



The  
University  
Of  
Sheffield.

University  
Secretary's  
Office.

## Minutes Meeting of the Senate

**Date:** 23 June 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 S Bhaumik, Dr L Bingle, 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 J Derrick, Ms B Eyre, Professor J Flint, Dr D Forrest, Mr S Foxley, Professor R Freckleton, Professor G Gee, Professor V Gillet, Professor J Grasby, Professor K Hadjri, Dr S Hale, Dr V Halliday, Professor R Hand, Professor J Harrison, Professor S Hartley, Mrs A Higaldo-Kingston, Professor N Hughes, Dr J Jones, Ms N Jones, Dr S Keegan-Phipps, Professor J Kirby, Dr W Kitchen, Ms S M Konstantinidou, Ms E Lynas, Dr C Majewski, Professor C McDermott, Professor S McIntosh, Professor N Monk, Professor T Moore, Dr N Murgatroyd, Professor C Newman, 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 R Timmers, Professor G Valentine, Dr D Vessey, Professor M T Vincent, Dr T Walther, Professor C Watkins, Professor L Wilson.

**Secretary:** Dr T Strike

**In attendance:** Mr M Borland, Mr N Button, Mr A Carlile, Mrs K Clements, Ms E Croxford, Miss A Davison, Ms S Hanson, Professor C Jackson, Dr E Smith, Ms K Sullivan, Mr A McSweeney, Mr D Swinn.

**Apologies:** The Senate received apologies from 13 members (15 apologies were reported to the meeting but two members who had offered apologies had been able to attend).

### WELCOME

The President & Vice-Chancellor (P&VC) welcomed members to a virtual meeting of the Senate. The Student Officers-elect, attending the meeting as observers, were welcomed:

- Evie Croxford – President Elect
- Savannah Hanson – Education Officer Elect

Professor Caroline Jackson, Head of Department for Archaeology, and Al Carlile, Director of Planning, Projects & Business Intelligence were noted as in attendance for item 6.

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

Senate received and noted the President & Vice-Chancellor's Report.

## **2. Declaration of Conflict of Interests**

The following conflicts of interest were declared:

- (a) Professor Caitlin Buck: In relation to item 6, (i) a joint supervisor of a PhD student with a colleague in Archaeology who is part funded by Historic England, senior staff from which have made representation to UEB regarding the future of archaeology at Sheffield. (ii) signatory to a letter sent to members of UEB from staff and students in the School of Mathematics and Statistics expressing concern for the future vibrancy of the School's own interdisciplinary research if the Department of Archaeology is closed
- (b) Dr Willy Kitchen: In relation to item 6, (i) a graduate of the Department of Archaeology (PhD, 2000). (ii) Head of Department for Lifelong Learning (DLL), where DLL currently have ten students registered on existing degree pathways with Foundation Year leading to higher level study in the Department of Archaeology.

## **3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 March 2021**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2021, 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. Archaeology Review**

### Background

The Chair outlined the background to the item. The University Executive Board (UEB) had commissioned a Review of the Department of Archaeology following a letter to the Vice-Chancellor raising concerns regarding the sustainability of the Department's activities. Having received the report of the Review Group, which contained options, UEB considered the Review Group report and had subsequently made a recommendation to Council that the key areas of strength in teaching and

research within Archaeology should be retained and realigned with disciplines across the University, in areas of complementary activity. This option was considered most likely to sustain the areas of strength in the discipline of Archaeology, which by consequence meant there would not be a separate Department of Archaeology.

The constitutional decision would be Council's to make. As part of its deliberation process, and before making a final decision, Council sought advice from the Senate, and this was the purpose of the item. Council would receive the advice from Senate at their July meeting for a final decision.

Respecting that Senate members may express an opinion on any matter, Council specifically sought academic advice on the proposal. Council also said they wanted an opportunity to hear from all members of Senate.

#### Senate Process for providing advice to Council

Council said that in seeking advice from Senate they wished to benefit from the views of all members of the Senate and asked the University Secretary to devise and propose an appropriate mechanism to gather this information and present it to Council in a full, comprehensive and transparent manner.

