This paper presents the confirmed Minutes of the last meeting of the Senate held on Wednesday 19 October 2016 at The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes.

The Senate approved these Minutes as a correct record of the meeting on 25 January 2017 subject to the inclusion of amendments to Minutes 11.32 and 11.34.

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 19 October 2016 at 2.00pm in the Hub Theatre, The Open University, Walton Hall

PRESENT:

1) Ex officio

Mr Peter Horrocks Vice-Chancellor
Professor Hazel Rymer Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching Innovation)
Professor Kevin Hetherington Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Academic Strategy)
Mr Ian Fribbance Interim Executive Dean, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Professor Rebecca Taylor Executive Dean, Dean, Faculty of Business and Law
Professor Simon Kelley Executive Dean, Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies
Professor Mary Kellett Executive Dean, Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies
Professor Patrick McAndrew Director of the Institute of Educational Technology
Mr Chris Rooke Director of Learning and Teaching Solutions

Appointed

2) Central Academic Units

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS)

Faculty of Arts
Dr Cristina Chimisso Professor David Johnson
Dr Naoko Yamagata Dr Elaine Moohan
Professor Ole Grell Professor John Wolfe

Faculty of Social Sciences
Dr Deborah Drake Dr Troy Cooper
Dr Catriona Havard Dr Richard Heffernan
Dr Helen Kaye Dr Jovan Byford

Faculty of Business & Law (FBL)
Miss Carol Howells Dr Devendra Kodwani
Dr Kristen Reid Dr Sharon Slade
Mr Mike Phillips

Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)

Faculty of Science
Dr John Baxter Mrs Diane Butler
Dr Janet Haresnape  
Professor Hilary MacQueen  
Professor David Rothery

**Mathematics, Computing and Technology**

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

Dr Leonor Barroca (remote)  
Dr Stephen Burnley  
Dr Jon Hall  
Dr Hayley Ryder  
Dr Ann Walsh  
Dr Gareth Williams

**Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies (WELS)**

**Education and Language Studies**

Ms Annie Eardley  
Professor Regine Hampel  
Dr Indra Sinka  
Dr Uwe Baumann

Mrs Anna Comas-Quinn  
Ms Tyrrell Golding  
Dr Elodie Vialleton

**Health and Social Care**

Professor Jan Draper  
Mrs Sue Cole

Dr Aravinda Guntupalli  
Dr Verena Waights

**Institute of Educational Technology (IET)**

Dr Anne Adams  
Mr Chris Edwards

Professor Eileen Scanlon

**Other Central Units**

Dr Liz Marr

3) **Associate Lecturers**

Mrs Frances Chetwynd  
Dr Clare Spencer  
Dr Hilary Partridge  
Dr Tim Parry

Dr Fiona Aiken  
Dr Tricia French  
Dr Linda Walker

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

Mr Chris Pane  
Ms Lorraine Adams  
Mrs Nicola Simpson (alternate)

Mr John Murphy  
Dr Barbara Tarling  
Dr Sandra Summers (alternate)

5) **Academic-related Staff**

Mr Mike Innes  
Mr Michael Street  
Ms Pat Atkins  
Mrs Joanne Smythe  
Mr Simon Horrocks  
Mr Billy Khokhar (remote)  
Miss Barbara Poniatowska

Mrs Clare Ikin  
Mr Jake Yeo  
Mr Denzil DeSouza  
Ms Elaine Walker  
Mr Phil Berry  
Mrs Maria Crisu  
Mrs Selena Killick

6) **Co-opted members**

Professor John Domingue  
Mr Rob Humphreys (remote)  
Mr John D'Arcy  
Ms Susan Stewart

Dr David Knight  
Mr Tony O'Shea-Poon  
Mr Jonathan Wylie

**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
Mr Lucian Hudson, Director of Communications (to Minute 11)
Ms Laura Mullan, Internal Communications Manager
Mr Marco Mormone, KPMG (to Minute 11)
Mrs Susie Palmer-Trew, Portfolio Manager, Academic Strategy (to Minute 15)
Dr Diana Stammers, Interim Director of Academic Strategy (for Minute 14)
Mr Michael Flack, Head of Strategic Planning and Policy (to Minute 11)
Dr Judith Pickering, Senior Manager, Learning and Teaching Centre (for Minute 13)
Mr Paul Hollins, Manager, Learning and Teaching Centre (for Minute 13)

APOLOGIES:

Appointed

1) Ex officio

Ms Rosie Jones, Director of Library Services

2) Central Academic Units

Faculty of Social Sciences
Dr Anastasia Economou Dr Daniel McCulloch

Faculty of Health and Social Care
Mr Mick McCormick

4) Students Appointed by Open University Students Association

Miss Claire Smith

In attendance

Mr Andrew Law, Director, Open Media Unit
1 WELCOME AND THANKS

1.1 The Vice-Chancellor, Mr Peter Horrocks, welcomed the 32 new and returning members to the Senate following the bi-ennial elections held earlier in the year. He also welcomed Ms Nicola Simpson (alternate for Ms Claire Smith) and Dr Sandra Summers, (temporary member pending completion of appointments to the Senate) from the OU Students Association. Mr M Morome, KPMG was also welcomed as an observer to the meeting.

