

SENATE

Open Minutes

Of the Teams meeting held on Wednesday, 16 December 2020.

Present via Teams meeting:

Nick Braisby	Vice-Chancellor (Chair)
Gavin Brooks	Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Liz Cleaver	Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Digital
Rachel Cragg	Pro Vice-Chancellor External Engagement
Ellie Smith	University Secretary and Clerk to Council
Julie Irwin	Director of Student Success
Florin Ioras	Director of Enterprise and Research
Miriam Moir	Interim Academic Registrar
Karen Buckwell-Nutt	Director of the Institute for Health and Social Care
Russel Stone	Head of School, Media & Creative Industries
Kevin Maher	Head of School, Business, Law & Computing
Paul Morgan	Head of School, Human and Social Sciences
Phil Wood	Head of School, Aviation & Security
Sri-Kartini Leet	Head of School, Art, Design & Performance
John Hathaway	Elected representative, Business, Law & Computing
Lauren Vincent	Elected representative, Art, Design & Performance
Helen Ayo-Ajayi	Elected representative, Nursing & Allied Health
Rob Penhaligon	Elected representative, Media & Creative Industries
Sainey Faye	Nominated representative, University Partnerships Board
Margaret Greenfields	Nominated representative, Research and Enterprise Committee
Richard Jones	Nominated representative, Education Committee
Tamsin Grainger	Students' Union President
Natasha Neal	Students' Union Vice-President- Education
Leah Hill	Senior Registry Officer: Governance and Quality (Secretary)

Apologies

Daisy Toscano	Elected representative, Health Care & Social Work
Louisa Berry	Elected representative, Aviation & Security

Minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2020

20.98 The Minutes of the virtual meeting held on 23 September 2020 were approved as an accurate record.

Matters Arising / Status of Actions

20.99 It was noted that one action remained incomplete - the nomination of a Senate member from the Professoriate. The Director of Enterprise and Research confirmed that a name would be available once the Professoriate had met in January 2021.

Chair's Actions

20.100 The Chair confirmed that the No Detriment Policy: Emergency Measures had been invoked for Semester 1 by Chair's Action. This was endorsed by Senate. Senate also discussed invoking the No Detriment Policy for Semester 2 and agreed that ongoing circumstances warranted a commitment to invoking the No Detriment Policy for Semester 2, with a communication to students prior to the Christmas break confirming this and further, more specific, details to follow in January 2021.

Action: Miriam Moir to liaise with Communications regarding this.

Senate Representative on Council

20.101 Senate congratulated Professor Florin Ioras on his re election as Senate representative on Council. The Chair also thanked all those who stood and voted.

Chair's Report

20.102 A report document had been circulated to members in advance of this meeting and the following points were highlighted by the Chair:

- Student recruitment and financial outturn very positive in spite of challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic
- Reward payment made to all full time and part time permanent and fixed term staff in recognition of the University's excellent performance in 2019/20
- Staff have been working extremely hard to continually reinvent the University's services and the way in which we deliver them to cope with the ever-changing landscape of the pandemic, public health guidance, and government restrictions
- An interim Ofsted visit went ahead recently, focusing on the adjustments made to learning and teaching in light of COVID-19 and the resulting report is encouraging. A full inspection is expected at some point in the future and the Chair highlighted the importance of achieving a good outcome to ensure the University remains able to deliver our portfolio of apprenticeships. Full support from Senate members and their teams in preparation for this was requested
- The Office for Students have indicated the University are no longer subject to enhanced monitoring
- A number of new appointments and departures were noted, in particular Professor Elizabeth Cleaver, PVC Education and Digital who has done much to advance Curriculum 2023, implement a new process of School Enhancement Reviews, and in leading educational changes to the ever-changing COVID situation, will sadly be leaving the University in January
- Growing the core was highlighted as a key issue and essential to enable the University to achieve the aims of the partnership strategy
- The University has led the development of the GTRSB pledge which will be launching on 20th January 2021
- The University have formally adopted the IHRA definition of anti-semitism as endorsed by Senate and Council at their recent joint meeting.

Debate – What's higher in Higher Education? Incorporating knowing our customers / students – being relevant and unique as previously proposed

- 20.103 Senate received a paper outlining identifying who our students are and what we need to do to better cater for them and remain relevant and unique. It was acknowledged that the paper had been written three years ago and the University had leapt forward in a number of areas since then.
- 20.104 John Hathaway provided some additional background information and posed the following questions for Senate to discuss:
- How do we stand out in the market space to a broader public (14-17 year olds / parents / graduate employers)?
 - How do we get ahead of the competition and attain a position of over-subscription?
 - How do we better connect and communicate with all publics to remove the 'Bucks who?' narrative
- 20.105 Senate members engaged in a positive discussion covering further development of meaningful external engagement, turning highlighting our achievements into genuine impact and ways in which to nurture innovation within Schools.
- 20.106 The Chair concluded by inviting Senate members to take these discussions back to all the corners of the institution for further reflection and development.
- 20.107 The debate topic for the next meeting of Senate was confirmed as: Free speech/Prevent: the University's position, which would be led by Louisa Berry.

Matters for approval / discussion

A. Annual Monitoring Overview

- 20.108 An interim report on Academic Quality and Standards was given to Senate to provide an update on the new Annual Monitoring process implemented for 2019-20. The final report will be presented to Senate at the next meeting in March 2021.
- 20.109 The report covered five themes, including Application of Standards Report; Partnerships; Approval and Review; External Examining; and Student Casework. Areas of good practice highlighted included the development of Bucks Connect for enabling student results to be released online and briefing sessions for Board Chairs.
- 20.110 A number of process reviews were also noted, including a review of the annual monitoring process for partner institutions and a review of the Fitness to Practise and Academic Misconduct procedures.
- 20.111 Senate confirmed confidence in the maintenance of Quality and Standards at the University.

