Minutes

Meeting of the Senate

Date: 16 December 2015

Present: The Vice-Chancellor, in the Chair
Professor Anderson, Ms Annabel, Professor Ayscough, Professor Bateman, Professor Bath, Ms Binnie, Professor Brown, Professor Buck, Dr Butler, Professor Campbell, Professor Cowell, Dr Crockford, Professor Crowther, Dr Fairclough, Professor Goldman, Professor Gray, Professor Green, Professor Grundy, Professor Harrison, Professor Hitchmough, Ms Horn, Dr Horn, Professor Hounslove, Mr Hudson, Professor Jackson, Ms Jahan, Professor Jones, Dr Kim, Professor Koh, Professor Labbe, Mr Latimer, Ms Lim, Professor Maltby, Professor Marsh, Mr McAuley, Ms McClean, Dr McMillan, Mr McMorrow, Ms McKeown, Dr Molyneux-Hodgson, Professor Morgan, Professor Murdoch-Eaton, Dr Nicholson, Dr North, Dr Ogletorpe, Dr O'Reilly, Professor Overton, Mr Parekh, Miss Pattacini, Dr Perraton, Professor Phillips, Mr Rapier, Mr Robertson, Ms Saville, Dr Sexton, Dr Simpson, Mr Simpson, Professor Siva-Jothy, Professor Stevenson, Dr Stokes, Dr Surtees, Mr Sykes, Professor Valentine, Professor Von Fay-Siebenburgen, Dr Wainwright, Professor Warren, Dr West, Professor West, Mr Weston, Professor Williamson, Professor Winder, Dr Winter, Professor Withington

Secretary: Dr A West

In attendance: Mrs Arnold, Mrs R Barker, Ms Birch, Mr Brown, Mr C Clow (AV), Ms Griffin, Mr Rabone, Mr Ray (AV), Mr Swinn, Dr Strike, Miss Woodcock

Apologies: The Senate received apologies from 28 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 DVC/PVC LT

DEATHS

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

Dr Colin Haworth, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Materials Science and Engineering, and a member of staff from 1959 to 1987, aged 83 which occurred on 26 November 2015.

Roger Burns McCreath, undergraduate student in the Modern Languages Teaching Centre, who passed away January 2015, aged 50.

Bryony Rachael Hollands, undergraduate student in the Department of Music, who passed away August 2015, aged 19.

Umar Gero Jibril, postgraduate student in the Department of Chemical and Biological Engineering, who passed away September 2015, aged 35.

Robert Henry, undergraduate student in the School of Architecture, who passed away October 2015, aged 24.

Louis Booth, advanced apprentice in the Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre, who passed away November 2015, aged 19.

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) **HE Green Paper Proposals**: On 6 November the Government had published its Higher Education Green Paper, *Fulfilling our potential: teaching excellence, social mobility and student choice*. It contained proposals to radically alter the regulation of UK HE by merging HEFCE and OFFA to create the Office for Students, with an expected remit focusing on student protection. This would reinforce false assumptions that HE was a ‘market’ based on a transactional arrangement between supplier and consumer, into which a simplified process of entry for new providers was necessary to drive quality and expand student choice. It was unfortunate that the paper was presented as a means to address apparent flaws in the existing system but failed to recognise the excellence and high quality activity that was taking place across the sector, towards a range of different research and teaching outcomes. Furthermore it did not take into account the different costs of certain activities and the consequent need for a holistic funding model that supported what was important and not what was lucrative. Although the paper’s stated aim of increasing social mobility and widening participation was laudable it was inconsistent with the replacement of student maintenance grants with loans, which was likely to have the most significant impact on under-represented groups.

