



The  
University  
Of  
Sheffield.

University  
Secretary's  
Office

## Minutes

**Date:**

14 December 2016

**Present:**

The Vice-Chancellor, in the Chair

Ms Allen, Mr Ashman, Professor Ayscough, Professor Bateman, Professor Bath, Mr Berlyne, Professor Biggins, Mrs Bingham, Dr Blank, Professor Brandist, Professor Buck, Professor Campbell, Ms Cvasin, Professor Clarke, Dr Conway, Dr Crockford, Professor Crowther, Ms Day, Professor Dobson, Ms Eggett, Professor Fitzmaurice, Professor Flint, Dr Foster, Ms Grant, Professor Hervey, Mrs Horn, Mr Hudson, Professor Jackson, Mr Jary, Dr Kim, Professor Kinsey, Dr Kitchen, Professor Koh, Professor Labbe, Dr Labeit, Professor Latreille, Dr MacIntosh, Professor Marsh, Dr McMillan, Ms McKeown, Mr Morgan, Professor Morgan, Dr Nicholson, Ms Nolan, Ms O'Neill, Dr Paisley, Professor Pitts, Ms Popa, Dr Priede, Mr Rapier, Mr Round, Mr Rowland, Dr Simpson, Professor Sims, Professor Stevenson, Dr Stokes, Mrs Talbot, Mr Trendall, Professor Valentine, Professor Vasilaki, Dr Vismans, Professor Waller, Dr Want, Professor Watkins, Professor West, Dr Williams, Professor Williamson, Dr Wilson, Professor Winder, Professor Winter, Professor Wood

**Secretary:**

Dr A West

**In attendance:**

Mrs Arnold, Mrs Barker, Mr Borland, Mrs Clements, Mr Dodman, Dr Strike, Mr Swinn, Mr Wild, Ms Wray

**Apologies:**

The Senate received apologies from 22 members.

## WELCOME

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed Members to the final Senate meeting of 2016.

## DEATHS

The Senate noted with regret the following death, which had occurred since the last meeting:

Joan Hatherly, Senior Customer Services Assistant in the University Library, and a member of staff from 1994 to 2009. Aged 68.

Members stood in memory.

## 1. VICE-CHANCELLOR'S PRESENTATION AND REPORT

The Senate received a presentation from the Vice-Chancellor, in which attention was drawn to the following points:

- (a) Higher Education and Research Bill: The Bill had been debated in both Houses of Parliament attracted extensive criticism from the House of Lords, led by Baroness Alison Woolf. However, to date only Government amendments had been approved. Despite some improvements to provisions relating to institutional autonomy, as currently drafted the legislation could have a significantly adverse effect given the substantial interventionist powers afforded to the Secretary of State, notably to remove a university's Royal Charter. In addition to Baroness Woolf, the University continued to proactively engage in lobbying activity alongside other groups, including the Council for the Defence of British Universities.
- (b) Teaching Excellence Framework: The Teaching Excellence Framework continued to be strongly resisted by the sector on the basis that the current proposal, despite some improvements, would actually measure outputs and not excellence. There were also particular concerns that the final product would not take into account the wider public benefit of university education. The Vice-Chancellor was leading external engagement on the matter through external groups and significant media presence. The PVC Learning and Teaching and the Director of Strategy, Planning and Change were actively supporting internal and external efforts to shape the TEF, including liaison through the Russell Group and working with the Students' Union. However, as a Tory manifesto pledge written by the current Minister for Universities, Science and Research and Innovation, the Government showed no appetite to make significant changes. It was worrying to note the possibility that institutional TEF outcomes could be used to restrict recruitment of overseas students, which would have a potentially disastrous impact on some outstanding institutions due to the distorting effect of the current measures that were used. A report on progress and the latest developments could be provided to a future meeting of Senate.
- (c) International Matters: In the current climate international staff and student mobility was potentially the University's most significant challenge. As previously noted and frequently argued to ministers, in an era of real-terms reductions in public funding for both teaching and research, universities were increasingly reliant on overseas student fees to support expenditure on facilities and to sustain courses in addition to the demonstrable academic and wider economic and cultural benefits that overseas students brought to the UK. Government rhetoric and consultation on international student numbers were taking place in the context of the wider aim to reduce net migration, which was both misguided and unhelpful. It was especially concerning to note that the Home Office was considering reducing overseas student numbers by up to as many as two thirds, despite intense lobbying both from within and outside Government. The wide media coverage of this issue in key countries such as India and China posed a significant risk to international student recruitment, which was exacerbated by negative perceptions of the UK following the EU Referendum.
- (d) Institutional Response: In addition to activity related to the Higher Education and Research Bill the University was undertaking extensive lobbying and awareness raising about the importance of international mobility. The re-launched #weareinternational campaign had been widely supported from the HE and other sectors. This had given it renewed impetus while added strength came from the close involvement of Students' Unions and the NUS, which had recently issued a

