Minutes  Meeting of the Senate

Date: 25 March 2015

Present: The Vice-Chancellor, in the Chair
Professor Anderson, Professor Askes, Dr Blake, Dr Brereton, Professor Buck, Dr Butler, Professor Campbell, Professor Coca, Dr Cotter, Dr Cruise, Professor Dobson, Professor Fitzmaurice, Dr Foster, Professor Harrison, Mr Harrison, Dr Hernandez, Professor Hodson, Dr Horn, Professor Hounslow, Dr Howell, Mr Hudson, Professor Jackson, Dr Johnston, Professor Jones, Dr Jorgenson, Dr Kitchen, Professor Labbe, Dr MacIntosh, Mrs Marriott, Mr McAuley, Ms McKeown, Dr Nicholson, Dr North, Professor Nutbrown, Professor Overton, Miss Pattacini, Professor Peat, Dr Perrault, Professor Phillips, Mr Rapier, Mr Wyse, Mr Simpson, Professor Simons, Dr Slatter, Dr Soubes, Mr Stern, Professor Stone, Mr Sykes, Professor Valentine, Dr Vasilaki, Professor Vincent, Mr Ward

Secretary: Dr A West

In attendance: Mrs Arnold, Mrs Barker, Professor Bath, Mr Brown, Mr Colley, Mr Dodman, Ms Fulton, Ms Green, Mr Lilley, Mr Rabone, Ms Robson, Mrs S Stephens, Dr Strike, Mr Swinn, Miss Woodcock, Mr Wright

Apologies: The Senate received apologies from 31 members.

WELCOME

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed the new University Librarian, Ann Horn, to her first meeting of Senate. Also welcomed were Dr Louise Robson, attending as an observer and Jack Wyse, the Student’s Union Development Officer, who was attending on behalf of the Education Officer, Malaka Shwaik. This was Professor Paul White’s final meeting of Senate before he stood down as Deputy Vice-Chancellor on 30 April and the Vice-Chancellor thanked him for his significant and valuable contribution to the success of the University, in particular for his leadership during the Vice-Chancellor’s absence during part of 2013/14.

DEATHS

The Senate noted with regret the following deaths, which had occurred since the last meeting:

Emeritus Professor John Allan Barnard, Newton Drew Chair of Chemical Engineering and Fuel Technology and Head of the Department of Chemical Engineering, and a member of staff from 1 September 1977 to 30 September 1982, aged 86.

Emeritus Professor Frank Benson, Professor and Head of Department in the Department of Electronic and Electrical Engineering from 1967 to 1987 and Pro-Vice Chancellor from 1972 to 1976, aged 93.
Melvyn Bilbey, Fire Equipment Technician in the Department of Estates & Facilities Management, and a member of staff since 2002, aged 63.

Dr Victoria Henshaw, Lecturer in the Department of Town & Regional Planning, and a member of staff from 2013 to 2014, aged 43.

Stephen Hughes, former undergraduate student in the Department of Geography, who passed away October 2014, aged 23.

Eric Edward Stanley, Principal Lecturer in Architecture in the School of Architecture, and a member of staff from 1965 to 1968, aged 85.

Glyn Woods, Technician in the Department of Animal & Plant Sciences, and a member of staff from 1 September 1966 to 10 February 2012, aged 67.

Members stood in memory.

1. **VICE-CHANCELLOR’S PRESENTATION AND REPORT**

The Senate received a presentation from the Vice-Chancellor, who responded to speculation in the media linking him with the vacant Vice-Chancellorship at the University of Oxford by reiterating his commitment to the University of Sheffield, his pride in its recent achievements and its ambitious future plans.

Attention was drawn to the following points:

(a) **External Environment**: The sector was entering a further period of uncertainty in the run-up to the UK General Election on 7 May, particularly given the debate about home undergraduate tuition fees. Whilst this was welcome in terms of the potential benefits to students of a lower fee cap, it was essential that any Government approached the issue with sufficient realism to create a genuinely sustainable, long-term funding model, within which universities were sufficiently resourced to successfully achieve their objects. The University was undertaking its own analysis and modelling in order to continue to contribute to the ongoing debate. Developments around vocational education and alternative routes to HE continued apace with recent announcements about Degree Apprenticeships coinciding with the release of a report co-authored by the Vice-Chancellor and the Vice-Chancellor of University of Warwick, Professor Sir Nigel Thrift. The AMRC continued to lead the sector in developing quality apprenticeship education and the University continued to look for ways to build on the success of the Training Centre and its growing reputation.

