Minutes of Meeting of the Senate

Date: 21 October 2015

Present: The Vice-Chancellor, in the Chair

Ms Allen, Ms Annabel, Professor Ayscough, Professor Biggins, Ms Binnie, Professor Buck, Mrs Campbell-Pilling, Dr Cooper, Dr Crockford, Professor Crowther, Professor Dobson, Dr Fairclough, Professor Flint, Professor Gillet, Professor Goldman, Professor Grasby, Professor Grundy, Professor Hand, Dr Harris, Professor Hitchmough, Ms Horn, Dr Horn, Mr Hudson, Professor Jackson, Professor Keefe, Dr Kinsey, Dr Kitchen, Professor Koh, Professor Labbe, Dr Lamb, Ms Lim, Professor Maltby, Mrs Marriottt, Professor Martin, Mr McAuley, Ms McClean, Dr McMillan, Professor Milton, Mr McMorrow, Ms McKeown, Dr Molyneux-Hodgson, Professor Morgan, Professor Nicholl, Dr Nichols, Mrs Nolan, Dr North, Miss Paisley, Mr Parekh, Professor Piette, Mr Rapier, Ms Saville, Dr Simpson, Mr Simpson, Professor Stevenson, Dr Surtees, Dr Swift, Mr Sykes, Dr Wainwright, Professor Warren, Professor West, Professor Winder, Dr Winter.

Secretary: Dr A West

In attendance: Mrs R Barker, Ms Birch, Mrs Campbell-Pilling, Ms S Fulton, Ms Griffin, Ms Purves, Mr Rabone, Mr Swinn, Miss Vinnicombe, Miss Woodcock,

Apologies: The Senate received apologies from 36 members.

WELCOME

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed members to the first meeting of the Senate in 2015-16, including new Heads of Departments and the Students Union Sabbatical officers. Also welcomed were the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching).

DEATHS

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

Professor Peter Cropper, Professor of Music Performance from 2005 to 2011 and Leader of the Lindsay String Quartet in residence in the Department of Music from 1974 to 1979, aged 69.

Professor John Roach, Professor in Department of Education and Emeritus Professor of Education and member of staff from 1965 to 1983, aged 95.

Professor W. Derek Collins, Professor of Applied Mathematics and member of staff from 1974 to 1987, aged 83.

Members stood in memory.
1. VICE-CHANCELLOR’S PRESENTATION AND REPORT

The Senate received a presentation from the Vice-Chancellor, in which attention was drawn to the following points:

(a) The role and powers of Senate: Senate was reminded of the role of Senate within the University’s overall governance framework. Council was ultimately responsible for the entirety of the University’s activities and recent regulations and guidance, including the Higher Education Code of Governance published in December 2014 by the Committee of University Chairs, had placed greater emphasis on the role of Council in overseeing academic matters. However Senate provided vital oversight of teaching, research and the admissions and regulation of students with much of the detailed work delegated to sub-committees. Members were encouraged to contribute to discussions to ensure that the University derived maximum benefit from the collective knowledge and experience of members of Senate and other colleagues. It was noted that an introductory email had been sent to all new members of Senate to assist with their induction.

(b) The Political Environment: It remained essential for the University to continue to engage with the process of policy making. An anticipated Higher Education Green Paper was expected to provide for a number of developments that would reinforce the concept of a market for HE, positioning education as a product and students as consumers (See also Minute 1(f), below).

The Government Spending Review, due to report by the end of November 2015 aimed to identify the means by which the Government could achieve its target of eliminating the deficit by 2019/20. BIS was amongst the unprotected departments that had been asked to identify budget cuts of between 25 and 40%. This would have significant implications for the HE sector given that spending on HE and science comprised the majority of BIS’ expenditure and universities were already required to co-fund research. Current indications were of a significant reorganisation and reduction in the number of BIS’ partner organisations, driven to a large extent by continued assertions about the inefficiencies of HE; for example significant revisions to the structure of research councils as a result of a review of expenditure by management consultancy firm, McKinsey & Co.

Post-meeting note: The Green Paper, entitled, 'Fulfilling our potential: teaching excellence, social mobility and student choice' was published on 6 November 2015.

In Government’s Productivity Plan, published in July 2015, aimed to address the slowdown in UK productivity growth and the lack of infrastructure, planning and skills needed to improve performance. Although the plan acknowledged the importance of sufficient investment in high-quality science and innovation, the impact of wider initiatives designed to reduce the overall deficit were likely to intensify the pressure on funding for research and innovation.

(c) Sheffield City Region (SCR) Devolution Deal: MPs had debated the second reading of the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill on 14 October, the SCR deal having been announced by the Chancellor of Exchequer at the
AMRC on 2 October. The University featured prominently in the SCR deal, which was worth £30 million year over 30 years, and the process of negotiation had strengthened the relationships between the various regional organisations involved. The University had a central role in the SCR deal through its leading contribution to the emerging Advanced Manufacturing District.

