This paper presents the confirmed Minutes of the last meeting of the Senate held on Wednesday 8 June 2016 at The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes.

The Senate approved these Minutes as a correct record of the meeting on 19 October 2016 subject to the inclusion of an amendment to Minute 18.2.

Keith Zimmerman
University Secretary

Sue Thomas
Working Secretary to the Senate
Email: sue.thomas@open.ac.uk
Tel: 01908 655083
THE SENATE

Minutes of the meeting of the Senate held on Wednesday 8 June 2016 at 2.00pm
in the Hub Theatre, The Open University, Walton Hall

PRESENT:

1) Ex officio

Mr Peter Horrocks, Vice-Chancellor
Professor Kevin Hetherington, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Academic Strategy)
Professor Hazel Rymer, Interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching Innovation)
Professor Richard Brown, Interim Executive Dean, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Professor Rebecca Taylor, Executive Dean, Dean, Faculty of Business and Law
Professor Mary Kellett, Executive Dean, Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies
Professor Anne De Roeck, Interim Executive Dean, Faculty of Science and Mathematics, Computing and Technology
Mr Jeremy Roche, Dean, Faculty of Education and Language Studies and Health and Social Care
Professor Patrick McAndrew, Director of the Institute of Educational Technology

Appointed

2) Central Academic Units

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Faculty of Arts
Professor Ole Grell
Professor Graham Harvey
Dr Lynda Prescott

Faculty of Social Sciences
Dr Troy Cooper
Dr Jovan Byford
Dr Deborah Drake

Faculty of Education and Language Studies and Health and Social Care

Faculty of Education and Language Studies (FELS)
Dr Uwe Baumann
Dr Jane Cullen
Dr Tim Lewis
Dr Elodie Vialleton

Mrs Sue Cole
Dr Verina Waights
Dr Mary Twomey

Mrs Annie Eardley
Professor Regine Hampel
Dr Indra Sinka
Professor Jan Draper
Mr Mick McCormick
Faculty of Science and Mathematics, Computing and Technology

Faculty of Science
Dr Arlène Hunter Dr Janet Haresnape
Professor Claire Turner Professor Hilary MacQueen
Dr John Baxter Professor David Rothery

Faculty of Mathematics, Computing and Technology
Mrs Lisa Bowers (remote) Dr Rachel Hilliam
Dr Tony Nixon Professor Andy Lane
Dr Peter Robbins Dr Toby O’Neil
Dr Hayley Ryder Mr Brendan Quinn
Dr Ann Walshe Dr Magnus Ramage
Dr David Bowers

Faculty of Business & Law
Ms Carmel McMahon Miss Carol Howells
Dr Sharon Slade Mr Mike Phillips

Institute of Educational Technology
Dr Anne Adams Professor Eileen Scanlon

Other Central Units
Dr Liz Marr

3) Associate Lecturers
Mrs Frances Chetwynd Dr Linda Walker
Dr Clare Spencer Dr Fiona Aiken
Dr Tim Parry Dr Hilary Partridge
Dr Tricia French

4) Students Appointed by Open University Students Association
Miss Ruth Tudor Miss Lorraine Adams (alternate)
Mr Josh Brumpton Mrs Nicola Simpson
Ms Alison Kingan (alternate) Dr Barbara Tarling

5) Academic-related Staff
Dr Donna Smith Mr Mike Innes
Mr Jake Yeo Mr Michael Street
Ms Pat Atkins Dr Christina Lloyd, Director Academic Services (Interim)
Ms Clare Riding Mrs Joanne Smythe
Mr Phil Berry Mr Simon Horrocks
Dr Victoria Crowe Mr Billy Khokhar
Mr David Smith Miss Barbara Poniatowska

6) Co-opted members
Mr Christopher Goscomb Mr Rob Humphreys
Dr David Knight Mr John D’Arcy
Professor John Domingue Mr Tony O’Shea-Poon
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
Mr Andrew Law, Director, Open Media Unit
Observing

Ms Kathryn Baldwin, Vice-Chancellor’s Business Manager
Mrs Susie Palmer-Trew, Portfolio Manager, Academic Strategy (for Minutes 12 and 13)
Mr Michael Flack, Assistant Director, Programmes, Learning and Teaching (for Minutes 15 and 16)
Mr Lucian Hudson, Director of Communications (to Minute 14)
Mr Iain Gilmour, Academic Lead, Academic Strategy (for Minute 12)

APOLOGIES:

Appointed

1) Ex officio

Mrs Tricia Heffernan, Director, Library Services (Acting)
Mr Chris Rooke, Director, Learning and Teaching Solutions

2) Central Academic Units

   Faculty of Arts
   Dr Naoko Yamagata

   Faculty of Science
   Professor Monica Grady

   Faculty of Social Sciences
   Mr Matt Staples  Dr Catriona Havard

   Faculty of Mathematics, Computing and Technology
   Dr Leonor Barroca

   Faculty of Business and Law
   Dr Kristen Reid

   Institute of Educational Technology
   Mr Chris Edwards

4) Students Appointed by Open University Students Association

   Mr David Humble  Mr John Murphy
1.1 The Vice-Chancellor, Mr Peter Horrocks, welcomed Mr Tony O’Shea Poon, Head of Academic Governance and Policy as a co-opted member of the Senate. He also reported that Dr David Knight, Director, Access Careers and Teaching Support had been reappointed as a co-opted member.