The Chair of Senate proposed to the meeting of Senate a questionnaire, provided in advance in the papers, to be issued to all members of the Senate immediately following the meeting, so that members could contribute their views and advice. This was proposed to Senate, to make it possible for all members to be included, and provide appropriate anonymity. It was proposed that members of Council and Senate would see the unattributed collated responses. The Chair of Senate asked if Senate was content with the approach described, and if any member was not content with what was proposed to say so. There was no objection and the approach agreed. The report of the Senate meeting would be provided to Council (with this minute) alongside Senate member's responses to the Questionnaire. The Questionnaire asked two questions: one on the academic elements of the proposal and the second on any other comments members of Senate might wish to make. The University Secretary would collate and anonymise responses prior to circulation to Senate and Council. The responses would be shared with Senate in full at the same time as they are disseminated to Council. A link to the Questionnaire would be shared with members of Senate after the meeting.

#### Presentations

Senate received a presentation from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) on the findings of the Review Group and the recommendation made by UEB to Council. It included the purpose of the review; terms of reference; the review process; context; 7 key findings; exploration of options; 3 options submitted to UEB; UEB recommendation; implications; response to the UEB recommendation; and next steps.

Senate received a presentation from the Head of Department (HoD) of Archaeology setting out the case for option 1, investment in the Department. It included; context; review process; outcomes from the Review Panel and UEB; the recommendation

being acted upon before being approved; the department's financial position; income generation in relation to UG and PGT students; other planned income streams; research income; and the Department's view.

Senate received a presentation from the Students' Union (SU) President and the SU Education Officer. The SU, in the interest of its members, could not support the proposal for option 3 due to concerns regarding the potential consequences for students.

The SU was of the view that considering academic departments as individual economic units was not beneficial and created false competition. Concern was expressed in relation to the future of Arts and Humanities subjects in the context of Government actions and the possible implications of Government's response to the tuition fees element of the Augar Review of post-18 education and funding. It was highlighted that archaeology was listed as a shortage occupation by UK Government and Council was asked to consider another proposal.

Regarding the process, the SU was of the opinion that the review was neither open nor transparent. In relation to the impact on students, announcing the review outcomes and UEB recommendation during the assessment period was problematic for students. The SU believed that the University's Student Protection Plan (SPP) was not sufficient in itself and a bespoke protection plan should be provided for each student affected. The SU was of the opinion that option 1, investment in the Department, should be recommended to Council. Feedback from individual students was provided to Senate, which included testimony about the level of support for Archaeology at Sheffield from a number of eminent figures, the strong pastoral care for students shown by the Department, and a concern that not all students appeared to have been included in the metrics provided.

### Discussion

Twenty written questions had been submitted by four members of Senate in advance of the meeting and these were addressed alongside oral questions put during the meeting following the presentations.

In response to a request to detail the scope of the consultation process used to arrive at the recommendation to close the Department of Archaeology, the DVC outlined that the UEB recommendation was for the areas of strength in the discipline to be identified, retained and moved to other complimentary parts of the University. The suggestion that the Department was not engaged in the Review was refuted as the Review had included a staff meeting, a meeting with the HoD, and a full day of meetings with staff and students. The Review Report was shared with the Department at the same time as it was circulated Senate members. It had not been shared earlier as the University had followed due process and first shared the Report with Council given the recommendations it contained. Once Council had agreed to consider the Report, and so seek the advice of the Senate, the redacted version was produced and shared more widely.

Regarding the consideration given to the credibility, reach and viability of inter-disciplinary research links with Archaeology elsewhere on campus, the Vice-President (VP) for Research set out that by retaining areas of research excellence in

the discipline and thoroughly investigating the most appropriate way to align that excellence with related research areas, the viability of related research elsewhere on campus could be strengthened. All areas of research activity would be considered and “knock-on” effects taken into account. Research services had documented the existing collaborative links between Archaeology and other departments in terms of joint publications and funding applications and these would be taken into account by the UEB implementation group dependent on the Council decision.

In reply to a question on the mechanism used to capture the opinions of staff and students in other departments on campus, and of the wider research community in the UK and overseas, the VP for Research said that the Review Group included external membership from highly rated Archaeology Departments and considered all relevant data, including that provided by the Department itself and heard opinions from staff and student representatives from the Department. Further consultation across campus would be undertaken if the UEB recommendation was to be taken forward.

Questioned on how certain UEB was that Option 3 would not have deleterious consequences for current and future work towards REF Impact Case Studies for units of assessment other than Archaeology (UOA15), the VP for Research responded that retaining areas of research excellence would support future impact case studies. The Implementation Group would be carefully considering the impact of different research activities.

In response to a question as to whether Option 3 would reduce the capacity of remaining academic staff to make convincing cases for interdisciplinary funding involving archaeology and/or palaeoenvironmental science, the VP for Research replied that option recommended retaining and relocating research excellence in Archaeology and, with the right support and investment, strengthen the interdisciplinary funding and collaborations.