1.2 On behalf of the Senate, the Vice-Chancellor thanked Mr Chris Goscomb, Graduate member of the Senate who had resigned from the Senate.

2 RE-ORDERING OF THE AGENDA

2.1 The Vice-Chancellor informed the Senate that as a result of feedback received from some members of the Senate, a revised agenda for the meeting was issued on 12 October 2016. The revisions included:
   a) a revised ordering of the items in section C;
   b) a deferment until January 2017 of two items, the presentation on the research environment and the discussion of the Council Governance Review; (S-2016-04-12) to ensure appropriate time was given in the meeting to the most critical items;
   c) the transfer of the Academic Performance report (S-2016-04-07) to Section D;
      In addition paper S-2016-04-14, Revised Code of Practice for Student Discipline had been withdrawn by the author pending further revisions.

2.2 Mr Horrocks invited members to send any specific points of detail in relation to papers S-2016-04-07 (Academic Performance Report) and S-2016-04-12 (Council Governance Review) to the secretariat. The Senate was also advised that the record of the consideration of the report of the Council Governance Review by the Academic Quality and Governance Committee at its meeting on 6 October 2016 would be referred to the newly established Council Governance and Nominations Committee. Assurance was given that members of the Senate would have the opportunity to comment fully on the report and recommendations at the next meeting in January 2017.

3 MINUTES S-2016-03-M

3.1 The Senate approved the minutes of the meeting of the Senate held on 8 June 2016 subject to the inclusion of the following amendment:

Minute 18.2 to read:

3.2 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

4 MATTERS ARISING S-2016-04-01

The Senate noted the response to the matter arising from the last minutes.
5 REPORT FROM AND QUESTIONS TO THE CHAIR

5.1 The Vice-Chancellor opened his remarks by acknowledging that the meeting of the Senate was being held at a very challenging time for the University as it attempted to resolve one of the most difficult operational delivery failures that it had faced. A detailed debate would take place under the Group Tuition Policy (item C1) but he wished to recognise straightaway the immense organisational effort and resulting personal impact on many colleagues across the whole University community. He thanked everyone directly affected for their hard work and efforts and asked that those not directly involved supported colleagues who were working under pressure.

5.2 Mr Horrocks congratulated the team of scientists from the University, led by Dr M Patel, who were part of the European Space Agency (ESA) ExoMars Mission, which was attempting to discover if methane gas existed in the atmosphere and below the surface of Mars. The Schiaparelli Lander carrying equipment designed by Dr Patel and his team was scheduled to land on Mars imminently.

5.3 Work continued with colleagues from the Government and External Affairs team to lobby the Government on issues relating to part-time study. Mr Horrocks reported that following an encouraging meeting with the Education Minister last month work was ongoing to align the University’s aims with the Government’s priorities in this area. These included lobbying for further relaxation of ELQ (Equivalent or Lower Qualifications) rules, Next Steps Loans (loans for 60 credit modules in line with the government’s priorities around accelerated degrees), Credit Transfer (positioning the University as a national point for secure credit storage as a mechanism to ensure students are protected if their Higher Education Institution (HEI) left the market) and protection of the Student Opportunity Fund. Mr Horrocks acknowledged that progress might be limited in these areas this year as the Government’s attention focussed on withdrawal from the European Union.

5.4 The University had welcomed the recent report by Universities UK on enabling social mobility in higher education, which called for a greater focus on mature students in UK government policy, and emphasis on encouraging upskilling or reskilling and the promotion of lifelong learning, along with the value of part-time study.

5.5 Mr Horrocks also thanked the Director of the OU in Wales and his team for their significant work in providing evidence to the review of higher education funding and student finance arrangements in Wales led by Professor Sir Ian Diamond. The report published last month proposed substantial policy developments in Wales for part-time students, including greater support for part-time provision, a doubling of overall investment in higher education, and the removal of restrictions around ELQ and modular study.