1.2 On behalf of the Senate, the Vice-Chancellor thanked the following members who were attending their last meeting of the Senate:

Professor Richard Brown
Interim Executive Dean, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Professor Anne De Roeck, Interim Executive Dean
Faculty of Science and Mathematics, Computing and Technology

Mr Jeremy Roche, Dean
Faculty of Education and Language Studies and Health and Social Care

Dr Christina Lloyd, Director, Academic Services (Interim)

Miss Ruth Tudor, OUSA, President

1.3 The Vice-Chancellor also thanked all those whose Senate membership ended on 31 August 2016 for their service and dedication.

2 MINUTES S-2016-02-M

2.1 The Senate approved the minutes of the meeting of the Senate held on Wednesday 13 April 2016 subject to the inclusion of the following amendments:

Minute 6.1: third sentence to be amended (amendment shown in italics) to read:

2.2 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.

Minute 10.3: final sentence to be amended (amendment shown in italics) to read:

2.2 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.

3 MATTERS ARISING S-2016-03-01

The Senate noted the response to the matter arising from the last minutes.

4 REPORT FROM AND QUESTIONS TO THE CHAIR

Students First Strategy

4.1 The Vice-Chancellor opened his remarks by expressing his belief that there was a clear sense across the University of moving in the right direction. He acknowledged challenges still faced the University but with the approval of the new Strategy for the University by the Council on 10 May 2016, he considered the University now had a firm platform for the future and wished to see that momentum built upon. He thanked the Senate for its support in that achievement. Work would now focus on the implementation of the Strategy and in particular how the cross-university and collaborative nature of the strategy workshops could be built on during implementation. Mr Horrocks drew attention to pioneering and innovative
initiatives already underway in the spirit of the new strategy, such as the OpenCreate direct authoring tool and the new set of MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) for credit from the Faculty of Business and Law on FutureLearn. The budgets for 2016/17 would be considered by the Vice-Chancellor’s Executive and the Council imminently. Given the Council’s support for a strategy for growth, Mr Horrocks was confident the University would be able to increase strategic investment to address areas of academic performance and academic excellence, and the need for innovation.

Faculty Recruitment and Structure

4.2 Mr Horrocks informed the Senate that following approval of the titles of faculties and schools at the last meeting of the Senate, recruitment to senior roles in faculties was progressing. The majority of Heads of School had been appointed in the Faculties of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies (WELS) and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), with the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) expected to follow this month.

4.3 Mr Horrocks noted that concerns had been raised by some Senate members on the substantive appointments of Executive Deans. He considered those matters had been addressed in email communications and reiterated to the Senate that all decisions were taken by the appropriate Appointment Committees, which had adhered to the University’s recruitment procedures and policies throughout.

4.4 Professors Mary Kellett and Rebecca Taylor had been appointed as Executive Deans of WELS and the Faculty of Business and Law (FBL) respectively. Two Interim Executive Deans, Mr Ian Fribbance (FASS), and Professor Simon Kelley (STEM) would take up their new roles on 1 August 2016. Mr Horrocks thanked Professor Richard Brown and Professor Anne De Roeck for their commitment and leadership during the past year of transition. Professor Hazel Rymer, was welcomed to the Senate in her role as Acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching Innovation). The Senate congratulated those colleagues on their new appointments.

Student Recruitment and Support Centres (SRSC)

4.5 A report would be made to the Senate under agenda item B4.

External Political Developments

4.6 Mr Horrocks informed the Senate that the Northern Ireland Employment and Learning Department had indicated that University would receive an 11% increase in its grant allocation. In Scotland although there was a slight reduction in the total funding received in 2015-16, the University’s funding allocation from the Scottish Funding Council was a significant improvement on early indications. The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) announced a small reduction in the University’s funding in Wales but this was more favorable than anticipated. Last month the Higher Education Funding Council in England (HEFCE) announced its final grant allocation of £71.4m for the University and confirmed that the Student Opportunity Allocation would be £34.1m. This was significantly better than originally anticipated and was the result of the very strong representations the University had made to protect the Allocation.

4.7 In England, a White Paper on higher education “Success as a Knowledge Economy” had been published. Key elements of this included the opening up of the market to new providers, a new Office for Students, the bringing together of the seven Research Councils into a single body and further details of the Teaching Excellence Framework. The University would continue to lobby the Government on issues including the creation of learning accounts, loans for modular study and student mobility. It was also noted that Professor Hazel Rymer had as been appointed to the HEFCE Teaching Excellence and Student Opportunity Strategic Advisory Committee (TESO SAC).
4.8 Mr Horrocks announced that in October, in partnership with KPMG, the University would launch three Apprenticeship Standards. This would put the University in a strong position to respond to the Government’s Apprenticeships levy being launched in April 2017.