In response to a question on the activity to support staff and students within the Department of Archaeology, and those who work closely with them, since the UEB recommendation was announced, the DVC recognised the uncertainty that this process had created for staff, and the University looked to support them in any way it could. HR support was available to staff, a confidential discussion could be arranged, specific wellbeing information was available online which included signposting to specialist services. In terms of students, meetings have been held with Director of Academic Programmes and Student Engagement and the Faculty’s Director of Operations, and students have been referred to the appropriate services for advice and support.

In answer to a question about whether members of Senate would be offered the chance to comment on a draft of the written Report from Senate to Council and whether members of Senate could see the Report at the same time as Council, the University Secretary clarified that there will be three outputs from the Senate meeting provided to Council: (i.) the Report of the meeting; and the related minute (ii.) the collation of Senate members’ comments from the Questionnaire; (iii.) members of Senate on Council being invited to speak at Council. The Report of the Senate meeting would be circulated to members of Senate at the same time as it was circulated to Council.

A comment was made that it was reassuring that the University would commit to ensuring programmes of study can be completed by all currently enrolled students within existing timeframes. The question was asked, for the avoidance of doubt, whether Senate could be further assured that this commitment extended to the ten students currently studying within the Department for Lifelong Learning this year who are enrolled on integrated degrees with a foundation year and guaranteed (subject to successful completion of their foundation year level) progression to year one study within the Department of Archaeology in September 2021 or later? The VP Education stated that teach out was the preferred option for all students, However, ahead of any Council decision and without further detail on implementation the consultation with students on the Student Protection Plan had necessarily been limited in scope. At this stage, it was not possible to guarantee that support would be bespoke. The University could guarantee that it would interact with students and provide the best support possible, meeting its commitments under the Student Protection Plan, but that a decision on the Options and timeframes would be required to work out the optimal format for protecting student's programmes of study.

On being asked whether Senate could have sight of more detailed national figures relating to the size (student numbers) and tariff-composition (per cent ABB+, BBB-BBC, and BCC-) of the home UG market in Archaeology (current and historic), the DVC replied that the quality of the undergraduate intake for the subject area was approximately 50% ABB+ from 2015/16 to 2018/19, but this number had changed in the 2019/20 data to around 30% of the intake having ABB+, although it was noted that this figure did not capture all students as it included only those with tariff eligible qualifications and did not include those from foundation years for example. The full data had been provided in the meeting papers along with an outline of the sector-wide coding changes for information.

In reply to a question regarding how realistic the Department's foundation degree proposals were in the context of the Augar Review, the Head of Archaeology accepted the point about the future of foundation degrees and said that the Department believed that it was still a viable route and that it was just one route being explored.

On being asked how the Department's proposed lowered entry tariff could be reconciled with the University aim to lift entry standards, and Departmental practice elsewhere in the University, the Head of Archaeology suggested that lowered entry tariff was sector practice in the Archaeology discipline outside of Oxford and Cambridge as there was no A level subject match to the degree. A competitor was cited which had increased its student recruitment through a flexible entry tariff during confirmation and clearing. There have been instances in the past of the University of Sheffield turning down applicants who did not meet the ABB+ tariff criteria in place and the applicant would then enrol at a competitor institution.

It was queried how credible the Department's future projections for student intakes were based on past performance and given that a likely more constrained recruitment for 2021/22 was not acknowledged. The Head of Archaeology recognised that projecting into the future during the pandemic was particularly challenging.

It was asked why the full financial information could not be made available to Senate. The DVC set out that the information that was redacted was done so based on legal advice in order to protect the University's commercial interest. The advice stipulated that while all the financial information could have been redacted, UEB wished to minimise the redactions required in the public interest and so only redacted the University level financial information. There was a concern that information provided to Senate could enter the public domain and be subject to FOI requests. It was further highlighted that the UEB recommendation was premised on academic rather than financial sustainability.

It was asked whether the Faculty plan was still an option and if not, why it was no longer under consideration. The DVC responded that there had been clear attempts made in the past to develop a strategy for the Department at Faculty level but this had not been successful. There were examples of where Faculty-led initiatives have been met with resistance within the Department, for example, the Faculty proposed to recruit a new external Head of Department with significant research experience when the previous HoD's term expired, but the Department had rejected this idea. UEB also had to recognise the changed context, both in terms of the continuing decline in the Department's performance and external pressures due to COVID-19. The Department had a differing perspective and the HoD stated that the Department did not reject the Faculty's HoD recruitment proposal but suggested that the process had not been followed and that the Department should first be offered the opportunity to recruit a HoD from within the Department. The Department's approach to proposing recruiting to four more junior posts was based on its assessment of its financial situation.