timely statement reiterating the enormous benefits of international students to the UK. The business community had been prominent supporters, with the University working closely with the local Chamber of Commerce, the Confederation of British Industry and Institute of Directors. More specifically, the University had been successful in building on existing overseas partnerships in teaching, research and global student mobility whilst continuing to proactively investigate new opportunities. Members were reminded that the meeting of Senate in March would be held at AMRC and enable Members to better understand its work and to consider the wider opportunities for departments and faculties.

- (e) Planning and Finances: Faced with a range of challenges and the need to safeguard long-term sustainability, the University needed to ensure the effectiveness and robustness of its planning and financial processes in order to ensure the institutional ability to sustain the provision of an excellent core academic offer with the flexibility to invest in new opportunities. The Vice-Chancellor thanked colleagues for their efforts to date in considering how to prioritise resources whilst minimising any impact on service delivery. However it was noted that that the University had still been successful in a number of areas, for example increasing research income to record levels during 2015/16. The Strategy Delivery Group was supporting faculties and professional services to effectively manage staff costs and a parallel review of the University's capital expenditure plans had been instigated to ensure that these plans were affordable and did not lead to unforeseen negative consequences at local and institutional level. With respect to capital it was suggested that priority might be given to capital projects that would ultimately reduce running costs, bearing in mind wider concerns about increasing efficiency in the use of space. It would also be necessary to review the proportions of staff costs and capital expenditure relative to income. It was recognised that previous capital plans had been predicated on income growth that was now unlikely to be realistic, whilst balancing the need for facilities that were fit for purpose and met academic needs.

Clarification was provided about how SDG would interact with Senate in order to ensure that there was appropriate scrutiny and accountability for matters within Senate's remit. Members noted the range of wider communications and opportunities for colleagues to engage with the process, and the ongoing work that was planned to take place involving Senate Budget Committee to support transparency and understanding (see Minute 9(a), below). It was further clarified that academic concerns were at the forefront of SDG decision-making but that these extended to ensuring that there was no adverse impact on the overall student experience, including pastoral and well-being support. It was noted that Senate would receive a further update in due course, which might include the issues that had been identified and solutions proposed. In addition, a forthcoming UEB-HoDs Away Day would include a related discussion, in particular about how to ensure that departments could be supported to consider the management of costs in the longer-term without detriment to ambition and delivery of excellence.

- (f) Student Recruitment: It was crucial that the University recruited appropriate numbers of the best quality students. Led by the PVC Learning and Teaching and informed by previous efforts, colleagues involved in recruitment, marketing and planning were working to ensure that the University was able to maximise its strengths and to demonstrate to applicants the significant benefits of studying and living in Sheffield. Members were asked to support this essential activity by ensuring that departmental colleagues responded promptly and with care to admissions queries and ensured that the content of online information and Open Days was exceptional.