5.6 With reference to student numbers for the University, Mr Horrocks reported that the extension of the Final Enrolment Date by one week had enabled a significant number of additional students to register. He acknowledged the additional pressure this put upon teams implementing the GTP at that point. An announcement on OU Life had provided full details for all staff but in summary, the anticipated gap between target and actual registrations had been significantly closed with 56,190 full time equivalent (FTE) registrations, however, this still left the University -3.7% short of the ambitious target set and -1.5% down on last year. Mr Horrocks drew attention to specific successes to celebrate. Targets for new postgraduate students were exceeded (+41%), and new undergraduate student numbers in Scotland (+10%), Wales (+9%) and internationally (+21%) were strong. Mr Horrocks commented that the marketing campaign had been bold and creative and generated over 170,000 enquirers. Overall new undergraduate student numbers were -1.4% below target and continuing students -4.3% below target. A challenge for the University appeared to be in England, where a larger than expected drop-off in old regime students at later stages of study had been evident.
5.7 Mr Horrocks concluded that the challenges faced by the University – both in terms of the current operational problems with tutorial delivery and the recruitment shortfall accentuated the need for everyone to continue to focus on the six strategic themes and strive to meet the targets set across them.

5.8 In response to an invitation for any questions or comments, a member drew attention to a number of references in at least six of the papers presented to the Senate for the meeting to the restraints evident due to lack of IT resources. He expressed his concern that insufficient or inappropriate IT resources might be cited as reasons not to progress with initiatives. The Vice-Chancellor assured the Senate that this was an area upon which further work would be undertaken.

5.9 A member also asked for a further breakdown of the shortfall in registrations across both new and continuing students. Mr Horrocks agreed to provide this information after the meeting.

*Post Meeting Note*

New students: 1.4% below target  
Continuing students: 4.3% below target

5.10 A member referred to the reordering of the agenda for the meeting and drew attention to the deferment of the discussion of the report of the Council Governance Review. He noted a recommendation in the report that the size of the Council be reduced and he sought assurance that members of the Senate would be able to discuss this and no decision or action would be taken before the next meeting of the Senate in January 2017 when the report would be discussed. The University Secretary confirmed this position for members of the Senate.

6 STRATEGIC PLANNING AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

SPRC-2016-03-M: Minute 4.14

6.1 A member drew attention to the reference to the independent assessment of the Student Recruitment and Support Centre (SRSC) Programme which had been commissioned from KPMG. He asked if the results of the report, and how lessons could be learned for future implementation of strategies would be made available to the Senate. The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that the Senate would receive this information.

6.2 The Senate noted the unconfirmed Minutes and Confidential Minutes from the meeting held on 22 June 2016.

7 ACADEMIC QUALITY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE S-2016-04-03

AQGC-2016-06-M: Minute 1.8

7.1 A member drew attention to the reference to the pattern of submission for TMAs being an indicator of the amount of time Associate Lecturers (ALs) had been able to provide to students. She voiced her disagreement with this view and explained that the pattern of submission for TMAs would be an indicator of the amount of disruption experienced by students due to confusion about tutorial provision. She believed ALs would be providing more time to students in order to inform them of planned tutorial provision and ensuring they had all the necessary information, in addition to the normal amount of time they provided to their students.

7.2 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Academic Strategy) (PVC RAS), Chair of the Academic Quality and Governance Committee, explained that the comment represented the view of one member of the Committee. The Committee would be considering further
information including key performance indicators (KPIs) relating to the Group Tuition Policy and difficulties associated with it at its forthcoming meeting on 7 November 2016.

7.3 The Senate noted the confirmed Minutes of the meeting of the Academic Quality and Governance Committee held on 27 June 2016 and the unconfirmed Minutes of the meetings held on 19 September 2016 and 6 October 2016.

8 RESEARCH COMMITTEE S-2016-04-04

The Senate noted the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2016 and by correspondence between 7/13 July 2016.

9 EDUCATION COMMITTEE S-2016-04-05

Minute 2.1: Matters Arising

9.1 A representative of ALs reiterated the views expressed in the minutes of the meeting of the Education Committee on 14 July 2016 that greater clarity was required in relation to the recording of tutorials. She commented that at present module teams devised their own protocols and some ALs sought the views of their groups but there was a wide variety of practice. She also reported incidences of screen captures from online tutorials being uploaded to social media sites and she suggested much greater clarity was required on this issue too. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching Innovation) (PVC LTI) agreed that action was required in this area and that it would be included in the forthcoming review of tutorial policy.

Minute 10: Group Tuition Policy

9.2 A member drew attention to the debate at the meeting on the Group Tuition Policy. He considered that ample warning and concerns had been expressed to the University at that point about the Policy but the response did not acknowledge the problems arising or attempt any resolutions. He considered that the only response given to these concerns appeared to be bland reassurance that the position was satisfactory.

9.3 The Senate noted the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2016.

10 SENATE WORKING GROUP: LOCATIONS S-2016-04-06

10.1 The Chair, Senate Working Group: Locations introduced the report and recorded his appreciation for the time senior colleagues had taken to engage with the Group and its work. He reported that the Group continued to have ongoing concerns in relation to the implications of the locations decision. He reported to the Senate the Group’s concerns that the impact of the problems with the Group Tuition Policy impacted upon the same teams who were currently working under pressure to handover work to other locations. He requested that the University adopt a more strategic approach overall to these issues.

