



The  
University  
Of  
Sheffield.

University  
Secretary's  
Office.

## **Minutes Meeting of the Senate**

**Date:** 18 March 2020

**Present:** The President & Vice-Chancellor in the Chair  
Dr P Ali, Dr A Alshreef, Professor K Ayscough, Professor W Baird, Professor P Bath, Professor S Beck, Professor S Bhaumik, Professor A Bingham, Dr L Bingle, Professor J Brazier, Mr D Boufidis, Professor J Boxall, Professor C Buck, Professor G Brown, Mrs A Cantrell, Professor D Coca, Professor P Crowther, Professor J Derrick, Professor S Fitzmaurice, Professor J Flint, Dr D Forrest, Professor G Gee, Professor J Grasby, Dr V Halliday, Professor J Harrison, Professor S Hartley, Professor A Hindmoor, Mrs A Horn, Professor R Horn, Professor M J Hounslow, Professor N Hughes, Professor R F W Jackson, Dr J Jones, Mrs A Hidalgo-Kingston, Professor J Kirby, Dr W Kitchen, Ms M Li, Professor L Maltby, Professor T Moore, Professor W Morgan, Professor K Morris, Mr D Newberry, Professor C Newman, Dr S D North, Mrs Z Ollerenshaw, Professor A Pacey, Professor G Panoutsos, Professor D Petley, Mr C Porter, Dr L Robson, Dr S Rushton, Mr R Simpson, Professor N Sims, Professor D Sinclair, Dr S Staniland, Mr R Sykes, Professor M Tait, Professor G Valentine, Mr J Verity, Professor M Vincent, Dr T Walther, Professor C Watkins, Professor M Williamson, Dr L Wilson, Professor E A Wood.

**Secretary:** Dr T Strike

**In attendance:** Mr M Borland, Dr M Butler, Mr A Colley, Dr E Smith, Mr D Swinn, Ms S Whitby, Ms T Wray

**Apologies:** The Senate received apologies from 9 members.

### **WELCOME**

The President & Vice-Chancellor (P&VC) welcomed members to the virtual meeting of Senate.

### **1. President & Vice-Chancellor's Report**

The President & Vice-Chancellor (P&VC) presented the report and provided updates:

- (a) COVID-19: The safety of staff and students was the primary concern. The University had announced a temporary move to online teaching and colleagues were in the midst of transitioning tuition. Further decisions would be required by Senate and at an operational level. Government had given itself additional powers to respond to the virus and a statement by the Education Secretary regarding schools, colleges, and universities was expected later on Wednesday 18 March.

- (b) Student Recruitment: There would be uncertainty regarding international recruitment for 2020/21 and potential implications for Home recruitment, through increased competition for these students within the sector. There was a need to have mitigating measures in place. Work was being coordinated by the Vice President Education through a UEB Task and Finish that had been established to consider the size and shape of future student recruitment. With regard to A Level examinations, there had been speculation that the examination period could be delayed until Autumn 2020, which would squeeze the recruitment and induction activities of universities and prompt consideration of the academic year calendar.

During discussion, Senate was informed that there had been one confirmed staff case, one confirmed student case, with 44 students self-isolating. The University was still open and any decision to close buildings would be made as, and when circumstances dictated. Communications regarding this would be sent to HoDs. Discussions were ongoing in relation to examinations and alternative arrangements, with the University committed to no detriment regarding graduation. Communications would be issued and included in the FAQs on the webpage. Decisions regarding the carrying over of funds for research and related activities would be made in due course. Industrial action funds were being used to mitigate the impact of action and maintain learning outcomes, within the context of local need.

The merits of holding virtual Open Days was being explored. It was clarified that the ELTC International Summer School would be conducted online. Research suggested that 99% of students had online access and the Learning and Teaching Coronavirus Sub-Group planned to consider the issue at its meeting on 19 March. Developing and marketing quality online degrees would require significant investment and time and would likely be more suited to certain specialist areas of the University. The Russell Group were lobbying UKRI regarding “no cost” extensions for research staff. Circumstances could mean that it would be necessary to revisit and review departmental budgets and the Planning Round would then need to take this account.

## **2. Inaugural Address from the Vice-President for Research**

Senate received and noted a presentation from the Vice President for Research on her thoughts and reflections on research at the University. The ambition was for research at TUoS to be world-leading, delivering outcomes and impacts through interdisciplinary research geared to global challenges, and to be outward facing with international research partnerships. Two questions for the institution to consider were whether the University’s research was good as it could be, and whether members of the University desired change. The Research and Innovation Sub Group on the Vision and Strategy had prioritised a focus on research excellence and delivering the best PGR and early career researcher experience. Further components being considered was whether the institution was sufficiently ambitious and whether the institution should engage more widely beyond the city region. In concluding, the VPR believed that the University was a fantastic institution that could achieve greater success.

