

## THE SENATE

### Minutes

This paper presents the confirmed Minutes of the last meeting of the Senate held on Wednesday 13 April 2016 at The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes.

The Senate **approved** these Minutes as a correct record of the meeting on Wednesday 8 June 2016 subject to the inclusion of amendments to Minutes 6.1 and 10.3.

Keith Zimmerman  
University Secretary

Sue Thomas  
Working Secretary to the Senate  
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## THE SENATE

Minutes of the meeting of the Senate held on Wednesday 27 January 2016 at 2.00pm  
in the Hub Theatre, The Open University, Walton Hall

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### PRESENT:

#### 1) Ex officio

Mr Peter Horrocks, Vice-Chancellor  
Professor Belinda Tynan, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning Innovation)  
Professor Kevin Hetherington, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Academic Strategy)  
Professor Richard Brown, Interim Executive Dean, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences  
Professor Mary Kellett, Interim Executive Dean, Faculty of Education and Language  
Studies and Health and Social Care  
Professor Anne De Roeck, Interim Executive Dean, Faculty of Science and Mathematics,  
Computing and Technology  
Professor Rebecca Taylor, Dean, Faculty of Business and Law  
Professor Hazel Rymer, Dean, Faculty of Science and Mathematics, Computing and  
Technology  
Dr Christina Lloyd, Director, Academic Services (Interim)  
Professor Patrick McAndrew, Director of the Institute of Educational Technology  
Mrs Tricia Heffernan, Director, Library Services (Acting)

### Appointed

#### 2) Central Academic Units

##### Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

###### Faculty of Arts

Professor Ole Grell  
Professor Graham Harvey  
Dr Lynda Prescott

Professor John Wolffe  
Dr Cristina Chimisso  
Dr Naoko Yamagata

###### Faculty of Social Sciences

Dr Troy Cooper  
Mr Matt Staples  
Dr Jovan Byford  
Dr Deborah Drake

Dr Anastasia Economou  
Dr Catriona Havard  
Dr Helen Kaye

##### Faculty of Education and Language Studies and Health and Social Care

###### Faculty of Education and Language Studies (FELS)

Dr Uwe Baumann  
Dr Tim Lewis  
Dr Elodie Vialleton

Mrs Annie Eardley (remote)  
Dr Indra Sinka

###### Faculty of Health and Social Care

Mrs Sue Cole  
Dr Verina Waights  
Dr Mary Twomey

Professor Jan Draper  
Mr Mick McCormick

## Faculty of Science and Mathematics, Computing and Technology

### Faculty of Science

Professor Monica Grady  
Dr Arlene Hunter  
Professor Claire Turner

Dr John Baxter  
Dr Janet Haresnape  
Professor David Rothery

### Faculty of Mathematics, Computing and Technology

Dr Leonor Barroca  
Mrs Lisa Bowers  
Dr Tony Nixon  
Dr Hayley Ryder  
Dr Ann Walshe  
Dr David Bowers

Dr Rachel Hilliam  
Professor Andy Lane  
Dr Toby O'Neil  
Mr Brendan Quinn  
Dr Magnus Ramage

### Faculty of Business & Law

Miss Carol Howells  
Dr Kristen Reid

Mr Mike Phillips

### Institute of Educational Technology

Dr Anne Adams

Professor Eileen Scanlon (remote)

### Other Central Units

Dr Liz Marr

### 3) Associate Lecturers

Mrs Frances Chetwynd  
Dr Clare Spencer  
Dr Tim Parry  
Dr Tricia French

Dr Linda Walker  
Dr Fiona Aiken  
Dr Hilary Partridge

### 4) Students Appointed by Open University Students Association

Miss Ruth Tudor  
Mr Josh Brumpton  
Ms Alison Kingan (alternate)

Mr John Murphy  
Mrs Nicola Simpson  
Dr Barbara Tarling

### 5) Academic-related Staff

Dr Donna Smith  
Mr Jake Yeo  
Ms Pat Atkins  
Ms Clare Riding  
Mr Phil Berry  
Dr Victoria Crowe

Mr David Smith  
Mr Mike Innes  
Mr Michael Street  
Mrs Joanne Smythe  
Mr Simon Horrocks  
Miss Barbara Poniatowska

### 6) Co-opted members

Dr David Knight  
Professor John Domingue  
Mr Rob Humphreys

Mr John D'Arcy  
Ms Susan Stewart

### In attendance

Mr Keith Zimmerman, University Secretary  
Mrs Dawn Turpin, Head of Governance  
Ms Sue Thomas, Senior Manager, Governance  
Miss Teresa Coyle, Manager, Governance

