



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

University
Secretary's
Office.

Minutes Meeting of the Senate

Date: 24 June 2020

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

Secretary: Dr T Strike

In attendance: Mr M Borland, Dr M Butler, Mrs K Clements, Ms B Eyre, Ms E Lynas, Dr E Smith, Mr L Wild.

Apologies: The Senate received apologies from 8 members.

WELCOME

The President & Vice-Chancellor (P&VC) welcomed members to the virtual meeting of Senate, including Beth Eyre, Students' Union President Elect, and Ellie Lynas, Students' Union Education Officer Elect, who were attending as observers.

1. President & Vice-Chancellor's Report

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

- (a) Student Number Controls: The Department for Education had confirmed the University's temporary student number cap. The University was working with

representative bodies and mission groups to advocate against student number controls becoming a long-term measure.

- (b) COVID-19 sector support: Michelle Donelan, Universities Minister, had said it was unlikely there would be any additional funding for the HE sector. The feedback received to date on the Ministerial University Research and Knowledge Exchange Sustainability Taskforce was somewhat mixed. The University was currently working on the assumption that no further support would be forthcoming.
- (c) Immigration: The Immigration Bill, and the new immigration system it introduces, was due to come into force in January 2021. The specific details of the new points-based immigration system for students and staff was not yet available. Students arriving in the UK after 1 January 2021 would apply for a visa under the new arrangements.
- (d) Planning: Departments and Professional Services would see a 15% budget reduction for 2020/21. Dependent on student recruitment for 2020/21 further actions could be required and work would take place to prepare further options that could be utilised, if required.

Discussion focused on student recruitment. It was highlighted that application numbers were healthy and restrictions in recruitment would come from the ability of students to travel, progress regarding campus re-opening, and student appetite for blended learning. Different scenarios, including a worst-case scenario were discussed.

The reference in the Report to the “local UCU Branch Executive” in the fourth bullet point of section 8.2 regarding industrial action should have instead referred to the “full branch membership at an Extraordinary General Meeting”.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 March 2020

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2020, having been circulated, were approved as an accurate record, subject to an amendment to show Anne Horn had attended the meeting.

3. Matters Arising on the Minutes

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

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.

5. Academic quality, standards and the student experience during the coronavirus pandemic:

(i) Leadership, Management, Governance and Assurance during the COVID-19 crisis, including meeting Office for Students requirements

Senate received and noted a report which set out the operating arrangements for Council and Senate assurance based on the leadership, governance and management arrangements which have been adopted during the University's emergency planning and response to COVID-19.

(ii) Managing the impact of COVID-19 on Learning and Teaching

Senate received and noted a report which set out the approach that had been taken to managing the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on learning, teaching and assessment and summarised key decisions. Attention was drawn to compliance with Office for Students (OfS) requirements; the work of a Covid-19 Learning and Teaching sub-group; a Safety Net policy; the changed timings of Examination Boards; the role of external examiners would continue as normal but be undertaken remotely; the release date of results had been moved; the dates of the August resit exam and assessment period remained unchanged; and physical graduation ceremonies would not take place in July 2020. For 2020/21, it was planned that there would be as much face-to-face teaching as possible, in line with Government advice and health and safety.

The alternative teaching arrangements and support for students that are broadly equivalent were noted.

(iii) Safety Net Policy

Senate received and retrospectively approved a Safety Net Policy for achievement to be reliably assessed including appropriate alternative arrangements for assessment and awards, including for marking and moderation.

It was highlighted that policy supported students and recognised the potentially large impact of COVID-19 on their studies and outcomes. It aimed to offer assurance to students on their performance to date, and was broadly in line with other providers in the sector.

During discussion, it was clarified that staff and students would not be expected to be on campus if it was not safe for them to do so and the University would operate within the relevant guidelines. Remote location students would be supported.

It was not known when the pandemic would end and the institution was planning with an awareness of social distancing requirements. Consideration also had to be given to access and egress. It would be important for Departments to consider what was essential for face-to-face provision, and what could be undertaken online, with decisions driven by need rather than space. Options to use alternative spaces in the city were being explored. The

University would need to be agile to pivot appropriately between face-to-face and online teaching in the future.

