

Academic Staff Member Election 2022

Colin Pulham

I joined the University in 1992 as a Royal Society University Research Fellow and have since held multiple roles within the School of Chemistry including Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Course Organiser, Director of Studies (Personal Tutor), and Director of Teaching. Since 2008, I have been Professor of High-Pressure Chemistry and have developed a vibrant research programme focussed on crystallisation science, often working closely with industry to translate research into socio-economic impact. An example is a long-standing partnership with a local company that has resulted in the development of the world's first commercially viable heat batteries that enable increased use of locally generated renewable energy and off-peak electricity, thereby reducing use of fossil energy sources and carbon emissions as well as tackling fuel poverty. During the period 2019-2021, I was elected Chair of the Heads of Chemistry UK and have worked closely with the Royal Society of Chemistry in supporting the discipline. Since August 2015, I have been Head of the School of Chemistry and will be stepping down from this role at the end of July 2022.

My time as Head of School has been very enjoyable and highly rewarding, if at times rather challenging. It has provided me with very valuable insight into the structures, processes and cultures of this university, and has highlighted the often adverse effects that implementation of new policies and systems can have on academic and professional services staff. Examples include many aspects of the People & Money programme, and the Sustainable Travel Policy, which in its current state is simply not fit for purpose. Moreover, the proliferation of multiple new initiatives with little consideration of how they will be implemented within Schools, combined with a lack of understanding and awareness of their negative impacts on our colleagues, is a major concern. This is particularly striking in view of the hard work and dedication of colleagues that has sustained the University through the challenges of the pandemic. All too often, the impacts on Schools appear to be forgotten – an inexplicable approach given that it is the Schools who are responsible for delivery of so much of the University's core business of teaching, research, and knowledge exchange. Also apparent is the frequent mismatch between the University's stated values and how it actually behaves, particularly with regard to its staff.

Hence, I firmly believe that there is a requirement for greater scrutiny and oversight by the University Court of the University Executive's decisions, policies and initiatives. Of particular importance is the assessment of the impact that implementation of these policies and initiatives has on staff within the Schools, including more robust and realistic identification and mitigation of risk. If elected, I will bring my experience as a former Head of School to assist the Court in its role of ensuring that the University's key processes and procedures are fit for purpose. Furthermore, I will use my experience to ensure that the University aligns its behaviour with its stated values, especially in its treatment of our staff