### Observing

Ms Kathryn Baldwin, Vice-Chancellor's Business Manager  
Mrs Alison Benson, Senior Manager, Governance  
Mr Mark Butler, Good Governance Institute  
Mr Lucian Hudson, Director of Communications  
Mr Guy Mallison, Director of Strategy

**APOLOGIES:**

**Appointed**

**1) Ex officio**

Mr Jeremy Roche, Dean, Faculty of Education and Language Studies and  
Health and Social Care  
Mr Chris Rooke, Director, Learning and Teaching Solutions

**2) Central Academic Units**

**Faculty of Education and Language Studies (FELS)**

Professor Regine Hampel Dr Jane Cullen

**Faculty of Science**

Professor Hilary MacQueen

**Faculty of Mathematics, Computing and Technology**

Dr Peter Robbins

**Faculty of Business and Law**

Ms Carmel McMahon Dr Sharon Slade

**Institute of Educational Technology**

Mr Chris Edwards

**4) Students Appointed by Open University Students Association**

Mr David Humble

**5) Academic-related Staff**

Mr Billy Khokhar

**6) Co-opted members**

Mr Christopher Goscomb

**In attendance**

Mr Andrew Law

## 1 WELCOME AND THANK YOU

- 1.1 The Vice-Chancellor, Mr Peter Horrocks, welcomed the following members to the Senate:

Mrs Lisa Bowers, Staff Tutor, North, MCT  
Dr Ann Walshe, Staff Tutor, North West, MCT  
Mrs Tricia Heffernan, Director, Library Services (Acting)  
Dr Hilary Partridge, AL, Social Sciences  
Ms Alison Kingan, OU Students Association (attending as an alternate)

- 1.2 The following member participated in the meeting remotely:  
Professor Eileen Scanlon, Institute of Educational Technology  
Ms Annie Eardley, FELS

- 1.3 The Vice-Chancellor recorded the Senate's thanks to Mrs Nicky Whitsted, Director, Library Services who had retired from the University, for her contribution to the Senate.

- 1.4 It was also noted that this was the last meeting for Professor Belinda Tynan, PVC Learning Innovation who was leaving the University. The Vice-Chancellor reported that he would comment further on this later in the meeting.

## 2 MINUTES

S-2016-01-M

- 2.1 The Senate **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2016 as a correct record of the meeting subject to the following amendment:

Minute 10.5

The word "ambiguity" to be deleted and replaced by "flexibility".

Minute 13.8

- 2.2 A member queried whether the concerns of members of the Senate in relation to the role and function of Faculty Assemblies had been taken on board and whether further information would be presented to the Senate. The University Secretary confirmed that there would be a report to the Senate on this item at its next meeting.

## 3 MATTERS ARISING

S-2016-02-01

Academic Quality and Governance Committee (AQGC)

- 3.1 A representative of Associate Lecturers (ALs) commented that she was pleased to see that the criteria for membership of the AQGC would be reviewed and the AL Executive consulted on methods to source relevant expertise. She urged that progress be made on this matter.

Faculty Configuration: Governance

- 3.2 A member enquired on progress on the consultation on the constitutions of Teaching Committee and Boards of Studies due to be undertaken in April. The Interim Executive Dean, Science, Technology and Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) who had overall responsibility for this aspect of the Faculty Transformation Project confirmed that draft constitutions and memberships were due to be issued for consultation imminently. The drafts were also being discussed with representatives of ALs and the OU Students Association. A Faculty Governance Reference Group had been set up comprising members of each faculty and key stakeholders from the Academic Policy and Governance Unit and the Quality Office to take forward work to develop generic constitutions (terms of reference, membership and mode of operation) for Boards of Studies. A report would be made to the next meeting of the Senate.

**Action: The Interim Executive Dean, (STEM)**

- 3.3 The Senate **noted** the responses to the matters arising from the minutes of the meeting of the Senate held on 27 January 2016 that were not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda

#### **4 REPORT FROM AND QUESTIONS TO THE CHAIR**

- 4.1 The Vice-Chancellor reported on external developments affecting the University:

##### Universities All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG)

- 4.2 Mr Horrocks reported that he had attended a meeting of the Universities APPG which had discussed the role credit transfer could play in addressing the fall in part-time study. The Group had been very receptive to the Open University's ideas and he believed there was a clear opportunity for the University to influence policy in this area and to play a pivotal role in delivering the governments targets for widening participation through credit transfer and progression.

##### Loans for part-time post-graduate study

- 4.3 Last month the Government had confirmed that loans for part-time post-graduate courses with no full-time equivalent would be available from the Student Loans Company in England for the academic year 2016/17. This had been introduced following concerns expressed by the University and indicated that Government was taking note of the case the University continued to make for the importance and value of part-time study.