Clarification was sought regarding the external pressures that were academic rather than financial and the risk that areas of excellence would transfer to other departments and then 'wither on the vine' outside of a strong integrated Departmental culture. The DVC responded that the rationale in the UEB recommendation was academic sustainability. It was notable that the UG recruitment pool was too small to sustain a Department. The transfer of areas of excellence would enable access to increased professional services support, a mutually strong research ethos, and provide an opportunity for these areas to receive planned investment, and to flourish and develop. UEB was committed to supporting transitions and investing in areas of excellence, which was consistent with the manner in which research funding had developed.

From the Department's viewpoint, the HoD outlined that it was only now smaller because 7 staff had retired last year and professional service staff numbers were small given the financial situation and as the Department had been placed in review. It has however met its goals in reducing its deficit. The multidisciplinary nature of archaeology meant that there were benefits from members of the discipline being able to work together and share ideas. Examples were provided of other institutions where changes which moved the discipline across different departments had not been deemed a success. It was suggested that there was greater scope for success regarding mergers between two departments where there were synergies between the two departments concerned. This was discussed in 2014 with History, but not taken forward. Synergies with Geography were also said to exist, for example.

In response to a point of clarification on whether the Trade Unions might address Senate the University Secretary said while the UCU and others might have a legitimate interest in representing their members views on the matter there were other more appropriate fora and mechanisms for the TUs to provide their input.

It was clarified that the Faculty VP for Arts and Humanities could not attend the Senate meeting, but had participated in the UEB discussion and supported the UEB recommendation. The Faculty recognised the challenges the Department faced regarding UG recruitment and research performance and had made significant efforts to support the Department. Further work would be need to be undertaken, subject to a decision by Council, to identify which parts of the University the identified areas of strength would transition to.

Further clarity was sought on whether a reduction in tariff would alleviate the decline in UG applications. The DVC suggested that the Review Group had concluded the lowering of A level entry tariff might lead to a small increase in applicants, but not to a sufficient increase regarding sustainability of the department. The University did not have related subjects such as Classics which in other universities could be used for potential course application transfers to Archaeology. The Department said it did not support that analysis and expected if it were permitted a flexible entry tariff in clearing it could find applicants.

It was asked why a process of performance managing the Department had not been put in place earlier and before this proposal was brought forward. The DVC replied that there had been a process of performance management with and through the Faculty through processes such as the Planning Round. The Departmental deficit had been steadily reduced due to a decline in staff numbers, rather than through income growth. The HoD outlined that the Department believed it had met all of its objectives, one of which was to reduce staff numbers, and had not been informed the Faculty was performance managing the Department.

There was a discussion regarding the accuracy of the costings and the process to arrive at the figures for the new posts set out in the Department's presentation about sought future investment in posts.

Concern was expressed regarding the unintended consequences of the University's tariff ambition on smaller disciplines, such as archaeology, and it was asked whether further tariff data could be made available to members of Senate. The Chair explained that further data could be shared if available but how much additional data could be supplied in addition to that already provided would need to be explored.

In response to a request that the identity of the external reviewers and their role in the review be provided to Senate, the DVC clarified that the individual names would not be released to protect their confidentiality and the individual's departments. The two external members were recruited for their expertise in the discipline. They were both from Russell Group universities and had senior leadership experience. One was suggested by the Archaeology Department HoD and one was suggested by the DVC. Both external members were involved in the review process in full and attended all meetings. They did not write the report or formulate recommendations, but endorsed the report and noted that it was an accurate representation of the Review Group's position.

It was suggested that the financial information for option 1 did not appear to take account of increased income from additional recruitment and updated modelling and costing was requested. The DVC responded that the department had not achieved its financial forecasts and income growth in the past and there was a risk that the forecasts now being presented were unrealistic. The income assumptions in Option 1 were assessed by the Finance and Planning teams, particularly in relation to previous performance and current student recruitment markets. On this basis it had been assumed that income would be maintained at 2019/20 levels.

In response to a suggestion that members of UEB on Senate should not complete the questionnaire as their views had already been heard by Council, the University Secretary outlined that all members of Senate are equally members of Senate and it would be inappropriate to distinguish members by their membership category in the Senate composition set out in Regulation.