During discussion, the VPR expressed confidence in finding international partners whose ambitions and aims aligned with those of the University. REF 2021 was currently scheduled to proceed as planned, however, there were discussions taking place at the national level. It would take time to develop the institution’s culture, working with faculties and departments, to enhance the University’s

competitiveness. Specific communications have been disseminated to laboratory based PGR students, with further communications planned for 20 March.

### **3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 December 2019**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2019, having been circulated, were approved as an accurate record.

### **4. Matters Arising on the Minutes**

An update on Expectations of PGR Students (20 March 2019 item 5) was provided. Following discussion at Senate regarding changing the fee paying period for PGRs Senate agreed an Implementation Group would be formed to consider the concerns raised and develop proposals which would be brought back to Senate in due course. Proposals are being prepared by Research Services, Student Recruitment and Admissions, and Global Engagement with an options appraisal prior to returning to Senate. It is likely any changes once agreed would have effect in 2021/22.

There were no other matters arising on the Minutes that were not covered elsewhere on the Agenda.

### **5. Matters Requiring Approval**

Senate received and noted a summary of the matters within the Reports from Committees of the Senate and Other Matters sections of the Agenda for which Senate's formal approval was sought and that two additional papers had been circulated as part of item 7.

### **6. Vision and Strategy**

Senate received and noted a verbal update on the Vision and Strategy. Extensive consultation had taken place and work had been undertaken on different strands, coordinated through UEB and Vision and Strategy Sub Groups. The initial timescale was to present an outline to March Senate and to Council in April. However, given the current circumstances the Chair of Council had agreed with the President and Vice-Chancellor to pause the work. It was expected that the priorities would be revisited later in 2020.

### **7 a) Proposed Amendments to the Council Regulations in regard to the Membership and Powers of Senate**

Senate received and considered a paper from the University Secretary that proposed amendments to the Council regulations in regard to the Membership and Powers of Senate.

Senate agreed to recommend to Council amendments to Regulation IX:2 Composition of the Senate. This would enable the Heads of the three parts of the AMRC to be nominated to sit on the Senate. It would also enable academic, teaching and research staff in the three parts of the AMRC to be included in the extra-Faculty

elections to Senate, and be entitled to stand in the Senate elections and to vote for candidates in that constituency.

During discussion, it was clarified that the Vice President for Education and the Vice President for Research would make a joint nomination regarding which Extra-Faculty HoDs would be nominated to serve on the Senate.

Senate also agreed to recommend to Council an amendment to Regulation IX:1 Powers of the Senate. The University Secretary drew attention to the University Charter, which set out the University's power to rescind a degree, and that Senate delegated this to the P&VC, however, the existing Charter power is not included in the listed Powers of Senate in the Regulations. The proposed amendment would rectify this.

Senate received and endorsed an amendment to Regulation XIV under the Notes for Students on Registration. The amendment provided additional text in Regulation XIV to provide a clearer link from the Senate power to the Senate Regulations regarding the withdrawal of awards.

Senate received and endorsed amendments to Regulation IX:4, Delegation of Powers of the Senate. Following the receipt of legal advice, these amendments would enable the P&VC to nominate the Deputy Vice-Chancellor or a Vice-President to exercise the powers under paragraphs 4.1.2 and 4.1.7 on his behalf. The suggested amendments had been approved in principle by the Council on 24 February, subject to Senate being content.

It was also clarified that the proposed approach would allow the Student Administration Service to bring forward a procedure for the withdrawal of an award to Senate through the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee, as permitted through the amendment proposed in the Regulations.

## **7 b) Semester Dates: Proposed Changes in Response to COVID-19**

Senate received and endorsed a proposal to waive the provision in Regulation XIV: 18 that a semester must comprise a period of fifteen weeks (in view of the extraordinary circumstances brought about by COVID-19), and agreed to recommend to Council, by correspondence, to change the semester dates for students, ending two weeks early and returning one week early,

Attention was drawn to the rationale for the proposal which would reduce the loss of teaching time and allow additional time for the preparation for moving to online teaching and assessment.

During discussion, it was noted that the Student Union were supportive of the proposal and could assist in communicating with students. The SU position would be communicated to Council. There would be a need to communicate clearly and consistently with students. The challenge of managing student expectations would require thought about how best to deliver learning outcomes.

One approach regarding the timing of teaching would be to use timetabled lecture slots for staff to be available online to students.

Regarding the timescale for the move from face to face to online teaching, it was noted that many Russell Group institutions planned to cease face-to-face teaching on 20 March and an announcement regarding the closure of schools was expected on 18 March.