Plans for regional science and innovation audits created the potential for competition between initiatives designed to support excellence and those intended to facilitate regional innovation, with only limited funding available; the LEP Science and Innovation Board, Chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, would be instrumental in ensuring that the region obtained maximum benefits from the available funding and that devolution did not simply transfer to the regions responsibility for delivering austerity measures.

(d) **Northern Powerhouse and China:** The Vice-Chancellor had been part of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's delegation on his recent visit to China, during which he had sought £24 billion of investment in a range of initiatives in the SCR. It was noted that the state visit to the UK by the President of China, Xi Jinping, was likely to further strengthen regional connections. The University was widely recognised to have a key role in efforts to create a 'Northern Powerhouse', building on established connections including ScHARR’s collaborations with the NHS on Wellbeing and the AMRC.

(e) **International Student Visas:** Home Office proposals to introduce more stringent English language requirements as part of new visa rules for international students would have severe implications for the recruitment of overseas students, particularly those with advanced skills but weaker English language ability. Although it was positive to note that the Home Secretary’s speech to the Conservative party conference that outlined the plans had been roundly condemned by the HE sector, business and industry and a number of politicians, the continuing anti-immigration rhetoric was a significant threat to both long-term institutional sustainability and the wider national interest. In addition to efforts from within the sector, it was essential that leaders in business and industry were strident in advancing the national economic case for overseas students and that the wider benefits to the UK of the hundreds of thousands of overseas alumni were celebrated.

(f) **Teaching Excellence Framework:** The anticipated HE Green Paper was expected to launch a consultation on the introduction of Teaching Excellence Framework in 2016 that would be used as the basis for permitting individual institutions to increase their home undergraduate tuition fees at the rate of inflation from 2017. Any period of consultation would be subject to particular time-pressures given that institutions would need to agree and announce 2017 tuition fees in early 2016.

There was also significant concern across the sector about the practicalities of a TEF, in particular the suggestion that assessment criteria would focus on out-put measures. Devising an effective and appropriate methodology was particularly complex due to the lack of available relevant underpinning data and it was vital that any such metrics were supplemented by relevant contextual information. Furthermore, the excellence of existing UK quality assurance processes was globally recognised and HEFCE had launched its own consultation on the future of QA before the UK General Election. The University had submitted a response and, along with others in the sector, continued to engage with colleagues in BIS in order that any new systems and methods of institutional evaluation were fit for purpose. In particular, policy makers had been invited to consult directly with those actively involved in teaching to help ensure that any new system was practical and
workable.

(g) **Responding to Challenge**: The University was well-placed, having achieved wide recognition for the significant amount of work taking place internally and in collaboration with external partners to contribute to debate on a range of challenging issues. The launch of the new Strategic Plan (see also Minute 5, below) would be timely in setting out a vision for the future direction of the institution in the context of the current policy and HE landscape.

Professor Hounslow provided an update on the 2015 student recruitment position, in which attention was drawn to the following key points:

(h) **2015/16 Recruitment**: The overall picture was positive, despite continued decline in applications from home PGT students. Currently, home UG registrations had comfortably exceeded institutional target and overseas registrations were expected to settle at close to target. It was noted that Senate would receive a further update on the final student numbers for 2015/16 after the 1 December census date.

The University had enjoyed unprecedented success during Confirmation, Adjustment and Clearing as a result of the considerable amount of work done by academic and professional services colleagues across the University, who were thanked for their efforts. Particular attention was drawn to a joint Corporate Affairs-Admissions campaign, which had helped the University to attract approximately 10% of the new intake through Adjustment and Clearing without having to compromise on previously agreed lower limits on entry tariff. Members were reminded of the need to consider the potential of Adjustment and Clearing when responding to applications for 2016.

(i) **Looking ahead**: It was noted that the global recruitment context was challenging. There was economic uncertainty in a number of countries from which the university traditionally recruited heavily, notably China, and this was exacerbated by increasingly stringent immigration rules and unfavourable political rhetoric. Although the cap on home student numbers had been removed the number of 18-year-olds in the UK population would decrease until 2020 whilst the percentage of students gaining top A level grades had fallen in 2015, as it had in 2014; a trend that was expected to continue. There was greater uncertainty around future recruitment of home PGT following the introduction of PGT loans from 2016 and the end of HEFCE matched-funding to support institutional PGT scholarship schemes. Significant effort would again be required throughout 2015/16 to achieve a strong outcome in 2016 but the University was in a strong competitive position overall and could approach the current recruitment cycle with confidence.

