



St Cuthbert's Society

June 12th 2018

Dear Council member,

The purpose of this email is to describe an important change in the governance arrangements for the Durham Colleges, and how it affects you as a member of Cuth's College Council. In a nutshell, College Councils are to cease to exist, and will be replaced by an explicitly advisory body. This may well come as a disappointment to you and I want to set out the reasons for it, and to assure you both about what it does, and what it does not, imply.

This significant change has come about as a result of a top-level review of the governance arrangements for the Colleges and the other departments delivering the wider student experience in Durham University. In formal terms, University Council (the University's governing body) has decided that the existing system of College Councils, with Chairs drawn principally from among the members of University Council, is unsatisfactory for at least two reasons – firstly, despite clarity in terms of reference that they are advisory bodies, their formal establishment as Committees of Council implies a supervisory role they do not have (though this was in fact their role in earlier years); secondly, University Council members serving as College Council Chairs are placed in a position of potentially conflicting interests, and thus one that compromises their primary role as members of University Council.

As a result, University Council resolved to disestablish all College Councils in the fourteen maintained colleges, and to replace them with College Advisory Boards (CABs). It will take time to recruit the necessary members, but it is anticipated that all Boards will become fully operational during the academic year 2018/19. This means that over the next few months, the College Councils will be stood down, and your own membership of Cuth's College Council will come to an end. The exact end date is yet to be decided, and I will write to you to inform you of the date once it is known; however, I am writing to you now to give you advance notification.

I would like to stress that there is absolutely no implied criticism of any College Council or any of their members in this decision. Clarity in governance is an obligation of any public body, and something to which higher education is having to pay increased attention. The role of our College Council in advising and supporting me as the Head of College has been invaluable, and that role will continue explicitly in the work of the newly-constituted College Advisory Board. I thank you most warmly for the contribution you have made to the College Council's work to date.

The terms of reference that University Council have set out for the new Advisory Boards include a fairly specific composition of the Board membership, and accordingly I will

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need to take some time to review how we will achieve this in our own College. I will write to all members of College Council further about this matter, too.

For now, allow me to repeat my thanks, to repeat the assurance that this change does not in any way reflect upon the existing work of the College Council, and to say how much I hope that you will be able to continue to support the work of the Society and the life and experience of its student community.

Very best wishes,

Professor Elizabeth Archibald
Principal, St Cuthbert's Society

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