

SENATE

Open Minutes

Of the Teams meeting held on Wednesday, 24 March 2021.

Present via Teams meeting:

Professor Nick Braisby	Vice-Chancellor (Chair)
Professor Rachel Cragg	Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Digital
Ms Ellie Smith	University Secretary and Clerk to Council
Ms Julie Irwin	Director of Student Success
Professor Florin Ioras	Director of Enterprise and Research
Ms Miriam Moir	Interim Academic Registrar
Professor Karen Buckwell-Nutt	Director of the Institute for Health and Social Care
Dr Russel Stone	Head of School, Media & Creative Industries
Dr Kevin Maher	Head of School, Business, Law & Computing
Professor Paul Morgan	Head of School, Human and Social Sciences
Professor Phil Wood	Head of School, Aviation & Security
Professor Sri-Kartini Leet	Head of School, Art, Design & Performance
Mr John Hathaway	Elected representative, Business, Law & Computing
Ms Lauren Vincent	Elected representative, Art, Design & Performance
Mr Rob Penhaligon	Elected representative, Media & Creative Industries
Ms Daisy Toscano	Elected representative, Health Care & Social Work
Ms Louisa Berry	Elected representative, Aviation & Security
Dr Dearbhla Gallagher	Elected representative, Human & Social Sciences
Dr Sainey Faye	Nominated representative, University Partnerships Board
Mr Richard Jones	Nominated representative, Education Committee
Ms Tamsin Grainger	Students' Union President
Ms Natasha Neal	Students' Union Vice-President- Education & Welfare
Mrs Leah Hill	Senior Registry Officer: Governance and Quality (Secretary)

Apologies

Professor Gavin Brooks	Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Dr Margaret Greenfields	Nominated representative, Research and Enterprise Committee
Ms Helen Ayo-Ajayi	Elected representative, Nursing & Allied Health

Minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2020

21.01 The Minutes of the virtual meeting held on 16 December 2020 were approved as an accurate record.

Matters Arising / Status of Actions

21.02 It was noted that all outstanding actions were complete. The Chair welcomed Fiona McCormack to Senate as the nominated member from the Professoriate.

Chair's Actions

21.03 Chair's Actions taken since the last meeting in December 2020 were noted and endorsed.

Chair's Report

21.04 A report document had been circulated to members in advance of this meeting and the following points were highlighted by the Chair:

- The University is currently forecast to make a small surplus of c. £0.5m, reflecting year-on-year growth of c. £1.6m and some £4.6m ahead of the prudent deficit budget set for the year.
- Student recruitment is showing a mixture of positive and negative signs. There has been a 24% uplift in applications. However, conversion to acceptances are significantly down at this point, -24% year-on-year. In some respects this pattern reflects a national picture reported by UCAS, but our pattern is more marked, with a greater gain than the sector in applications, and a greater decline in acceptances.
- Many students on practical programmes have returned to campus recently to a hybrid curriculum. The University awaits further government guidance regarding the return of the remainder of our students. The Chair encouraged all staff to make use of asymptomatic testing, and where possible, to encourage students to do so too.
- The OfS continues to launch consultations on policy changes some of which could have significant impacts on the University and the sector. Amongst these, there is a consultation on Quality and Standards, Monetary Penalties, and we anticipate further consultation on measures to strengthen free speech and academic freedom. A new Chair of OfS has been appointed and we can anticipate a marked change of tone and emphasis with this new appointment.

Debate – Free Speech / Prevent: Informing the University's Position

21.05 Senate received a government white paper concerning free speech and academic freedom in Higher Education. Louisa Berry delivered a presentation providing some additional background information:

- Free speech is fundamental to our society. It is the lifeblood of democracy and the cornerstone of a free and liberal society. Academic freedom enjoys a special status, with additional protections recognised in law and culture, as centres of enquiry and intellectual debate, bastions of free thought. Ideas must prove themselves in the arena of evidence and debate.
- Wider concerns include the perception that free speech leads to students being expelled; academics fired; threats of violence; feeling of being silenced; cancel culture; 'chilling effect' of views being suppressed. The white paper acknowledges that Universities do have measures in place but raises concerns that this is not enough. The Government wants Universities to strengthen measures.
- The relationship between free speech and prevent duty was highlighted.
- Proposals that HE providers must do more to defend free speech and provide more protection. Universities are asked to:
 - be at the forefront of ensuring a culture that values free speech is embedded and actively challenge those who would curtail it.