The University has had to move at speed during the pandemic and as much as possible decision making had been conducted through the usual governance routes. The Chair of the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee was supported by the Learning and Teaching Strategy Group. Decisions on synchronous or asynchronous lectures would be taken at the department level.

(iv) Postgraduate Research Student Support

Senate received and noted the report. It was highlighted that the University had been able to support final year UKRI-funded PGR students who had requested extensions. The University had agreed to extend the scheme to PGR students that received a full or part-stipend from the University, and would then consider support for international PGR students.

(v) Student Support

Senate received and noted the report. Attention was drawn to the impacts on different groups of students, which had informed planning for the next academic year. The University has sought to support students whether they remained in Sheffield, were in other parts of the UK or the world. For students in Sheffield it was important to safeguard against isolation and to maintain a virtual community.

The extent of the Student Hardship fund in the coming academic year was discussed. Whilst it was an area that the University would wish to support it would, along with all budgets, be subject to review.

6. Degree Outcomes Statement

Senate received, and recommended to Council the adoption and publication of a Degree Outcomes Statement. Attention was drawn to the fact that the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee has considered the Statement and recommended it to Senate.

7. Review of Student Protection Plan

Senate considered and approved the updated version of the University's Student Protection Plan (SPP) for submission to the Office for Students for its approval and subsequent publication. Attention was drawn to the current SPP, which was drafted in 2018/19 with the intention to regularly review and update it. The OfS had announced its intention to commence a consultation regarding SPPs, but this had been paused due to the pandemic. The University had therefore updated its proposed new SPP to be a single unified plan covering the University and the International Faculty.

8. MA in Legal Practice Course and Graduate Diploma in Law

Senate approved the discontinuation of the MA in Legal Practice (LPC) and the Graduate Diploma in Law (GDL), noting, subject to consideration by the Council, the transfer of the existing provision to the University of Law (UoL). It was highlighted that there was only one other Russell Group university that still offered vocational legal education. 16 students had completed the first year of the part time course and were due to complete by August 2021 with 10 students on a leave of absence. The teach out arrangements would see these students registered at the University and taught the University's curriculum delivered by the UoL, which would lead to a University of Sheffield award.

During discussion, it was confirmed that that students who are to be consulted would be directed to the SU for support. Some dissatisfaction with the consultation process within the Faculty was expressed. Consultation on the proposal had been included in the work of a wider Working Group. The original timetable of the Working Group had been delayed due to industrial action, but it had recommended to the School of Law and the Faculty discontinuation of the LPC and GDL and exiting vocational legal education.

9. Withdrawal of Degrees and Distinctions Procedure

Senate considered and approved the procedure. Attention was drawn to the University power to withdraw an award and the Senate regulation agreed at the March 2020 meeting, which now required a mechanism to process a withdrawal.

It was clarified during discussion that there were separate arrangements for dealing with unfair means in research degrees (which would be cross-referenced) and for honorary degrees.

10. Briefing for Senate on the Council Effectiveness Review

Senate received a briefing and noted the Council Effectiveness Review and that the views of Senate members would be sought through a questionnaire.

11. Update on the Review of Senate sub-committees

Senate received an update and considered a question about whether it wished financial matters to continue to be briefed through a separate Senate Budget Committee that reports to Senate or prefer for financial presentations to be given directly to the Senate. It was highlighted that future of SBC was an outstanding issue from the previous Senate Effectiveness Review. In 2019, it was agreed with the chair of Senate Budget Committee to continue with the current arrangements for another year, 2019-20, to the end of the term of office of the current chair, and to re-visit the matter on the appointment of a new Chief Financial Officer.

During discussion, the benefits of reporting financial matters directly to Senate were considered, including enabling wider engagement in financial matters, as against the pressure on Senate agenda time for greater engagement compared to a sub-group. SBC currently met five times a year.

Senate agreed to receive a further proposal on a hybrid model involving some direct reporting to Senate of financial matters, alongside amended Terms of Reference for SBC that avoided any duplication. The University Secretary would bring a further proposal to Senate in due course.

12. Amendments to Regulations on the Use of Computing Facilities

Senate considered and approved amendments to Regulation XXIV: to reflect the service name change; provide clarity regarding the scope and definition of the regulation; and to delegate decision-making.