##### Support for lifetime learning

- 4.4 The Vice-Chancellor drew attention to the announcement following the Budget last month that the Government would be reviewing the gaps in support for lifetime learning, including for flexible and part-time study after the dramatic decline in part-time student numbers. This was a very positive development that indicated a commitment to support part-time and flexible learning and the University would play as full a role as possible in that review. The University would also be continuing its campaign for further relaxation of the rules for students studying for a qualification that was equivalent to, or of a lower level, (ELQ) to that which the student already held.

- 4.5 The University had not yet received confirmation from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) of its funding for the academic year 2016-17 in England. However the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) had notified HEFCE of its priorities for higher education for the coming year and an entire section had been devoted to the support of part-time students and widening participation. This was a very encouraging development.

- 4.6 Work was also ongoing in developing high-level standards for apprenticeships. This was viewed as a significant opportunity for the University and three Faculties were currently involved in the project.

##### Developments in the Nations

- 4.7 Parliamentary elections were due to take place in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in May and Mr Horrocks drew attention to the work of the Nation Directors and their teams in lobbying their respective governments in relation to education policy. In Northern Ireland an increase had been announced in funding for students and in Wales there was an indication that the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFWC) was focussing more strongly on part-time provision, and had recognised the OU specifically for its best practice in this area.

##### VAT Case

- 4.7 Mr Horrocks also reported that a claim submitted to HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) on behalf of the University for the repayment of VAT plus associated interest, totalling £53m, had recently been resolved in the University's favour. This related to goods and services

procured from a supplier over the period 1973 to 1994. He emphasised that this was a one-off gain and did not change the need for the University to balance recurring expenditure with recurring income. It would however increase the University's reserves and financial resilience in the face of future funding and policy changes. Mr Horrocks thanked colleagues in Finance, Open Media Unit and Library Services for their hard work in achieving this result.

**5 STRATEGIC PLANNING AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE S-2016-02-02**

SPRC-2016-01-CM: Minute 7.4

- 5.1 A member sought clarification as to whether the target level of £50m cost-savings or increase in income in order to create flex and resilience referred to in the minute was an annual target and whether it was an opinion or a verified amount. The University Secretary confirmed that the figure referred to an annual target for savings or increases, however it was not definitive and had been used during the process of modelling financial scenarios. Mr Zimmerman also confirmed that the recent resolution of the VAT claim would not affect this exercise.
- 5.2 The Senate **noted** the unconfirmed Minutes and Confidential Minutes from the meeting held on 2 February 2016.

**6 ACADEMIC QUALITY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE S-2016-02-03**

Minute 2.6

- 6.1 With reference to this minute, a member commented that the Nursing Programme Committee had not been able to recruit a representative of the OU Students Association for over a year. She enquired whether this presented an opportunity to consider how students were appointed to and represented on these committees. A representative of the OU Students Association acknowledged the difficulties in recruiting students to the Nursing and Social Work Programme Committees but confirmed that the Association had an agreement with the University that official representative roles on committees would be organised through the Association. He commented that although expressions of interest were received from students regarding membership of the Social Work Programme Committee none had followed this up by requesting information on the process of appointment. He concluded that the main barrier to participation seemed to be the time commitment involved rather than the appointment process.
- 6.2 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Academic Strategy) confirmed that the Interim Executive Dean for the Faculty of Education and Language Studies and Health and Social Care (FELS/HSC) was investigating the student membership of the Social Work Programme Committee. The Interim Executive Dean, FELS/HSC confirmed this and acknowledged that the process had not been followed correctly.
- 6.3 The Senate **noted** the minutes of the meeting of the Academic Quality and Governance Committee held on 29 February 2016

**7 EDUCATION COMMITTEE S-2016-02-04**

Attendance

- 7.1 A member queried whether the meeting held on 16 March 2016 was quorate as attendance appeared low and an alternate had attended for an Interim Executive Dean who should not be counted as a member in such circumstances. The Acting Chair of the meeting confirmed that the number of attendees had been counted very carefully at the start and the meeting had been confirmed to those present as quorate. The University Secretary agreed to verify the records of the meeting and the terms of reference and report back to the Senate.

**Action: Governance Team**

Post Meeting Note

*The Governance Team examined its records of the meeting and attendance. The meeting was quorate with eight members from a membership of 14 attending.*

Minute 3.1

- 7.2 A member commented that although it was pleasing to see the inclusion of a new workstream to the Assessment Programme to identify the work that was needed to support the provision of plagiarism software to students, it should be noted that there was a lack of synergy between systems for detecting software and the system for marking electronic assignments. The Interim Executive Dean, FELS/HSC, VCE Sponsor for Assessment commented that the project aimed to cover as many areas as possible in its work though she could not confirm at this point whether it would be possible to investigate this particular issue.
- 7.3 The Senate **noted** the minutes of the meeting of the Education Committee held on 16 March 2016.

