



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

University
Secretary's
Office.

The Council, 28 November 2016

Report of the Senate

Date: 19 October 2016
Chair: The Vice-Chancellor
Secretary: Dr A West

1. Vice-Chancellor's report

- 1.1 The Vice-Chancellor presented a report based on the presentation provided to Council as part of his report to Council on 17 October, including the post-Brexit landscape for HE and the UK's international standing; the HE and Research Bill; and areas of opportunity and challenge:
- 1.2 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Learning and Teaching gave a presentation on the development of the Teaching Excellence Framework, which was discussed in detail by Council on 17 October. Members recognised a number of inherent risks associated with the TEF, in particular that a 'TEF league table' might affect recruitment and that tuition fees set below the maximum might be perceived to imply lower quality provision. These matters would be subject to a detailed cost/benefit analysis that also considered the bureaucratic burden and associated costs of the TEF.
- 1.3 The Acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation gave a presentation on the development of the Research Excellence Framework and the University's preparatory work:
 - (a) Stock-Take: During 2016 the University undertook a review of research activity. The review had considered a sample of outputs from eligible staff, and impact case studies from departments and provided feedback to help departments and faculties understand their preparedness. It provided evidence of the excellence of research in a breadth of institutional activity but has also pointed to the need to strengthen outputs and impact.
 - (b) Stern Review: Lord Stern's review of the REF had reported in July and recommended a number of changes to the process for the next exercise, in 2020. In particular, that all research active staff would be submitted and upper and lower limits on the number of individual outputs permitted. The Stern Review advocated new institutional-level case studies and the inclusion of broader bodies of underpinning research. With respect to research environment, a new institutional-level template would mean shorter narratives for units of assessment and increased use of metrics. Senate also noted the likelihood that submission to multiple UOAs would be abolished in 2020.
 - (c) Next Steps: A technical consultation on the Stern recommendations will conclude shortly to inform guidance that would be published during 2017 along with the rules and criteria. Submission would occur in 2020 and results announced in 2021. At

institutional level, a further evaluation of progress will be undertaken in 2017 that took into account the impact of the Stern Review and focused on supporting enhanced performance in specific areas.

1.4 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor provided a more detailed update on developments since the EU Referendum on 23 June:

- (a) Certainty: The Government has confirmed the position on some key issues for the HE sector. Senate welcomed the ability for new and continuing non-UK EU students to access student finance for the duration of their course and that they will be eligible to retain home fee status. It is also positive that HM Treasury has agreed to underwrite existing Horizon 2020 projects, including those that extend beyond the UK's departure from the EU, and funding for ERASMUS+ has been confirmed until 2020. Similarly, during the transition period, normal rules of residency will continue to apply to non-UK EU citizens.
- (b) Outstanding Issues: The timeline for the UK leaving the EU was not yet known. Although the Prime Minister has stated that the formal process would be triggered by March 2017 this was not certain. Whenever this occurred, the two-year negotiation and transition period will be marked by a high degree of complexity and challenge that will be felt across all sectors, including HE. The sensitive nature of those negotiations and consequent lack of detail about many of the issues at hand is likely to create significant uncertainty throughout the negotiation process.
- (c) The University Response: The University has aimed to be as proactive as possible in its response to the EU Referendum result and subsequent developments but Senate was encouraged to suggest other possible actions that could usefully be taken. There have been regular updates to students and staff via a dedicated website that has been running, and is regularly updated, since 24 June, and direct communications such as an immigration information session for concerned staff. In addition, research activity continues to be actively encouraged, both EU funding applications and the development of research partnerships. Externally, the University-led #weareinternational campaign has been relaunched on a global scale and is contributing to the wider policy debate in Government, including through the White Rose office in Brussels.

2. Strategy Delivery Group

Senate received a presentation from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor about the work of the Strategy Delivery Group, which she Chaired under the sponsorship of the Vice-Chancellor, and the context in which it was operating. Attention was drawn to the following:

- (a) Context and Purpose: At a time of increasing challenge for HE it is timely to consider how the University could maintain and enhance its institutional strength on a sustainable basis. The cumulative impact of a number of factors on the University's financial forecasts is growth in expenditure outstripping growth in income. It is essential for the University to address this gap whilst enabling delivery of strategic objectives. Throughout the process SDG is seeking an open dialogue with staff and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor will be holding a series of open door sessions for individual colleagues.
- (b) Workstreams: SDG operates as a programme group to facilitate more specific action, e.g. at local level, with input from a range of colleagues across the University. An overarching framework comprises three workstreams within which these activities can take place: (1) University-wide review of distinct activities in a number of areas designed to maximise their impact; (2) cost management review, focusing on how to control and where possible reduce costs whilst enabling growth in

income; and (3) review of professional functions, activities and services. The latter will encompass areas of professional activity in both faculties and professional services and seek to identify how these supported strategic delivery and how this could be enhanced.

- (c) Costs Management Review: The Chief HR & Corporate Officer provided an overview of the Staff Release Scheme, which had been established under workstream 2 (see above) and was launched on 20 October. SRS is a centrally determined scheme which will enable members of staff to voluntarily leave their employment in return for a payment, subject to local considerations and an agreed business case. The scheme also provides opportunities for future operational effectiveness and change to maintain and enhance the student experience and wider academic endeavour. Senate noted that although Students' Union staff had been involved previously it was important that the SU Officers and wider student body are engaged in the process.
- (d) Review of Research Support Activity: The first review under workstream 3 (see above) is concerned with research support activity. As a research intensive institution it is vital that supporting structures are effective and appropriately located. The review will focus on both Research and Innovation Services and support available within the Faculty of Engineering, as a case study – but each faculty is represented on the review group to ensure that the matter is viewed holistically.

5. Report of the Council

Senate received a report on the meeting of Council held on 7 July 2016.

6. Reports of committees

6.1 Committees of Senate

Senate approved the reports of the following committees:

- (a) Learning and Teaching Committee
(Meetings held 5 July and 28 September 2016)
 - (i) Terms of Reference and Membership: Senate approved amended Terms of Reference and Membership for the Learning and Teaching Committee and the Committee for Collaborative Provision.
 - (ii) New, significantly amended and discontinued programmes: Senate approved new, significantly amended, suspended and discontinued programmes approved by Faculties since 4 May 2016.
 - (iii) Other Matters: Additional topics covered in the report included the draft implementation plan for the Learning and Teaching Strategy, the new requirements for greater Council involvement in receiving information about academic quality assurance, the National Student Survey 2016 results, recent bids to the HEFCE Catalyst fund and student evaluation of learning and teaching.
- (b) Senate Budget Committee
(Meetings held on 7 July and 29 September 2016)

Senate approved amendments to the committee's categories of membership to reflect current practice. Attention was also drawn to the Committee's planned discussions with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor about Strategy Delivery Group and related communications with Senate. The Chair had held his annual meeting with UEB during June, at which the AMRC had been highlighted as an area where

increasing the awareness and understanding across the University could help to identify new opportunities.

- (c) Research Ethics Committee
(Meeting held on 14 September 2016)

Senate noted an update on work to develop a revised research ethics policy which would be submitted to Senate for approval in December.

6.2 Other committees

Senate received for information the reports of the Finance Committee (meetings held on 9 May & 13 June 2016), Estates Committee (meeting held on 27 May 2016), Health and Safety Committee (meeting held on 11 May 2016), and the Military Education Committee 2015-16, which were approved by Council at its meeting on 7 July 2016. Senate also received the annual report of the Student Services Department 2015-16.