



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

University
Secretary's
Office.

Minutes Meeting of the Senate

Date: 17 March 2021

Present: The President & Vice-Chancellor in the Chair
Dr P Ali, Professor H Askes, Professor W Baird, Professor P Bath, Professor S Beck, Dr R Bellaby, Professor A Bingham, Dr L Bingle, Professor J Brazier, Professor G Brown, Professor C Buck, Mrs A Cantrell, Professor T Chico, Mrs A Clements, Revd Dr J Clines, Professor P Crowther, Professor C Deery, Professor N Dibben, Ms B Eyre, Professor J Flint, Dr D Forrest, Mr S Foxley, Professor G Gee, Professor J Grasby, Professor K Hadjri, Dr S Hale, Miss L Hall, Dr V Halliday, Professor R Hand, Professor J Harrison, Professor S Hartley, Professor J Haycock, Mrs A Higaldo-Kingston, Professor R Horn, Professor M Hounslow, Professor N Hughes, Dr J Jones, Ms N Jones, Professor J Kirby, Dr W Kitchen, Ms S M Konstantinidou, Professor J Litster, Dr C Majewski, Professor S McIntosh, Professor N Monk, Professor T Moore, Professor K Morris, Dr N Murgatroyd, Dr S D North, Professor A Pacey, Professor G Panoutsos, Professor D N Petley, Dr E Poku, Dr S Pukallus, Dr L Robson, Dr S Rushton, Mr R Simpson, Dr S Staniland, Professor C Stokes, Mr R Sykes, Professor C H Tan, Professor G Valentine, Dr D Vessey, Professor M T Vincent, Dr T Walther, Professor C Watkins, Professor L Wilson, Mr S Zuddas.

Secretary: Dr T Strike

In attendance: Mr M Borland, Mrs K Clements, Dr E Smith, Ms K Sullivan, Mr A McSweeney, Mr D Swinn, Ms S Whitby.

Apologies: The Senate received apologies from 10 members.

WELCOME

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

1. President & Vice-Chancellor's Report

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

- (a) UK-EU Free Trade Agreement: The UK would contribute towards the Horizon Europe budget in order to secure its participation, however it was not clear whether this would be funded from a new funding stream or from existing budgets. The UK will no longer participate in the Erasmus+ scheme and has set up a national alternative, named the Turing Scheme. The University intended to submit a bid to the scheme.

- (b) Independent Review of the TEF: The Independent Review of the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) had been published alongside the Government's response to the Review. Headlines included that there would not be a subject-level TEF; it was expected that the TEF would take place every four or five years; there would be four TEF ratings overall, rather than the existing Gold, Silver and Bronze categories; and student satisfaction was unlikely to be included in the basket of performance measures.

- (c) Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom: A new free speech condition of registration would be placed on higher education institutions. There was an existing duty placed on Council as the governing body to protect both academic freedom and freedom of speech. Senate was invited under items 11 and 12 to consider additions to the terms of the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee and the Senate Research and Innovation Committee to make explicit the existing duty.

- (d) Admissions: Senate was updated on the admissions position for home and overseas admissions for UG, PGT and PGR.

During discussion, it was clarified that the University had been operating on the principle that where a student could not use accommodation due to government restrictions that the University would not charge the rent on that accommodation. Regarding the scope of the Data Warehouse project, it was clarified that that some, but not all of the University KPIs were numerical and it was the numerical KPIs that were being built into the scope of the Data Warehouse project.

2. Declaration of Conflict of Interests

No conflicts of interest were declared.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 December 2020

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2020, having been circulated, were approved as an accurate record.

4. Matters Arising on the Minutes

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 for which Senate's formal approval was sought.

6. Covid-19 – Learning and Teaching

Senate received a verbal update from the interim Vice-President for Education and reviewed arrangements in the second Semester to maintain teaching quality and standards, support students, meet learning objectives and enable adequate exams and assessments.

The announcement of a national lockdown on 4 January meant that an anticipated increase in the proportion of face-to-face teaching for all programmes had not happened. There were exemptions that have enabled face-to-face-teaching for the majority of programmes in Medicine, Dentistry and Health and for some education and social work courses. As a residential campus based university, the University was committed to increasing face-to-face teaching as soon as possible, subject to government guidance.

There had been an increase in staff confidence in the delivery of digital learning, which was being delivered across the institution. Confidence was expressed in the delivery of learning objectives for non-practical course. Assurance in relation to achieving learning outcomes was undertaken through the usual departmental and faculty mechanisms and included crosscutting work carried out by the FDLTs and the Vice-President for Education.

Online assessments had been well received by students. There had not been an increase in disciplinary cases related to unfair means. This was a challenging area as data was difficult to obtain and any evidence of this occurring should be passed to FDLTs.

