Minutes

Meeting of the Senate

Date: 12 March 2014

Present: Professor White, in the Chair
Ms Annabel, Mrs Armstrong, Mr Ashman, Professor Ayscough, Dr Ballai, Ms Barnes, Dr Beck, Professor Bermel, Dr Blackett, Professor Brumfitt, Professor Buck, Mr Buckle, Professor Bulmer, Professor J Biggins, Professor Campbell, Mr Cho, Dr Cooper, Dr Cotter, Professor Crowther, Dr Cruise, Dr Fairclough, Professor Fitzmaurice, Professor Freckleton, Mr Gilbert (for Mr Rae), Professor Gillet, Professor Gray, Ms Green, Professor Grundy, Professor Hand, Mrs Hart, Mr Heminway, Dr Hernandez, Professor Hervey, Dr Hinchliff, Professor Horwath, Mr Howard (for Ms Chapman), Dr Howell, Professor Jackson, Professor Jenkins, Professor Jones, Professor Jordan, Professor Keefe, Dr Kitchen, Professor Labbe, Dr Lamb, Professor Lange, Ms Lee, Professor Lerner, Mr Lewis, Professor Maltby, Professor Marsh, Ms Mattila, Mr McAuley, Dr McGourlay, Dr Miller, Dr Molyneux-Hodgson, Miss Morgan, Professor Negrine, Professor Newman, Professor Nicholl, Dr Nichols, Dr North, Professor Nutbrown, Professor Oglethorpe, Dr Overton, Mr Parekh, Dr Partridge, Miss Pattacini, Ms Peall (for Mr Kohnert), Professor Peat, Dr Perrault, Dr Pope, Professor Pyper, Mr Rapier, Professor Ryan, Professor Saul, Dr Simons, Mr Stern, Dr Stevens, Professor Stevenson, Mr Sykes, Professor Tovey, Professor Valentine, Mr Ward, Professor Warren, Professor Watkins, Professor Weetman, Ms Wells, Professor M Williamson, Dr Winter

Secretary: Registrar and Secretary

In attendance: Mrs Barker, Mrs Birch, Mr Croft, Mr Davies, Ms Davies, Ms Fulton, Mr Gilbert, Ms Green, Mr Hastings, Miss Marsden, Mrs Kouchakji-Allen, Dr Strike, Mr Swinn, Dr West, Ms Woodcock, Ms Wray

Apologies: The Senate received apologies from 19 members.

WELCOME

Professor White welcomed two new members of Senate to their first meeting: Tracey Lee, Mature Student Representative, and Yun-Hang Cho, Faculty of Engineering Student Representative.

DEATHS

The Senate noted with regret the following deaths, which had occurred since the last meeting:
Thida Teresa Buor, postgraduate student in the Department of Civil & Structural Engineering, aged 28.

Alexander Benjamin Chew, postgraduate student in the Faculty of Engineering, aged 26.
Mrs Joanna Hilda Hunter, Lecturer in the Department of English Language and a member of staff from 1 October 1964 to 30 November 1986, aged 77.

Mr John van Loo, Assistant Director (Health Sciences Library) in the University Library, and a member of staff from 1995 to 2006, aged 66.

Professor Bernard Argent, a member of staff in the Department of Materials Science and Engineering from 1967 to 1990, aged 83.

Mr Eric Rose, a member of staff in the Department of Automatic Control and Systems Engineering from 1968 to 1995, aged 84.

Mrs Susan Martin, a member of staff in the Department of Education from 1986 to 2009, aged 59.

Dr John Allison, a member of staff in the Department of Electronic and Electrical Engineering from 1959 to 1986, aged 81.

Mr Kenneth Robert Crooks, Assistant Financial Accountant in the Department of Finance, and a member of staff from 1968 to 1995, aged 77.

Professor Vic Barnett, Professor in the Department of Probability and Statistics from 1975 to 1990 and Pro Vice Chancellor from 1986 to 1989, aged 76.

Professor Peter Joseph Artymiuk, Professor of Structural Biology in the Department of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology since 1985, aged 61.

Members stood in memory.

1. PRESENTATION AND REPORT

The Senate received a presentation from Professor White in which attention was drawn to the following points:

(a) Recent Developments: The sector had entered another turbulent political period as decisions taken by BIS were communicated to the sector through HEFCE. The BIS Grant Letter to HEFCE had been published on 10 February after a lengthy delay, which meant that the University had not yet received its grant letter from HEFCE. This delay had led to the requirement for universities to submit a Strategy for Access and Success being postponed.