- (g) The Year Ahead: The University would enter 2017 faced with a number of uncertainties, all of which would continue to present challenges and demand a constructive and proactive response. The likely implementation of Article 50 following the EU Referendum would have significant impact due to the number of colleagues and students with friends, family and colleagues from across Europe. The impact of Brexit on staff morale and long-term potential drain of talent away from the UK had been a prominent issue at a recent meeting of the Russell Group. It was anomalous that the Government continued to celebrate the relative global strength of UK HE given that this was largely dependent on the contributions of international staff and students in collaboration with their UK peers. Regardless of the final form of the HE Bill, its implementation would affect the University one way or another, which would require careful and informed action. The inclusion of students in the political debate about immigration, wider economic concerns and global developments, notably the inauguration of the US President-elect, would all have an institutional impact. Nevertheless, the University would face these challenges with confidence in its ability to seek opportunities and maximise its strengths, irrespective of circumstance.

## **2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 OCTOBER 2016**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2016, having been circulated, were approved as an accurate record.

## **3. MATTERS ARISING ON THE MINUTES**

There were no matters arising on the Minutes

## **4. 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.

## **REPORTS FROM STATUTORY BODIES**

### **5. REPORT ON THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE COUNCIL**

(Meetings held on 17 October and 28 November 2016)

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

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

### **6. REPORT OF THE LEARNING AND TEACHING COMMITTEE**

(Meeting held on 22 November 2016)

Senate received and approved the Report, including:

- (a) National Student Survey Results 2016: Senate endorsed the actions planned in response to the results of the National Student Survey 2016. Overall satisfaction remained strong at 89% but a series of actions were proposed to support departments in a holistic manner to address persistent issues and further enhance performance. It was noted that from 2017 the NSS would include additional questions focusing on student engagement. It was also noted that a potential NUS-led student boycott of the 2017 NSS, in protest at its proposed use as a measure in the TEF - and therefore a means to increase tuition fees, was a significant risk to institutional TEF performance. The University continued to liaise with the Students' Union on the matter, noting the probability that if a boycott did occur then historic NSS data would be used in the TEF.
- (b) New and Significantly amended programmes approved by Faculties since 21 September 2016: Senate approved the new, significantly amended, suspended and discontinued programmes approved by Faculties since 21 September.
- (c) Amendments to the General Regulations: Senate approved changes to the General Regulations for Higher Degrees by Research relating to admission as a staff candidate.
- (d) Collaborative Partnerships: Senate endorsed the approval of agreements for renewing collaborative partnerships in 2016-17.
- (e) Learning and Teaching Spaces: The development of an institutional vision for formal and informal learning and teaching spaces was noted, including plans to link into wider work about use of spaces and estates developments. It was clarified that this work had only recently commenced and that extensive consultation with students would take place throughout.
- (f) Virtual Learning Environment: Senate noted the draft policy and minimum expectations that had been prepared to support the Learning and Teaching Strategy theme of taking a programme level view of courses. The draft documents had been prepared with reference to extensive feedback from staff and students with respect to current use of the VLE, including strengths and weaknesses. The draft policy and minimum expectations had been tested with learning technologists and students and a process of wider staff-engagement would now be undertaken. The establishment of a VLE oversight group led by the Directors of Digital Learning was noted.
- (g) Working Group on Lecture Capture: Following Senate's previous approval of a recommendation to make the use of lecture capture the institutional norm a working group had been established to develop supporting guidance and resources for staff. It was reported that the Committee had now approved a series of recommendations made by the working group and an implementation group would now be convened to support the next phase of work. Clarification was provided that the next phase would consider a range of issues, including confidentiality and technology, and work with departments to support directors of learning and teaching in applying the scheme appropriately at local level.

## **7. REPORT OF THE RESEARCH AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE**

(Meetings held on 16 November 2016)

Senate received and approved the Report, including:

- (a) Global Challenges Research Fund: A significant amount of preparatory work had taken place and more was planned to ensure that colleagues were aware of the funding possibilities afforded by the GCRF. Alongside awareness raising activities within faculties, other measures included workshops, dedicated guidance and web pages and the offer of one-to-one meetings.
- (b) REF Stock Take: Led by the Deputy PVC Research and Innovation and supported by the Faculty Directors, the institutional REF stock-take was subject to detailed analysis and communication. Priority actions included ensuring that researchers understood expectations for quality outputs and working with departments to maximise the potential of their impact case studies.

