



The  
University  
Of  
Sheffield.

University  
Secretary's  
Office.

## The Council, 14 December 2020

### Report of the Senate

**Date:** 14 October 2020  
**Chair:** The President & Vice-Chancellor (P&VC)  
**Secretary:** Dr T Strike

#### For information

#### 1. Annual Academic Assurance Report

1.1 Senate considered the Annual Academic Assurance Report, produced by the Senate Academic Assurance Committee (SAAC), and approved its submission for consideration at Council's meeting on 23 November 2020. This Report is provided to Council under agenda item 8.4.

#### 2. President & Vice-Chancellor's report

- 2.1 The President & Vice-Chancellor (P&VC) presented the report, including:
- (a) Covid-19: DfE had published updated guidance regarding the reopening of higher education buildings and campuses. It included the need for continuing and prospective students to receive clear, accurate and timely information; institutions needed to have plans in place to control and manage local outbreaks; testing of all staff and students was not required; and it outlined four 'tiers of restriction' in relation to teaching provision. There were currently 3,531 students self-isolating, with the split between those self-isolating students living in University accommodation and those living in private accommodation being approximately 50:50.
  - (b) Brexit: It increasingly appeared that an agreement between the UK and the EU on the future relationship would not be reached, or that any agreement and trade deal would be so narrow as to be of limited benefit to the higher education sector. The focus of the University's work was now largely internally facing, and on ensuring that the University was as best prepared as possible for the end of the transition period on 31 December 2020.
  - (c) Student recruitment: The University's overall undergraduate recruitment position remained strong, despite the uncertainty of return to campus and the disruption created by changes to A Level grades. As of 2 October, figures for Home UG and Overseas UG enrolment were in line with expectations following the Confirmation, Adjustment and Clearing process. Significant uncertainty remained, however, with the overseas PGT cohort. While applications have held up, the delay in the commencement of teaching meant that PGT figures would only become available in November as those students begin to arrive and enrol.

- (d) Success and achievement: Recent examples included the Nuclear AMRC had secured government funding to establish a new advanced manufacturing research centre in Derby; the Students' Union being the Whatuni Student Choice Award for Best Students' Union for the fourth consecutive year; the *Off the Shelf* festival and *Festival of the Mind*; participating in a major UK study into the long-term health impacts of Covid-19; and collaborating with refugees in Syria to develop sustainable PPE.

2.2 Discussion focussed on a one week pause in teaching that the University would undertake.

### **3. Student Return to Campus**

3.1 Senate considered the paper and noted the information provided to students on what the University was committing to deliver, including on-line and on-campus learning. Senate was assured that the requirements set by the DfE in relation to reopening buildings and campuses were being met. Work undertaken over the summer regarding the student return to campus, had followed DfE guidance, Health & Safety guidance and the University's legal obligations. All staff were thanked for their work at speed and under pressure.

3.2 Senate received a verbal update on recent developments including the national 3 tier 'Local Covid Alert Level' framework and, alongside this, the DfE 4 'tiers of restriction' relating to the provision of face-to-face education. Sheffield City Council and the local public health team had agreed it would be appropriate for the University to resume teaching at a level commensurate with the DfE Tier 2. DfE Tier 2 involved delivering blended learning but with a reduction in the amount of face-to-face teaching and increased risk mitigation.

3.3 Discussion covered testing and tracing; mitigations; face-to-face teaching; implications for staff; student arrival to, and departure from, the University; student support; and the technological infrastructure.

### **4. Report of the Council**

4.1 Senate received a report on the meeting of Council held on held on 13 July 2020.

### **5. Reports of committees**

#### **5.1 Committees of Senate**

5.1.1 Senate approved the reports of the following committees and reports from Chairs of committees in those instances where a committee had not met since the previous meeting of Senate:

(a) Report from the Chair of the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee

Senate received and approved the Report, including:

(a) New, Significantly Amended, Discontinued and Suspended Programmes approved by Faculties between 7 May 2020 and 28 September 2020

(b) An updated University of Sheffield Graduate Attributes Framework

(b) Report from the Chair of the Senate Research and Innovation Committee

Senate received and approved the Report, including the establishment of a University Early Career Researcher Committee (UECRC).

(c) Report of the Research Ethics Committee

(Meeting held on 9 September 2020)

Senate received and approved the Report, including the impact of Covid-19 on research ethics, endorsement of a new draft 'Preventing Harm in Research and Innovation (Safeguarding) Policy', endorsement of new guidance developed in response to the findings of an internal audit of the University's ethics arrangements, consideration of potential breaches of the Ethics Policy. Discussion at Senate focused on the Hong Kong national security law and Senate was informed that the University had not yet formulated a formal position.

(e) Report of the Senate Academic Assurance Committee  
(Meeting held on 22 September 2020)

Senate received and approved the report. Following discussion of the Committee's Business Plan for 2020/21 Senate concluded that graduate employability was a relevant theme within the Committee's remit.

(f) Report of the Senate Budget Committee  
(Meeting held on 9 July 2020)

Senate received and approved the Report, including that the Committee had received verbal briefings on the Financial Forecast and budget 2020/21, and on the Planning Round.