10.2 Another member commented that she was concerned that staff working in regions about to be closed felt forgotten. She acknowledged communications had improved but was aware that colleagues about to lose their jobs still received communications about plans moving forward and she considered this to be insensitive and unnecessary. She was also concerned that Student Recruitment and Support Centres (SRSCs) were changing the work of Student Support Teams (SSTs) without proper pilot schemes and felt this was a parallel situation to the problems identified with the Group Tuition Policy. She also commented that although new staff had been recruited, their remit was very broad and she believed there was a lack of specialised guidance available to students.

10.3 The Director of Teaching, Learning and Teaching Innovation expressed her disagreement with the comment relating to a lack of strategic vision and commented that she considered
those working in widening access regional activity and participation were working strategically in partnership with other organisations. She explained that she would welcome any ideas or suggestions to deliver these initiatives in a different way.

10.4 Another member drew attention to the comment in paragraph 8 of the report and the confidence expressed by the University Secretary that once the new structures were in place, effective collaboration would be possible. He sought further information on what mechanism were envisaged to deliver such collaboration. Another member was concerned that the reorganisation was disguising other problems such as new staff working in new roles under unreasonable pressure and support for disabled students or offender learners not being fully in place.

10.5 The Director of Academic Services reported that he was working with Assistant Directors in regional offices to improve targeting of communications. He also informed the Senate that further work had been commissioned to test more rigorously the current outcomes of the programme to evaluate whether progress was according to plan.

10.6 The Senate noted the report of the meeting held on 29 September 2016.

11 GROUP TUITION POLICY S-2016-04-11A&B

11.1 The Chair informed the Senate that he would open the debate on the Group Tuition Policy by making a statement in his role as Vice-Chancellor. He would then ask the proposer of the motion in paper S-2016-04-11 to speak to the motion. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching Innovation) (PVC LTI) would then be asked to provide an update on the current position. Following that, Professor Rebecca Taylor, Executive Dean, Faculty of Business and Law (FBL) in her role as Vice-Chancellor’s Executive lead on the More Students Qualifying strategic objective would make an announcement on additional measures which had been agreed to support students. Mr Horrocks explained he would then seek the views of the representatives of the OU Students Association and then move to vote on the motion and take comments from the floor of the Senate.

11.2 The Vice-Chancellor opened his remarks by apologising unreservedly to all students and staff who had been affected by the problems associated with tutorials and tuition.

11.3 Mr Horrocks apologised specifically to students for the disruption they had experienced to their studies and he assured them that the University intended to do all it could to ensure that no student’s studies suffered further. He offered his apologies to the staff of the University for the position in which they found themselves and the embarrassment that they had suffered as a result of the below-standard service offered to students. He thanked them very sincerely for the immense work they had done to help recover the situation.

11.4 Mr Horrocks acknowledged to the Senate that colleagues across the University had previously expressed their concerns over the implementation of the Group Tuition Policy and those warnings and concerns were not sufficiently acted upon. He explained that a review by external consultants KPMG was currently underway focussing on the issues that led to the problems in the provision of tuition for students. This would ensure independence from the Vice-Chancellor’s Executive (VCE) and would report to the meeting of the Audit Committee of the Council taking place on 1 November 2016 and the Council on 23 November 2016. This review would seek the views of staff across the University in a range of roles including staff tutors and associate lecturers (ALs). Its aims would be to identify remedies for the current situation but also to ensure the correct lessons were recognised for change implementation in the future.

11.5 The Vice-Chancellor clarified that he was ultimately answerable to the Council for any serious issue of delivery to students and he willingly accepted that accountability. The
Council had emphasised that the priority at this point had to be the restoration of a proper service to the University’s students and to ensure that this was secure and robust for the presentations ahead.

11.6 The Senate had a key role to play in strengthening academic quality. With this in mind, Mr Horrocks urged members of the Senate to focus time in the meeting on how improvements could be made to the delivery of tuition to assure academic quality. He explained that the PVC LTI would provide further information on the efforts being made to recover the situation and explain how the Education Committee would establish an ongoing review of the Group Tuition Policy (GTP). The Education Committee would maintain oversight of all significant operational and policy amendments and would report back to Senate. It would seek approvals of policy changes where necessary, but would remain cognisant of any significant impact of policy changes on operations and the student experience.

11.7 In explaining work that was currently underway and future activity, Mr Horrocks reported that the operational activities of the Group Tuition Project had been incorporated into the Tutorials Delivery Action Group which was chaired by the Director of Academic Services and included representatives from all four faculties and other responsible units. He assured the Senate that as a response to the crisis VCE was considering significant operational changes and changes to policy where necessary. Mr Horrocks also commented that VCE was willing to implement the proposed amendment to the advance notice provision in the Policy as set out in the motion, if carried, but he was concerned that this might not provide students with the advance notice they required. He invited the OU Students Association representatives to comment on this.

