

Being a Senate Assessor on Court

Working in a large University inevitably, you become very involved in the day to day of your own area whether this is a School or Institute. I had previously been a member of the University Learning and Teaching Committee and that helped me appreciate the wider context of the University. I had found that role interesting particularly hearing from colleagues working in different subjects and discussing common issues and areas of practice. It was this opportunity to contribute as a Senate Assessor on Court across the University in many different activities that interested me. Working across the University has been challenging especially in understanding the complex and dynamic nature of the University but rewarding.

The core of the role of Senate Assessor is being a member of the University Court, a significant responsibility. As a Senate Assessor I see part of my task is to draw on my experiences as an academic with a wide remit across teaching, research and management to consider the challenges facing the University and examine whether the strategies and decisions are in the best interests of the University.

Attending the University Court which meets five times in the year and the Court Strategy day is one important dimension of the role but there are also the committees of Court where Senate Assessors have a place. I have been on the University's Human Resources Committee for the last two years as a range of initiatives have been taken forward. Examining the development and implementation of these initiatives is part of ensuring that the best interests of the University remain at the centre of policy and decision making. Other Senate Assessors sit on different committees that deal with areas such finance, estates. Each committee will have five meetings in the years. As well as being on Court Committees and University-wide committees such as the Library Committee, part of my role is to contribute to other activities which relate directly to Colleges and Schools: the yearly Reward and Recognition Committee, Promotions Committee and appointment panels for Heads of School. In this work there are busy times (for me recently January to March) especially for these annual meetings where there is a significant amount of material to go through. I also have been the Senate Assessor in the Periodic Subject Reviews. Despite the sound of another weighty set of papers landing on my desk, I always feel I have gained as an academic from this work particularly the PSR. As the University is embarking on a generational programme of development, the role of Senate Assessor is, to my mind, both rewarding and important.

On a final note, part of my interest in the role is a concern for representation and equality. The University today is a very different from the institution I enrolled in as an undergraduate now more than forty years ago. It is more complex and more diverse in its student body and in its staff and so as a female professor I thought it an important responsibility to take on. And, as I said earlier it is one that has been both challenging and rewarding.

Christine Forde, Senate Assessor