- In advance of legislation - to review existing internal practices against expectations and make changes where necessary.
 - 'engagement with stakeholders' – however no dates or timeline given.
- 21.06 Senate members engaged in a positive discussion covering the points above and potential next steps. The following key points were noted:
- Consideration regarding how best to promote a safe space for students to voice their opinions/express their views without the fear of facing severe consequences. It was acknowledged that this is more difficult to manage in an online environment.
 - Concerns raised about the level of understanding of this area amongst staff and students which could be adding to feelings of discomfort or reluctance to discuss controversial topics in class / a public forum. A suggestion to create more of a debate culture within the institution was positively received. It was noted that debates form part of a number of professional programme's content already.
 - What it means to exercise the right to free speech without offending others.
 - The boundaries of acceptable language and approach was discussed and it was agreed that the area of a whole community response to promoting free speech should be explored further within the Curriculum 23 project.
- 21.07 The Chair concluded by thanking Louisa Berry for preparing and leading this important discussion.
- 21.08 The debate topic for the next meeting of Senate was confirmed as: Widening Participation issues - what this means for the University in terms of challenges and strengths, which would be led by Margaret Greenfields.

Matters for approval / discussion / information

A. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee

- 21.09 The Terms of Reference for the addition of an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee was given to Senate. It was noted that the Committee would report into both Senate and Council and was an important addition for continuing to create and foster inclusion within the University.
- 21.10 Senate approved the addition of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee to the Committee structure of the University and the associated Terms of Reference.

B. Quality Enhancement Committee

- 21.11 The proposal for the addition of a Quality Enhancement Committee was presented to Senate after having been discussed and agreed at the recent Education Committee.
- 21.12 Senate queried whether a link to Academic Planning Committee (APC) had been considered. It was confirmed that although no direct link to APC was planned, there would be representation, via Rachel Cragg, Pro-Vice Chancellor, on both QEC and APC.
- 21.13 Natasha Neal, VPEW, requested the addition of 'or nominee' to the ex-officio membership 'Students' Union Vice-President: Education and Welfare' within the terms of reference.
- 21.14 Senate approved the addition of the Quality Enhancement Committee to the Committee structure of the University and the associated Terms of Reference.

C. Academic Integrity Charter

- 21.15 Senate received a paper concerning the Academic Integrity Charter which stated that higher education providers are being invited to sign up to a new sector Academic Integrity Charter during the academic year 2020-21.
- 21.16 It was reported that Education Committee has considered the benefits to the University of signing up to the Charter and recommended to Senate that the University becomes a signatory to the Charter.
- 21.17 Senate were pleased to approve the request for the University to sign up to the Academic Integrity Charter.

D. REF 2021 submission – summary paper

- 21.18 A summary paper outlining the imminent REF 2021 submission had been circulated to Senate in advance of the meeting.
- 21.19 The Director of Enterprise and Research thanked all colleagues who contributed to the process and invited Senate members to send any further comments they may have to him after the meeting.
- 21.20 Senate supported and noted the submission.

E. Annual Monitoring – final Quality & Standards Report

- 21.21 An interim report on Academic Quality and Standards was presented to Senate at the meeting in December 2020 from which Senate confirmed its confidence in the University's maintenance of Quality and Standards.
- 21.22 Senate noted the final version presented to this meeting.

Reports to Receive:

Council Report

- 21.23 The Minutes from the meetings held on 9 February 2021 had been circulated and were received.

Student Union Report

- 21.24 The Report submitted by the President and Vice-President of the Students' Union had been circulated and was received.
- 21.25 Senate noted the concerns raised within the report and supported the Pro-Vice Chancellor's intention to explore this further with the School and SU.

Academic Planning Committee

- 21.26 The Minutes from the meetings held on 3 December 2020 and 11 February 2021 had been circulated and were received.
- 21.27 Senate was reminded that the Minutes of these meetings were confidential and business sensitive.

Education Committee

21.28 The Minutes from the meeting held on 27 January 2021 had been circulated and were received.

Research and Enterprise Committee

21.29 The Minutes from the meeting held on 23 February 2021 had been circulated and were received.

Matters for Endorsement:

External Examiner Approval Panel

21.30 Senate received the update from the External Examiner Approval Panel and endorsed the decisions made in each instance. It was noted that the inclusion of a section to this report, concerning coverage across the institution, would be helpful going forward.

Action: Miriam Moir, Interim Academic Registrar

New Programmes of Study and Revalidations

21.31 The report detailed recommendations to Senate of programmes presented to Approval Panels where conditions had been signed off. The Academic Registrar also noted the following programmes which had been considered at approval panels in recent days:

MA Music Business (approved)

MA Music & Audio Production (approved)

21.32 The programmes were presented to Senate and endorsed.

Date of the next meeting

The next meeting of Senate is on Wednesday 9 June 2021 at 2.00pm.