(b) **HE Green Paper Consultation**: The consultation period ran until 15 January 2016. The University response would include reinforcing the fact that students were more than merely consumers in a market-place and that excellent higher education included advancing the wider training and skills agenda to the long-term benefit of students but also to meet the needs of employers. The response would also present arguments on the concept of teaching excellence, taking into account the views of academics and students (See also Minute 1 (g), below). Colleagues who wished to contribute to the response should contact Strategy, Planning and Governance by 23 December 2015.
Nurse Review: The Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) (see Minutes (d) and (e) below) had confirmed that the recommendations made by Sir Paul Nurse’s review of UK Research Councils would be implemented, subject to enabling legislation. RCUK would become a new non-departmental public body, Research UK, with overall responsibility for research funding. It was noted with concern that support for research was likely to be aligned with government policy to a far greater extent than at present and therefore much more narrow in its reach: it was possible that Research UK would be overseen by a ministerial committee, although details were currently unclear. Despite welcoming the preservation of the dual support system, it was noted that the remit of Research UK would include the distribution of QR funding that was currently undertaken by HEFCE, which was to lose its funding role following its merger with OFFA. Ultimately, the absence of a single point of contact with an overview of different activities and support requirements across the sector and the distribution of teaching grant and research funding through distinct bodies would represent a significant and challenging change. It was also noted that the Government had recently announced an independent review of the REF, Chaired by the President of the British Academy, Lord Nicholas Stern.

CSR Headlines: In funding terms the outcome of the CSR was more positive for the sector than had been anticipated: the 17% cut to the BIS budget was lower than expected. However, BIS was facing significant staff cuts and the loss of HE expertise was an unintended consequence that could have a potentially significant negative impact on HE in general. It was pleasing to note that the science budget would be protected in real terms but it was not yet clear how the cumulative extra funds would be allocated through the Global Challenges Research Fund. Changes to the repayment threshold for student loans and the replacement of maintenance grants with loans were regressive, as were the 50% cut to the Student Opportunity Fund and abolition of bursaries for the study of nursing and allied health professions following the removal of the cap on places. Although the introduction of loans for home PGT students was an opportunity, the University-led PSS scheme had successfully demonstrated the importance of scholarship to support PGT study, particularly for students from a WP background. The CSR also considered at length issues of devolution and regional investment.

CSR Implications: Publication of the respective BIS and HEFCE grant letters in Spring 2016 would reveal the full extent of the impact of the CSR at sector and institutional level. Overall it was expected that the University would face cuts to the teaching grant and Student Opportunity Fund and would also be subject to the new apprentice levy on large employers. However, there were opportunities to grow numbers of PGT and students of nursing and allied health professions but the increased use of loans to fund these students would have long-term implications for these students in the future. The University was in a strong position to benefit from opportunities to attract increasing amounts of research funding through investment in specialist institutes and a wider commitment to the Northern Powerhouse.
(f) The University Position: In considering its institutional response to the various challenges and uncertainties facing the HE sector, the University would concentrate on how it could continue to make a positive difference locally and globally and celebrate the student body as more than just consumers of an educational product. The University would be guided by its values and the aims and objectives expressed in the new Strategic Plan, taking into account the external factors and internal discussions. Adapting to the new landscape would be challenging but responding constructively to challenge was a notable feature of universities. By maintaining and enhancing excellence in a holistic manner, rather than reacting to external metrics, the University could approach the future with confidence.

(g) Teaching Excellence (See also Minute 6(a), below): The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) was leading the University response to the proposed introduction of the TEF from 2016, connected to the development of a new Learning and Teaching Strategy (See Minute 6(b), below). This work would concentrate on articulating the institutional view of teaching excellence, including working with students to showcase the excellent provision being delivered across the University. Focusing on its existing strengths and values would enable the University to most effectively manage the impact of the TEF and to maximise the opportunities it presented on a long-term sustainable basis. The Students’ Union had welcomed the proposed approach, in particular drawing attention to the explicit link between the TEF and institutions’ ability to raise tuition fees in future and the impact that this would have on students and graduates. University representatives were also actively engaged in discussions with BIS about the metrics to be used, with a formal technical consultation planned to take place during 2016. It was noted that the University already recognised and celebrated teaching excellence, for example the annual Senate awards and dedicated promotion routes for teaching staff. The initial TEF Level 1 was based on a strong institutional QAA performance and the University had therefore met this requirement. The uncertainty was around the metrics that would be used to evaluate Levels 2-4 and concern at the speed with which its introduction was proposed.