11.8 In conclusion, the Vice-Chancellor reiterated his thanks to all staff who had worked tirelessly to rescue a difficult and serious situation. He pledged that no student would suffer a detriment to their studies.

11.9 Mr B Quinn, proposer of the motion explained that the motion had been drafted to reflect the sense of desperation many colleagues felt as they witnessed the situation unfold in relation to the delivery of tuition to students. It was not his motion specifically and he explained that he spoke on behalf of all the signatories listed in the paper. He emphasised that it was not a motion expressing resistance to change but it was recognition of a policy that had been implemented but was clearly not working adequately. Many members had supported the policy when it was considered by the Senate in October 2014. They had acknowledged the existing system of tuition delivery had flaws and were genuinely pleased to see action to try to remedy these and provide a good service to students. However concerns had been expressed at that point over the implementation of the policy and in particular the publication of information on tutorials three months in advance. Members of the Senate had supported the policy having been given assurances that their concerns would be taken into account. However it was the opinion of the signatories to the motion that the Senate’s concerns had been ignored and this had resulted in a disastrous situation with damage to the reputation and credibility of the University.

11.10 In proposing the motion attention was drawn to the four specific parts. Part (a) referred to the disappointment that concerns previously expressed had not been addressed. Mr Quinn expressed his hope that students understood how hard staff had tried to ensure the policy worked but this had proved an impossibility. Part (b) drew attention to the poor level of service provided to students as a result of the implementation of the policy and the inadequate testing in advance. Part (c) was an attempt to remedy the situation by proposing amendments to the wording including removing the reference to “about three months” in paragraph 42 of the GTP. These amendments were designed to support students and improve the situation for them. Part (d) looked to the future and requested a full review of the policy and not just its implementation with direct involvement from the Senate. Mr Quinn urged the Senate to support the motion.
11.11 Professor Hazel Rymer, PVC LTI, reported that on 29 September 2016, following escalation of issues regarding the secure delivery of tutorials and tuition to students, the Vice-Chancellor, University Secretary and Executive Deans were presented with a series of options including the proposition that the entire programme of tuition for the first weekend of October be cancelled. It was agreed to continue and the majority of tutorials did proceed although many practical difficulties were experienced. VCE met on 1 October 2016 and an Incident Response Group (IRG) was established. Another group, reporting to IRG, the Tutorials Delivery Action Group (TDAG) was also set up with membership from faculties and service areas. The two groups have co-ordinated all activities to respond to the failures in the delivery of tutorials. Professor Rymer informed the Senate that significant progress had been made and the majority of students were now able to book tutorials through to the end of 2016 but there was still a considerable amount of work to do to restore a robust and high-level service to students for the remainder of the 16J presentation, the 16K presentations and to begin preparatory work for 17B presentations.

11.12 Professor Rymer acknowledged that the tutor/student relationship was a very valuable one and one-to-one contact with their tutor was crucial for students to succeed. The intention of the policy was to build upon that relationship by enabling team teaching so students could benefit from more than one tutor delivering tutorials. Students were promised that timetables for tutorials would be available in good time before the start of their modules but this was not the case. Students and tutors became geographically separated, rooms for tutorials were not booked and notification of arrangements was very late. These problems had impacted upon the student experience and on the ability of ALs to deliver tuition. Professor Rymer apologised to students and staff for the unacceptable level of service provided.

11.13 In responding to the motion proposed, Professor Rymer commented that part (a) was undoubtedly correct and that concerns expressed about implementation of the GTP were not adequately addressed and had resulted in a major disruption to provision of tuition to students. In relation to part (b), Professor Rymer acknowledged that the Learning Events Management (LEM) system was not delivered to scope or on time and was not delivering the functionality required. She explained that some of the apparent inflexibility in the GTP related to this system and some to the interpretation of the policy, however neither were acceptable for students. Referring to part (c) and the proposal to remove reference to provide a schedule for core learning events “about three months before module start”, Professor Rymer confirmed that the aim was to provide such information as early as possible and Senate’s views would be welcomed on this point. Part (d) of the motion called for a full review of the policy and for this to be brought to the Senate for consideration. Following on from the Vice-Chancellor’s statement, Professor Rymer confirmed that three reviews were currently ongoing. The Business Performance Improvement team was undertaking a rapid review to address process issues for 17B presentations. KPMG had been commissioned to carry out a wider review for the University Audit Committee and the Council, consulting students, ALs and other staff, and this would focus on establishing where the problems arose and identify lessons to be learned for other major projects. A full review of the policy would be conducted under the auspices of the Education Committee and reported to the Senate. This would be a continuous review over approximately 18 months with various phases to quantify any changes in student outcomes and would focus on what was intended via the policy, what was delivered and, going forward, what could be delivered to students.

