Amendment to Grace 2 of 12 June 2024 (EJRA) initiated under Special Ordinance A (ii) 5: Notice in response

28 June 2024

The Council has received a proposed amendment to Grace 2 of 12 June 2024, put forward by 64 members of the Regent House (Reporter, 6747, 2023–24, p. 706). The Grace recommends the retention of the Employer Justified Retirement Age (EJRA) but with changes to its scope and other revisions to the University’s Retirement Policy.¹ The Council notes that the amendment seeks the abolition of the EJRA by removing reference to the fixed retirement age from Special Ordinance, replacing the Report’s recommendations. The amendment, if approved in the ballot, would take immediate effect, when the outcome of the ballot is announced on 23 July 2024.

The Council has agreed to authorise submission of the amendment under Special Ordinance A (ii) 7, with some minor changes to the drafting (see below). This will enable a vote to be taken on the proposal to abolish the EJRA at the earliest opportunity. The Council is content that, if the amendment were to be approved in the ballot, it would be possible for its immediate impacts to be managed and for other implications to be considered over the longer term without any major disruption to the operations of the University. Most changes resulting from the abolition of the EJRA would be cultural – setting expectations, standards and norms – and these could be introduced over time. Providing additional tools for Heads of Department, to manage their staff more effectively, would be necessary but also a sensible step in any case. Those tools could draw on examples of good practice from across the University, where some institutions have already introduced their own ways to support the development of their staff. Institutions could be encouraged to adopt better practices because they result in better relationships. Also, proposals for changes to the provisions that aim to protect academic freedom are likely to be presented in due course as part of a review of the disciplinary procedure for officers. When there is capacity for that review, the Council and the General Board would be asked whether they wish to consider further changes as a consequence of the abolition of the EJRA.

The Council has also considered the costs of abolition of the EJRA, noting the Review Group’s estimate of approximately £7.4m a year in steady state on additional salary costs, compared to £2.2m if the EJRA is increased to 69.² In the event that the ballot results in the abolition of the EJRA, the Finance Committee and the General Board will, as part of the normal budgetary process each year, examine how the consequential financial implications can be managed.

Options on the ballot paper

The Vice-Chancellor has made minor changes to the wording of the amendment, using her authority under Regulation 11(c) of the Ordinance for Graces and Congregations. The effect of these changes is to remove imperfections in the drafting, so that the amendment has the intended effect (if approved) of amending Special Ordinance C (ii) 12, rather than simply replacing the Report’s recommendations with the alternative of abolishing the EJRA.

The revised wording of the amendment in full is as follows, with the minor changes to the text highlighted in bold:

That the recommendations in paragraph 14 of the Joint Report of the Council and the General Board, dated 14 May 2024, on the University’s Retirement Policy and Employer Justified Retirement Age (Reporter, 6741, 2023–24, p. 578) not be approved and that instead

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¹ See the Joint Report’s recommendations, Reporter, 6741, 2023–24, p. 578.
² See paragraph 5.4.8 of the Review Group’s report.
Special Ordinance C (ii) 12 (Statutes and Ordinances, p. 77) be amended to read as follows, having the effect of abolishing the Employer Justified Retirement Age:

12. Subject to the provisions of Statute C and any Special Ordinance made under Statute C, a University officer shall be entitled, unless the tenure of their office is limited in accordance with the provisions of any other Statute or Ordinance or by Grace, to hold office until their employment terminates so long as they satisfactorily perform the duties of the office.

The Vice-Chancellor has decided that the options on the ballot paper in the vote on Grace 2 of 12 June 2024 will be as follows:

(A) In favour of the Grace in its original form
   - The EJRA only applies to academic officers, the Vice-Chancellor and the Pro-Vice-Chancellors
   - The EJRA takes effect at the end of the academic year those officers reach 69
   - The changes to the Retirement Policy and Ordinances are made with effect from 1 September 2024, as set out in the Report

(B) In favour of the Grace as amended
   - The EJRA is abolished for all officers, both academic and academic-related, of any age, with immediate effect

(C) Against the Grace, whether in its original or amended form
   - The EJRA is retained for all officers, both academic and academic-related, as it currently stands, retiring at the end of the academic year in which they reach 67

The Single Transferable Vote regulations\(^3\) will apply in this ballot. Online voting will open at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, 10 July and close at 5 p.m. on Monday, 22 July 2024. Hardcopy voting papers and supporting materials will be distributed not later than Wednesday, 10 July to those who opted in November 2023 to vote on paper; the last date for the return of voting papers is 5 p.m. on Monday, 22 July 2024.

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\(^3\) Statutes and Ordinances, p. 121. See also the explanation of the voting system on the governance site: https://www.governance.cam.ac.uk/ballots/rh/Pages/STV-explained.aspx.