(h) Research: There had been continued growth in research awards in a number of areas and overall institutional performance had been positive in 2014/15, despite the constrained funding environment. The University was developing increasingly ambitious and higher value proposals in a more collaborative manner. For the first time, the annual total of grant applications had exceeded £500million. In particular, new research grant and contract awards had grown by 10% and the value of new awards in the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health had increased by 56%, which was notable given the overall concentration of funding for medical and related research. Awards for capital research equipment were also positive and it was pleasing to note strong performance in EU awards during the first year of Horizon 2020.
(i) Science Review: The University had recently committed to reviewing its portfolio of science provision. This was intended to ensure its continuing ability to undertake significant world-class scientific activity on a long-term sustainable basis in the context of the challenging funding environment for science nationally. Two external reviewers had agreed to provide an independent report to complement internal reflections that together would inform the development of a Science Strategy for Sheffield. It was confirmed that the Review would run alongside complementary activity at national and sector level to consider the question of sustainable funding for science. The Review would commence in December 2015 and conclude in the Summer of 2016; further updates would be provided in due course.

(j) Sustainability Strategy: The University was playing a leading role in devising a strategic approach to the issue of sustainability, in particular the question of food security through the Grantham Centre for Sustainable Futures and its collaboration with the Students’ Union. More broadly, the University had for the first time sent a delegation to the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris to share knowledge and expertise on matters such as carbon capture and nuclear energy. At local level, the University had confirmed its commitment to becoming a carbon-neutral institution, including the recent joint statement between the Vice-Chancellor and President of the Students’ Union about the institutional investment strategy and its intention to divest from fossil fuels by the end of 2016/17.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 OCTOBER 2015

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2015, having been circulated, were approved as an accurate record.

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.

REPORTS FROM STATUTORY BODIES

5. 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

6. REPORT OF THE LEARNING AND TEACHING COMMITTEE
   (Meeting held on 25 November 2015)

   Senate received and approved the Report, including:
(a) **Teaching Excellence**: Senate endorsed a proposed approach to articulating an institutional vision of teaching excellence in response to the recent HE Green paper. This would set out how the University developed and rewarded excellence in learning and teaching and how this was supported in an institutional and sector context. A series of papers would be prepared to inform this work and Senate would have the opportunity to discuss the matter in more detail at its meeting in March. (See also Minute 1(g), above)

(b) **Consultation on the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2016-2021**: It was noted that work had commenced to develop a new Learning and Teaching Strategy for the period 2016-2021 with a view to a discussion at Senate in June 2016. Consultation events would cover each of the three key themes of flexibility, excellence and outward facing curricula and a dedicated website via which staff would be encouraged to submit their comments.

(c) **National Student Survey 2015**: Senate endorsed the proposed response to the results of the NSS, in respect of which a significant number of actions were being taken at faculty and departmental level. In particular, a working group had been convened to consider assessment and feedback in greater detail, this having been identified previously as an institutional strategic target.

(d) **University Library Strategic Plan 2015-2020**: Senate endorsed the Library’s Strategic Plan for the period 2015-2020, which had been discussed and welcomed by the Committee as a bold statement of intent. In particular the blended approach to service provision that was planned as a result of the complex information landscape.

(e) **Amendments to the General Regulations for Higher Degrees**: Senate approved amendments to the General Regulations for Higher Degrees relating to research away from the University, subject to the addition of the word ‘normally’ twice in new Regulation 31; and PhD degrees undertaken in an EPSRC Centre for Doctoral Training.

(f) **Renewal of Existing Collaborative Arrangements**: Senate approved the renewal of collaborative partnerships with the Nuclear Science and Technology Consortium and the College of the Resurrection and Yorkshire Ministry Course at Mirfield.

(g) **Proposed New Degree Award Titles**: Senate approved two new award titles for Integrated Masters programmes in the Department of Geography and a new award title for a Double Masters in the faculties of Engineering and Social Sciences, for introduction from September 2016.

(h) **Criteria for Senate Awards**: Senate approved an amendment to the eligibility criteria of category four for a Senate award that would make the awards more inclusive and representative, in response to feedback received.

(i) **Terms of reference and membership of Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) and sub-committees**: Senate approved the terms of reference and membership for LTC and its sub-committees, subject to the addition of the Students’ Union International Officer to the membership. It was noted that there was a vacancy on LTC for a representative of Senate and members were requested to consider suitable nominations.
7. REPORT OF THE RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE  
(Meeting held on 11 November 2015)

Senate received and approved the Report. Particular attention was drawn to recent cases of PGT and PGR students who had not obtained the necessary ethics approvals for their research, with serious implications for their progress. It was noted that the University had in place robust processes for dealing with such matters, involving consultation between departments and UREC, which had also discussed the matter in general terms at its last meeting. Emails had been sent to relevant staff to highlight the Ethics Policy and the importance of obtaining ethics approval and the consequences of not doing so for students, staff and the University. Members noted the practice of quinquennial departmental visits to raise awareness of ethical issues that were now included in staff inductions and research methods training for students. It was pleasing to note that the overall number of ethics cases was relatively low but work was continuing to ensure that there was a widespread appreciation of ethical matters across the University, including discussion fora, dedicated faculty and departmental ethics contacts and the development of case studies for use in training.