(b) The BIS Grant Letter: BIS’ guidance over how HEFCE allocated its budget was noted, in particular an obligation to protect Widening Participation measures despite cuts to the National Scholarship Programme, which had also been refocused on PGT students, and the abolition of the separate Access to Learning Fund.

(c) BIS Guidance, 2014-15: There had been a net £45m reduction across the sector in the HEFCE recurrent teaching grant, reflecting the shift in HE funding profiles towards income from tuition fees. Despite this reduction, there remained a requirement to protect STEM provision. Increased tolerance around SNC allocations and 30,000 additional student places would significantly increase pressure on resources. Concerns around HEFCE’s ability to provide adequate funding in an expanded sector had led to government pressure on institutions to reject students who were unlikely to complete their studies.
Increased teaching capital of £20m and protection of the research budget were noted.

(d) **BIS Guidance, 2015-16**: The continued protection of the research budget and extension of the Research Partnership Investment Fund were areas of particular focus for BIS. The recurrent teaching grant would be reduced by a further £246m but HEFCE were simultaneously being asked to devise means by which to ensure quality and student experience given possible increases in student numbers. Increased funding for the additional costs of teaching high cost subjects had also been confirmed but significant concerns remained over the unhelpful and misleading view that the sector could accommodate continued reductions in funding through efficiency savings and self-finance.

(e) **Impact and Response**: Building on the previous Diamond and Wakeham reviews, a further review of efficiency in HEIs would be led by Sir Ian Diamond, with an initial report to be made in summer 2014. The publication of a final report would take place in early 2015. It was reported that Liam Byrne, MP, the Shadow Minister for Higher Education, would be visiting the University and discussions would include the importance of securing adequate funding to maintain and enhance the student experience.

The proportion of university income received from HEFCE continued to decrease such that the risk to institutional income increasingly lay with tuition fees, notably from overseas students. There was continued income pressure due to the static settlement for research, which meant that research funding from the public sector had effectively been cut. It was noted that EU research funding was growing in significance and was becoming a core element of research funding. The outcome of the general election (2015) and the referendum on UK membership of the EU (2017) would have implications for the University.

(f) **The External Environment**: The significant challenges facing the sector were being discussed across a range of sector bodies and stakeholders. The graduation of the first cohort of UG students to have paid £9k/year tuition fees was generating increasing focus on the value of money for university education and discussion of alternative routes to obtaining a degree, including apprenticeships. The University was playing a leading role in supporting PGT provision through its HEFCE Catalyst-funded project to support PGT study, with particular emphasis on Widening Participation. The University would continue to contribute to the debate around financial sustainability in HE finance in the run up to the general election in 2015. It was equally important that the University and the sector continued to challenge the negative rhetoric and damaging government policy on immigration by celebrating and demonstrating the value and benefit to the UK of international student recruitment.

(g) **University Update**: The University was considering a range of initiatives by which it could respond effectively to the challenges posed by the volatile external environment. Analysis of the implications of the Chancellor’s Autumn Statement and the HEFCE Grant letter would inform a coordinated institutional response. The Strategic Curriculum Change project and the development of a new University Strategic Plan 2015-2022 would considerably enhance institutional resilience to the impact of external factors. Further significant work had taken place during the process of student number target setting and the planning round, consideration of a
University research strategy and collaboration with the Students’ Union on the international student agenda.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 DECEMBER 2013

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2013, having been circulated, were approved and signed.

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.

5. DEVELOPING THE NEXT STRATEGIC PLAN

Professors Labbe and Maltby presented an overview of the purpose and process for the development of the next University Strategic Plan 2015-2022. An effective plan would enable the University to articulate its principal aims and objectives to an internal and external audience by celebrating institutional excellence and successes that were matched by a stout desire to support the education of its students.

The development process would be a collective enterprise, informed by academic expertise in relevant areas of policy and practice from within the University’s own academic community. Members noted the timescales for key stages of the process that would run to autumn 2015, when formal approval of the final plan would be sought from Council. A range of focused activity was intended to allow colleagues across the University to engage with the process, thereby engendering a sense of collective ownership in the plan amongst all sections of the community. A dedicated website had been set up by which additional contributions could be made and it was noted that Senate would receive a further presentation at its next meeting on 18 June. The principles expressed in the University’s Mission, Vision and Identity statement would underpin the new strategy in order to ensure that it was both consistent with institutional values and reflected a realistic level of ambition.

