



The Council, 11 July 2016

Report of the Senate

Date: 22 June 2016
Chair: The Vice-Chancellor
Secretary: Dr West

1. Vice-Chancellor's report

The Vice-Chancellor presented a report covering the following main areas:

- (a) Higher Education White Paper: Senate received an overview of the HE White Paper. It was reported that it was important to recognise that Government's approach to improve the sector was based on increased marketisation of the sector. This perspective was refuted as it was felt that there is already a significant amount of competition within the sector and the UK HE sector is one of the most successful in the world.
- (b) Higher Education and Research Bill: The Bill proposed replacing the Further and Higher Education Act 1992; creating the Office for Students; creating UK Research and Innovation; and introducing the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) with new metrics and the potential to increase fees within a cap. The student perspective of TEF was that it was a way of increasing tuition fees.
- (c) Teaching Excellence Framework: The University's approach to 'excellence' has been to focus on what was important to the institution in terms of its mission, values and identity.

The TEF would be in addition to the existing Quality Assurance system and would be an extra cost for institutions. Participation in the TEF was technically voluntary, although by default the University was in TEF Phase 1, with the later stages being voluntary. The use of metrics was viewed as a way to differentiate between providers and linked to marketisation of the sector, although the University is aware that the metrics were by their nature 'proxy' measures that did not fully capture 'excellence'. Linking the TEF to fees would enable institutions meeting the criteria to increase fees by inflation, so this would not result in a real terms increase in fees.

In year 1 of TEF, 2016/17 all providers with a successful QA award would receive a 'Meets Expectations' rating and consequently be able to raise fees in line with inflation - 2.8% - in 2017/18. Year 2 of TEF, 2017/18 was an optional, trial year with a technical consultation to inform implementation. A number of colleagues had expressed an interest in being on the national TEF Panel and this was encouraged as it assists the University in understanding the process.

A Steering Group has been set up to provide direction and involves key academic, professional services and students' union representation. In terms of the

timescales, BIS' technical consultation on the TEF closes on 12 July with applications opening in October 2016 and closing in December 2016. The judgements would be made in February and March 2017, with awards made in April 2017. The University planned to follow this with a lessons learned exercise.

- (d) **Office for Students**: The OfS has been based on the model of a regulator in other sectors, for example water and electricity supply, and would be funded by institutions. However, the regulation of these markets was not viewed as a suitable model.
- (e) **Degree apprentices**: There was cross party recognition of a need for new vocational or industrially sponsored routes. However, they should not be viewed as a cheap alternative to more traditional HE qualifications as degree apprentices require good quality teaching and it is critical to have the research context.
- (f) **Research**: It was reported that the Higher Education and Research Bill proposed changes to the structure of the Research Councils, with the existing Research Councils amalgamated into UK Research and Innovation. Regarding funding, HM Treasury are beginning to understand that funding research on a flat-cash basis is not sustainable. The Stern Review report is likely to be published in July. Preparatory work for the next Research Excellence Framework has been undertaken, including the 2016 annual stocktake. The Global Challenges Research Fund will not be within the remit of Research Councils and is intended to be a genuine inter-disciplinary funding pot. Sheffield is seen as a leader in industrial funding, particularly through the AMRC and NAMRC. The University had played a leading role in the successful SCR bid to participate in the first round of Science and Innovation Audit to assess the assets of a region and understand what the commercial opportunities might be.
- (g) **EU Referendum and our international community**: An open letter from the heads of HE institutions, including the University's Vice-Chancellor, had been published in the Independent. The Vice-Chancellor thanked those areas of the university that have held referendum debates, for example the Politics Department and the Students' Union working with Student Services. Members of Senate were encouraged to keep progressing EU funded research applications. In the event of a 'leave' vote the negotiating period between the UK and the EU would be 2 years. A list of Frequently Asked Questions is being compiled and members of Senate were asked to send any questions arising from a 'leave' vote to eu@sheffield.ac.uk.
Politics has had a wider impact on universities as a home for international talent. For example, the rhetoric and policy on immigration and visas was seen as damaging to trust and recruitment. The University has responded positively in a number of ways, including by making the case for international scholarship beyond borders; registering students to vote; working with others to make a strong case on post-work study and removing students from migration figures; leading on #weareinternational; setting up the All Party Parliamentary Group on International Students; pressing for policy to be devolved to the City Region; and hosting the UKCISA annual conference in Sheffield.
- (h) **Financial approach**: The University's approach was to be vigilant on costs and to ensure that it is making the best use of capital expenditure. There has been action on international students and a greater focus on campaigns and student support via philanthropy.
- (i) **Thanks**: The Vice-Chancellor, on behalf of Senate, thanked Richard Jones who will step down as Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research & Innovation on 1 September 2016; Tony Ryan who has stepped down as the Pro Vice Chancellor for the Faculty of

Science; and Tony Weetman who stepped down as Pro-Vice-Chancellor for the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health earlier this year. The Vice-Chancellor also thanked the outgoing Students' Union officers for their work during the year.