11.14 Professor Rebecca Taylor, Executive Dean, FBL and VCE lead on the More Students Qualifying strategic objective introduced her statement by confirming that the commitment of staff to the University reflected a strong belief in its mission and a determination to deliver an excellent learning experience to students to help them achieve their goals. She commented that this had never been more apparent as over the last few weeks as staff
from teams across the University had worked exceptionally hard, often in difficult and embarrassing circumstances, to manoeuvre through a situation that impacted on the learning experience of many students. It was now vital to learn lessons from the past, stabilise the present and decide on the best way forward. In the immediate future work would continue on events for the 16J presentations to ensure that the disruption was minimised and issues with tutorial venues and online sessions were resolved. The dedication and commitment of staff over recent weeks was commended and they would have the opportunity to feed into the review processes.

11.15 Professor Taylor explained that it was also essential that the University delivered additional support to students to ensure that despite the recent disruption to tutorials they had the best chance to engage and succeed. A package of measures had therefore been compiled to enable the University to support students, now and in the future. Additional funding had been made available to provide additional learning support where appropriate for students on 16J presentations. Faculties had been given discretion to identify additional support plans on a module by module basis and to work with ALs to develop and implement these plans by the end of November 2016 in order to provide students with the greatest chance of success.

11.16 Professor Taylor announced the details of the measures that had been agreed:

a) A goodwill payment of £200 would be made to all ALs teaching on modules on 16J presentations that had implemented the GTP to acknowledge the disruption over recent weeks. For other staff, the existing range of mechanisms to recognise and reward extraordinary effort will be deployed once the current situation was stabilised.

b) A payment would also be made to ALs for the extra time required to deliver agreed additional support to 16J students.

c) A commitment was given to restore the tutor/student link through the geographical allocation of students for all modules with face-to-face events. The use of clusters and/or the actual size/boundaries of these clusters would be reconsidered. Geographical allocation was underway across faculties for the 16K and 17B presentations.

d) A commitment was made to widespread involvement in both the KPMG review and review by the Education Committee and on the planned improvement of the processes and systems supporting GTP.

e) A commitment that ALs and students would be consulted on the development or redevelopment of module group tuition strategies for 17J onwards.

11.17 Professor Taylor informed the Senate that in many circumstances, Staff Tutors, Regional Managers and ALs were already enquiring about the provision of extra support for students affected by the disruption from the GTP implementation. The expertise and creativity of these groups was critical to support students and module teams, and Staff Tutors and Regional Managers were asked to work together with ALs to enable the delivery of the agreed additional support for students.

11.18 Professor Taylor explained that Staff Tutors, Regional Managers and ALs would be asked on the day after the meeting of the Senate to identify the additional support requirements of any students or groups of students who were disrupted by the recent tutorial delivery issues and who would therefore benefit from additional learning support. Communications would be issued to students on Monday 24 October 2016. Professor Taylor urged the Senate to express its support for these additional measures.
11.19 The President, OU Students Association thanked the Vice-Chancellor for his acknowledgment of, and apologies for, the difficulties experienced by students. He also expressed his gratitude to the dedicated staff who had worked hard to support students through the challenging period. He explained that students supported the aims of the GTP and would not be supporting the motion presented to the Senate. They wished to see the outcomes of the reviews underway and wanted the policy to continue to aspire to achieve its stated aims.

11.20 The Executive Dean, Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Languages (WELS) expressed her concern that section (c) of the motion might be problematic so proposed an amendment which was seconded by Dr U Baumann:

(c) that the Education Committee consult students, ALs, and other stakeholders with a view to amending the Group Tuition Policy’s aim to provide a schedule for module-based core learning events “about 3 months before module start” such that students are provided with as much advance notice as is commensurate with what is possible within current processes and systems for student registration and tutor appointment.

11.21 A representative of the OU Students’ Association commented that when the GTP was proposed in October 2014, students were informed that the policy would be of benefit to them and it was on this basis that they supported it at that time. She was concerned that the motion and the proposed amendment was allowing the implementation of the GTP to influence the aims of the policy itself and this would not be an acceptable situation. She requested that the outcomes of the reviews be considered and then further consideration be given to any revisions to the policy. Another member sought clarification as to what was meant by “other stakeholders” in the amendment.

11.22 The University Secretary advised the Senate that it should move to a vote on the proposed amendment. If members were not happy with the content or wording then they should vote against it and propose further amendments if desired. A member expressed his concern that it was unjust to move directly to a vote without the opportunity for members to state why they supported or rejected the amendment. Mr Zimmerman reiterated that Senate needed to focus its attention on debating the substantive motion rather than procedural motions such as the proposed amendment.

