Academic freedom and collegiality

The management side intends to propose that the following characterisations of academic freedom and collegiality respectively be added to the Code of Practice on Corporate Governance. This will, of course, require approval by the Senate and the Council.

Academic freedom

Through its commitment to academic freedom, the University is committed to ensuring that academic staff and other members of the University have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges. It is similarly committed to ensuring that staff have the right to criticise the functioning of higher education institutions, including their own, without placing themselves in jeopardy.

Collegiality

Through its commitment to collegiality, the University is committed to ensuring that members of staff have the opportunity to make their voice heard, directly or indirectly, on any matter of concern to them, and in particular to ensuring that they are consulted on the development of strategy and on matters of policy and principle, including the basis on which resources are allocated. Specifically, the University is committed

(a) to ensuring that academic decisions are taken by academic bodies;

(b) to maintaining elected seats on the Council, the Senate and all policy boards (in the case of the Senate the elected seats to constitute a majority of the total membership);

(c) to supporting a forum within each faculty (the faculty board or equivalent) which can act as a two-way channel of communication between staff in the faculty and the faculty’s management committee¹;

(d) to encouraging regular and effective staff meetings in schools, and to encouraging staff engagement in the development of school strategy, planning submissions and other strategic and policy issues;

(e) to encouraging members of the University to contribute to decision-making, either directly (through participation in staff meetings or through election to relevant University authorities and key committees) or indirectly (though representative bodies);

(f) to mechanisms for regular and effective consultation and negotiation with unions representing staff

(g) to making all Council, Senate papers and committee papers available on request to members of the University (typically through Campusweb), subject only to confidentiality considerations as defined in this Code.

Although University authorities and the University management will thus strive to consult as widely as possible – and to be as open and transparent as possible – about the development of strategy and policy, and will take into account all views expressed through

¹ Under Ordinance III, the faculty board is empowered to ask questions about, and express an opinion on, any matter concerning the faculty, and to convey such opinions to the faculty management committee, which in turn is obliged to take account of any recommendations made by the board.
such consultations, it will not always be possible or practicable to defer decisions until all interested parties have expressed views.

Roger Gair  
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