# The Council, 13 July 2020

## Council Effectiveness Review: Proposed Scope, Process, Timescale, Terms of Reference and Membership

**Authors:**
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### 1.      Purpose of paper

1.1      This paper provides an update on the Council Effectiveness Review, following the second meeting of the Council Task and Finish Group on 4 June and subsequent actions agreed at that meeting.

### 2.      Scope and Process

2.1      Although the approach to the Review has been flexed due to the impact of Covid-19, it remains focused on compliance with the regulatory framework and how discharging these responsibilities affects the wider operation of Council. However, the Group has agreed that there should be some student input via the interview process.

### 3.      Phase 1 Desk- Based Review Update and Feedback

3.1      Regulation: The extensive documentation that Shakespeare Martineau have reviewed (all Council and related material from the last three years) suggests that regulatory compliance is effective and well managed, being carefully considered and with appropriate follow-up and monitoring. The University compares very favourably with others in the sector. Interviews will be used to test Council members' perceptions of this, and their engagement with and understanding of the material. The Review will also consider whether the current approach is proportionate in terms of the impact on Council's ability to undertake its other functions and discharge its full range of responsibilities.

The Review will also reflect on how Council might learn from its experiences of conducting meetings and transacting business on a virtual basis to inform its future operations.

3.2      Other Council Matters: The University Secretary is clarifying a number of technical points: the operation of the Council Scheme of Delegation; the extent of Council's engagement with the "student voice"; and the business planning and agenda setting process.

### 4.      Stakeholder Interviews

4.1      Interviews with Council Members, UEB and Senate are expected to be largely completed by the date of the Council meeting. Further thought will be given to seeking external stakeholder engagement when the Group returns to consider strategic elements of Council effectiveness as part of the follow-up work.

(a)   Council: Council received a message from the Chair of the Task and Finish Group on 15 June explaining the interview process and Shakespeare Martineau have been provided with members' contact details to set up telephone/video calls.

(b)   Senate: The Group recognises that academic governance is one of the most challenging areas for the majority of universities and governing bodies. Having an effective bicameral governance structure is a fundamental element of the University, regardless of the regulatory framework in place at a given point in time.

Senate has received a briefing explaining the purpose of the Effectiveness Review and the contribution of members of Senate to it. The questionnaire was finalised following discussion with Professor Maltby, as Chair of the 2017-18 Senate Effectiveness Review and member of the 2017-18 Joint Council and Senate Task and Finish Group on Academic Quality and Standards. The questionnaire seeks reflections on how Senate is adapting to its role following the Senate Effectiveness Review and its engagement with Council in providing academic assurance and receiving feedback, including the new approach to the Annual Academic Assurance Report. Senate received the questionnaire after the Senate meeting on 24 June, for response by 2 July (the questionnaire is attached as Appendix 1).

(c)   UEB: The University's approach to regulatory compliance includes assigning an executive lead to particular areas and providing assurance to Council. In evaluating the effectiveness of Council's oversight of that process, these interviews will consider the ease with which the Executive is able to provide that assurance, and assess whether the current balance and distinction between management and governance is appropriate and understood.

(d)   Student Engagement:

The current Students' Union Sabbatical Officers and previous three SU Presidents will be invited to take part in an interview within the wider scope of the Review, i.e. the regulatory framework's focus on students and their level of interaction and engagement with Council. All interview questions will be framed with reference to the initial findings from the desk-based phase of the review.

## 5.   Optional Deep Dive

5.1   Two suggestions have been made in relation to the operation and effectiveness of Council Oversight or Task and Finish Groups in overseeing major projects and the role and distinction between Executive and Council sub-committees. These areas are linked, and include a cultural element. Although this is an important factor in considering effectiveness, it is difficult to incorporate within the current scope of the Review. The Group will consider options for a deep dive after the interviews and Senate questionnaire process has concluded, and responses have been analysed.

## 6.   Update on Process and Timetable

6.1   The Group will meet again in mid-July and subsequently in mid-August. A draft report will be produced by the end of August in order for the current timetable to be met, with a final report and recommendations being presented to Council in November 2020.

6.2   It is understood that the Committee of University Chairs plans to present the new Higher Education Code of Governance to its July plenary meeting, in which case the review will reflect on the University's compliance. It is not necessary to revise the timetable at present but if a "Deep Dive" is deemed necessary it may be challenging to complete this for inclusion in the draft report.  Therefore the Group has agreed that the "Deep Dive" element could be undertaken and reported separately, if necessary.

## 7. Action requested of Council

7.1    Council is invited to note the update and endorse the direction of travel agreed by the Task and Finish Group.

# SHAKESPEAREMARTINEAU

**THE UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD**

**COUNCIL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW**

**Questionnaire for members of the Senate**

**Purpose**

The purpose of this questionnaire is to elicit the views of Senate on Council's role in relation to academic governance as set out in the following sources:

**The Office for Students Regulatory Framework**

*"*The governing body receives and tests assurance that academic governance is adequate and effective through explicit protocols with the senate/academic board (or equivalent)" (Public Interest Governance Principle IV)

**The CUC Higher Education Code of Governance**

"The governing body receives assurance that academic governance is effective by working with the Senate/Academic Board or equivalent as specified in its governing instruments." (Primary Element of Higher Education 4).

For the purposes of this questionnaire, we use "academic governance" to mean how the academic affairs of the University are governed.

**Completing the questionnaire**

You are asked to complete this questionnaire by indicating with an X the extent to which you agree with various statements which reflect the expectations of effective oversight of academic governance by university governing bodies.

There is also an "any other comments" box for any additional information you wish to include. It would be particularly appreciated if you could use this box to provide further details for any questions where you neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree with any of the statements, as this will enable us to make appropriate recommendations to help Council discharge its functions in an efficient and effective way.
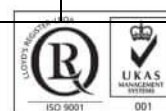
All completed questionnaires will be treated in confidence. Responses may be cited in the report but will not be attributed to individuals

Please complete the questionnaire by **7 July 2020** and return it to joanna.forbes@shma.co.uk

| | | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Unable to comment/don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I understand the respective roles of Council and Senate in the governance of the University | | | | | | |
| 2 | From my perspective I believe that Council understands its role in academic governance | | | | | | |

MULTILAW

ISO 9001   UKAS MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS 001

| 3 | Council and Senate work effectively in relation to academic governance | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | The Senate Academic Assurance Committee helps Senate to discharge its role in academic governance | | | | | | |
| 5 | The Annual Academic Assurance Report from the Senate contains all the information Council needs to discharge its role in academic governance. | | | | | | |
| 6 | There is an effective way for Council to provide feedback to Senate on matters relating to the assurance of academic governance. | | | | | | |
| 7 | Based on my experience, knowledge and/or understanding, I am confident that Council receives and is able to test assurance that academic governance at the University is effective. | | | | | | |
| 8 | Any other comments on Council's oversight role in relation to academic governance at the University? | | | | | | |

Name ………………………………………………….

Role ………………………………………………….

Length of time on Senate ………………………………………………….