**8 SENATE WORKING GROUP: LOCATIONS S-2016-02-05**

- 8.1 The Chair of the Working Group, Professor John Wolffe introduced the report and explained that a wide-ranging discussion of current concerns regarding the locations changes had been covered at the first meeting of the Working Group. The University Secretary had provided further information from relevant colleagues on a number of issues raised and this information was appended to the report. Professor Wolffe encouraged members of the Senate to raise issues with representatives of their Faculty on the Working group.
- 8.2 A member commented that she considered morale amongst staff working in regional centres to be very low at present. Another member drew attention to the reference to stakeholders being consulted on the configuration of office space in Manchester, Milton Keynes and Nottingham where the English Student Recruitment and Support Centres (SRSCs) were being established. He was concerned that this was not the case in practice and consultation had been minimal with unsuitable accommodation being proposed. Another member expressed her support for that view. The University Secretary offered to consult with Interim Executive Deans on the points raised and report back to the Working Group.
- 8.3 The Senate **noted** the report of the meeting of the Working Group: Locations held on 15 March 2016.

**9 OU STRATEGY S-2016-02-06**

- 9.1 The Vice-Chancellor introduced the paper and thanked members of the Senate who had attended the workshop session held earlier for their comments on the detail of the strategy. A note of those comments would be appended to the minutes of this meeting of the Senate. Mr Horrocks reiterated that the main objective of the strategy was the growth of the University in terms of both student numbers and the number of students qualifying. He drew attention to a number of changes which had been made since the Senate considered the previous draft. These included a revision of the vision for the University to include specific reference to growth, reference to life-changing learning to recognise the social justice mission of the University and the removal of the distinction between objectives and enablers. The University's values were also stated in a more prominent way to reinforce them. A new objective referring to digital innovation had also been added.
- 9.2 The resources required for implementation of the strategy were being considered as part of the current financial planning cycle and would be submitted to the Council for approval on

12 July 2016. Mr Horrocks assured the Senate that, assuming the strategy was approved by the Council at its meeting on 10 May 2016, considerable effort would be undertaken to communicate the impact and changes that would be required for effective implementation. He acknowledged this had not always been effective in the past but he urged members to engage with the opportunities for engagement that would continue during implementation.

- 9.3 The President, OU Students' Association welcomed the most recent developments to the strategy. She asked though that under the stated aims of the Adaptive Organisation and Culture objective, consideration be given to emphasising the need to work not only "for" students but also "with" them. She felt this would reflect the changing way that the University engaged with its students and emphasise that students should be a priority in the University's work. Another representative of the OU Students' Association commented that one element of working with students would be to ensure student representatives received adequate notice of events to which they were invited to participate to ensure their views were represented.
- 9.4 A representative of ALs reported that the Associate Lecturers' Assembly had supported the revised strategy and had been pleased to see points it had raised previously incorporated in it. She believed that the strategy now articulated many of the values which colleagues considered to be essential elements of the spirit of the University. Another member commented that flexibility was required to ensure policies introduced would operate to the benefit of all Faculties.
- 9.5 Another member commented that recent results from the National Students Survey had indicated a decline in quality offered and he queried whether work had been undertaken to investigate the reasons for this change. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning Innovation) commented that the declining results possibly reflected shifting views following the changes in English funding arrangements for study but cohorts of students would always be different in their perception of the University. Work was underway to examine the results further, and also to encourage more students to respond to the survey.
- 9.6 Another member welcomed the attendance of the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Council at the earlier workshop session. He urged the University to consider organising more opportunities for such interaction between representatives of the Senate and Council.
- 9.7 The Director of the Centre for Inclusion and Collaborative Partnerships expressed her support for the revised strategy and acknowledged that increasing social mobility and widening participation were implicit within it. She queried whether aims such as improving qualification rates of different groups or of disabled students should be stated more explicitly. Another member welcomed the strategy though queried whether the focus was too much on the short term. He also suggested that the synergy between the objectives required further development. The strategy could also be linked more closely to the University's extensive work in relation to sustainable development.
- 9.8 Another member agreed that the strategy included many good ideas but he was disappointed that there was no attempt to quantify the desired growth in student numbers. If the intended growth was substantial then this would have an impact on the provision of student support. A representative of the OU Students' Association also commented that a possible tension might exist between growth in student numbers and the quality of support for students. The Vice-Chancellor assured members that the focus was not simply on increasing numbers of students but also on supporting students to succeed.
- 9.9 The Vice-Chancellor summarised that the strategy appeared to command the broad support of the Senate. He acknowledged the points of detail that had been raised and assured members that they would be considered before the strategy went forward to the Council for approval. Mr Horrocks also reflected on views expressed in relation to the strategy being introduced against a background of low morale. He acknowledged the

impact of the decision on location changes on staff but commented that he did not consider morale to be low across the entire University and drew attention to instances where colleagues had been very enthusiastic and engaged with the University's work. Mr Horrocks concluded that the delivery of the strategy would require the support of the entire University to ensure it achieved its key objectives of serving its students. The strategy would now proceed via the Strategic Planning and Resources Committee to the meeting of the Council on 10 May 2016.