4.9 Thanks were recorded to all staff involved in negotiations with the various Funding Councils and Governments for their work in achieving these significant results. The Vice-Chancellor urged all staff who might be interested in influencing policies that could benefit OU students to contact the Government and External Relations team to share their expertise and ideas.

Research

4.10 Mr Horrocks reminded the Senate that he had pledged on the University’s Charter Day to learn more about the University’s research. He had greatly enjoyed the time he spent in the STEM Faculty learning about highly innovative projects and ideas. Two specific projects, OpenWash and MK:Smart had recently been mentioned in the media. OpenWASH free learning resources had linked into a major initiative in Ethiopia to improve sanitation and provide safe water to nearly 30 million more people. The modules would be piloted at Training and Vocational Colleges across four regions in Ethiopia over the coming year and were a joint project across STEM and the International Development Office, with Pam Furniss, Senior Lecturer in Environmental Systems providing academic leadership. The MK:Smart researchers, led by Professor Gillian Rose had been awarded £750,000 to study the impact and engagement of Smart Cities, focusing on Milton Keynes.

50th Anniversary campaign

4.11 A video “Opening up the Future” produced to launch a fundraising campaign to coincide with the University’s 50th anniversary was shown to the Senate.

5 STRATEGIC PLANNING AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

SPRC-2016-03-CM: Minute 7.10

5.1 A representative of the OU Students’ Association sought further information on the suggestion that variable pricing could be considered in terms of providing differentiated levels of student support. The Vice-Chancellor commented that this was an observation but no further work had been initiated. In response to a further question, he assured the Senate that those students with disabilities who required additional support would not incur additional costs.

SPRC-2016-03-M: Minute 4.8

5.2 A member queried how the concept of developing a local strategy relating to Milton Keynes and the surrounding area could be replicated in other areas as the University was closing many of its regional offices. The Vice-Chancellor explained that there were two different approaches, one being a broad strategy to work with businesses across the UK as a whole and the second being specific partnership initiatives in order to deliver a greater presence in Milton Keynes.

SPRC-2016-03-M: Minute 4.10

5.3 A member drew attention to the reference to continuing grief in some units in relation to the decision on the University’s locations. He commented that the last staff survey had showed a lack of confidence in the senior management of the University. He asked for clear evidence to support the Vice-Chancellor’s earlier comment that he sensed colleagues believed the University was moving in the right direction. Mr Horrocks explained that he had been meeting staff from a range of units who had expressed their enthusiasm for the direction in which the University was moving. He acknowledged that some members of staff still had concerns but he felt a sense of optimism and support. Quantifiable evidence would not be available until the next staff survey was conducted in the autumn.
5.4 The Dean, Faculty of Health and Social Care commented that the business-consumer model referred to in the minute presented difficulties in engaging fully with employers as existing University systems did not fully support it. It was therefore essential that the University invested in its infrastructure to overcome the problems.

5.5 The Senate noted the unconfirmed Minutes and Confidential Minutes from the meeting held on 20 April 2016.

6 ACADEMIC QUALITY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

6.1 A member commented that the University was undergoing a period of rapid change. He sought reassurance that the management of the many different projects was robust and that reports from projects with relevance to academic matters would be presented to the Senate. The Vice-Chancellor explained that he had confidence in the management of the projects but acknowledged that the interdependency between the projects could be improved. Work was ongoing to develop implementation of various projects in a more coherent way and to reflect more on their impact from the point of view of the recipients, for example, students or associate lecturers. Further consideration would be given to the mechanisms for identifying matters to be reported to the Senate.

6.2 A member drew attention to the reference to the Teaching Committee in the STEM Faculty potentially comprising 40 members and confirmed he would raise the matter substantively under Agenda item C 4 relating to Faculty Governance.

6.3 The Senate noted the confirmed Minutes of the meeting of the Academic Quality and Governance Committee held by correspondence dated 29 March 2016 and the unconfirmed Minutes of the meeting held on 18 May 2016.

7 RESEARCH COMMITTEE

7.1 The Senate noted the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2016.

8 SENATE WORKING GROUP: LOCATIONS

8.1 The Vice-Chancellor informed the Senate that as a result of Mr David Matthewman leaving the University, Dr Christina Lloyd had taken over responsibility for the Student Recruitment and Support Centres (SRSC) project and Mr Miles Hedges was Acting Chief Operating Officer. An independent review of the project by KPMG had been commissioned and the final report was awaited. The summary of the findings had confirmed that the project had been well planned and was robust however it identified a lack of engagement with affected staff and also recommended that the top level Target Operating Model required more detail. The review had also proposed that the Student Seamless Journey (SSJ) project should become the overarching initiative to implement the changes. Mr Horrocks confirmed that Dr Lloyd and Mr Hedges commanded the full support of the Vice-Chancellor’s Executive in implementing the project to improve support to students. He also reassured the Senate that lessons would be learned from the project on communication and engagement.

8.2 Dr Lloyd explained to the Senate that her current priorities within the project were to work with colleagues in Human Resources to implement staff choices in relation to closing offices or relocation. Progress had also been made on covering extended hours in the new centres. A workshop was due to be held for staff from Student Recruitment and Fees (SRF), Academic Services, faculties and associate lecturers focussing on delivering the vision of the SSJ project and addressing issues of engagement. Work was also
commencing on bringing together the functional Target Operating Models alongside those for the SSJ project.