8. REPORT OF THE RESEARCH AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE  
(Meetings held on 18 November 2015)

Senate received and approved the Report, including:

(a) External Environment: It was reported that discussions about research and innovation were taking place in a rapidly changing external environment, in particular the report of the Nurse Review and the HE Green Paper. The findings of the Nurse Review were not subject to formal consultation but there was an opportunity to comment on its impact and implications through the wider consultation on the Green paper. Members were asked to send their views to their FDRI to inform the institutional response. Recent policy announcements emphasised the concept of ‘place’, which would be driven predominantly through regional science and innovation audits. The University would play a central role in the audit of the Sheffield City Region but there was significant potential to collaborate more widely across the North to drive a broader, complementary, Northern Science and Innovation Strategy.

(b) RCUK efficiency ratings: With respect to the University’s recovery of indirect costs, clarification was provided that this calculation was based on actual costs incurred during the previous year. Additional pressures on costs recovery included the way in which Research Councils index grants to allow for inflation and their approach to funding large capital research equipment. Success with these schemes required significant institutional commitment and had the effect of reducing overall RNC. It was noted that increasing the amount of academic time charged to grants could improve recovery of overheads. The Costing and Pricing Steering Group regularly reviewed the University’s rate of costs recovery against expectations and regularly undertook re-evaluations to ensure that the recovery rate was appropriately maximised.
(c) **Student Representation:** Clarification was provided that the Doctoral and Researcher Development Committee included student representation. The Doctoral Academy itself could facilitate connections between student representatives and the Students’ Union.

9. **REPORT OF THE SENATE BUDGET COMMITTEE**

(Meetings held on 19 November 2015)

Senate received and approved the Report, including:

(a) **Professional Services Budget Setting Process:** The Committee had held a further discussion about the process that was followed to set professional services budgets under the current executive structure. Whilst SBC was satisfied that this process was appropriate and effective it had noted the inherent challenge in identifying and quantifying the costs of academic and professional services activity and any duplication between roles within faculties and professional services.

(b) **Budget Pack 2015/16:** The Budget Pack had been welcomed as an accessible and informative document. Notwithstanding the confidential nature of some of its contents, further consideration should be given to sharing the pack with colleagues more widely to raise awareness of the institutional financial position and its implications at local level.

(c) **Planning Round 2015/16:** The Committee had received an update on the annual planning round and expressed the hope that it would enable greater budgetary certainty to support investment and planning in the broader interests of the University as a whole, despite the uncertainty created by external factors.

**REPORTS FROM JOINT COMMITTEES OF THE SENATE AND COUNCIL**

10. **REPORT OF THE HONORARY DEGREES COMMITTEE**

(Action taken by correspondence)

Senate received and noted the Report of the Honorary Degrees Committee.

**REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL**

11. **REPORT OF THE ESTATES COMMITTEE**

(Meeting held on 08 September 2015)

Senate received and noted the Report of the Estates Committee.

12. **REPORTS OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

(Meetings held on 19 October 2015)

Senate received and noted the Reports of the Finance Committee.

13. **REPORT OF THE HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE**

(Meeting held on 13 October 2015)

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

14. LIBRARY ANNUAL REPORT

Senate received and noted the Library’s Annual Report.

15. ANNUAL REPORT OF CASES REVIEWED EXTERNALLY BY THE OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT ADJUDICATOR 2014-15

Senate received and noted the Annual Report of cases reviewed externally by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

16. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE APPEALS COMMITTEE OF THE SENATE RELATING TO THE PROGRESS OF STUDENTS 2014-15

Senate received and noted the Annual Report of the Appeals Committee of the Senate relating to the progress of students.


Senate received and noted the Annual Report of the Discipline Committee and the Disciplinary Appeals Committee of the Senate.

18. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MILITARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Senate received and noted the Annual Report of the Military Education Committee.

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 March 2016

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