## **10 TEACHING EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK**

- 10.1 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning Innovation) began her presentation by explaining that the announcement by the Government to introduce a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) was an opportunity to raise teaching standards, widen participation in higher education and provide greater focus on graduate employability. Professor Tynan also commented that at present there was no single definition of teaching excellence. The timeline of events that led to the publication of the Green Paper *Fulfilling our Potential: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice* was explained and key aspects of the paper outlined. These included a proposed merger of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the Office for Fair Access (OFFA), the outline of the different levels within the TEF and new metrics on engagement with study, teaching quality, learning environment, and student outcomes. Consultation was due to commence shortly and it was assumed that a Bill would be presented in the Queen's Speech later in the year.
- 10.2 Professor Tynan presented suggested drafts of how the University might score for undergraduate students using metrics likely to be proposed in the TEF. These included satisfaction from the NSS Survey, teaching quality, employment, and participation rates.
- 10.3 A member commented that the TEF would focus the University on its core functions as a teaching university. Another member queried the figure given for the percentage of staff with teaching qualifications as she felt it might be lower than that presented. With reference to the data, another member commented that the data used from the NSS survey required background context. The University was able to rely on data received from approximately 15,000 students where as some universities had considerably lower response rates. A representative of the OU Students Association commented that the University was working to try and improve the response rate to the NSS Survey but considered that further work was required.
- 10.4 A representative of ALs commented that in relation to teaching quality, if the University wished to increase its scores in the metrics presented, it should consider offering ALs paid opportunities to gain teaching qualifications.
- 10.5 Professor Tynan thanked members of the Senate for their helpful comments and emphasised that this work was at an early stage and would be developed as more information on the TEF and the measures to be used became clearer. As it was her last meeting, Professor Tynan also took the opportunity to thank the Senate for its support during her term of office as Pro-Vice-Chancellor.
- 10.6 The Vice-Chancellor, on behalf of the Senate, thanked Professor Tynan for her work for the University and wished her well for the future.

*Tea break*

## **11 ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE REPORT**

**S-2016-02-07**

- 11.1 The Vice-Chancellor introduced the report and explained that it presented a set of key performance indicators covering areas of academic and strategic importance. At the workshop session held earlier, members of the Senate had provided insightful comments

on the indicators that could be incorporated into future reports and these would be reflected upon. The Vice-Chancellor invited comments from members on each theme in the report in turn.

- 11.2 In considering the information provided, a representative of the OU Students Association enquired whether data could be presented on module retention and completion in relation to post-graduate students. The data provided referred only to undergraduate students. The Vice-Chancellor agreed that this would be considered further.
- 11.3 A member commented that in considering student satisfaction and service quality, it was important to ascertain the correct information. Although calls may be answered promptly, the key measure was whether the student's query was resolved satisfactorily. The Director, Academic Services (Interim) commented that qualitative studies were carried out on responses and that this information could be provided. She also explained that the data in the report relating to satisfaction and service quality was for February 2016 and that more recent data showed improvements against targets. Dr Lloyd emphasised that staff in these areas were working very hard to support students and at the same time contribute to training materials ahead of the establishment of Student Recruitment and Support Centres.
- 11.4 In response to a question relating to the levels of research income and awards, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Academic Strategy) commented that this was likely to reflect a lull in the cycle between Research Excellence Framework (REF) exercises. There was also evidence of Research Funding Councils becoming much more competitive in their allocation of funding. These issues were under discussion in Faculties and the Vice-Chancellor's Executive would shortly be considering the challenges the University faced in relation to research funding.
- 11.5 The Senate **noted** the report.