8.3 The Chair, Senate Working Group: Locations welcomed the update and considered it addressed the concerns of the Group expressed in principles 1 and 2 in the paper. He welcomed the assurances given to improve collaboration and communication. In respect of the third principle in the paper referring to effective communication and engagement, Professor Wolffe drew attention to the suggestion that a Director, England be appointed with overall responsibility for the development of local/regional strategy.

8.4 The President, OU Students Association commented that she considered that the Vice-Chancellor’s Executive carried out the functions of the proposed Director, England post and queried whether it was necessary. She believed that the costs of such a post should be channelled into the provision of support for students.

8.5 A member welcomed the developments since the last meeting of the Senate however he expressed his concern over what he perceived to be a lack of transparency in decision making in respect of the offices in Manchester. He reported that building work had commenced and staff displaced yet many believed adequate space was available and the distress caused had been unnecessary. There also appeared to be a lack of clarity over the numbers and grades of advisers being appointed.

8.6 Another member welcomed the work of the Working Group and supported the proposal for the creation of a Director, England post believing it could bring many benefits. Another member expressed her support for the reinstatement of the Student Seamless Journey project. The Director, Centre for Inclusion and Collaborative Partnerships (CICP) commented that she had provided the Working Group with information on widening participation and would welcome the opportunity to explain further ongoing work such as the relationship developed with the Association of Colleges.

8.7 The University Secretary commented that the proposal for a post of Director, England would require further consideration and he would respond to the Working Group. Dr Lloyd also offered to respond to the Group on the planning of the Manchester office accommodation. In response to a question from a representative of the OU Students Association on widening participation from disabled people, Dr Lloyd offered to discuss the issues outside of the meeting.

8.8 The Dean, Faculty of Health and Social Care commented that the reference in paragraph 5 of the report to Locations implementation requiring a strong institutional approach was important. He enquired who would be leading on numerous matters such as local and regional strategies, home working and staff management as many such issues applied across all faculties. The University Secretary explained that he and Executive Deans were ultimately responsible.

8.9 The Senate:

a) noted the report of the meeting held on 12 May 2016

b) approved the following principles to underlie the ongoing implementation of the Locations decision:

i) that every effort be made to ensure timely and accurate communication with affected staff;

ii) that collaborative working between Student Support Teams, Student Recruitment and Fees staff, and Associate Lecturers be facilitated;

iii) that strategic steps be taken to ensure that effective local and regional engagement is maintained after the closures.
9 CENTRAL DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE: ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16 S-2016-03-06

9.1 A member commended the work of the Academic Conduct Officers (ACOs) in handling cases of alleged plagiarism.

9.2 The Senate noted the annual report covering student misconduct cases referred to the Central Disciplinary Committee between 1 May 2015 and 30 April 2016.

10 SPECIAL APPEALS COMMITTEE: ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16 S-2016-03-07

The Senate noted the report of the Special Appeals Committee of the Senate covering student appeals against decisions of the Central Disciplinary Committee for the period June 2015 to May 2016.

11 HONORARY DEGREES COMMITTEE

Honorary Awards 2016 and Honorary Degrees 2017 S-2016-03-08

11.1 The Vice-Chancellor, as chair of the Honorary Degrees Committee, drew attention to the areas from which the Committee intended to proactively encourage future nominations. These included nominations from ethnic minorities, from a wide geographical spread across the whole of England and from those who met the criteria for an award based on academic and scholarly distinction.

11.2 The Senate:

a) noted the arrangements for conferment of awards at degree ceremonies being held in 2016;

b) approved the list of nominations recommended by the Honorary Degrees Committee for the award of honorary degrees at future degree ceremonies.

Award of Fellowship S-2016-03-09

11.3 The Senate approved a recommendation from the Honorary Degrees Committee for the award of Fellowship of the University.

12 ACADEMIC STRATEGY UPDATE

12.1 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Academic Strategy) (PVC RAS) introduced the update and Mr Iain Gilmour, Academic Lead explained how the strategy was developing and the progress achieved to date. The academic strategy was a holistic approach that would set the framework for the academic endeavour of the University to deliver the objectives of the Students First strategy. Through pedagogic innovation it would enable the University to become more agile and flexible and also focus on students’ success. It would also help to align teaching and research and enable research to inspire the University’s teaching and engage students.

12.2 A workshop had been held to elicit ideas on the development of a sustainable academic community which formed the basis of the academic strategy. At its widest, an academic community encompassed staff, students, associate lecturers, alumni and communities of professional practice. Such communities needed to consider how they reacted to changing environments in an agile way and further work was underway to examine how the University’s academic community could be more student facing and better aligned with associate lecturers. Mr Gilmour explained that further consultation was planned on the development of the strategy and a paper would be presented to the next meeting of the Senate in October 2016.
12.3 A representative of the OU Students Association welcomed the student-facing approach but requested that in the spirit of that approach, workshops and other opportunities to participate in the development of the strategy should be held at times when it was easier for students to attend. It was agreed to consider this further. Another representative of the OU Students’ Association sought further information on the definition of academic communities and Mr Gilmour explained that such communities could be formal in the sense of an academic discipline or be very broad incorporating those in practice or relationships with students. Another member enquired how graduates and alumni of the University could engage with the strategy and the PVC RAS confirmed that the aim was to consider such communities in a holistic way to be broad and inclusive.