The following specific points were noted as being within the scope of discussions:

- Questions of institutional size and shape and priority setting;
- The importance of demonstrating the excellence, value and importance of the full breadth of University research activity;
- The impact of external factors;
- Input from students, including the Students’ Union and in academic departments;
- The University’s relationship with and impact on the Sheffield city region.

In response to a question relating to the Vice-Chancellor’s remuneration, it was clarified that this was decided by the lay officers of Senior Remuneration Committee, a Council sub-committee, and did not involve academic staff or the University executive. There was little evidence to suggest that the University had or was likely to suffer any reputational damage or any drop in alumni engagement resulting from increases in the remuneration of its senior staff.
It was also confirmed that national pay negotiations would commence shortly, through UCEA, but the University remained committed to providing an attractive and appropriate package of benefits to its diverse staff body. Discussions about the Living Wage were ongoing at national and local level and involved a range of complex issues. The University would continue to consider these issues in an informed manner, with the benefit of the expert opinion of Human Resources Committee, and the Students’ Union would be kept informed of the progress of discussions.

6. FUTURE BIBLICAL STUDIES EDUCATION AND RESEARCH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD

Professor Labbe provided an overview of a proposed new structure to sustain delivery of the University’s proud tradition in Biblical Studies teaching and research. UG programmes would be administered by the Department of Philosophy but course content would remain unchanged. Research provision would be reinforced by the establishment of a new interdisciplinary Biblical Studies Research Institute that would operate on a cross-Faculty basis to deliver greater breadth. A process of review had commenced in April 2013, and several Working Groups had considered a range of options in discussion with staff and students in order to propose changes that were viable and supported. This imaginative rethinking of the University’s offer created the potential to attract additional students and enhanced the disciplinary contribution to the teaching of the Faculty.

Senate endorsed the proposals, which would be implemented from 1 September 2014, and agreed to recommend to Council that the proposals be approved.

REPORTS FROM STATUTORY BODIES

7. REPORT ON THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE COUNCIL
(Meetings held on 28 November 2013 and 25 February 2014)

Senate received and noted the Report on the Proceedings of the Council. Senate welcomed the importance that had been placed on attracting and retaining the best staff but sought clarification over the practical effect on academic staff of the University’s new performance management criteria. Enhancing existing good performance was important for the University to maximise success and these criteria had been included in a suite of new employment policies and procedures that had been agreed in discussion with trade union colleagues. The University was justifiably proud of its employment record, with significant achievements including the attraction of talented and diverse staff as well as initiatives such as Sheffield Leader and Juice that focused on leadership development and wellbeing.

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES OF THE SENATE

8. REPORT OF THE LEARNING AND TEACHING COMMITTEE
(Meeting held on 19 February 2014)

Senate received and approved the Report of the Learning and Teaching Committee including:

(a) Strategic Curriculum Change: Senate approved quality management arrangements for the Level 1 Faculty Challenges, whereby ownership would rest with the FDLT and be overseen by Quality and Scrutiny Sub-Committee. A core set of learning outcomes would be developed that could be supplemented by additional faculty-specific outcomes if required. It was
noted that the each Faculty Challenge was based on 35 learning hours per student. Although it would be core provision, account would be taken of any impact on students on accredited courses in designing an appropriate model.

Clarification was provided that each Faculty would establish a Working Group to consider any resource implications of this new Challenge activity, with reference to elements of existing good practice in the Faculty of Engineering. An overarching Operational Group, Chaired by Dr Andrew West, would also consider related resource requirements across Professional Services and administrative roles in faculties and departments. It was further clarified that a great deal of work was underway to ensure the availability of sufficient appropriate space for the Challenge activities to take place. It was noted that preparation for Level 2 Challenges was at an earlier stage of development because these would not begin until 2015.

(b) Placement Learning:

(i) Senate endorsed a recommendation that all degree programmes that could be converted to a Degree with Employment Experience should be returned in the Key Information Set as KIS code 1 (Optional Sandwich available) and that faculties would be consulted as to the programmes to which this applied.

(ii) Senate endorsed the wider promotion of placement learning opportunities amongst students and staff in order to raise awareness. The resource intensive nature of supporting these opportunities might merit the establishment of a learning unit and Student Services was leading work to enhance efficiency across services supporting the different kinds of opportunity that were available. Further discussion would take place with FDLTs and UEB in due course.