## **12 LOCATIONS UPDATE: DELIVERING STUDENT SUPPORT THROUGH STUDENT RECRUITMENT AND SUPPORT CENTRES**

- 12.1 Ms Pat Atkins, Acting Director, Student Support presented an update on the implementation of the locations analysis recommendations to the Senate. She explained that the changes to locations provided an opportunity to improve the student journey, improve efficiency and operations and also to introduce new services. The aims of the new student journey were very significant so the process was being divided into smaller steps.
- 12.2 As a result of the changes, students would benefit from extended hours for support and advice. Students and enquirers would also benefit from the provision of more curriculum-contextualised support and this would result in a much improved student experience and satisfaction leading to increased retention and progression. Ms Atkins explained that the new structure would also provide greater resilience for the University with shared standards across all Student Recruitment and Support Centres (SRSCs).
- 12.3 Ms Atkins drew attention to further work that would be undertaken once SRSCs were in operation. The work of the Student Seamless Journey project would restart and a new Student Support Policy would be developed during 2016/17.
- 12.4 A representative of ALs expressed her concern that although Student Support Teams (SSTs) had been envisaged as bringing together ALs, faculties and learner support for students, their work appeared to focus on the learner support aspect. She was concerned that the Teams did not interact with ALs and was disappointed that the integrated support as envisaged was not being provided. Ms Atkins assured the Senate that this issue was being examined. Further improvements in the integration of IT systems would be required to improve the ways learner support and ALs worked together.

- 12.5 Another member commented that she was aware of high staff turnover rates amongst staff in Student Recruitment and Fees (SRF) in one centre and was disappointed by the physical location of the teams who, as a result, were unable to interact together. Ms Atkins commented that the staff would be moving to enable greater integration in their work.
- 12.6 A member commented that although SSTs were envisaged as providing the totality of support for students, in reality this was often not the case. Staff tutors were working hard to establish greater team working but SSTs needed to incorporate the work of advisers and operate as a much wider team to fulfil this aim. Staff tutors and ALs often felt distant from core activity supporting students. Another member supported this view and commented that the reality was some way from the vision presented in the slides. Ms Atkins acknowledged that work to integrate support fully was still in progress and urged colleagues to help embed the aims of the vision.
- 12.7 A representative in the OU Students Association asked if the aim was for SSTs to work in a more proactive way to offer support to students. Ms Atkins explained that the aim was for SSTs, partly through extended operating hours, to be able to contact students when they were not at work and offer support in a proactive way.
- 12.8 Another member commented that although the future vision looked impressive, the transition period to achieve that vision would be challenging. He feared a loss of knowledge as experienced staff left the University. Although systems could store information, they were not a substitute for experienced colleagues with great institutional knowledge.
- 12.9 Ms Atkins thanked the Senate for their comments. Work would continue on the practical arrangements to embed greater integration of teams and she emphasised that there would be a period of parallel running between the two systems for the transfer of institutional knowledge.

### **13 ENTRY POLICY**

**S-2016-02-08**

- 13.1 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Academic Strategy) introduced the paper and explained that it proposed a draft Entry Policy for discussion which had been developed following widespread consultation with staff and students. The entry project was established as part of the Student Success portfolio to develop an Entry Policy and associated tools, information, advice and guidance to ensure that all students began their studies at a start point which maximised their chance of success. The work on the Students First Strategy, and also the proposals for a Teaching Excellence Framework, had subsequently shaped the development of the policy. Professor Hetherington emphasised that the draft policy did not propose any change from the policy of open access to the University but proposed ways to increase opportunities for students to succeed.
- 13.2 A member expressed her support for the draft policy and commented that students did not always recognise the commitment required to study with the University, so any way to clarify that from the outset would be helpful.
- 13.3 A representative of ALs welcomed the policy and the importance it could have in enabling students to make the right choices at the start of their studies. She reminded the Senate that although diagnostic tools were helpful, resources should remain in place for students and enquirers to approach advisers for advice. Another representative of ALs commented that she felt the University was wasting an opportunity to increase student numbers by directing some students to other providers as proposed in paragraph 10. An OU Student Association representative also commented on this point and asked for clarification. Professor Hetherington explained that the aims of the University strategy was not just to increase numbers but to increase numbers of students qualifying too. The Director, CICP also emphasised that those students who it was felt would struggle with study on grounds

of literacy or numeracy would be encouraged to study with the University's local partners such as further education colleges to acquire the appropriate skills. The University would maintain contact with them during that period.

- 13.4 An OU Student Association representative also drew attention to the importance of advice on student finance too, especially if a staged approach was encouraged for studying.
- 13.5 A member supported the policy but urged caution as to overloading students with information and advice and tools. He emphasised the importance of diagnostic tools including "trigger points" which would refer enquirers or students to an adviser for in-depth guidance. He also supported the idea of assisting students who were not yet ready for University study to develop and return to the University.
- 13.6 Another member expressed her support for the policy though admitted she had been sceptical in the past of the concept of managed open entry. She agreed it was essential not to deter students from studying but by adopting a responsible approach to student recruitment she hoped it would be possible to influence students' choices, especially in the light of the significant financial commitment they were required to make, and that this would lead to the right outcome for them.
- 13.7 A member also drew attention to the importance of retention and progression and commented that the predominance of 60 point courses at level 1 did not suit all students. He believed short courses with 10 points of credit were very valuable in helping students start to study. Professor Hetherington commented that this aspect of the curriculum was being considered within other projects looking at the size and shape of the University's curriculum.
- 13.8 The Interim Executive Dean (STEM) welcomed the policy though commented it would not resolve all the difficulties students face when choosing to study. She urged Faculties to work on developing appropriate entry and exit points with clear study routes for students. Another member commented that students studied at different rates and consideration should be given to accommodating this. She also felt that Open Educational resources could play a bigger role in helping students to make the right study choices.
- 13.9 The Vice-Chancellor thanked the Senate for its helpful comments. The final version of the policy would be presented to the next meeting of the Senate in June 2016 for approval.