End of year assessment and classification boards were anticipated to operate in the same manner as previous years. Central support for examination boards would continue in order that mitigations were applied as consistently as possible. Continuing students would benefit from the Safety Net Policy put in place for 2019-20 assessments only.

Work was taking place with the Students' Union and the Careers Service regarding employability for graduates. Transition into the 2021-22 academic year could require the provision of more support for second year UG students unfamiliar with the campus and the city than would usually be the case. Further thought would need to be given in departments to the support provided to incoming first year students who would not necessarily have covered the full A level curriculum.

During discussion, it was explained that it was not believed to be useful to categorise face-to-face teaching for each course as either mandatory or optional. Government guidance on returning to face-to-face teaching was anticipated shortly and the University was committed to returning to face-to-face teaching as soon as it was permissible to do so. Regarding August examination resits; it would be difficult to amend the form of resits currently planned. There were no plans to alter the start date of PGT courses in 2021/22. Some concern regarding the tone of some communications with students was expressed and this would be reviewed. The Safety Net policy applied from 15 March 2020 to the end of the 2019/20 academic year. There were no plans to extend the Safety Net policy and this position had been made clear.

Following the presentation and discussion Senate expressed its thanks to the FDLTs for the outstanding contributions that they had made in difficult circumstances.

7. Semester Dates

7.1 Report of the Senate Task and Finish Group: Semester Dates

Senate received the Report and approved the following:

- (a) The current structure of the academic year be adopted for the academic years 2024/25 to 2027/28, noting that there will be no misalignment between the respective Easter vacations of the University and Sheffield schools across this period.
- (b) A Task and Finish Group has been an effective means of entertaining a range of views on the issues pertaining to future Semester dates, and that a Task and Finish Group becomes a standard part of the future semester date approval process.

Attention was drawn to the background and the establishment of the Task and Finish Group, and to the work undertaken by the task and Finish Group including benchmarking and the consultation options, survey and outcomes.

During discussion, it was recognised that any national changes to a Post Qualification Applications system would necessitate reconsideration of future semester dates.

7.2 Dates of Semesters and Vacations 2024/25 to 2027/28

Senate received and approved proposed semester and vacation dates for the period 2024/25 to 2027/28.

REPORTS FROM STATUTORY BODIES

8. Report on the Proceedings of the Council

(Meetings held on 14 December 2020 & 8 February 2021)

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

Four related questions were submitted in advance relating to the Council discussion of, and decision to adopt, the IHRA definition of antisemitism. In submitting the four questions, the individual member of Senate declared that they were a member of the Palestine Education network (a joint initiative between Sheffield Hallam University and the University of Sheffield). The individual was also currently the President of the University of Sheffield branch of UCU, which passed a motion on the 17 October 2019 opposing the adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism.

Council had agreed that the University should adopt the IHRA definition. Namely that it would have regard to the definition in developing strategy, policy and procedures, and when dealing with complaints. It also agreed that the University should put in place actions to mitigate concerns around academic freedom and the impact on other groups, which were expressed by some respondents during the consultation, as reported in the minutes of the Council discussion. The working

examples provided by the IHRA accompany the definition to serve as illustrations and were provided as such to Council in the paper that informed its discussion.

Council had invited Senate to add to the Terms of Reference of its Learning & Teaching and Research and Innovation Committees to strengthen their existing roles in 'ensuring that academic staff have the freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and put forwards new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinion'. This would, if approved by Senate further embed the issue in governance terms.

Separate to the mitigations that were being put in place regarding freedom of speech there was a wider piece of work, initiated by the Council Equality Diversity & Inclusion Committee (EDIC), to develop a Religion & Belief Equality strategy and action plan. EDIC had initiated a listening exercise on experiences of exclusion concerning race and ethnicity in relation to religion and belief in the autumn, which was being led by the University Chaplaincy and the Vice-President & Head of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, as Chair of the Race Equality Steering Group. This was due to report to EDIC in June with the intention that it will develop and propose a comprehensive University Religion and Belief Equality Strategy and action plan for approval by UEB and Council. A progress report on this activity was due to be shared through the staff update shortly.

Council had an existing public interest governance duty to ensure academic staff have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and to put forwards new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions. Inviting Senate to add to the Terms of Reference of the Learning & Teaching and the Research and Innovation Committees to make explicit the protection of academic freedom was one of the responses from Council to the concerns raised by some of the respondents to the University consultation on the IHRA definition. The effectiveness of this approach could be evaluated after the measure was put in place. If Senate then considered that Council should additionally appoint a Task and Finish Group, separate from, or reporting to the Council Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee, then Senate can express this opinion to Council for its consideration.

During discussion, it was confirmed that Council had received and discussed the working examples provided by the IHRA in arriving at its decision to adopt (have due regard to) the definition. However, it was not considered possible to adopt, or not to adopt, working examples provided alongside the definition. The Senate Learning & Teaching and Research & Innovation Committees would be provided with the support deemed necessary by the Chairs of those Committees to conduct the Committee's business, for example including the provision of legal advice if required.

