



**ACADEMIC BOARD
(Special Meeting)**

Tuesday 10 July 2012

MINUTES

Key to abbreviations

AB	Academic Board
HEI	higher education institution
HR	Human Resources

38 **REFORM OF STATUTE 18**

Reported

38.1 The meeting had been scheduled in order to facilitate a continuation of

Discussion

- 38.6 The Provost noted receipt of a written response from the non-professorial AB members' group. The Convenor of the group, Dr Andrea Townsend-Nicholson, reported their view that the protection of academic freedom was a strategic matter resting with the Council, in consequence of which the mechanisms for determining the legitimacy of the cause for dismissal of staff should be embedded explicitly within the Statutes. The group also believed that procedures for dismissal must apply equally to all staff, but that a further test should be put in place in respect of research active staff to guard against the use of redundancy as a tool for undermining academic freedom.
- 38.7 Individual AB members raised a number of specific concerns relating to the proposals, including:
- the ability of Council to retain oversight of issues of academic freedom in the absence of statutory requirements relating to the Redundancy Committee, to the handling of grievances, and to the availability of legal representation. A member of AB proposed that an alternative arrangement might be to relocate procedural detail to bye-laws which would be more easily amended than the current statutes, but which would still afford the necessary protection;
 - the removal of the need to establish a Redundancy Committee that was in effect difficult to convene, and to seek Privy Council approval of amendments to the process in these areas, effectively represented a weakening of the protection afforded to academic staff;
 - a perceived relationship between those HEIs which had reformed Statute 18 along the lines proposed, and those at which redundancies had occurred. The examples of King's College London and Sussex University were cited;
 - the role played by external funding bodies in strategic decisions regarding the long-term future of individual academic areas, and the possible impact of such decisions upon academic staff;
 - the perceived change to the relationship between academic staff and the Head of Department under the proposals.
- 38.8 Some AB members requested an extension of the consultation period. It was noted that matters of this kind were often discussed at departmental meetings, which were generally not held over the summer. Members queried what was to be gained by seeking to bring about the proposed changes on the current timetable.
- 38.9 The Provost noted that the proposed revisions embodied no fundamental change to the role of Head of Department, who would under the current arrangements be involved in any redundancy process.
- 38.10 The Provost confirmed that during his term of office only one disciplinary case had reached the point of a tribunal, and that issues of academic freedom had played no part in the case. AB debated whether this constituted evidence supporting the view that the