#### **14 ACADEMIC ORGANISATION**

**S-2016-02-09**

- 14.1 The Interim Executive Dean (STEM) drew attention to paragraph 7 of the paper and reported that the Knowledge Media Institute (KMi) would be moving to the Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics as a distinct research institute. It would have the same status within the Faculty as the other Schools listed in the paper.
- 14.2 The Senate **approved**:
- a) The names of the faculties of the University as set out in paragraph 4 of the paper; and
  - b) The names of the Schools within the faculties as set out in paragraph 6 of the paper subject to the correction of the following typographical error (shown in ~~strikethrough~~):  
  
School of Environment, Earth and Ecosystems Sciences

**15 SCHEDULE OF DELEGATION S-2016-02-10**

- 15.1 The University Secretary drew attention to a typographical error in relation to the delegations stated under Power 24. The bodies listed beneath the Special Appeals Committee (SAC) required deletion as they were listed there in error.
- 15.2 The Senate **approved** the revised Senate Schedule of Delegation for the Senate subject to correction identified above.

**16 EMERITUS PROFESSORS S-2016-02-11**

The Senate **approved** the award of the Emeritus Professor title to:

- a) Professor Susheila Nasta, Arts and Social Sciences,
- b) Professor Chris Cornforth, Faculty of Business and Law, and
- c) Professor Glenn White, MCT and Science

**17 THE COUNCIL S-2016-02-12**

- 17.1 A member referred to paragraphs 38-46 in the report of the business of the meeting of the Council held on 8 March 2016 which referred to the discussion of appointment procedures for Executive Deans. He considered that the Council had not received a complete report of the debate and outcomes of the discussion of the procedures at the meeting of the Senate on 27 January 2016. The member felt this raised issues of governance.
- 17.2 A member of the Senate, who was also a member of the Council, commented that those Senate members, who were members of the Council and present at the meeting on 8 March 2016, considered that the Council had been sympathetic to the views of the Senate on the issue of the appointment procedures for Executive Deans. A helpful discussion had taken place which had resulted in a compromise position being reached and approved.
- 17.3 Another member of the Senate, who was also a member of the Council expressed his support for that view and reported that the Council had also acknowledged concerns expressed during the debate on the item on *Building an Effective Culture* (paragraphs 9-24 of the report). The member reported that a review of the Council was currently underway with the assistance of external advisers and that one of the key issues to be considered was how the Senate and Council could engage more closely. Members of the Senate would have the opportunity to submit views via a formal consultation. Another member of the Senate, who was a Council member, reported that the Group overseeing the review of the Council included external members of the Council and they had expressed a wish to extend the review beyond its original scope to include consideration of the engagement between the Council and the Senate.
- 17.4 Another member drew attention to paragraph 10 of the report and the difficulties in providing feedback on issues relating to the implementation of principles approved by the Senate. She requested whether consideration could be given to simplifying the process of reconsidering matters once agreed. The Vice-Chancellor suggested that regular analysis of the Academic Performance Report by the Senate could help in this respect.
- 17.5 The Vice-Chancellor emphasised to the Senate that there had been no intention of providing anything other than a factual account of the debate at the Senate and the view of VCE to the Council at its meeting on 8 March 2016 in relation to the appointment procedures for Executive Deans. Mr Horrocks assured the Senate that proceedings of formal committees were recorded scrupulously and objectively and the professionalism of the staff in this respect was beyond reproach.

17.6 The Senate **noted** the report of matters discussed at the meeting of the Council held on 8 March 2016.

**18 ACTION BY THE CHAIR**

**S-2016-02-13**

The Senate **noted** the report of action taken by the Chair since the last meeting of the Senate.

**19 FUTURE ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

**S-2016-02-14**

The Senate **noted** the potential items for the agenda for the Senate meeting on 8 June 2016.

