



The  
University  
Of  
Sheffield.

Office  
Of  
The President &  
Vice-Chancellor.

UEB/2020/0505/02

## Minutes

## University Executive Board

**Date:**

17 March 2020

**Present:**

Professor K Lamberts (KL) (in the Chair)

Professor J Derrick (JD), Professor S Fitzmaurice (SF), Professor S Hartley (SH), Professor M J Hounslow (MJH), Ms J Jones (JJ), Professor W Morgan (WM), Professor C Newman (CN), Professor D Petley (DP), Mr R Sykes (RS), Professor G Valentine (GV), Professor C Watkins (CW)

**In attendance:**

Dr T Strike (TS), Mr I Wright (IW) (item 1.3), Mr S Foxley (items 2 and 3).

**Apologies:**

**Secretary:**

Mr N Button (NB)

### 1. Coronavirus update

#### 1.1 Headline Scenarios – Student Recruitment

1.1.1 UEB considered the impact of the coronavirus outbreak on student recruitment issues. Attention was drawn to the potential impact on different student cohorts and types, the need to influence government and other policy makers to minimise disruption to universities, and the wider work the University was engaging in to support all applicants, offer holders, and current students.

1.1.2 UEB noted the information contained in the update and that there would be further discussions on these issues as the situation developed.

#### 1.2 Closed Minute and Paper

#### 1.3 HR related policies

(Mr I Wright in attendance for this item)

1.3.1 UEB received an update on HR related policies following government advice that people should work from home where possible. Attention was drawn to the closure or partial closure of various services across the University, including libraries, Students' Union facilities, and catering facilities, and the need for Departments to take a pragmatic approach to ensuring that their operations were not materially affected by changes in working arrangements and that general productivity was maintained.

1.3.2 During discussion, UEB noted the following:

- Heads of Department's two key priorities were ensuring that teaching was successfully moved to online provision and that the basic functioning of their Departments – particularly on issues like student support – was maintained.

- On student support, it was important that some face-to-face provision was continued.
- Research and other work requiring laboratory equipment would be severely impacted by those facilities shutting down, including if they were only kept open for essential functions.
- The move to online provision would be supported by bringing forward the Easter break to give Departments and academics additional time to plan and prepare. This would also facilitate reconsideration of the examination timetable.

### 1.3.3 UEB agreed:

- (a) The Easter vacation would be brought forward by two weeks and commence on Monday 23 March. The end of the Easter vacation would be brought forward by one week to Sunday 20 April. A paper proposing this would be submitted to the Senate meeting on Wednesday 18 March and, if agreed, approval would be sought from Council subsequently. This would then be communicated to Heads of Department at a briefing due to be held on Thursday 19 March. Appropriate communications would then be sent out to students and staff, highlighting to staff that this additional time was for the purpose of supporting the transition to online delivery of teaching.
- (b) As a result of a change to the Easter vacation, further consideration would be given to adjusting the examination timetable to ensure that all learning outcomes were preserved.
- (c) The arrangements around laboratory work would be considered by the University's Research Group, although UEB expressed a preference that, as much as was possible, this provision should be continued, with appropriate safeguards in place to aid social distancing. Any decision would be kept under careful review as the situation developed.
- (d) Further communication about staff working practices would be issued to aid clarity in a fast-moving situation.

### 1.3a Recruitment Pause

- 1.3a.1 UEB considered a proposal to pause all non-essential staff recruitment for the duration of the coronavirus outbreak given it was likely that the ability to hold recruitment, selection and induction activity would be badly compromised. Any proposed exceptions would be taken to the weekly meeting of the Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Group for consideration, including externally funded posts. This would apply to all posts that had not yet been advertised and would also extend to the AMRC.
- 1.3a.2 UEB agreed the proposals contained in the paper in principle. Further detailed guidance would be prepared and circulated to UEB.

### 1.4 UEB Business Continuity and Contingency Planning for Council, Senate and UEB

- 1.4.1 UEB considered business continuity and contingency plans for University Council, Senate and the Executive Board. UEB agreed the following:

#### Senate

- For the Senate meeting on Wednesday 18 March, the option would be extended for members to attend virtually through the Blackboard system. This could then be rolled forward to subsequent meetings for as long as required. As much as

possible, the agenda for the next meeting would be maintained. It was noted that Senate had a quoracy of 20.

### **Council**

- As with Senate, Council members would be given the choice of attending meetings in person or virtually. There were provisions for the Chair of Council to take substantive decisions between meetings and in the event that Council itself was unable to meet. The agendas for Council meetings would be curtailed to the most urgent and essential items. It was noted that Council had a quoracy of seven.

### **University Executive Board**

- The same provisions as for Council and Senate would be provided to UEB, with the option for members to attend virtually. Sub-committee Chairs and Secretaries would be asked to plan for virtual attendance at their meetings and remove non-essential items from their agendas, but to work under the assumption that meetings would continue as normal if there were items that needed to be discussed.

1.4.2 UEB also agreed to submit to Senate a proposal to allow early graduation of students in the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry, and Health. This would assist with the additional pressure being put on the NHS from the coronavirus outbreak and, although some additional summative assessments may be required for a small number of students, many had already completed the necessary academic and professional requirements. The President & Vice-Chancellor, as Chair of Senate, would approve recommendations for the award of degrees.

2. **Closed Minute and Paper**

3. **Closed Minute and Paper**

4. **REF update**

This item was deferred.

5. **Faculty Planning**

This item was deferred.