REPORTS FROM STATUTORY BODIES

13. Report on the Proceedings of the Council (Meeting held on 24 February and 27 April 2020)

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

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES OF THE SENATE

14. Report of the Research Ethics Committee (Meeting held on 13 May 2020)

Senate received and approved the Report, including the impact of Covid-19 on research ethics; concerns regarding the use of 'comments' when ethics reviewers approve applications; new guidance and arrangements for ethical review of pedagogical research, the cancellation of the majority of UREC-funded projects for 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

During discussion, it was clarified that guidance for ethical review of pedagogical research was anticipated to be released shortly and it was hoped that the panel of reviewers would be in place for the 2020/21 academic year.

15. Report of the Senate Academic Assurance Committee (Meeting held on 9 June 2020)

Senate received and approved the Report, including the proposed approach to the Annual Academic Assurance Report. Attention was drawn to the Committee's role in aiding Senate to provide assurance to Council on academic standards and quality.

16. Report of the Senate Budget Committee (Meeting held on 4 June 2020)

Senate received and approved the Report. Attention was drawn to the Quarterly Financial Report and the projected year-end surplus, which was anticipated to be significantly less than the surplus at the end of the 3rd Quarter, largely due to a reduction in income from student accommodation. SBC had a discussion with the Chief Financial Officer and received an update on the immediate impact of Covid-19, including the risks related to cash liquidity and to covenants related to borrowing.

The institution must therefore take this seriously and do all it can to manage spending, and to maximise student recruitment.

During discussion, the President & Vice-Chancellor outlined that the University Executive Board was considering a range of possible options to reduce costs should they become necessary, so that the University was prepared to take action if, and when required to do so.

This was Professor Richard Jackson's final report as Chair of SBC and Senate thanked him for his service on the Committee and as Chair of SBC since 2014.

17. Report of the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee (Meeting held on 13 May 2020)

Senate received the Report and approved the following:

- (a) Changes to the complaints procedure
- (b) Changes to Regulation XIV, paragraph 57 (Study for Other Degrees)
- (c) Changes to Regulation XIV, to reflect terminology used for the new student record system (SITS)
- (d) Revision to Regulation XXII relating to the Discipline of Students
- (e) Revision to General Regulation XV, paragraph 59 (Award of Merits and Distinctions for Foundation Degrees)
- (f) A revised Taught Session Recording Policy
- (g) New, significantly amended, discontinued and suspended programmes approved by Faculties

During discussion, it was clarified that sexual violence related complaints were not referenced in the complaints procedure and consideration would be given to including this within the Notes for Students.

18. Report of the Senate Research and Innovation Committee (Meeting held on 13 May 2020)

Senate received the Report and approved the following:

- (a) A new policy on Posthumous or Aegrotat Awards for Postgraduate Research Students
- (b) Amendments to Regulation XVI: General Regulations for Higher Degrees by Research
- (c) PGR Supervision: Overarching Principles for Mandatory CPD
- (d) Update to the Research Data Management Policy

Attention was drawn to the Research Excellence Framework and Research England's announcement that REF 2021 submission date would be 31 March 2021. In relation to PGR supervision, it was clarified during discussion, that the intention was for all supervisors to undertake mandatory training.

19. Report of the Senate Nominations Committee

(Meeting held on 1 June 2020)

Senate received and approved the report, including approval of the appointment and reappointment of Senate representatives on University committees. In relation to diversity of views, it was highlighted that a broader range of people, for example at different career stages, with different characteristics, or from different parts of the institution, would enable a broader range of views to input in to the work of committees.

REPORTS FROM JOINT COMMITTEES OF THE SENATE AND COUNCIL

20. Report of the Honorary Degrees Committee

(Meeting held on 12 March 2020)

Senate received and noted the Report of the Honorary Degrees Committee.

OTHER MATTERS

21. Quarterly Financial Results

Senate received and noted the financial results for the quarter ending 30 April 2020.

22. Report on Action Taken

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

23. 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.

24. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Those Senate members for whom this was their last Senate meeting, including the student representatives, were thanked.

These Minutes were confirmed at a meeting

held on 14 October 2020

..... Chairman