**20 DECLASSIFICATION OF PAPERS**

The following paper remained confidential after the meeting:  
S-2016-02-2B Strategic Planning and Resources Committee – Confidential minutes

The following paper was declassified after the meeting:  
S-2016-02-11 Emeritus Professors

**21 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

Meetings of the Senate would be held on the following dates:

Wednesday 8 June 2016  
Wednesday 19 October 2016  
Wednesday 25 January 2017  
Wednesday 5 April 2017 (tbc)  
Wednesday 7 July 2017

Keith Zimmerman  
University Secretary

Sue Thomas  
Working Secretary to the Senate  
Email: [sue.thomas@open.ac.uk](mailto:sue.thomas@open.ac.uk)  
Tel: 01908 655083

Attachment:

S-2016-02-M Appendix      Note of comments from the workshop session held for Senate members on 13 April 2016 at 11.00 am

## SENATE WORKSHOP 13 APRIL 2016

### Feedback on the Students First Strategy paper

#### Introduction

- The Vice-Chancellor and the Director of Strategy gave a brief overview of the Students First strategy and explained how the feedback from Senate and the wider University had been used to inform this refined version of the strategy. Members were also advised that notes were being taken and these would be appended to the minutes of the meeting of the Senate taking place in the afternoon.
- Members of the Vice-Chancellor's Executive with responsibility for leading the six objectives within the strategy gave a short overview of the aim of each objective and how the work would be taken forward.

#### Comments from members of Senate

There was support for the overall direction of the strategy with some detailed comments about the wording within the document and specific activities to deliver the objectives

- Digital innovation: Digital technology can be both a barrier and an enabler. We need to be careful how we integrate this in vision and increase the emphasis on the use of digital technology as an enabler for Widening Participation.
- Vision statement: Suggestion that we refer to reaching more "people" rather than "students". Otherwise we risk the unintended consequence of reducing the remit only to registered students and not the wider public reach through OU/BBC television programmes and OpenLearn.
- Academic excellence: Should refer more clearly to the value of research in attracting, motivating and retaining talented staff and feeding into high quality learning materials
- Employability and career progression: Distance learning can provide less opportunity for social development and networking but we need to capitalise on the value that from students, alumni and ALs can make bring in creating a great employability network. Believe OUSA want us to be more proactive around opportunities for peer mentoring.
- Adaptive organisation and culture: Welcome the reference to data and analysis in the strategy. But the biggest barrier is that our current systems are not flexible or

agile. Would like to see more detail beyond the statement that we will consider upgrades to core IT systems.

- Employability and career progression: It would be helpful to clarify that this refers to students rather than staff.
- Income diversification and cost reduction: The strategy document must stand over time and be suitable for an external audience. We need to be clear that cost reduction does not mean doing things "on the cheap".
- Income diversification and cost reduction: There is clear scope to generate income from the goodwill and interest amongst our formal and informal learners so why have we allowed the OUW online store to be offline for 6 months?
- Digital Innovation: We have some leading research on using touch - haptics in a wider sense to facilitate applied study learners. It works with non-sighted learners so we should be doing more with this to support students.
- Success measures: Does measure on increasing our global reach capture our global ambition adequately? We need to be clear that measures answer the right question on what we are trying to achieve.
- Academic excellence: Welcome the aspiration to integrate further ALs with the academic staff base. Hope this ends debate on whether ALs are support or teaching staff and recognises that they do both.
- Digital Innovation: Our current digital technologies needs to work properly and for all. OULive is an example of where we get this wrong for students - and this will be exacerbated with the Group Tuition Policy. Doesn't work at all well for disabled students.
- Adaptive organisation and culture: Need to clarify that the references to staff include ALs. It is difficult for ALs to conceive of their role differently - massive impact of change on ALs. The positive drive behind strategy needs to be better articulated for ALs.
- Strategy overall: the strategy is fine but we need to be clear how it will be implemented We must maintain momentum and currency - update people on how it's working, what's changing etc.
- Income diversification and cost reduction: The message about our strong financial position needs to be managed as that is not how it feels to many people on the ground.

- Academic excellence – We need to make a strong case for research students. An academically excellent institution needs to attract good research students as they will enhance our reputation and brand long term. We already have a good base with approximately 2k on campus and in Affiliated Research Centres across the world and they make a strong contribution to the intellectual community.
- Digital Innovation: We should not overlook non-digital innovation. Our capability in supported open learning is a clear USP.
- Strategy overall: Welcome the strategy but we should not let it sit on the shelf. Academic professional development is crucial to implementing the strategy. This includes AL development and also research development.
- Strategy overall: Welcome the direction of the strategy. Suggestion that we need to develop our academic capacity on understanding the future economic developments that affect learning needs such as trends in the labour market and the changing nature of work. It would be to our strategic advantage to have a sector-leading research focus in this area.

Anna Barber  
Senior Strategy Manager  
Strategy & Information Office