11.23 The proposer of the original motion expressed his concern that the amendment did not provide any suggestion of timescales and requested further information from the proposer of the amendment. Professor Kellett explained that the provision of timescales in the policy had led to complications hence her proposal to amend the motion. The proposed amendment provided an opportunity to take decisions on the policy within the governance structure of the University after consultation with stakeholders.

11.24 The Vice-Chancellor requested that the Senate vote on the amendment as proposed in minute 11.20.

11.25 The amendment was not carried with the following votes recorded:

For the amendment: 33
Against: 52
Abstentions 5

11.26 The original motion as set out in paper S-2016-04-11A was then voted upon.
11.27 The motion was carried with the following votes recorded:

For the motion: 53
Against: 29
Abstentions: 5

11.28 The proposer of the motion expressed his regret that the motion was voted upon without the opportunity for members to speak for or against it. He was concerned that as a result student members of the Senate would not have been fully aware of the extent to which staff had worked to try to implement the policy. He commented that he was aware that student members of the Senate had expressed their concern about being approached outside of meetings by other members in relation to Senate business. He believed that a discussion outside of the meeting in relation to the motion might have been helpful in this instance and expressed his regret that student representatives had voted against the motion.

11.29 A representative of the OU Students Association commented that she had attended the meeting of the Education Committee where the GTP had been discussed and concerns raised. She confirmed that despite the recent issues the OU Students Association still supported the aims and principles of the GTP. Students with caring responsibilities or disabilities were able to take advantage of the opportunities made available through the policy. The policy offered many benefits to students and until the outcomes of the reviews were known, she believed it was unwise to amend the policy. Students appreciated all the efforts of the staff involved but agreed that considerable work was still required for modules on 16J presentations.

11.30 Another representative of the OU Students Association sought further information on the reviews underway. She asked if timescales had been set for each one and how their scope had been agreed and how the outcomes would be communicated to students. She also asked how students could become involved in them and how faculties would identify students requiring the additional support being offered. Another student representative commented that implementation was key to the success of a policy and she enquired how students could be involved in the implementation of the GTP in future. The PVC LTI responded that the BPI review was very rapid, the KPMG one would make an initial report to the Audit Committee early in November 2016 and the review conducted by the Education Committee would be a longer, ongoing review possibly lasting 18 months to ensure all aspects and outcomes were included. Professor Taylor explained that staff tutors, module teams and ALs would work together to identify students they considered required additional support and what specific measures would help them. Suggested support mechanisms might include more online support, additional face-to-face tuition or further learning materials. Students would also be able to request additional support themselves if they felt they had been disadvantaged and should discuss their requests with their tutor.

11.31 The Chair of the AL Executive expressed her concern that it was not clear how the reviews would connect together. She also commented that some of the mitigating actions identified in the GTP risk register were long-term such as the replacement of OU Live in 2018, yet the failure of the system was a very current issue. The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that the KPMG review would include interviews with the AL Executive and the Education Committee’s review would include AL representation. Another AL member urged the University to work now on actions for the 17B presentations as November 2016 marked the three month point ahead of module start dates and considerable planning was still required. She also reflected on the principle of student choice offered through the GTP. In areas with low student populations, their choices were either to participate in online tuition or travel very long distances to attend a tutorial. She felt this effectively removed any element of choice for them and forced them into accepting the only realistic option.
11.32 The University Secretary read comments received from the Director of the OU in Wales who was participating in the meeting remotely. He observed that concerns raised by staff in Wales, Scotland and Ireland in relation to specific impacts in the nations on the quality of the student experience and problems with funders were not reflected in the paper (11B) and had not been acted upon. He requested that this dimension be considered as part of the review(s), which he had already made a written request to input into on behalf of himself and staff based in Wales. He suggested the review must look at the wider organisational culture that allowed a predictable and predicted situation to happen. He also expressed his thanks to all staff who had worked hard to mitigate things.

11.33 Another member enquired whether the payments to ALs would be offered to those who worked on a module that had only partially implemented the GTP. This had not been clear from the announcement. She also drew attention to problems with technology that undermined the flexibility of the GTP and commented that the notion of clusters for tutorials was pedagogically unsound as relationships between students and their tutor were the key to success.

11.34 A member commented that although many colleagues could see the difficulties emerging with the GTP there had not been a forum for them to express these and bring together the views of those working in Student Services, IT, Faculties and also ALs. She suggested that the reviews should consider this cultural dimension to the situation. The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that the review by KPMG would include this aspect.