The future of UK immigration policy and its membership of the EU would have a marked influence on the sector, as would the implications of the provisions of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Bill relating to universities and freedom of expression.

Against a challenging background, Members were encouraged to highlight to UEB any issues to which the University could usefully respond, particularly bearing in mind University interests.
Executive Structure: A number of changes were reported regarding the membership of the University Executive upon the impending, planned retirement of several current members. Professor Shearer West, currently the Head of the Humanities Division at the University of Oxford, had been appointed as Deputy Vice-Chancellor with effect from September 2015 with interim arrangements being put in place following Professor White’s retirement as DVC at the end of April. Recruitment to the posts of PVC (L&T) and the FPVC (Medicine, Dentistry and Health) were well underway and the new position of University Secretary had been advertised. Changes to reporting arrangements and responsibility for Professional Services departments was intended to strengthen and enhance UEB’s capacity in the face of unprecedented challenge and change. The University needed the responsiveness to identify and take advantage of opportunities in areas of strength and distinctiveness, in particular by focusing on nationally and internationally leading innovation and translation.

Demonstrating Public Value: The debate about HE generally and tuition fees specifically had a worrying and misguided tendency to focus on the personal financial value of a university education to individual students rather than its wider public benefits, for society and the economy. It was noted that the work of SPERI was contributing to efforts to shift perceptions of HE away from a private investment decision to one of public good through the provision of skills and the power of HEIs to create ideas and foster innovation.

Success and Achievements: Members were reminded of the University’s latest individual and institutional accomplishments. Highlights included the Process Improvement Unit (see point (e), below), the University’s inaugural Apprentice Awards ceremony that was the first of its kind in a UK university; and continued recognition for the wider work of the AMRC, most recently a visit from the Governor of the Bank of England, Mark Carney, who hailed it as prime example of Sheffield’s spirit of hard work and innovation.

Efficiency: A recent UUK report into Efficiency in HE, authored by Sir Ian Diamond, had highlighted the success of the sector in achieving over £1bn of efficiency and costs savings over the last three years and the vast wider financial contribution that it made to the UK economy. At this University, growth in student numbers and falling real-terms funding have driven efficiencies and the sector as a whole needed to combat the implication that HE was inefficient in its use of resources. It was particularly pleasing to note that the success of the University’s Process Improvement Unit had been recognised externally with a silver award from the Institute for Continuous Improvement in the Public Sector.

The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) gave a presentation to update Senate on Achieve More with additional reflections on this year’s Level 1 Challenge in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities from the Director of Learning and Teaching (Civic Engagement) and the Faculty Director for Learning and Teaching (Arts and Humanities). Attention was drawn to the following points:

Rationale: Members were reminded of the strategic rationale for the overall initiative, which aimed to provide students with a broader educational experience beyond their individual disciplines and thus add greater value to the University’s degrees, learning from the Faculty of Engineering’s Global Engineering Challenge that had been run successfully for a number of years.
Level 1 Challenges, 2014-15: Four out of the five faculties had now completed the Level 1 Challenges, on a one week basis; the last Faculty was to complete during April having been phased over multiple weeks in the second semester. Over 5,600 students in total will have completed the programme and it was noted that the imaginative themes had helped to stimulate both staff and students and resulted in the production of some outstanding work. Guidance had been provided to aid staff designing, delivering and overseeing community based learning; this had proved useful and would help to shape future developments.

Additional Benefits: PG students who had acted as facilitators had reported a positive learning and development experience of their own. So too had the alumni who had taken part and their involvement had been particularly valued by the students, who welcomed the opportunity to engage with former students who were no working in a variety of fields.

Evaluation: Participant feedback had been gathered and the Level 1 events would be evaluated at a dedicated Away Day with both staff and student representation. The scale and nature of the overall project was unprecedented and there was much to reflect on that could enhance the ways in which the Level 1 Challenges would be run again for the 2015/16 cohorts. In particular, the logistical issues were pronounced and it was challenging to deliver a course or event to several hundred students at once whilst retaining sufficient capacity to focus on the primary pedagogical purpose of the programme. This evaluation and additional feedback from all those involved would also inform thinking about how the Level 2, cross-faculty, challenges would work. These would run for the first time in 2015/16 and aimed to build on the experiences and Level 1 learning outcomes.

