicit, and that compromise appointments are not made.

**Who chairs electoral boards?**

The regulations governing electoral boards for statutory chairs require the Vice-Chancellor to be a member and therefore to take the chair. The Vice-Chancellor usually appoints either a Pro‑Vice-Chancellor with portfolio or a ceremonial Pro-Vice-Chancellor as his or her representative for this purpose. The Vice-Chancellor has a general power under Section 11 of Statute IX to delegate any of his or her functions to any member of Congregation, and, in exceptional cases, it could be expedient for the Vice-Chancellor to appoint the Head of Division to function in his or her stead as Chair of the electoral board. This is seen as a pragmatic approach to widening the constituency of those who might be approached to take on what can be an onerous task.

Where the Vice-Chancellor decides to delegate his or her function as Chair of an electoral board to the Head of Division, the individual regulations governing the statutory professorship may need to be amended. This is likely to be required where the Head of Division is already named as an elector in the regulations or where the balance of electors would be adversely affected. It is routine for the specific regulations to be reviewed for each new appointment process and any amendments to the regulations require approval by PRAC. The regulations must comply with the *General Provisions for electoral boards* in Council Regulations 3 of 2004 and any relevant trust deeds (GPC may also need to review the regulations where there is a trust).

The impact of the Head of Division acting as the Vice Chancellor’s delegate on the overall balance of representation on the board should be considered also when appointments to the electoral board are made. The views of all interested parties should be taken into account through consultation to be undertaken by the Division with the normal expectation that an additional external elector be identified.

**Process for statutory professor recruitment**

**Stage 1: Division and Department/Faculty agree that the statutory professorship should be filled**

**Stage 2:** **Vice-Chancellor appoints a Chair for the electoral board**

**Stage 3:** **The role, responsibilities and selection criteria for the statutory professor, and the search strategy and selection process, are agreed**

The Chair of the electoral board facilitates a meeting with the Head of Division and the Head of Department/Chair of Faculty Board. The Head of House will also be invited to attend, and the Chair may invite others to attend, for instance the College's nominee for the electoral board and any internal or external individual whose advice the group would value. The Departmental Administrator should be in attendance if he or she would normally be involved in drafting the further particulars. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss and agree the following:

1. the vision and strategy for the post including
   1. the broader strategic positioning of the role within the University and Division, and
   2. the nature of the leadership required of the post-holder;
2. the balance of other responsibilities within the role;
3. the essential selection criteria;
4. the overall strategy for the selection process, including the search and advertisement phases;
5. the appointment of a lead person for the search (this may be a member of the electoral board, a member of faculty or an external search consultant);
6. a proposal for the membership of the electoral board.

Following the meeting, the Senior Appointments Office will circulate notes from the meeting to all attendees and copy them to the Divisional Administrator. The Department/Faculty will draft further particulars and circulate them (copying the Senior Appointments Office) for agreement to the Division and College, with a statement of the search strategy, the lead person for the search, the advertisement, and the search and selection process that has been agreed.

The Division and Department/Faculty will brief the lead person for the search phase about the post under recruitment and the selection criteria. Personnel Services will provide briefing and support to the lead person on carrying out effective searches and on equality and diversity, including the potential for unconscious bias.

**Stage 4: Approvals phase**

Where required, financial approval for the post will be sought by the Division (presently, from PRAC). The Senior Appointments Office will seek approval from the Vice-Chancellor for the further particulars, the advertisement, and the appointment of the electoral board members.

**Stage 5: Search phase**

*Scoping*: *the initial gathering of names of potential candidates*

The lead person for the search will consult with all electoral board members (possibly through a meeting if that is the most appropriate way to do so without undue delay) in order to refine approaches to the search and to gather initial suggestions for potential candidates. The lead will further seek suggestions from Department/Faculty members, and from others, including external experts who could have useful views. The lead will identify potential candidates by researching the known world-leaders in the field against the agreed selection criteria, with particular care to identify women and members of other groups under-represented in the professoriate. The Senior Appointments Office will support the search and may involve external search consultants if requested on a case-by-case basis. The result of this scoping stage will be a list of names with biographical notes for consideration by the electoral board.

*Decision on which potential candidates to approach*

When the list of initially suggested names has been assembled, the Chair of the electoral board will facilitate a meeting of as many electors as possible, but including *at least* the Head of Division, the Head of Department/Faculty Board Chair, the Head of House or the other college elector, and the search lead person. The purpose of the meeting is to review the list of names gathered at the scoping stage and to agree which candidates should be approached and by whom. Any electors who cannot attend or otherwise take part in the meeting should be invited to submit their views by other means. The timing for the advertisement will also be agreed (if that has not been done previously). The Chair will confirm that under‑represented groups have been included in the search and make a report to the Vice‑Chancellor if no women are on the list for approaching at this stage. The search may be continued if that is considered desirable in the light of the number of individuals identified, their quality, or their diversity.

**Stage 6: Advertisement and approaches to candidates**

**Stage 7: Applications and references**

Applications are circulated to the electoral board and references taken up for those judged to be credible candidates (unless it has been agreed to delay seeking references until a later stage). The invitation to referees asks them to include comment specifically in relation to the selection criteria. If no women are selected for referencing, a report is made to the Vice-Chancellor to explain the reasons. The search may be re-opened if the quality or diversity of candidates is not considered optimal.

**Stage 8: Shortlisting**

The electoral board will meet to shortlist candidates and finalise plans for the selection process. The Chair will ensure that the electoral board is briefed on the potential for bias and that any bias in references is brought to the attention of the electoral board. The shortlist shall be signed as having been agreed by all the electors. If no women are shortlisted, a report is to be made to the Vice-Chancellor to explain the reasons: the report will identify the women who were considered strongest when judged against the selection criteria and indicate why they were not shortlisted (with reference, for instance, to their ranking against the criteria).

**Stage 9: Selection**

In all cases, consideration will be given to appropriate selection methods in addition to a board interview to ensure that evidence about the candidate can be gathered in a variety of ways. The process should also ensure that the candidates, the Department/Faculty, and the College have time to get to know each other either before or during the selection process. This is unlikely to be less than a full day, and will often be longer. The Chair will ensure that all candidates are given equal opportunities to engage and familiarise themselves with the Department/Faculty and College. Candidates will be informed which elements of their visit(s) are part of the selection process and which are familiarisation.

On the rare occasions when candidates state they wish their application for the post to remain confidential, alternative arrangements may have to be made.

**Stage 10: Review**

After each recruitment exercise, electors will be asked to give feedback about the recruitment process to the Senior Appointments Office.