2. Our Strategic Plan: Learning and Teaching Plan (2016-2021)

Senate approved a Learning and Teaching Plan 2016-2021 and noted that the Plan will be received by Council.

The plan sets out the strategic direction for learning and teaching by highlighting the key areas of focus for the coming five years. By establishing a number of major themes, it would allow all faculties, departments and professional services to plan their activities to support the overall vision. The Plan was produced following an extensive period of consultation with staff, students and alumni. Over 600 individuals took part in various consultation activities between November 2015 and April 2016.

Points noted in discussion included the following:

- It was important to look beyond metrics and look at the student journey to see how improvements could be made. As part of this student engagement was an important aspect of 'excellence'.
- The Students' Union view was that the University should not participate in the voluntary aspects of the TEF.

3. Our Strategic Plan: Implementation of 'Our Research and its Impact' (2016-21)

Senate endorsed the draft implementation plan for the 'Our Research and its Impact' section of the University Strategic Plan, which will also be received by Council.

The implementation plan set out the institutional direction of travel in the following four strategic areas:

1. Concentrate our focus on key research strengths, where we are acknowledged global leaders
2. Continuity and resources for major growth programmes
3. Increase high quality international research partnerships
4. Promote new initiatives for early career researchers

The draft plan was intended to be generic in nature, so that it provided the appropriate context to support both faculty and cross-cutting research strategies.

Points noted in discussion included the following:

- In relation to the involvement of Faculties other than the Faculty of Engineering in the Advanced Manufacturing Park (AMP), the Faculty of Science has been looking at whether there are opportunities at the AMP that would be suitable.
- Regarding the issue of travel time for staff between the campus and the AMP it was explained that the Faculty of Engineering's approach has been to have a discovery centre in the central campus and a translation centre at the AMP, as a translational centre required a large space and was of lower density.
- Doctoral students are looking to strengthen their contribution to, and role within, the University and representation on the Research and Innovation Committee could be one way of achieving this.

4. Report of the Council

Senate received a report on the meeting of Council held on 25 April 2016.

5. Reports of committees

5.1 Committees of Senate

Senate approved the reports of the following committees:

- (a) Learning and Teaching Committee
(Meetings held on 11 April and 18 May 2016)
 - (i) Languages for All – fee waiver eligibility relaxation: Senate approved the principle of relaxing fee-waiver eligibility restrictions for all students for Languages for All. It was noted that a business case outlining the costs, benefits and implications would be brought back to Senate before implementation.
 - (ii) Lecture Capture: Senate approved a proposal to delay full implementation of opt-out lecture capture by one year with full implementation of the lecture capture policy for 2017/18 onwards. It was noted during discussion that implementation was a Learning and Teaching process, rather than a technical one and that delaying implementation by one year would enable for a more successful implementation.
 - (iii) Governance Structures for Learning and Teaching: Senate approved a revised governance structure for the sub-committees of the Learning and Teaching Committee.
 - (iv) General Regulations: Senate approved a number of amendments to the General Regulations.
 - (v) Collaborative Partnerships: Senate approved new collaborative arrangements, as set out in the report.
 - (vi) Programmes of study: Senate approved the new, significantly amended and discontinued programmes approved by Faculties between 9 February and 3 May 2016.
- (b) Research Ethics Committee
(Meeting held on 11 May 2016)
 - (i) Conflicts of Interest Procedure: Senate approved the proposed procedure for dealing with potential UREC members' conflicts of interest.
- (c) Research and Innovation Committee
(Meeting held on 19 May 2016)
 - (i) Sheffield Institute for Nucleic Acids (SINFoNiA): Senate approved the establishment of a new Sheffield Institute for Nucleic Acids.
 - (ii) Transfer of Research Data Relating to Human Participants: Senate approved new principles and a procedure to govern the transfer of research data relating to human participants between principal investigators within the University.
 - (iii) Change to the University's Definition of Healthcare Research: Senate approved the change to the University definition of healthcare research.
- (d) Senate Nominations Committee
(Meeting held on 2 June 2016)
 - Senate Representation on University Committees: Senate approved the appointment and reappointment of Senate representatives on University committees as indicated in the Report.

- (e) Senate Budget Committee
(Meeting held on 9 June 2016)

5.2 Other committees

Senate received for information the reports of the Finance Committee (meeting held on 14 March 2015), Human Resources Committee (meeting held on 10 March 2015), and Health and Safety Committee (meeting held on 8 February) which were approved by Council at its meeting on 25 April 2016. Senate also received a report on actions taken by the Honorary Degrees Committee (meeting held on 10 March).

6. Legacy Gift

Senate approved the sending of a letter from the Vice-Chancellor, as Chair of Senate, to progress the administration of a significant estate, which had been bequeathed to the University, and to authorise the named individual to act as the University's and Senate's representative.

7. Quarterly Financial Results

Senate received for information the Quarterly Financial Results to 30 April 2016.