12.4 The Interim Executive Dean (STEM) commended the progress made with the strategy but felt the aspiration to build academic communities required further development to demonstrate more clearly their commonality of purpose. She believed such communities had a key role to play in collectively changing practice and that required further emphasis.

12.5 Another member sought further information on the timeline for the implementation of the strategy as she considered this was not clear from the presentation. The PVC RAS explained that when the strategy was presented to Senate for approval it would include a set of high level principles which would be regularly refreshed and these would form the basis of academic policy at the University. His aim was for implementation in the 2017/18 academic year.

13 ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE REPORT

13.1 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Academic Strategy) introduced the report and explained that the first part of the report presented a summary of previous feedback and the way it had been used to inform the development of future reports from October 2016. Comments were welcomed on the proposed new format. The latter part of the paper provided an update on some of the draft measures reported to the last meeting of Senate where new data was available.

13.2 A member proposed that on page 4, under Staff Profile/Capabilities the reference to “Proportion of academic staff with recognised HEA teaching qualifications" should be amended to include “or equivalent”. This would then enable recognised comparable qualifications such as the Science Council’s recently introduced Chartered Science Teacher to be included. It was agreed to make this change. Another member requested that the National Students Survey (NSS) should not be referred to as a measure of improved career prospects as it did not provide data on this area. The Director, Centre for Inclusion and Collaborative Partnerships (CICP) suggested that reference should also be included in retention and completion data to credit transfer so this can be monitored in the future.

13.3 A representative of associate lecturers asked for further information on the action being taken in relation to the data presented. The Vice-Chancellor assured the Senate that all the measures provided had significant action plans associated with them and comments from the Senate on the high level data helped to influence those plans.

13.4 A representative of the OU Students Association enquired whether the report would regularly present information on the widening participation attainment gap. She believed that further exploration of this issue was required. The PVC RAS confirmed that the University saw this as an important issue and reflected on the information it collected however the report to Senate may not include updates on every measure every time. Another representative of the OU Students Association was pleased to see reference to international students but enquired how their satisfaction was measured as there was no international equivalent to the National Student Survey. The PVC RAS reported that the
University was considering ways to capture international students’ feedback in its measures.

13.5 A member acknowledged the quantitative data collected but emphasised that measuring the quality of communications was more important and methods needed to be found to incorporate this. The PVC RAS explained that considerable qualitative data was collected in the University and consideration was now being given to ways to collate this for presentation to Senate. The aim was to present high level information to the Senate with occasional focus on specific areas.

14 ENTRY POLICY

14.1 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Academic Strategy) and the Director, Centre for Inclusion and Collaborative Partnerships (CICP) introduced the policy and explained that it aimed to support the strategic aim of increasing the numbers of students who are retained and who progress to successfully achieve their qualification aim. It was entirely compatible with the University’s mission. The policy would be introduced through a pilot phase initially to enable monitoring.

14.2 A representative of the OU Students Association commented that she initially had reservations about the proposal to direct students to other providers but was reassured by the work on developing partnerships and also the benefits of MOOCs. The Director, CICP assured the Senate that the University wanted to retain and register students but in instances where a partner’s provision was more appropriate, contact would be maintained and the students’ progress monitored. Another student representative commented that if the pilot was in place for the commencement of the 17B registration period with full roll out planned for the 17J cohort, it did not provide much time for evaluation. The Director, CICP assured the Senate that evaluation would be carried out as the pilot progressed.

14.3 With reference to principle 10 of the policy, a representative of the OU Students’ Association sought reassurance that alternative methods of contact would be made available for those unable to receive telephone calls. Another student representative welcomed the proposed extension of the triggers for referral to an adviser to include other characteristics, such as disability. The Director, CICP responded that these were important mechanisms to ensure that the University offered appropriate and relevant support.

14.5 The Director, Academic Policy and Governance welcomed the policy and emphasised the need for the University to provide appropriate advice to students. He also requested that the pilot implementation be monitored carefully to assess the impact on student numbers and retention. Another member commented that monitoring had shown that students who registered late for modules had a higher rate of difficulties with their studies so she urged that particular attention be paid to this group. Another member suggested that it would be helpful to explain more clearly the definition of study intensity in the policy.

14.6 Another member welcomed the policy and believed its impact on student success could be significant. She commented however that principle 9, relating to opportunities to speak to an adviser should be more emphatic. She considered it essential that students started off their experience with the University in the most positive way and it important that resources were available to enable students to seek advice from advisers. She also commented that the policy referred to prospective students with no prior educational qualifications (PEQs) being able to obtain honest and reliable advice. She felt this should be extended to those with low PEQs as well. Another member supported the comments in relation to principle 9 and welcomed the proposed refreshing of diagnostic exercises. The Director, CICP explained that the pilot implementation would provide an opportunity to assess whether estimates for resources were adequate. She acknowledged the point regarding low PEQs and agreed to include this in the pilot implementation. Dr Marr also commented that in
relation to principles 3 and 8, work was underway to develop the pre-registration space on the University website with appropriate resources.