(iii) Senate approved the formal recording of all placements of two weeks or more and agreed that work should take place to ascertain how to record summer internships.

(c) Amendments to General Regulations: Senate approved amendments to the General Regulations as set out in Appendix 3 to the Report, subject to Quality and Scrutiny Sub-Committee reviewing the proposed wording to Regulation 39 (relating to final examinations in first degrees) in order to add greater clarity.

(d) Enterprise Prize: Senate approved the introduction of new University of Sheffield Enterprise Prizes of £500 to each of a UG, PGT and PGR student in their final year of study.

(e) Collaborative Developments: Senate approved the following collaborative developments:

(i) An updated agreement for BA (Hons) in Business Management between the Management School and Sino British College, Shanghai.

(ii) A variation to an existing agreement, changing the name of Singapore Manufacturers’ Association (SMa) to Singapore Manufacturing Federation (SMf) and an MA/PG Diploma in Psychology and Education.
(iii) A BSc (Hons) in Material Physics with Nanjing University of Technology (NJUT).

(f) **Programmes Approved by Faculties:** Senate approved new and significantly amended programmes, as set out in Appendix 5 to the report.

(g) **Future Plans for Part-Time Undergraduate Provision:** These were subject to detailed discussion, and a vote was requested. Rather than proceed to a vote, the Chair preferred to seek further discussion with a view to reaching a consensus. Following this further discussion, and subject to the points below (see points (i)-(vi), Senate approved the closure of programmes set out in paragraph 2.6 of the Report, with the exception of the Working with Communities programmes (ACEU022 and ACEU032). Further consideration would be given as to whether this unique and distinctive programme could be sustained in a new curriculum.

Senate agreed to recommend to Council for approval a change of departmental name from the Institute for Lifelong Learning to the Department for Lifelong Learning to reflect market research, which identified the need to project a more friendly and accessible image.

Senate noted the impact on part-time education caused by the economic downturn and exacerbated by the higher fee regime and ELQ policy in 2012. A decline of 40% nationally was reflected in the Institute for Lifelong Learning (TILL) where student numbers had fallen from around 1300 in 2009 to c.350 in 2013/14. Part-time degree level programmes had not recruited since 2012.

Without decisive action the University’s existing part-time provisions would gradually decline to nothing and it would be extremely challenging to regain its competitive position. That the University had confirmed its strategic desire to continue to provide an offer to students from non-traditional backgrounds reflected its ethos as an institution, at a time when many other universities were withdrawing from this kind of provision altogether. However it was vital to ensure that a new offer was appropriately attuned to current market demand if it was to be successful.

Greater integration of programmes with faculties and the University’s significant financial commitment to supporting TILL in the development and delivery of new programmes and models were all positive developments that would offer a radically improved curriculum. Extensive evaluation of various models had taken place, involving colleagues from across academic and professional services departments.

During discussion Senate recognised that the formal closure of these existing programmes implied a number of issues that required resolution and upon which assurances were sought. Key points were noted as follows:
(i) Commitment to existing students: The decision to discontinue existing programmes would have no bearing on the studies of current students, who would be encouraged and supported to complete their studies. The University was committed to providing an educational experience that matched students’ expectations at the commencement of their studies.

Plans for completion would be discussed iteratively with students on an individual basis, which was already standard practice in TILL; and from a personal and academic perspective, including intensity of study, in order to ensure there was no detrimental impact on the experience of students. Members noted that the University had successfully managed the closure of programmes in the past, for example in the School of Nursing and Midwifery, and that expertise and good practice should inform the approach to current TILL students.

(ii) A Lifelong Learning Offer: Clarification was provided that a suite of CertHEs was planned for development that could be offered from 2015. These would form an integral part of the new curriculum as a means to enhance access to the University through non-traditional routes, as a standalone course of study or exit route. These programmes could be offered partly in the evening, depending on demand.

The University had confirmed its commitment to offering programmes to non-traditional students in its Access Agreement and in its broader widening participation agenda. There were a number of ways in which the city-region and society could engage with and access the University, for example the Discover Programme, the ongoing development of MOOCs and iTunesU but, for students who were interested in obtaining a qualification from a leading national and international institution, the University was significantly expanding opportunities to do so.