## **8. REPORT OF THE RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

(Meeting held on 2 November 2016)

Senate received and approved the Report including approval of a new University Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participant, Personal Data and Human Tissue. The updated policy had been developed following a lengthy and detailed review of the previous policy and subsequent University-wide consultation with staff and students and included two new additional Policy Notes on the re-use of anonymised data and social media research. A dedicated website would be set-up to enable relevant parts of the policy to be accessible in a user-friendly manner but alternative formats would also be made available.

Attention was also drawn to the Committee's ongoing work to review the University's online ethics application system that had resulted in the proposed development of prioritised enhancements and a timeline for completion, and to two new lay members having recently joined the Committee.

## **9. REPORT OF THE SENATE BUDGET COMMITTEE**

(Meeting held on 17 November 2016)

Senate received and approved the Report, including:

- (a) SBC Meeting with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor – Strategy Delivery Group: It was reported that SBC had held a productive meeting with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor to discuss the work of SDG and opportunities for the Committee to support it. A further meeting had been scheduled in January and would be reported to Senate in due course (see also Minute 1(e), above).

- (b) Financial Statements 2015/16, Financial Forecasts to 2019/20 and 2016/17 Budgets: The Committee had held wide ranging discussions that identified the importance of colleagues reflecting on how departments and faculties continued to operate in more constrained times, whilst recognising that this was inherently challenging and appropriate support was likely to be necessary. The Committee had also noted the need for a clear institutional vision and broad understanding about areas of particular strength or excellence together with ensuring that colleagues better understood and appreciated the nature of cross-subsidies and their rationale and impact. Clarification was provided that the trend for the outturn position to be more positive than forecast due to expenditure being below budget had not continued in 2015/16. The University had improved the accuracy of its expenditure forecasts and it was unlikely that there would be a significant change in institutional income and expenditure in the current year. With respect to the use of cross-subsidies it was reported that the University had received the report of the Science Review and both the Faculty and UEB were considering how to respond in a practical and achievable way before wider consultation was undertaken.
- (c) Student Recruitment 2016: The Committee had received an update on student recruitment in 2016, including an overview of trends in average UG tariff since 2014, and noted the increasing use of Adjustment and Clearing as an entry route, both of which were areas to which the Committee would return in future.
- (d) 2016/17 Planning Round: The Committee had received a briefing on the 2016/17 planning round and the supporting documentation that had been provided to faculties and departments, noting in particular the intention to achieve greater integration between strategic and financial planning.

## **REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL**

### **10. REPORT OF THE ESTATES COMMITTEE**

(Meeting held on 11 October 2016)

Senate received and noted the Report of the Estates Committee.

### **11. REPORTS OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

(Meeting held on 17 October 2016)

Senate received and noted the Report of the Finance Committee.

### **12. REPORT OF THE HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE**

(Meeting held on 24 October 2016)

Senate received and noted the Report of the Health and Safety Committee.

### **13. REPORT OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

(Meeting held on 21 September 2016)

Senate received and noted the Report of the Human Resources Committee.

**OTHER MATTERS**

**14. QUARTERLY FINANCIAL RESULTS SUMMARY**

Senate received and noted the financial results for the first quarter ending 31 October 2016.

**15. LIBRARY ANNUAL REPORT**

Senate received and noted the Library's Annual Report.

**16. ANNUAL REPORT OF CASES REVIEWED EXTERNALLY BY THE OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT ADJUDICATOR 2015-16**

Senate received and noted the Annual Report of cases reviewed externally by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

**17. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE APPEALS COMMITTEE OF THE SENATE RELATING TO THE PROGRESS OF STUDENTS 2015-16**

Senate received and noted the Annual Report of the Appeals Committee of the Senate relating to the progress of students.

**18. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DISCIPLINE COMMITTEE AND THE DISCIPLINARY APPEALS COMMITTEE OF THE SENATE 2015-16**

Senate received and noted the Annual Report of the Discipline Committee and the Disciplinary Appeals Committee of the Senate.

**19. REPORT ON ACTION TAKEN**

A Report on action taken since the last meeting of the Senate was received and noted.

**20. 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 16 March 2017

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