Achieve More and Student Progression: It was confirmed that existing provisions in the General Regulations allowed for sufficient departmental discretion about student progression in the case of non-completion of modules and that non-completion in respect of Achieve More would be recorded on a student’s Higher Education Achievement Record. A further paper had been prepared on this issue for consideration by the Achieve More Steering Group.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 DECEMBER

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December, having been circulated, were approved.

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. RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK 2014 RESULTS

Senate received a presentation from the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research and Innovation) on the results of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014.
which had been received on 18 December 2014. Thanks were expressed to all those involved in preparing the University’s submission. This had been a genuinely collective effort and the strong institutional performance was testament to the excellence of staff across the University. Attention was drawn to the following points:

(a) Outcomes: Press league tables adopted two principal metrics: research quality expressed as a grade point average; or research power, based on both the number of staff submitted and quality. In terms of quality, the University ranked equal 14th in the Times Higher Education (THE) league table, while in terms of power, it ranked 12th, with the lower ranking in the THE table due to the strong performance of a number of small, specialist institutions. A visualisation of the THE table reflected press headlines that the REF had favoured Oxford, Cambridge and London, with Sheffield ranked high among non-Oxford, non-London institutions. The University had underperformed on impact, ranking 13th in the Russell Group for this component of the assessment, compared with ninth for outputs, although identifying and articulating exemplar impacts had been challenging for all HEIs. There had been some strong performances, with 13 units of assessment in the top ten, including Biomedical Science (top in Allied Health Professions). However, a stronger overall performance would have required more units to be placed in the top five. Although preparation for the REF had been time consuming, it had provided an opportunity for internal reflection and scrutiny, as well as some wider benefits, including the impact case studies, which were a resource to be drawn on more generally.

(b) Strategy: Recognising that individual departments had different drivers, the University had chosen not to impose a one-size-fits-all approach involving institution-wide thresholds, but had instead sought to achieve the optimum balance between reputation and QR funding in each unit of assessment. In terms of selectivity, the University had submitted c.74% of eligible staff, placing it at the selective end of its competitor group but close to the sector average. As noted in previous communications with Senate and more widely, the purpose of the REF was to compare institutions themselves rather than individual members of staff and the University’s approach to selectivity had the single aim of maximising the institutional position. It could not be taken as a measure of individual merit and it would be incoherent to use selection or non-selection in such an external return in any subsequent HR processes. Clarification was provided over the findings of the University’s Equality Impact Assessment and the number of female staff submitted relative to the number of male. Further work was planned to analyse these findings in greater detail at faculty level led by the Gender Equality Committee, the outcomes of which would be shared with the University Women’s Network in due course. It was noted that the report of the REF Equality and Diversity Panel had recommended that funding councils undertake sector level analysis of submissions by gender using HESA data.

(c) Lessons: The results of the REF provided assurance concerning a number of areas of research focus emerging from the Futures 2022 initiative and the review of bio-medically-related life sciences chaired by Sir John Tooke. It was noted that early fears that the REF would disadvantage interdisciplinary research had not been realised and many interdisciplinary submissions had been highly rated, although treatment had varied across units of assessment. Impact would be a future focus for all departments, and work would continue to implement the Impact, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange Strategy.

(d) Next Steps: Looking ahead, it was assumed that a further REF would take place in 2020, though the nature of the likely assessment methodology was currently unclear. Uncertainty also surrounded the future of QR funding, in
particular the risks associated with an expected greater concentration of funding in areas of excellence reflecting a more general desire to see greater numbers of units placed in the top five.

6. **DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN**

Senate received a presentation about the development of the University’s new Strategic Plan. The five workshops held between November and January on each of the five key themes had generated a wealth of material that the Strategy Development Group was using in the initial preparation of a draft Strategy that would enable to the University to continue to flourish whilst retaining its own sense of identity.

**Challenge and Change:** External challenge and change meant that the University needed to ensure that could flex and respond effectively in order to benefit from new opportunities and mitigate emergent risks; where the University had significant strengths and distinctiveness this would be reflected, for example its contribution to wider regional development and engagement with its students. Additional work would take place to model the impacts of externally driven changes on potential institutional scenarios, for example possible disruption from changes to tuition fees and other funding changes and decreasing numbers of 18 year olds up to 2022.