14.7 The Senate approved the Entry Policy and associated implementation proposals.

Tea break

15 FACULTY GOVERNANCE

15.1 Professor Anne De Roeck, Interim Executive Dean, STEM introduced the paper and reminded the Senate that following the 2013/14 academic governance review (AGR) and work to explore further delegation of governance to faculties in 2014/15 the Senate approved the establishment of Teaching Committees as part of a new model of governance at its meeting in January 2016. An extensive consultation had taken place on draft terms of reference for Teaching Committees and these were being presented to the Senate for approval. Generic draft constitutions for Boards of Studies and Faculty Assemblies were included in the paper for background information and the final versions would contain a minimum set of operating requirements agreed by the Executive Deans.

15.2 Professor De Roeck informed the Senate of a number of amendments as follows:

a) Board of Studies: Mode of operation (b)  
Each Board of Study would not be required to produce an annual effectiveness review as stated. The mode of operation would simply state that the Board would be required to produce an annual report to the relevant Teaching Committee.

b) Board of Studies: Mode of operation (c)(iii)  
To read: (iii) a Student Forum managed by the OU Students’ Association

c) Faculty Assembly: Membership category 5  
To read: Two research students per school within the faculty appointed by the OU Students’ Association

d) Faculty Assembly: Membership category 7  
To read: Five students registered for a qualification or module within the Faculty appointed by the OU Students’ Association.

15.3 Representatives of the OU Students’ Association acknowledged the proposed revisions and requested that student members were able to access papers for meetings when published electronically. A student member also sought further information on how the effectiveness of the new structures would be evaluated. Professor De Roeck confirmed that Teaching Committees would be responsible for reviewing the operation of the new structures.

15.4 A member drew attention to the role of Teaching Committees in approving training provision for postgraduate research students within academic units and referred to the conclusions of a recent report which had described such provision across the University as fragmented. He was concerned that by allocating responsibility to individual faculties the fragmentation described would continue. He also sought information on the position of the Institute of Educational Technology (IET) and whether it would have a Teaching Committee. He considered that training in research methods should be co-ordinated across the University. Professor De Roeck explained that the provision of training for postgraduate research students was not a governance matter and was under consideration by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Strategy). A member also drew attention to the Research Professional Development Programme run by IET. Professor De Roeck confirmed that in addition to the four faculty Teaching Committees there would be a Teaching Committee for
the Learning and Teaching Innovation portfolio to cover the Access and Open programmes and the IET Masters Programme.

15.5 Another member commented that Teaching Committees appeared to focus on teaching activities and he considered they had limited remit in respect of research. He enquired where responsibility for research was sited within the governance of the University. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Strategy) explained that overall governance oversight for research students was the responsibility of the Research Degrees Committee. Effective quality assurance of the teaching provision for taught postgraduate students required a link through faculties to the Senate, and this was provided by Teaching Committees. Professor Hetherington also drew attention to discussion of this point at the last meeting of the Research Committee (RC-2016-01-M, minute 4) and the ongoing work. A member advised precision in the language used to ensure there was clarity in the responsibilities for training provision and supervision of research students.

15.6 A member commented that the membership of the Teaching Committee did not include a specific category of membership for staff tutors. She considered that this group of staff brought a specific perspective to the Committee in relation to areas such as curriculum and assessment. The University Secretary confirmed that Teaching Committees had provision to co-opt up to three members if they considered it to be necessary.

15.7 A representative of associate lecturers commented that the inclusion of associate lecturers in the membership of Teaching Committees was a welcome step towards greater inclusion of associate lecturers in the University’s academic community. Another member enquired as to how modifications to the generic constitution for Boards of Studies would be approved. Professor De Roeck confirmed that as Boards of Studies were not governance bodies such modifications would be for individual Faculties to consider.

15.8 Another member welcomed the inclusion of a representative from each Faculty Student Support Team (SST) on Teaching Committees. Another member however sought further clarification as to how that representation would be most appropriately selected. Professor De Roeck commented that it was difficult to be specific in a generic constitution as to which member of the SST would be the most appropriate representative on the Board of Study but further consideration would be given to this point and an amendment included.

15.9 The Senate approved the constitution for Teaching Committees subject to minor amendment as outlined in minutes 15.2 and 15.8.

