

Council of King's College, London
Strand, London
WC2R 2LS

Dear Council of King's College, London,

We want King's to become democratic in 2020, and to participate in choosing our next Principal. The KCL Council – our 'supreme governing body' – makes choices about covid-19, pay freezes, pension cuts, or tuition fee rises. It is almost entirely unelected. We would like to change that.

The [King's College London Act 1997](#) required that our KCL Council had elected representatives. There were 8 elected staff members, 3 elected student members, and 2 elected professional service staff members. But in 2009, elected members were abolished without reason. Now the [Statutes](#) say there are to be 8 members of staff, and 1 student, but no elections, save 3 members appointed via the Academic Board. In the words of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, 'a cardinal tenet of democracy is that people must be free to choose freely whom they want to support.' We therefore call on the KCL Council to arrange for full and free elections.

Better universities are more representative. To give three examples, [Cambridge](#) University has 16 representatives elected by staff, and 3 by students, on its 23 person Council. The [Higher Education Governance \(Scotland\) Act 2016](#) requires a minimum of 2 elected staff members, 2 trade union representatives, and 2 student representatives. [Oxford](#) University's 25 person Council has 11 members elected by staff, and 4 approved by staff, plus 3 student attendees.

There are many benefits of elected staff and student representation. Elections help resolve conflict [by democratic means](#), avoiding shutdowns and protests. Empirical evidence shows that with greater voice, there is less [strike action](#), [more productivity](#), and a [greater sense of community](#). This is important in times of crisis. But it is fundamentally a moral issue. Staff and students are the university. We are not human 'resources'. We have rights, and our voices should elect our governing body. We look forward to a positive answer from you as soon as possible.

Yours Sincerely,

KCL is Democratic

www.KCLisDemocratic.net

Draft timetable for KCL 2020 elections

1. First month: Council of King's College, London gives a written commitment to hold elections for at least 8 academic staff, 3 students, and 2 professional service staff members.
2. First month: any necessary negotiations are held on the timing, and voting regulations for new elections.
3. Second month: Statutes of King's College, London are amended through a resolution of the Council to reflect the new settlement. Arrangements are made for electronic voting.
4. Third month: elections by staff are held for new members of King's College, London.
5. Third month: in consultation with the KCL Student Union, arrangements are made for student representation, acknowledging (1) that student union elections usually take place each February, (2) that it may be desirable to align these dates, and (3) to pay regard to degree structures of Masters and PhD programmes, as well as undergraduates.
6. New year: new Principal of King's College, London is formally appointed, with the consent of the whole Council. This will be considered the first success of the new democratic model.