The proposal was anticipated to enable staff time to adapt and design assessment changes. Coursework deadlines would need to be looked at in the context of each programme, rather mandated. It was appreciated that there would be challenges for staff and thinking in different and pragmatic ways would be beneficial. It was recognised that there would be specific impacts in relation to clinical teaching

It was not yet clear how a 14-week Semester would be split between teaching weeks and examination weeks. The University would need to be as flexible and

pragmatic as possible with respect to extending the examination period outside the usual timeframe. Guidance would be produced to address the concerns of students related to the nature of examinations and group projects.

### **7 c) Proposals for the Early Graduation of Medical Students**

Senate received and endorsed a proposal, in response to a Department of Health and Social Care request, to expedite the award of degrees to final year medical students in order that these graduates could enter the NHS workforce as soon as practicable. This was in order to assist the NHS in addressing the anticipated significant strain on its workforce resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic.

During discussion, it was outlined that this process was expected to enable final year medical students to begin work in the NHS in May, rather than the usual start time in August. There would be a two-phase process to accommodate students undertaking resits or who were ill during the first phase. A recommendation and report on action taken would be presented from the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health at the next Senate.

## **REPORTS FROM STATUTORY BODIES**

### **8. Report on the Proceedings of the Council**

(Meeting held on 25 November 2019)

Senate received and noted the Report on the Proceedings of the Council.

## **REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES OF THE SENATE**

### **9. Report of the Senate Research and Innovation Committee**

(Meeting held on 5 February 2020)

Senate received and approved the Report, including:

- revised Terms of Reference so that the approval of new and amended research degree programmes and PGR quality assurance processes would be considered by Senate Research and Innovation Committee, and,
- revisions to the General Regulations for Higher Degrees, Postgraduate Diplomas and Postgraduate Certificates.

### **9. Report of the Research Ethics Committee**

(Meeting held on 12 February 2020)

Senate received and approved the Report, including a new audit procedure for ESRC-funded projects, as set out in Appendix 1, and that this become part of the Research Ethics Policy.

Attention was drawn to new guidance regarding the submission of data collection tools as part of an ethics application, new HR guidance regarding the payment of participants, the Annual Ethics Approval Report, and concerns about compliance with the Ethics Policy.

### **10. Report of the Senate Academic Assurance Committee**

(Meeting held on 3 March 2020)

Senate received and approved the Report. Attention was drawn to the discussion with the Vice-President for Education at the previous meeting of the Committee.

**11. Report of the Senate Budget Committee**

(Meeting held on 5 March 2020)

Senate received and approved the Report. Attention was drawn to the Committee's consideration of the Budget Pack and that the use of budget enhancements appeared to have succeeded to some extent as the gap between expenditure and budgeted expenditure was smaller than in previous years. In relation to the Planning Round SBC had noted that there were different approaches taken in different Faculties.

**12. Report of the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee**

(Meeting held on 11 February 2020)

Senate received the Report and approved the following:

- (a) Discontinuation of the existing Senate Employability Board.
- (b) Revised Terms of Reference for Senate Learning and Teaching Committee in line with similar changes to the Terms for Research and Innovation Committee (see 9. above.)
- (c) Revised Graduate Teaching Assistant/Associate Policy
- (d) New, significantly amended, and discontinued programmes, and title changes and new exit routes approved by Faculties between 24 September 2019 and 27 January 2020

Attention was drawn to the plans to establish two new management groups to provide broader and more timely input and oversight of the University's employability and careers activity, namely an Employer Advisory Forum with broader representation from different industry sectors and backgrounds, and a Skills and Employability Delivery Group.

During discussion regarding National Student Survey completion, it was clarified that Ipsos MORI currently had no plans to extend the deadline.

**OTHER MATTERS**

**13. Students' Union Complaints and Discipline Annual Report 2018-19**

Senate received and noted the report.

**14. 2018-19 Student Formal Procedures Cases: Report to Senate**

Senate received and noted the report.

**15. Annual Report of the Library 2018-19**

Senate received and noted the report.

**16. Returning Officers Report**

Senate received and noted the report.

**17. Quarterly Financial Results**

Senate received and noted the report.

**18. Report on Action Taken**

A Report on action taken since the last meeting of the Senate was received and noted. Senate noted that since the report had been circulated an additional Chair's Action had been taken to approve a new apprenticeship, the MMedSci Advanced Clinical Practice, which the Division of Nursing and Midwifery wished to provide from Autumn 2020. This was approved out of cycle in order to meet the tendering process timescales.

**19. Major Research Grants and Contracts**

A Report listing major research grants and contracts awarded since the last meeting of the Senate was received and noted.

These Minutes were confirmed at a meeting

held on 24 June 2020

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