Election of member of Professional Support Staff to University Council: FAQs

What governs this round of elections?

We previously had a Regulation in place which only governed the election of academic staff to Senate. The Governance and Assurance Office has worked to create a new Regulation, signed off by Senate and Council, which covers both the election of academic staff to Senate and of Professional Support staff to Council. This is the framework used to run this election, making the process open and transparent and setting the timetable and key milestones in the election process, as well as the rules for standing and voting. The relevant Regulation can be found [here](#).

Who is eligible to stand for election?

A key change for Senate is that fixed-term and permanent academic staff are now merged into one composite group for the purpose of the election, with the previous distinction between these staff categories removed. Although it has always been the case, it has also been made more explicit that all staff of the University on professional support contracts of whatever grade are able to stand for election provided they are in post at the point of the election starting. Staff who are employed through Commercial Services (YCL) are not eligible to stand as they are not employees of the University but rather of a subsidiary company (see para 9.4 of the Regulation). We would obviously not expect individuals to stand for election where they were planning to leave the University in the near future.

Why is this election being run later than normal?

The importance of developing the new Regulation, securing its approval and translating it into practice has been the main reason for running the election later than normal (the normal cycle would be that the election is run during the Summer vacation ahead of the new academic year). We have taken account of this in that the three-year term of office will start from the date of election and not the usual default date of 01 August.

How many Professional Support Staff sit on Council?

We have two professional support staff who are elected as members of Council from a total of 22 members. This is set out in the University Statutes which refer to the ‘non-academic staff’ appointed to Council (we now use more appropriate language and speak in terms of ‘professional support’ colleagues). On many university governing bodies, there is only one elected member of professional support staff.

What is the term of office and time of appointment?

It is a three-year term, which is the same as the four academic members elected to Council by Senate. Support staff members can be re-elected after one year has elapsed since the end of their term of office, but unless there was a lapse of one year and no election held, or an interim appointment was made, re-election would not normally arise as an option.

How does the role differ from other membership categories on Council?

All Council members have equal standing whether as lay independent members, representatives from YUSU and GSA, Senate nominees or *ex officio* senior management members. All are trustees of the University as an exempt charity, have parity of status and must act in the best interests of the University, both individually and collectively. However, all individuals and categories bring different perspectives to Council, including valuable staff insights, locally and generally. However, whilst being
elected to Council makes individuals ‘representative’ of a defined group of staff, the role is not to ‘represent’.

**Likely time commitment**

Council currently holds 5 formal meetings each academic year, with an additional strategic away day held jointly with the University Executive Board (normally towards the start of the academic year in October). Development/briefing events for members are also held in the afternoon of the day before the meeting, sometimes in the form of a visit to an academic department or other unit in the University (e.g. the Library, Careers Service etc). Pre-covid these development events were also followed by an evening dinner to which other University colleagues might also be invited. The formal meetings then take place the next morning and usually last ca. 3-4 hours. Elected support staff members should ensure through discussion with their line managers that they are released for attendance at Council meetings and other engagements.

**Encouraging diversity on Council**

Whilst this is an election and all eligible candidates are invited to stand, with the outcome determined by ‘first past the post’ voting, Council is particularly keen to strengthen the diversity of its membership, and encourages individuals to stand from under-represented groups (including women, BAME, disabled, LGBT+ and gender-diverse candidates) and from the full span of professional support grades.