

# 1. Our request: That the Vice-Chancellor takes a pay cut to reflect the cuts being delivered to other staff across the institution

## The University's response, by Dr Gill Rider, Chair of the University Council:

*Our Council is acutely conscious of its responsibility for ensuring appropriate remuneration for senior staff, and we are very sensitive to the current, and healthy, public and student debate about pay levels, value for money, and reward for responsibility and performance. Over the last few weeks a number of points have been raised directly with me, and Council, on this particular issue and I ensured that Council members had a full and frank discussion about this at its January 2018 meeting.*

*It is important to understand that we recruited Sir Christopher to Southampton two years ago after a global search because we wanted an outstanding academic and leader to undertake a fundamental long-term transformation of our University, as we face unprecedented external challenges. Sir Christopher is one of the most experienced Vice-Chancellors in the sector with a track record of delivering long-term exceptional results - he is a hugely respected academic, knighted for his services to engineering and higher education, and is a former President of Universities UK. He has held international leadership roles in the private sector, including as a plc Chief Executive, and he has served on the Prime Minister's Council for Science and Technology. His remuneration, which has risen by only 1.1% since he joined our university, rightly reflects that experience. For that reason, Council does not feel it is appropriate to expect the Vice-Chancellor to take a reduction in salary, nor is it relevant to link his pay to other issues.*

*Council members are unanimous that Sir Christopher is the right leader for the University as it undergoes fundamental long-term transformation, and that his breadth and depth of experience is critical to Southampton's long-term success.*

## **2. Our request:** That the PowerPoint from the November All Staff Briefing be made readily available to students

**The University's response:** *The the reason the Powerpoint presentation wasn't shared more widely initially with students was because it was created with a staff audience in mind, as part of the regular series of staff briefings. We completely understand that students have questions about the proposed changes, and that is why we created a student FAQ document responding to questions raised with us directly by students. This document is regularly updated and available for students to read on [SUSSED here](#).*

*A copy of the presentation was provided to the Students' Union President and Sabbatical Officers shortly after the staff briefing to inform ongoing consultation with student academic representatives. We're happy for the PowerPoint to be shared in ongoing discussion with students.*

**3. Our request:** That monthly Student Forums take place in the months leading up to, and after, the restructure to answer students' questions and provide regular updates

**The University's response:** *The Vice-Chancellor initiated the Student Forum here at Southampton when he first joined. He is very supportive of using this approach as a way of hearing directly and personally from students, while at the same time creating an opportunity to respond to issues raised. We held the first Student Forum of this academic year in October 2017 and this led to most issues being resolved within four weeks. We held three Student Forum roadshows before the Christmas break to answer questions about the voluntary severance scheme for students in Humanities, Chemistry and Health Sciences, and follow-up meetings in these areas are planned for February and March this year. We also have a University-wide Student Forum on a larger scale planned for Wednesday 2 May. We would be very happy to arrange additional such forums if students think they would be helpful.*

*Incidentally, the question refers to "the restructure" which is slightly misleading. The move from eight to five faculties is not a staff restructuring, it is literally a new faculty structure.*

**4. Our request:** That the additional drop-ins that were promised to students prior to Christmas are held

**The University's response:** *Some of the meetings before Christmas had to be cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances, including illness, but the replacement meetings are in the process of being re-arranged and we will be sharing dates and details with students as soon as we have this confirmed.*

**5. Our request:** That the University evidence how they will minimise any disruption caused by changes made over the summer

**The University's response:** *Minimising any potential disruption to students and staff is the key principle for our new Strategy Implementation Team working on the high-level Faculty changes that will take effect from 1 August 2018. We are identifying all the individual elements which will need addressing, from IT systems to signage, so we can plan those that definitely need to be in place by 1 August, and those that can take place after 1 August. Our core approach - to ensure the smoothest possible transition and minimal impact to our students - will be simply to “lift and shift” from one faculty to another, where appropriate. This means, for example, departments with the existing structure, staff, students and degree scheme are simply designated as being in new faculties, but remain in their existing locations. We understand the importance of keeping students informed as plans evolve and will continue to do so through the Students' Union, within faculties, and directly to students.*