(iii) Non-traditional student support: It had been recognised that some students from non-traditional backgrounds might require additional support in an integrated model. This had been built into the new model for part-time learning, with links to pastoral support from TILL throughout the student journey in order to benefit from the wealth of expertise that the department could offer. It was noted that the University was effective in supporting students with various additional requirements who were undertaking more traditional programmes and its retention rate compared favourably to that of many other institutions.

The proposed use of technologically enhanced and blended learning was welcomed. There was already widespread use of many facets of this across the University, for example MyEcho, and increasing the use of such tools could be expected to benefit all students in the future, regardless of age, background or mode of study.
(iv) **Evening provision:** Market research had demonstrated that the provision of evening classes was not a particular requirement for the majority of non-traditional learners who would be interested in studying at the University, who had expressed a preference for daytime study during the week. Flexibility of study was the primary concern.

Clarification was however sought over the continued availability of evening teaching: current students whose courses ran during the evening would be unaffected and the Foundation Year would include some evening provision, as would the new CertHEs from 2015. If there was sufficient demand or interest then it was agreed that additional teaching might be offered in the evening. It was further agreed to investigate the possibility of offering additional teaching at Level 1 in the evening. This would help to ensure support for the minority of students in the current market for whom evening teaching was a key factor in their ability to undertake higher education.

(v) **Competitive position:** Intensive work was required to establish the appropriate structures necessary to enable delivery of a comprehensive new curriculum from 2015, with related systems of student support. In the meantime, degrees with Foundation Year and the existing part-time Foundation Programme would recruit from 2014 in order to ensure that the University retained a non-traditional offer that could be significantly expanded with the introduction of further new programmes in 2015.

(vi) **Faculty Challenge:** Opportunities to undertake new Challenge activity for students entering the University through non-traditional routes would necessitate a flexible approach, based on individual circumstances. Further discussion would take place, in time for suitable arrangements and processes to have been agreed by 2015, when the 2014 Foundation year cohort was expected to be studying at Level 1.

It was agreed that Senate should receive at its next meeting a report detailing how the issues raised above were being dealt with at operational level. This would provide Members with the necessary assurances that existing students would suffer no detriment and that new provision could deliver the expected benefits.

9. **REPORT OF THE RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

(Meeting held on 5 February 2014)

Senate received and approved the Report of the Research Ethics Committee. As previously reported, a Conference celebrating 10 years of the University’s Research Ethics Policy would take place on 11 April and include keynote speeches from the Vice-Chancellor and PVC (Research and Innovation). The Committee has also recently undertaken a benchmarking exercise into good policies and practices as a continuation of its work to embed thinking about issues of research ethics across the University. Although the University had taken a more devolved approach, it was pleasing to note that it was complying with good practice guidance.
10. RESEARCH AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE  
(Meeting held on 12 February 2014)

Senate received and approved the Report of the Research and Innovation Committee, including an amended governance hierarchy and terms of reference for the institutional oversight of provision for research staff. The Standing Group for Research Staff would become a formal sub-committee of Research and Innovation Committee in order to ensure that institutional visibility and focus on the University’s provision for research staff was comparable to that of its doctoral provision.

Senate noted a draft Statement to Council, which set out how the University currently complies with the UK Concordat to Support Research Integrity. It was now a HEFCE requirement that every university submit a statement of compliance in its annual assurance return. Council would be asked to approve the draft Statement.

11. REPORT OF THE SENATE BUDGET COMMITTEE  
(Meeting held on 23 January 2014)

Senate received and approved the Report of the Senate Budget Committee including its recent series of meetings with the Registrar and Secretary and Professional Services Directors to discuss how different departments manage their budgets to deliver an effective service, with particular reference to the student experience. A report on the outcomes of these meetings would be provided to Senate on 18 June. The Committee had continued its work to improve understanding of financial processes and had added an account of the Strategic Development Fund to its website. This was a growing resource which members were encouraged to use and share with colleagues in departments. Further information would be added in due course, including accounts of Shared Costs and Resource Allocation.

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL

12. REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE  
(Meeting held on 25 November 2013)

Senate received and noted the Report of the Estates Committee.

13. REPORTS OF THE ESTATES COMMITTEE  
(Meeting held on 13 January 2014)

Senate received and noted the Reports of the Finance Committee.

OTHER MATTERS

14. REPORT ON ACTION TAKEN

A Report on action taken since the last meeting of the Senate was received and noted.
15. 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 18 June 2014

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