16 GROUP TUITION

16.1 The Acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching Innovation) (PVC L&TI) reported that in response to a request to add the Group Tuition Policy (GTP) to the Senate agenda (S-2016-03-13A) paper S-2016-03-13B had been prepared to update Senate about the implementation of the policy. Professor Rymer reported that 41 modules had implemented the policy which affected approximately 2000 students and about 200 associate lecturers. There had been over 4000 bookings for tutorials using the Learning Events Management (LEM) system. It was still very early in respect of the May presentation but feedback had been received from the Faculties of Business and Law (FBL) and STEM and Academic Services. This had identified the need to ensure that developments in the LEM system were operational for October 2016. Work was also underway to ensure appropriate quality of curriculum data in the system for use in tutorial timetabling by AL Services and Faculty staff. The project team was working with faculties, Academic Services, IT and associate lecturer representatives to review the experience of the May implementation, and draw on lessons learned to agree priorities for the period between June and August.
16.2 The Chair, AL Executive (ALE) commented that updates on a number of key risks originally identified were not included in the paper presented to the Senate and further information on the pilots for the 16D and 16E presentations was required. She also commented that the GTP project team was due to be disbanded in February 2017 however full implementation was not due to be achieved until February 2018 so information was also required on the support for the project going forward. Evaluation was also required in line with principle 10 of the policy which stated that the University would support a continuous programme of evaluation, scholarship and research into group tuition. This had been previously requested.

16.3 The PVC L&TI explained that the high level risks identified in the business plan were appended to the report and the project Steering Group reviewed it regularly. Professor Rymer confirmed that feedback was being gathered on the associate lecturer experience of implementation but that these were very early days. She also confirmed that the resource requirements for a programme of evaluation subsequent to implementation would be discussed with faculties, noting that scholarship around group tuition was already ongoing, for example in IET and eSTeEM, and that associate lecturers were involved in such projects. The Vice-Chancellor assured the Senate that associate lecturers were central to the implementation of the policy and evaluation would include their views. In response to an earlier comment, the Director, Access Careers and Teaching Support assured the Senate that the Academic Services Team would continue to oversee the implementation of the policy, building on the work of the project team.

16.4 A member expressed his concern that the current identified risks associated with the project had not been presented to the Senate. The information appended to paper S-2016-03-13B was very generic and not up to date and he requested more relevant information. Another member commented that the 16J presentation would be more complex to administer than the current 16E presentation so it was essential to receive feedback from staff tutors and associate lecturers to ensure the system was operating correctly. Another member commented that it would be important for staff tutors to know details of cluster managers. It was also unclear how tutorials could be arranged well in advance if details of associate lecturers tutoring on modules was not known. Another member expressed concern that there appeared to be no link between students’ and associate lecturers’ locations.

16.5 The PVC LT&I explained that the paper aimed to identify the high level risks and challenges to the implementation of the policy. Professor Rymer confirmed that staff tutors would be consulted via the Staff Tutors’ group on implementation so far. With reference to booking tutorials, dates would be available in advance although the clustering mechanism was intended to enable this to happen without precise numbers of associate lecturer appointments being available. The Director, Access, Careers and Teaching Support commented that the operational points of detail raised were all within the remit of the Academic Services team. They would have responsibility for the initial identification of associate lecturers to clusters, the organisation of tutorials and practical details and would work with associate lecturer colleagues to resolve the issues raised.

16.6 The President, OU Students’ Association expressed her support for the aims of the Group Tuition Policy but agreed that it would be beneficial for the Senate to see the current risk register for the project. She believed that some aspects of implementation presented risks and requested assurance that these were being managed appropriately ahead of the next presentation in October 2016. Another representative of the OU Students’ Association commented that where tutorials were offered only to students in a single tutor group this should be on grounds of pedagogy and not convenience.

16.7 Another member referred to the paper presenting data on the academic performance of the University and particularly the completion rates for qualifications. She urged the Senate to adopt a positive approach to the policy to support students and encourage them to see the advantages of attending tutorials. Another member enquired if plans were in place to
maintain business continuity if the GTP did not deliver as required. The PVC L&TI assured the Senate that development of such plans were a key element of managing risk.

16.8 A member was concerned that if the systems necessary to support elements of the policy did not deliver the required outcomes, the University could not rely on manual interventions and workarounds for the next presentation and that robust plans for capacity needed to be in place in advance. Another member commented that on modules with small populations one or two clusters were being proposed for the whole of the UK. She considered that increased reliance on online alternatives reduced the viability of face to face tuition. A representative of associate lecturers commented that it was particularly important for students studying at level 1 to be able to attend tutorials within reasonable travelling distance of their home. Another member reported that she was aware of technical issues with the LEM system and was involved with resolving them for the 16J presentation.

16.9 The Chair, AL Executive drew attention to part (c) of the request in paper S-2016-03-13A that the University assess staff development and implementation time for the policy for associate lecturers.

16.10 The PVC LT&I reiterated that it was still very early in the implementation of the policy to draw conclusions and that colleagues in Academic Services were working on the operational issues raised. A further update would be provided to the October 2016 Senate.

Action: PVC (LT&I)

17 QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION: HIGHER EDUCATION REVIEW 2015: REPORT AND ACTION S-2016-03-14

17.1 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Academic Strategy) introduced the paper and explained that it summarised the outcomes from the University’s Higher Education Review, conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) in December 2016. The Final Report was published by the QAA in March 2016. The paper presented a summary of the reviewers’ key findings including judgements that the University met UK Expectations in the four review areas and the level of risk determined for each Expectation. The approved Action Plan produced by the University and approved by the Vice-Chancellor and President of the OU Students’ Association was available on the University’s public website. The Senate was asked to consider any high level messages from the report to inform strategic thinking and any significant areas for enhancement.