**6. Our request:** That the University evidence how they will minimise any disruption caused to students whose programme will change Faculty over the summer

**The University's response:** *The “lift and shift” approach mentioned under Q5 will ensure that we avoid any potential disruption to subject areas being regrouped as part of the move to the new Faculty structure. As there are no changes in the degree courses as a result of these changes, we are not anticipating disruption to students at subject-level. We will continue to work with the Students' Union Sabbatical team and the network of academic representatives to support students and answer further questions as we get closer to 1 August, when the changes take effect.*

## 7. Our request: that the University evidence, in light of the student concern expressed in the All Student Vote result, how they will ensure that student experience is maintained for all students

**The University's response:** *The Vice-Chancellor has been clear that we will do nothing that could compromise our students' experience. Indeed, we are committed to improving the experience of our students. Our aim in making these changes is to ensure a sustainable and consistent basis for continuous improvement of the student experience. This is based on us being responsive, working collaboratively, and communicating effectively with our students. A major focus of the University's Ten Year Plan is to support the University in achieving our goal of being placed consistently as one of the world's top 100 and the UK's top 10 universities and we can only achieve this by ensuring a highly-positive positive experience of our students.*

*All our staff are committed to ensuring that the education, research and training that we deliver for our students continues to be of the highest quality. We will continue to work with our staff across the University, with the Students' Union and with your academic representatives to achieve this. This year we are working with HR to encourage a specific student experience objective to be included in all staff members' annual objectives.*

## 8. Our question: Why was a restructure initiated in the first place?

**The University's response:** *Our current university structure of eight separately-managed faculties, including two separate faculties teaching and researching in engineering, contributes to siloed activity and a siloed approach, and it doesn't play to the University's strengths. It also makes little sense to the outside world, so a more considered and simplified arrangement will provide clarity and improve the positive perception and reputation of our University. The new faculty structure will enable us to further strengthen our education and research, create new opportunities for interdisciplinary activity and, in turn, pursue broader strategic themes. This will also allow us to streamline processes, administration and communication, and support an improved student and staff experience.*

**9. Our question:** Will the student representatives on the Faculty Executive Boards be elected reps from the Students' Union, and will they provide a full coverage of the student population in terms of UG, PGT and PGR representation?

**The University's response:** *It was the Vice-Chancellor's idea that there should be student members on the new Faculty Executive Boards, and we are actively discussing this proposal with the Students' Union President, VP Education and other Sabbatical Officers. We are aware of the strengths of our existing academic representation network, which is highly regarded by staff and students. We are also keen to ensure that we make the best use of the time of our student representatives, involving them in joint work and engagement with the new Faculty leadership. The exact form this will take is yet to be finalised and we are very interested in student views. In part, this will be informed by the terms of reference of the new Faculty Boards and the distribution of responsibilities between these Boards and other Faculty Committees. The coverage of UG, PGT and PGR representation has been specifically discussed with the Students' Union President and Vice-Presidents, and will form part of the proposal that will be discussed before they are presented to Senate in the spring.*

**10. Our question:** Are Schools going to be applied to the whole University, and will they serve an educational purpose?

**The University's response:** *The move from eight to five faculties and the associated subjects included in each Faculty were formally approved by University Council in January 2018, following a recommendation by Senate. The arrangements for the appointment of Deans to the new faculties was also approved. This means that we can now finalise the details and principles of the Faculty sub-structures, in particular the structure of Schools and Departments, whose purpose is to provide a well-resourced structure for educational and research purposes. A proposal will be made to Senate to consider in mid-February for approval by Council in mid-March.*

## 11. Our request: That the University explain the process of student consultation over the restructure that has taken place up until this point

**The University's response:** *Our aim is always to keep students informed regarding changes across the University and following the initial discussion of the proposals at University Senate in November, which is attended by Students' Union representatives, the Vice-Chancellor sent an all-student email to inform students of the proposed changes to the University. We set up a meeting to discuss the changes with the Students' Union Sabbatical team and with the elected Faculty Officers on 16 November to hear their initial views. Many questions and ideas were raised as a result, which we have been working on subsequently. We continue to work with the sabbatical officers answering questions and sharing information. We provided the Students' Union with copies of the presentation made to staff at the November all-staff address to help inform communication with students.*

