



The  
University  
Of  
Sheffield.

Strategy,  
Planning &  
Governance.

## **The Council, 22 February 2016**

### **Alumni engagement and Convocation: update**

At its meeting in July 2014, Council approved the final report of a task and finish group charged with reviewing the University's arrangements for alumni engagement. Key among its recommendations were the adoption of a statement of the purpose of alumni relations and the establishment of the Alumni Board. As a corollary to the establishment of the Board, Council agreed that that Convocation be invited formally to disband itself.

The Alumni Board is now established under the chairmanship of Richard Mayson and will present its first annual report to Council in July 2016.

Convocation held its last meeting in November 2015 and a final report from the Chair of Convocation is appended.

## Report from the University of Sheffield Convocation

1. This is the final report from Convocation which had originally been created by the Charter in 1905. It has successfully looked after its Members and supported the University in its attempts to climb up the greasy pole of the World Ranking League Tables.
2. Convocation has always had access to funds but those funds were never used in respect of individual members. Funds were, however, used to support the Student Societies or University Departments which had a need for funds over and above their particular allocation. Items were gifted to the University or pump-priming monies allocated to Departments.
3. As time went on and budgets were either more fluid or open to reconsideration, so Convocation was less involved in small donations but was approached for a substantial contribution towards the Student Union's Media Hub and latterly contributions towards Sheffield Volunteering.

### The 21<sup>st</sup> Century

4. Convocation was never created for the current era or the size and extent of its membership or electronic communication. Convocation had always been an amateur organisation.
5. Of late, it has been difficult to access the membership data. This was linked to two particular problems for Convocation. One problem was that it was by University Statute only composed of the graduates of the University whereas there were many more people who obtained qualifications from the University and wanted to support the Institution and the second problem was the lack of a fulltime organisation to run Convocation which clearly was now needed.

### The Alumni Office

6. Whilst Convocation was indeed critical of the way in which the University sought to create an Alumni Office in the late 1980 and 1990s, nevertheless the formation of the current Alumni Office was welcomed by Convocation and it has been entirely possible throughout this century to exist side by side and work to support each other.
7. Having been removed from the Charter, Convocation has taken a view that now is indeed the time to look at a different way forward and Convocation readily supported the creation of the Alumni Board and believes that the Board and DARE will effectively represent and support the interests of all those who have passed through this University. The maintenance and enhancement of the value of a degree from the University of Sheffield remains a proper objective.

### Convocation Fund

8. Until the early 1980s the UK Government made a *per capita* payment to a University through the Local Authorities in respect of each graduate for the purpose of maintaining post-graduation contact. This was passed on to Convocation. When the UK Government stopped doing that, this University came to an arrangement with

Convocation whereby the University paid Convocation's running expenses and Convocation was left to manage its own Fund.

9. The beneficial interest in that Fund is held by a trust and currently the Trustees are myself, Chris Furness, Elizabeth Gillott and Joan Travis. The monies are held broadly for the same aims and objects for which the University exists.
10. At its General Meeting in November 2015, Convocation decided to suspend itself *sine die* and endorsed the proposals that the trustees should dispense the money of the Convocation Fund in accordance with suggestions from the Alumni Board. It is anticipated, therefore, that the Alumni Board will be able to consider unique, interesting and entertaining ways in which the money can be used in the best interests of the University and its Alumni. As three of the Trustees serve on the Alumni Board it would not be expected that there would be any difficulty in securing the Trustees' consent.

### **And Finally**

11. I cannot let the opportunity pass without expressing the thanks of Convocation and my own personal thanks to the Senior Officers of the University, in particular the current ones but not forgetting those who have been in the University in the past and subsequently retired, for their on-going support and help throughout the life of this Body.

**Brian Wrigley**  
**Chair of Convocation**