

A motion has been submitted for Senate by Professor Aneez Esmail calling for the Board to pause the proposed staffing changes required to contribute to realising our Manchester 2020 ambitions.

Senate is reminded of the rationale for these changes, which have been raised at every meeting of Senate at least since February 2016. This rationale, the proposals, processes and governance are summarised in the attached paper, together with ongoing actions to reduce staff losses and continuing consultations with the Trade Unions.

The motion is in two parts and we are of the firm view that both parts of the motion are without substance.

The first part of the motion expresses concerns about process and governance.

A letter setting out these same concerns has been submitted to the Board and a response (attached) strongly refutes any basis for the concerns. You will have seen the statement from the Chair of the Board of Governors, Mr Edward Astle (attached), stating clearly and categorically that all due processes were followed by the Board and by Staffing committee. These concerns have also been addressed in a meeting between the Chair of the Board of Governors, the Registrar, Secretary and Chief Operating Officer and Professors Esmail and Williams, and the Chair of the Board has offered to hold a further meeting with other nominated professors.

The motion requests the papers for the Board be published. Papers for Board meetings and for sub-committees of the Board are written to facilitate good governance and therefore should be concise, informative and written with candour. They are, therefore, necessarily confidential and are not released; this was addressed in the meeting described above. Minutes of Board meetings are written in a more fulsome manner to ensure transparency concerning decisions made. These Board minutes include reports from Board sub-committees and are published once they are confirmed, normally after the next meeting of the Board. May's Board minutes will be published following the July Board meeting.

It is absolutely correct that the Senate is the Principal Academic authority of the University. In this capacity its powers are defined in Statute. It is not, however, the only academic authority within the University and Statute also define responsibilities for Academic Management and the role of the Faculties including the Deans.

On staff redundancy, specific requirements are defined in Statute and Ordinances. These require the University to first make proposals to the Staffing Committee. Then, these proposals are brought to the full Board of Governors. This is the process that was followed and the proposals were brought to the full Board of Governors on 3 May, which agreed that the consultation process should begin.

Following the Board's decision, the University is obliged to go through formal consultation processes with both the Trade Unions and with School Boards.

The Trade Unions were immediately provided with the necessary consultation materials on 4 May. We then entered into an agreed confidentiality period before announcements were made on 10 May.

Consultations with the Trade Unions have been ongoing since 10 May (six meetings held up to 21 June), and the necessary consultations have also been taking place with School Boards.

On 4 May, the University immediately called a special briefing of Senate to take place on 10 May. This gave notice of the briefing and ensured that the briefing took place as soon as the confidentiality period ended and at the same time as the announcements were being made.

The University is satisfied that it has met and is meeting its formal obligations to consult and has followed all necessary governance processes.

Secondly, the motion states that “First, SLT should accept that issues related to underperformance of staff should be dealt with under existing University policies and established HR procedure”.

The University absolutely accepts this. Individual performance is not the basis for these proposed redundancies. They are redundancies and therefore have to be dealt within the relevant Statute on dismissals due to redundancy. Thus the motion has no substance on this point.

The motion also calls for an extension to the period of voluntary redundancy and broadening of the “in scope” pool. Following the consultations with the Trade Unions, the pool of staff eligible to apply for voluntary severance in some areas has been significantly widened from the original proposal with a view to minimising the likelihood to having to proceed to compulsory redundancy, and the period of voluntary severance has been extended in some areas. This is in addition to the many other steps that the University is taking to avoid compulsory redundancy (see attached).

Senate can be assured that SLT and the Board would never engage in a process that led to the loss of academic or professional support staff posts without being very clear that we believe this is absolutely necessary, with a clear rationale and that it would be done in accordance with its legal obligations, rigorous governance standards, and importantly taking full account of the interests of all our staff.

Senior Leadership Team, 26 June 2017.