*The Union President, VP Education and PGR Representative are all members of University Senate and have therefore heard the proposals at the earliest stage alongside other Senators, and so have had full opportunity to raise points and ask questions before the proposals were formally approved by Senate members.*

*An email address - [shapingouruniversity@soton.ac.uk](mailto:shapingouruniversity@soton.ac.uk) - was set up in November available to everyone in the University, and emails were responded to personally by the Vice-Chancellor and other senior executives. The Vice-Chancellor has also met directly with a number of students groups to hear their views since the proposed changes were announced. We will continue to meet with students to discuss the faculty changes and other issues as we hugely value the feedback we have received so far.*

*We have also arranged a number of open meetings with students and staff within Humanities, Chemistry and Health Sciences, as areas under discussion for voluntary severance. Further meetings will happen in February and March, details of which will be communicated to students accordingly.*

**12. Our request:** That the University outline what additional consultation will take place over the coming months

**The University's response:** *As mentioned under Q11, we value our students' views and feedback and we will continue to meet and discuss the changes with our students during this academic year and beyond. In May, we will be holding our next University-wide Student Forum which will be an opportunity for students to discuss any issues and share their feedback on their student experience – both positive and negative – with the Vice-Chancellor, members of the Executive Group and the Students' Union. We will be announcing further details on our Student Communications channels.*

### **13. Our request:** That the University, to be more transparent, reveal the rationale behind the six departments selected for the Voluntary Severance scheme

**The University's response:** *Over the last 18 months, the University Executive Board has had to address the reality of our staff costs and numbers, which have risen at a rate far higher than our growth in student income and research income. Staff costs are still rising at a time when student numbers – and revenue from fees – are actually falling in the medium term. We also know from extensive benchmark exercises that our staff costs are increasingly out of kilter with staff costs at other Russell Group universities, and our productivity in some areas remains too low. At the same time, our research income, which also supports staff costs, has not grown as rapidly as planned.*

*Like other universities, we also face unprecedented external political, regulatory and financial factors, from TEF and league tables to the politicisation of higher education and the pressure on university pensions. It is a time of acute pressure on all universities, and Southampton is not immune to this, so we need to address these challenges head on.*

*Instead of a crude blanket approach, the University Executive Board (UEB) agreed that this should be based on an objective assessment of the performance and financial sustainability of each subject area, to inform decisions about where we can make savings alongside delivering improvements to quality and financial sustainability. This analysis provided the data and evidence for use by Deans and UEB in identifying areas in which cost savings could be made through a Voluntary Severance scheme, without compromising the delivery of quality teaching and research. The Faculties themselves were involved from the start in developing these plans and identifying the areas selected for the Voluntary Severance scheme. It is important to appreciate that this scheme was voluntary, and there were no redundancies.*

**14. Our request:** That the University provide students with an update on the progress of the Voluntary Severance scheme, and the next steps following its closure

**The University's response:** *We are currently considering the requests for Voluntary Severance which have been received and we will be providing a further update to staff and students within the next month.*

**15. Our request:** That the University evidence how they will ensure, in reference to Voluntary Severance/further staff cuts, that Postgraduate Researchers and Postgraduate Taught students whose supervisors leave, will have their interests protected.

**The University's response:** *The University regularly needs to adapt when colleagues leave the University or take time away for a variety of reasons, including retirement and maternity leave. In any of these scenarios, the continuity of supervision and education for our students is paramount and our approach is to work to solve any issues arising from this in consultation with staff and students involved. We will take a similar approach if this issue arises as a result of the proposed changes.*

**16. Our question:** How were the Departments and areas offered Voluntary Severance chosen?

**The University's response:** *Please see the answer to Q13.*

**17. Our question:** Many students choose to undertake doctoral study here to be supervised by specific staff, so how will the University manage the experience for these students?

**The University's response:** *As indicated in our answer to Q15, the University regularly needs to adapt when colleagues leave the University or take time away for a variety of reasons, including retirement and maternity leave. In any of these scenarios, the continuity of supervision and education for our students is paramount and our approach is to work to solve any issues arising from this in consultation with staff and students involved. We will take a similar approach if this issue arises as a result of the proposed changes.*