B. OFS Consultation on Quality and Standards

- 20.112 The OFS Consultation on Quality and Standards was presented to Senate, in addition to three papers circulated in advance of the meeting. These consisted of the full OFS Consultation document, a briefing and initial view on impact document and a summary of the proposed changes produced by the VC's Office.
- 20.113 Four proposals made by the OFS were noted - changes to the definition of Quality and Standards; the introduction of more challenging numerical baselines; a risk-based monitoring approach; and related interventions.
- 20.114 Senate noted that this tied in with ongoing discussions within the institution around entry tariffs but were concerned about the potential for unintended consequences of

implementation of the proposals, particularly in reference to widening participation and for applicants who are close to the borderlines for the proposed metrics.

20.115 It was reported that the University response would be produced based on wider responses received from directorates across the University. Senate noted that this would be presented for consideration by UET in early January and once approved, submitted to the OFS by the deadline of 12th January 2021.

C. EU Accessibility Directive

20.116 The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Digital) and Director for Student Success presented to Senate a plan to ensure the University becomes compliant with the EU Accessibility Directive, which states that all websites must meet the Accessibility Requirement and have an Accessibility Statement from September 2020. Mobile apps must meet accessibility requirements by June 2021.

20.117 The Director for Student Success reported that a review of digital accessibility had been completed. The outputs of the review include a draft University accessibility statement, a project plan outline and recommendations which would be circulated to Education Committee and Senate shortly.

20.118 Senate noted the update and would await circulation of the draft accessibility statement.

D. No Detriment Policy: Emergency Measures

20.119 A report that considered the impact of specific changes to regulations under the No Detriment Policy as applied to awards made in July 2020, and compared to the outcomes over the previous two years had been circulated to Senate. A sample of awards was used to determine the impact of two measures under the NDP: first the no detriment principle, and secondly consideration at borderlines.

20.120 Key points noted included:

- 6.4% of the students in the sample benefitted under the no detriment principle, which showed that largely students achieved as a result of their own hard work, despite the impact of the pandemic. Senate were pleased to note the lower than expected negative impact of the 'lockdown semester'.
- 16.5% (127 students) of the sample were upgraded at a borderline as a result of the No Detriment Policy. This resulted in 31% of first class degrees awarded, compared with 21% the previous year. Senate noted the need to consider the impact of the borderline measure in particular on grade inflation when considering the introduction of additional regulatory measures.

20.121 Senate agreed that this snapshot would be considered again at the next meeting in March 2021 when full student achievement and progression data would be available.

20.122 Senate noted the impact of the changed regulations and agreed these would be taken into consideration when considering which specific areas of the No Detriment Policy: Emergency Measures to implement in Semester 2.

Reports to Receive:

Council Report

20.123 The Minutes from the meetings held on 6 October 2020 and 23 November 2020 had been circulated and were received.

Student Union Report

20.124 The Report submitted by the President and Vice-President of the Students' Union had been circulated and was received.

20.125 Senate were pleased to note that the WonkHE representative at the recent RepCon meeting praised the University for its intention to keep the Wycombe campus library open over the Christmas break. As a result of this endorsement it was also agreed that the Uxbridge campus library would also remain open.

Academic Planning Committee

20.126 The Minutes from the meetings held on 17 September 2020 and 22 October 2020 had been circulated and were received.

20.127 Senate was reminded that the Minutes of these meetings were confidential and business sensitive.

Education Committee

20.128 The Minutes from the meeting held on 14 October 2020 had been circulated and were received.

20.129 Senate recognised the special need for keeping parts of the campuses open throughout Christmas this year and fully endorsed this decision.

Research and Enterprise Committee

20.130 The Minutes from the meeting held on 7 October 2020 had been circulated and were received.

20.131 Senate were informed of UETs support for the establishment of a Graduate School at the University and were pleased to note the proposal's progression.

Ethics Panel Annual Report 2019/20

20.132 The Annual Report for 2019/20 had been circulated and was received.

20.133 Senate commended the Ethics Panel for supporting and maintaining processes throughout lockdown.

Research Degrees Annual Report 2019/20

20.134 The Annual Report for 2019/20 had been circulated and was received.

20.135 Senate were pleased to note there are currently 31 students undertaking a research degree at the University and that seven research students had undertaken a viva during 2019/20, with five receiving minor corrections and two resubmissions.

Matters for Endorsement:

External Examiner Approval Panel

20.136 Senate received the update from the External Examiner Approval Panel and endorsed the decisions made in each instance. It was noted that there had been a mistake

regarding the dates for extensions to remit and clarified that these were from October 2020 until September 2021.

New Programmes of Study and Revalidations

20.137 The report detailed recommendations to Senate of programmes presented to Approval Panels where conditions had been signed off. The Academic Registrar also noted the following programmes which had been considered at approval panels in recent days:

LLM Law (awaiting completion of conditions)

BSc (Hons) Architectural Technology (approved with conditions)

BSc (Hons) Building and Construction Engineering (approved with conditions)

Bsc (Hons) Dance and Performance – top up (approved)

20.138 The programmes were presented to Senate and endorsed.

Closing remarks

20.139 The Chair closed the meeting by thanking members for their ongoing hard work, particularly given the difficult circumstances, and wished all a good Christmas break.

Dates of the next meeting

The next meeting of Senate is on Wednesday 24 March 2021 at 2.00pm.