**Strategic Themes:**

(a) Research and Impact took a variety of forms. Developing appropriate strategic priorities involved assessing how the University could continue to undertake the work that it wanted to do and where to focus effort to maximum effect;

(b) The Strategy’s provision for ‘Education and Student Experience’ involved careful thought as to areas of potential growth and those with less demand and how to measure quality and capability faced with greater variety of Post-16 qualifications. In so doing, there was an underlying imperative to continue to demonstrate and communicate the public value of higher education beyond mere private good as an ‘investment decision’;

(c) Further thought about public value across the range of institutional activity was related to developing the theme of Our Social Responsibility, focusing on making a positive difference through genuine engagement with society and more effectively coordinating the ways in which to demonstrate this impact;

(d) Further thought as to the University’s Place: Globally and Locally would reflect both the mutual benefits that it and the city-region could bring to each other and the global impact of higher education for the benefit of society. It was noted that the University’s sense of place should not be driven by league table position; this should result from developing an appropriate Strategy and successfully delivering the aims and objectives contained within it;

(e) A significant amount of work was taking place across the University to devise an enhanced approach to developing regional, national and international strategic partnerships that would deliver lasting, mutual benefits, for example in areas such as industrial, research and policy.

**Next Steps:** An outline draft Strategy would be prepared during the next six months, building on the work outlined above, with subsequent proposals about how the new Strategy would be launched and how the University would work collectively to achieve its goals. A ‘Town Hall’ consultation event would take place on 6 May attended by a range of staff from across the University with the purpose of using outputs from the earlier workshops to distinguish areas for focus in the Strategic Plan itself and those which would be better addressed through sub-
strategies. Members were encouraged to engage with this process and encourage colleagues to do the same in order to achieve the levels of engagement that would be vital to the event’s success. Attention was also drawn to the dedicated web pages which had been developed to provide updates and feedback and to allow any member of staff to input on a continued basis.

7. FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES – PROPOSED CHANGE TO ACADEMIC COSTUME
Senate approved a proposal to change the Regulations relating to Academic Costume, whereby students in the Departments of Architecture, Landscape, Law and Town and Regional Planning (the Department of Urban Studies and Planning from 1 September 2015) would graduate in the same coloured hoods as the rest of the Faculty of Social Sciences, with effect from January 2016.

REPORTS FROM STATUTORY BODIES

8. REPORT ON THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE COUNCIL
(Meetings held on 24 November 2014 and 23 February 2015)

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

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES OF THE SENATE

9. REPORT OF THE LEARNING AND TEACHING COMMITTEE
(Meeting held on 18 February 2015)

Senate received and approved the Report, including:

(a) Amendment to Procedures for the admissions of International Students from ELTC Summer School: The current ELTC proficiency test would be replaced with an assessment of work completed over the six-week ELTC programme preceding the start of the academic year. Clarification was provided that the ongoing assessment would provide a more appropriate test of students’ language capability that was suitable to the work they would be required to undertake on their degree programme, such as critical thinking, synthesis and citing sources.

(b) New Policies on the Recognition of Prior Learning and Double Counting: The new policy would give departments discretion to recognise credits obtained as part of a previous award towards a University of Sheffield degree (up to a maximum amount as stated in the policy). This would be particularly useful for students in departments offering professionally oriented programmes and, more generally, where students would otherwise be required to demonstrate the same learning outcomes of which they had already proved themselves competent as part of a previous award. Departmental discretion would ensure that academic standards and rigour were maintained.

(c) Amendments to the General Regulations: A number of amendments to the General Regulations were approved, including a new award title of Doctorate in Specialist Medicine (Dermatology); changes to the Regulations for Higher Degrees to reflect four year duration and optional placements; and provision for the use of credits awarded as part of a collaborative programme of study for an award from both the University of Sheffield and the partner institution.

(d) New and Significantly Amended Programmes: Senate approved a number of new and significantly amended programmes approved by Faculties between 19 November 2014 and 2 February 2015 and a number of programmes approved by Chair’s Action.
(e) Recording of Lectures: Members noted an update on the new policy on recording lectures in response to concerns that the Library had raised over issues around copyright and performing rights and following consultation with colleagues in other institutions with similar policies in place. It was clarified that reference to under-represented groups was not the result of specific concerns but reflected the Digital Engagement Group’s general concern to treat all student groups equitably.