Further detail was requested regarding the initial approval of four full time junior posts in the Department that had since been withdrawn. The DVC outlined that the recruitment was approved prior to COVID-19. This was then paused alongside the general pause on all staff recruitment across the institution, and reviewed in light of the Review that then took place. The initial proposals had been approved at the Faculty level and were for the reasons set out in the HoD presentation. However, it was questionable how realistic it would be to expect more junior staff to provide the Department with the senior leadership it required. The HoD noted that the 4 proposed posts sought by way of investment in the department would not be expected to drive its overall performance.

In response to why a senior academic colleague from a cognate department had not been asked to assist the leadership within the Archaeology Department, it was explained that this was not within the Terms of Reference of the Review Group.

Following a question on whether there been a risk assessment of the proposal based around the reputational harm caused, including to future student recruitment, it was noted that while the social media campaign will have had an impact it would be challenging to undertake a risk assessment of this type and predict any impact in such a dynamic environment.

The Chair checked at the end of the discussion whether every member who wanted to speak or ask a question had been able to do so. There were no further questions or comments from members of Senate.

## **7. REF2021: Reflections and Next Steps**

This item was deferred to the October 2021 meeting of Senate.

## **REPORTS FROM STATUTORY BODIES**

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

(Meetings held on 26 April 2021)

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

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

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

(Meeting held on 5 May 2021)

The Chair thanked Professor Peter Bath for his service to Senate and particularly in the role of Chair of the Research Ethics Committee, noting Professor Bath had been an outstanding chair and his work had been much appreciated. Professor Bath became chair of the committee in 2015 and was stepping down from both the committee and from Senate.

Senate received and approved the Report, noting: the planning for a forthcoming review of the Research Ethics Policy, including consultation with staff and PGR students; and an update on the work of a committee sub-group regarding data protection.

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

(Meeting held on 8 June 2021)

Senate received the Report and approved the following:

- (a) The process and timeline proposed for the production of the 2020/21 Annual Academic Assurance Report and its progression through the required governance route as set out in Appendix 1 of the Report.

### **11. Report of the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee**

(Meeting held on 20 May 2021)

Senate received the Report and approved the following:

- (a) Revisions to the General University Regulations (XIV), General Regulations for First Degrees (XV) and General Regulations for Higher Degrees (XVI) for 2021-22 for the term 'Level' be replaced by the term 'Year' as appropriate in the appendices.
- (b) Revisions to the General University Regulations (XIV) with the replacement of occurrences of 'the International Faculty' with 'City College'.
- (c) Revisions to the General University Regulations (XIV) for 2021-22 including changes to the terminology used regarding 'registration' and 'enrolment', removal of gendered pronouns and formalising an earlier period of Module Exchange (Add/Drop) in each semester.
- (d) Two new definitions of misconduct to be included in the Regulations for 2021-22 relating to the Discipline of Students (XXII). These were intended to clarify to students that a) the use of coursework sites is unacceptable; and b) conduct that undermines freedom of speech and expression is unacceptable.

- (e) Revisions to the General Regulations for First Degrees (XV) and the General Regulations for Higher Degrees (XVI) for 2021-22 to enable the introduction of the policy of compensation for students commencing study in or after September 2022.
- (f) New, Significantly Amended, Discontinued and Suspended Programmes approved by Faculties

Attention was drawn to the review of degree classification methodology which would take place in the coming year and be presented to Senate in due course

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

(Meeting held on 12 May 2021)

This item was deferred to the October 2021 meeting of Senate.

## **13. Report of the Senate Nominations Committee**

(Meeting held on 25 May 2021)

Senate received the Report and approved the appointment and reappointment of Senate representatives on University committees.

Attention was drawn to the vacancy for the Chair of the Senate Academic Assurance Committee following Professor Harm Askes standing down from the role having been appointed Deputy Vice-President for Education. A Chair for the Senate Budget Committee had been sought on three occasions. Senate would need to consider and agree a future course of action.

During discussion, it was noted that efforts were being made to increase the diversity of committee memberships. There had been some recent progress, but it was recognised that increasing the diversity of committee memberships was an ongoing challenge.

## **OTHER MATTERS**

### **14. Returning Officer's Report**

Senate received and noted the report.

### **15. Annual Report of the Military Education Committee**

Senate received and noted the report.

### **16. 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.

**17. Any Other Business**

Senate thanked outgoing members of Senate, for whom the June meeting would be their final Senate meeting, including Head of Departments, elected members and the student officers.

Professor Mike Hounslow was thanked for his 21 years uninterrupted service on Senate and it was agreed the Chair would write a letter of thanks to Professor Hounslow.