Clarification was provided that Sheffield International was particularly focused on enhancing recruitment from the Asian sub-continent, where this challenge was particularly pronounced, as part of wider efforts to diversify the international student population. The contract with the University of Sheffield International College included incentives to diversify the overseas student population.

2. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24 JUNE**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2015, having been circulated, were approved as an accurate record, subject to the correction of Mr McMorrow’s title (see also Minute 3(a), below).
3. MATTERS ARISING ON THE MINUTES

These were noted as follows:

(a) Minute 8(a), Report of the Learning and Teaching Committee, Proposed establishment of a Joint Institute with Nanjing Tech University: It was confirmed that the proposal had been approved subject to a number of points, including:

(i) The process of programme design would take account of matters such as freedom of expression. It was confirmed that programmes delivered under the aegis of the Joint Institute would be dual Sheffield and Nanjing Tech degrees;

(ii) The level of quality assurance applied would be comparable any other University of Sheffield degrees;

(iii) Members of staff could not be compelled to undertake teaching responsibilities in Nanjing under their current contracts of employment;

(iv) Staff who chose to teach in Nanjing could be assured that due regard would be had to ensuring their health and wellbeing.

It was reported that a cooperation agreement had been signed with Nanjing tech University and an application for the establishment of the Joint Institute had been submitted to the Chinese Embassy. This followed extensive consultation with academic departments and advice from professional services. Attention was also drawn to the following points:

- The academic approval process for all elements of programmes delivered by the University was underway. As previously noted, this provided the opportunity to examine in detail the matters raised by Senate and academic departments to ensure that they were addressed satisfactorily;

- While the establishment of a formal link with Nanjing Tech was rooted in its specialist Science provision, it provided scope to expand into other disciplines and would enable the University to investigate connections with other leading institutions in China. It was reported that the University had signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Zhezang University, which was ranked amongst the top ten HEIs in China.

(b) Minute 5, Languages Review: The Deputy Vice-Chancellor had taken over as Chair of the Review Group, which was in the process of evaluating a comprehensive range of data and information on languages provision across the University, including comparisons with the sector. Further discussion was taking place between the Heads of the Schools of East Asian Studies and Languages & Cultures prior to a consideration of future options at the next meeting of the Review Group, in November.

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. STRATEGIC PLAN

Senate received and noted the draft University Strategic Plan. Production of the
plan had been informed by a lengthy process of engagement and consultation with a significant number of staff, students and external stakeholders. This had resulted in a strategy that was values-led and would provide the overarching framework to guide future institutional activities. It was noted that the immediate priority was to finalise the substantive content while further work took place to agree its final design and means of presentation. The overall strategy would provide context for a series of underpinning strategies covering specific areas of University business (for example, see Minute 6, below).

It was reported that the delivery of stated strategic objectives would be enabled by the development of an implementation plan, led by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor. This would include measures of success that allowed for consideration of issues at departmental, faculty and institutional level. Clarification was provided that the plan highlighted the importance of ‘people’ to its ultimate success and the implementation phase would seek to ensure that individual as well as team contributions to achieving strategic objectives were appropriately valued and recognised.

6. INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY

Senate and received and noted the draft Internationalisation Strategy. It concentrated on the international elements of overall strategic themes, against which specific priorities had been identified. Particular attention was drawn to the following:

(a) continuing efforts to diversify the overseas student population;

(b) ensuring that the University was able to attract the best international staff through greater articulation of the benefits of working in Sheffield and to continue to develop the support available to new and current overseas staff;

(c) the engagement of all staff in continuing to develop globally focused curricula.

REPORTS FROM STATUTORY BODIES

7. REPORT ON THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE COUNCIL

(Meeting held on 6 July 2015)

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

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES OF THE SENATE

8. REPORT OF THE LEARNING AND TEACHING COMMITTEE

(Meeting held on 8 July 2015 and Action taken on behalf of the Committee)

Senate received and approved the Report, including:

(a) Proposed amendments to the General Regulations: It was confirmed that proposals to amend the General regulations pertaining to Foundation Years would be subject to a further period of consultation with Foundation Year Programme Directors and other relevant staff before being presented to Senate later in 2015/16.

(b) New, significantly amended and discontinued programmes: Senate approved new and significantly amended programmes approved by Faculties between 8 May and 29 June 2015 and new, significantly amended and discontinued programmes approved by Faculties between 30 June and 25 September 2015, subject to a correction to the MSc Sensory Neuroscience, which would be delivered by the Department of Biomedical Sciences and not Psychology.
(c) **Development of the Learning and Teaching Strategy:** It was reported that work had commenced on drafting the new Learning and Teaching Strategy and wide-ranging initial consultation and discussion was planned to take place during Semester 1 to inform further development over the course of the year, aligned to the overall Strategic Plan. The University was actively involved in responding to external consultations and evaluating its compliance with guidance from the Competition and Markets Authority. It was noted that, with respect to the TEF, the University would be preparing a statement of what teaching excellence meant in an institutional context to inform its response to any consultation and discussion with policy-makers.