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES OF THE SENATE

9. Report of the Research Ethics Committee

(Meeting held on 10 February 2021)

Senate received and approved the Report, noting the annual report of ethics breaches of ethics approval requirements, and other ethics concerns, for the period September 2019-August 2020; changes to ethics application form and information sheet guidance in response to a new policy on safeguarding in research; potential breaches of the Ethics Policy; and a complaint case.

10. Report of the Senate Academic Assurance Committee

(Meeting held on 2 March 2021)

Senate received the Report and approved the following:

- (a) The Committee's change from an elected category of membership to one based on nomination from each of the five Faculties of the University.

Attention was drawn to: the Committee's endorsement of the new model for delivering PGR Supervisor CPD; the Committee was not yet currently fully assured regarding the presence of and reasons for grade inflation in some departments, below the corporate level of reporting, and would be seeking further information and assurances; the Committee was not yet fully assured regarding student employment outcomes as there was not sufficient data of the quality required to make a judgement.

11. Report of the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee

(Meeting held on 9 February 2021)

Senate received the Report and approved the following:

- (a) An additional term of reference for the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee: "To ensure staff supporting and delivering our programmes have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions."
- (b) A change to the General Regulations to be enacted in 2020/21 to allow all exam boards to recommend undergraduate exit awards in exceptional circumstances.
- (c) A change to the General Regulations to be enacted alongside the implementation of the new student record system SITS in 2022/23 for the systematic introduction of Undergraduate Exit Awards, subject to the credit thresholds being the same for 3- and 4-year degree courses.
- (d) An institutional policy on moderation of assessed work.
- (e) An institutional policy on scaling, subject to the provision of worked examples in guidance that would sit alongside the policy.
- (f) A revised Teaching Awards Scheme for 2020-2021.
- (g) New, significantly amended, discontinued and suspended programmes approved by Faculties for the period 3 October 2020 – 18 January 2021.

During presentation of the Report, it was clarified that the Terms of Reference would be amended to reflect accurately the role of City College as a validated provider during the period University of Sheffield students there were taught out.

During discussion regarding undergraduate exit awards, it was clarified that an exit award was awarded at the discretion of an Exam Board, rather than an individual student applying for it. It was not envisaged that a student would apply or accept an exit award. Further clarification on exceptional circumstances would be provided to the Students' Union. It was noted that the academic appeals process was unchanged. In relation to moderation of assessed work, it was clarified that the minimum sample was whichever was the larger of ten pieces of work or 10%. Discussion of the proposed policy on scaling explored what was meant by the terms

scaling and calibration and their application in practice. It was agreed that Senate would be provided with some worked examples to accompany the scaling policy to help ensure that there was clarity across the institution. It was agreed to have a further discussion on scaling and calibration at a future Senate.

12. Report of the Senate Research and Innovation Committee

(Meeting held on 3 February 2021)

Senate received the Report and approved the following:

- (a) An additional term of reference for the Senate Research and Innovation Committee: "To ensure researchers have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions."
- (b) Amendment to Regulation XIV: General University Regulations to enable research students to have dual registration for the purpose of a jointly delivered, single collaborative programme.
- (c) Amendments to Regulation XVI: General Regulations for Higher Degrees, Postgraduate Diplomas and Postgraduate Certificates:
 - (i) The replacement of the section titled "Regulations for the Degree of PhD in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities" with a new set of "Regulations for the Degree of PhD by Practice" which can be offered by any Faculty.
 - (ii) Amendments to the section titled "Regulations for the Degree of PhD by Publication in all Faculties".
 - (iii) Amendments to the section titled "Regulations for the Degree of MD by Publication in all Faculties".
- (d) Adoption of the Preventing Harm in Research and Innovation (Safeguarding) Policy.
- (e) Publication of the University Statement on Open Research.

An update was provided regarding research funding and specifically to reductions in Official Development Assistance funding. The University and the sector were undertaking activities to highlight the impact of these changes to government. The University was working through the impact the reductions would have and all Principal Investigators affected had been contacted.

An update on the University's REF submission was received and Senate expressed its gratitude to all members of staff involved in the REF submission. Senate agreed to receive a presentation on the REF submission and any lessons learnt at its meeting in June.

OTHER MATTERS

13. Students' Union Annual Report: Complaints and Discipline 2019-20

Senate received and noted the report.

14. Student Formal Procedure Cases: Report to Senate 2019-20

Senate received and noted the report.

15. Annual Report of the Library 2019-20

Senate received and noted the report.

16. Report on Action Taken

Senate received and noted the report.

17. 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.

18. Any Other Business

There was no other business.