Additional clarification was provided that the CICS Technology Enhanced Learning team would be making a variety of training and support available to staff. Recorded lectures would be streamed via MOLE, which was the most secure option, but there were alternative ways to make recordings available to students, for example departmental and Google sites. Recordings would be kept until the end of the following academic year but staff would be able to download recordings so that they could be re-used in future years.

10. RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
(Meetings held on 4 February 2015)

Senate received and approved the Report, including two additional terms of reference in relation to recommended minimum and maximum length of service for faculty representatives and the frequency with which it would review the University’s Ethics Policy. It was reported that the Committee continued to expand the range of digital resources available to support staff and students and there had been almost universal implementation of the online ethics review system; only those departments who processed very small numbers of ethics applications were not using it. Senate noted that this was the final UREC report made under the chairmanship of Professor Newman and, on behalf of Senate, the Vice-Chancellor thanked him for his leadership, which had left the Committee well placed for the new Chair, Professor Bath.

11. REPORT OF THE RESEARCH AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE
(Meeting held on 11 February 2015)

Senate received and approved the Report. It was noted that the Committee was continuing to monitor the University’s progress with its plans to meet EPSRC’s requirements for research data management. Attention was drawn to the significant ongoing uncertainty and volatility regarding science and research funding, including the publication of the Government’s Science and Innovation Strategy in December 2014; the Nurse Review of Research Councils, to which the University would be submitting a response to the initial consultation; financing knowledge exchange activities; anticipated changes to the HEIF in 2016 and the future of EU funding. The combined effect of these factors was to make forecasting likely future funding allocations and awards increasingly difficult.

12. REPORT OF THE SENATE BUDGET COMMITTEE
(Meetings held on 22 January and 5 March 2015)

Senate received and approved the Report. The Committee had held a meeting with the Vice-Chancellor to discuss its overall role and specific potential activity that it could usefully undertake and a preliminary response had been provided to the Committee’s recommendations that were endorsed by Senate in June 2014. Further updates would be provided in due course. Detailed minutes of SBC meetings were available on the Committee’s website.
REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL

13. REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE
(Meetings held on 24 November 2014)

Senate received and noted the Report of the Finance Committee.

14. REPORT OF THE ESTATES COMMITTEE
(Meeting held on 8 January 2015)

Senate received and noted the Report of the Estates Committee. Clarification was provided that the proposed new Combined Heat and Power facility was required to mitigate the significant risks to the University, especially its high value, high quality research activities and the Faculty of Science generally, caused by weaknesses in the district heating facility. The proposed location to the rear of the Dainton Building followed extensive analysis and would provide energy for the whole of the Western Bank estate. Work on the site would be timed such as to mitigate disruption to teaching and would be reflected in timetabling arrangements for 2015/16.

15. REPORT OF THE HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE
(Meeting held on 9 February 2015)

Senate received and noted the Report of the Health and Safety Committee.

16. REPORT OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE
(Meeting held on 29 January 2015)

Senate received and noted the Report of the Human Resources Committee. Clarification was provided that the development of the Reward and Recognition Strategy had been informed by responses to the 2012 and 2014 staff surveys and aimed to reinforce a culture of recognition and of celebrating success and contribution, with additional discretionary elements providing greater scope for individual and team rewards than the current Exceptional Contribution Award procedure. It was expected that the cost of the new scheme would be similar to the old. It was noted that regard had been had to both the potential positive and negative effects of individual recognition and the scheme would be evaluated on an ongoing basis to ensure that it was achieving the desired outcomes.

OTHER MATTERS

17. FOSSIL FREE INVESTMENTS

Senate received a presentation from the Students’ Union Development Officer. Whilst recognising the University’s significant research effort into sustainability and cleaner energy, Members were encouraged to support the work of People and Planet, which promoted divestment from fossil fuel energy companies. Papers had been circulated setting out the ongoing discussions on this matter.

18. QUARTERLY FINANCIAL RESULTS SUMMARY

A report on the quarterly financial results to 31 October 2014 was received and noted.
19. REPORT ON ACTION TAKEN

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

20. 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 24 June 2015

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