(d) **Department for Lifelong Learning:** It was reported that Dr Willy Kitchen had been appointed as Head of Lifelong Learning. Under the recently established executive structure, academic leadership for DLL, along with Student Services, fell within the remit of the PVC Learning and Teaching. Measures were being taken to support DLL and its executive team, in particular line management through Student Services, subject to formal approval by Council. It was pleasing to note that implementation of DLL’s strategy for part-time and lifelong learning was progressing well and these changes aimed to provide the framework within which DLL could build on this initial success and realise the full potential of its new portfolio.

9. **REPORT OF THE RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**  
(Meeting held on 16 September 2015)

Senate received and approved the Report, including a planned review of the University’s Ethics Policy, in accordance with a recently agreed principle that this should be subject to review every five years. This was an important piece of work and Members were encouraged to contact the Chair of the Committee to ensure that the review achieved the greatest possible reach and did not leave any matter unaddressed.

10. **REPORT OF THE SENATE BUDGET COMMITTEE**  
(Meetings held on 9 July and 8 October 2015)

Senate received and approved the Report, including:

(a) **Membership:** Senate approved amendments to the committee’s categories of membership and one new membership category, to reflect current practice.

(b) **Financial Matters:** SBC had considered the financial forecasts to 2018/19 and their implications for institutional size and shape. SBC had also reflected on the draft financial results 2014/15, noting that the significant size of the operating surplus was due in large part to an exceptional item for the Research and Development Expenditure Claim from HMRC, further details of which was contained in the report of the Finance Committee. In 2015/16 the Committee planned to consider the impact of depreciation charges and running costs associated with capital projects; and a follow-up presentation about TRAC.

(c) **Meetings with Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellors:** Senate noted a report summarising individual discussions between SBC and Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellors held during May and June. Professor Jackson thanked the FPVCs for taking the time to attend these meetings. The report also contained additional reflections from the Committee, in particular its interest in considering the financial processes within the AMRC and SBC’s continuing
educational mission.
Clarification was provided by the Chief Financial Officer about the mechanism for resource allocation and budget setting, which aimed to achieve the greatest level of transparency subject to matters of commercial confidentiality. The current model was introduced in 2008 following the establishment of the present faculty structure. It involved a two stage process whereby the initial activity-based allocation of income and costs to departments and faculties was followed by strategic adjustments to take into account differences across faculties and disciplines, using the Strategic Allocation Fund (SAF) to achieve appropriate settlements in all areas. Members noted that Budget Packs were circulated widely, including to SBC, and recipients were encouraged to suggest ways in which the initial process of allocation could be enhanced. With respect to the SAF, in 2015/16 the contribution rate had increased from 1.3% of attributable income to 2.6% with allocations made to the Faculties of Arts and Humanities & Science. It was recognised that the issue of science funding was replicated nationally; the long-term sustainability of science funding was the subject to wide-ranging discussions both institutionally and nationally. Further clarification was provided that the Vice-Chancellor was ultimately responsible for deciding the SAF contribution rate, informed by discussion with the Department of Finance and UEB.

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL

11. REPORT OF THE ESTATES COMMITTEE
(Meeting held on 12 May 2015)

Senate received and noted the Report of the Estates Committee.

12. REPORTS OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE
(Meetings held on 18 May & 18 June)

Senate received and noted the Reports of the Finance Committee.

13. REPORT OF THE HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE
(Meeting held on 13 May 2015)

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

14. REPORT OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE
(Meeting held on 11 June 2015)

Senate received and noted the Report of the Human Resource Management Committee.

OTHER MATTERS

15. CHANGES OF DEPARTMENTAL NAMES – FACULTY OF MEDICINE, DENTISTRY AND HEALTH

Senate agreed to recommend to Council the naming of two new departments in the School of Medicine resulting from the mergers of four departments that were approved by Senate in June and Council in July. The new departments would be called:
- Department of Oncology and Metabolism; and
- Department of Infection, Immunity and Cardiovascular Disease.
16. **UNIVERSITY REGULATIONS – AMENDMENTS TO THE EX-OFFICIO MEMBERSHIP OF SENATE**

Senate agreed to recommend to Council for approval amendments to Regulations governing the composition of Senate, to reflect recently established new posts of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellors for Learning and Teaching & Research and Innovation and Directors for Digital Learning.

17. **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STUDENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT, 2014-15**

Senate received and noted the Annual Report of the Student Services Department.

18. **QUARTERLY FINANCIAL RESULTS SUMMARY**

A report summarising the Draft Financial Results for the twelve months ended 31 July 2013 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 16 December 2015

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