17.2 A member commented that he was disappointed by the reference in the report to the virtual research environment (VRE) as a “repository for forms and documents” as it should comprise a broad range of resources and interactive services to support research. He enquired whether the Action Plan included a plan for the amendment of the VRE and, if so, whether it included details of the improvement targets, and accountability for ensuring that they were met and by when. The PVC RAS confirmed that it did not. Issues such as these would be referred to the Director of the Graduate School for consideration.

18 ANNUAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW S-2016-03-15

18.1 The University Secretary introduced the paper which reviewed the performance and effectiveness of the Senate in accordance with the procedure agreed by Academic Quality and Governance Committee (AQGC) in February 2016. Mr Zimmerman expressed his disappointment over the low response rate to the survey and asked members if they had any further comments in relation to the review.

18.2 A representative of the OU Students Association highlighted that student members had engaged with the survey, expressing concerns including those related to timings of pre Senate meetings. Although earlier comments to find a solution were appreciated, the
member questioned if the practice was indicative of the commitment to student engagement more generally.

19 STATEMENT ON PRINCIPLES OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM S-2016-03-16

The Senate approved the Open University Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom.

20 ANNUAL REPORT ON STUDENT NUMBERS S-2016-03-17

20.1 A member commented on the reference to postgraduate student numbers and enquired about progress of the Postgraduate Strategy. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Academic Strategy) reported that the Vice-Chancellor’s Executive had agreed that the development of strategies and curriculum for postgraduate students should be devolved to faculties. He was due to discuss this with faculties imminently.

20.2 The Senate noted the provisional student recruitment outturn performance for the 2015/16 academic year, and student recruitment planning assumptions for 2016/17 and 2017/18.

21 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT: UPDATE S-2016-03-18

This item had been withdrawn from the agenda prior to the meeting.

22 STUDENT CHARTER: ANNUAL REVIEW S-2016-03-19

22.1 A member supported the development of the Charter and agreed it was an excellent example of collaboration between the University and its students. He was disappointed however that it made no reference to graduates of the University. He acknowledged that they had moved on from their studies but most had a very strong affinity with the University and would welcome recognition of the legacy of that relationship.

Action: Director of Communications

22.2 The Senate approved:

- a) the proposed changes to the Student Charter;
- b) the plans for communication and dissemination;
- c) the plans for annual monitoring and review.

23 EMERITUS PROFESSORS S-2016-03-20

The Senate approved the award of the Emeritus Professor title to Professor Roger Spear, Faculty of Mathematics, Computing and Technology and Science.

24 SENATE ACADEMIC APPEALS REVIEW PANEL S-2016-03-21

24.1 A representative of the OU Student Association queried why the nominations to the Senate Academic Appeals Review Panel were not approved at the time the panels were established. The Director, Academic Policy and Governance explained that the appointments were delayed until the academic restructuring of the University was approved. He assured the Senate that the University was operating within the timescales stated in its academic appeals procedures. He also advised the Senate that as a result of organisational restructuring further appointments would require approval by the Senate.

24.2 The Director, IET commented that the now disbanded Senate Membership Panel had been an effective means of considering appointments such those in the paper. He also
commented that nominations had not been proposed from the Institute, the Centre for Inclusion and Collaborative Partnerships (CICP) or the Knowledge Media Institute.

24.3 The Senate approved the list of proposed members in each of the categories of membership of the Senate Academic Appeals Review Panel.

25 THE COUNCIL

25.1 A member commented that he considered students of MOOCs to be part of the University's academic community. He considered there to be immense goodwill amongst FutureLearn learners and urged the University to consider carefully the products offered via the platform. He also questioned the marketing strategy for MOOCs and suggested FutureLearn should consider offering products associated with MOOCs to generate income. Another member expressed concern over the update on FutureLearn and asked if the University was confident continued investment was the most appropriate way forward.

25.2 The Vice-Chancellor commented that there were significant benefits from the synergies developing between FutureLearn and the University. FutureLearn’s products were continually improving and the launch of MOOCs for credit was a very exciting development. FutureLearn’s success in terms of innovation, participation and engagement had made it the most successful MOOC platform in the world. It was also assisting in eliciting interest in learning with the University. Mr Horrocks confirmed that FutureLearn was a wholly owned subsidiary of the University and its performance was continually monitored. The Senate’s comments would be reflected upon as part of that continual evaluation.

25.3 The Senate noted the report and confidential report of the meeting of the Council held on 10 May 2016.

26 ACTION BY THE CHAIR

The Senate noted the reports on action taken by the Chair since the last meeting of the Senate.

27 FUTURE ITEMS OF BUSINESS

The Senate noted the list of potential items for the agenda for the meeting of the Senate on 19 October 2016 subject to the postponement of the item relating to the Academic Year until a future meeting.

28 DECLASSIFICATION OF PAPERS

All confidential papers to remain classified as confidential with the exception of S-2016-03-20: Emeritus Professors which was declassified.
29 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

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

Meetings will be held on the following dates:

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

Keith Zimmerman
University Secretary

Sue Thomas
Working Secretary to the Senate
Email: sue.thomas@open.ac.uk
Tel: 01908 655083