11.35 Another member commended colleagues across the University for the exemplary way in which they had reacted to the crisis but expressed his concern that so many warnings of difficulties and problems were ignored. He urged the University in future projects to investigate concerns raised. He also suggested that the University reflect upon whether it had attempted too much institutional change in the previous year and that lessons should be learned for the future. A member commented that she was pleased to hear of the reviews of the situation but she was facing a major problem with the practical arrangements for a day school. A venue had not been booked and students would need to be informed of a late change which she considered to be an unacceptable level of service. She believed that more resources were required to handle all the emerging problems. The Director of Academic Services apologised for the difficulties being experienced and offered support.

11.37 A member observed that he did not consider that operational issues were the business of the Senate but it should be focusing its time on handling the crisis facing the University and ensuring such problems never happened again. He welcomed the reviews and announcement of additional support but commented that staff were under immense pressure and he was concerned as to whether they could physically fit in the provision of additional support to students. He affirmed a strong feeling of goodwill amongst colleagues but their efforts were focussed on dealing with immediate issues to assist students. Another member requested that the University consider the aims of the GTP carefully as they appeared to be competing against each other and it would be important to identify the key priorities.

11.38 Another member expressed her support for the aims of the GTP but believed that implementation of them against the background of so much other change occurring in the University at present had been challenging. She felt these problems should be resolved before embarking on any further major change projects and believed the pace of change should slow down to provide time to reflect. The Vice-Chancellor acknowledged the point of caution but commented that improvements were required and these could not be delayed.

11.39 A representative of the OU Students Association expressed her concerns over the systems supporting change. It was vital that systems were robust before they could be enhanced.
and she urged the University to use better data collection methods to improve its forecasting of student numbers. She also commented that following the removal of geographical allocation of students to tutors, the clusters identified were unrealistic and impractical. The Vice-Chancellor assured the Senate that the tutor/student allocation would be based on closer geographical proximity in future.

11.40 The Vice-Chancellor thanked the Senate for its support during a very challenging time for the University.

12 ANNUAL QUALITY REPORT S-2016-04-08

12.1 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Academic Strategy) (PVC RAS) introduced the report and explained that paragraphs 1 to 4 set out in detail the specific purposes of the report. Professor Hetherington referred back to paper S-2016-04-03 and explained that the Academic Quality and Governance Committee would meet on 7 November 2016 to discuss performance against a set of KPIs being developed on the management of tutorial delivery from the quality assurance aspect. The Committee would reaffirm its confidence in the Annual Quality Report and statement of assurance at that meeting.

12.2 A member commented that although evaluation of tutorial delivery against KPIs would be valuable, he felt that evidence from Student Support Teams would also be very helpful in evaluating the tuition delivery problems from a quality aspect and he felt this was missing from current reviews. SSTs had been referred to in actions plans to resolve the problems but he was not aware that evidence had been sought from them on the extent of the problems and full implications. Professor Hetherington commented that this could be a helpful source of information and agreed to pursue it.

12.3 Another member enquired whether any reference at all would be made in the report or statement to the issues the University experienced with the delivery of tuition to students. Professor Hetherington confirmed that the AQGC would consider this at its forthcoming meeting on 7 November 2016. The report had already been sent to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) to comply with their deadline. The former Head of Quality who was attending the meeting as an observer explained that the SFC required assurance on the quality of the student experience and academic standards for the year up to 31 July 2016 with a statement of assurance to follow signed by the Chair of the Senate or the Council. The Council at its meeting on 23 November 2016 would consider AQGC’s views and those of the Senate and would consider how to respond to the request from the Higher Education Funding Council’s request for the assurance statement to be confirmed.

12.4 The Senate:

a) noted that the report was used as the annual report on institution-led review submitted to the Scottish Funding Council; and

b) delegated to the Academic Quality and Governance Committee the recommendation to Council that it endorse the statement of assurance.

13 TEACHING EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK S-2016-04-10

CONFIDENTIAL MINUTE – recorded separately as S-2016-04-CM

14 ACADEMIC STRATEGY S-2016-04-09

14.1 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Academic Strategy) (PVC RAS) introduced the paper and explained that the Academic Strategy articulated how the University would achieve the Students First objective of Academic Excellence and how it would also provide
crucial support for the success of the other five Students First objectives. It included a set of strategic aims for the University’s academic endeavour, underpinned by high-level principles and identified the priorities needed to enhance Academic Excellence. Professor Hetherington informed the Senate that further consultation of the strategy would continue and the final version would be presented to either the meeting of the Senate in January or April 2017 for approval.

14.2 A member commented that this was a very important document for the University and he did not consider it appropriate to discuss it at this point of the meeting. He urged caution that the University was progressing it too quickly alongside numerous other changes and asked for discussion of it to be postponed until the next meeting. He considered the draft strategy to have areas for commendation but some aspects presented problems that required detailed debate. Professor Hetherington commented that his aim had been for Senate to consider and hopefully approve the strategy at the January 2017 meeting of the Senate to enable faculties to use it as the foundation of their business planning for 2017/8. However he acknowledged the significance of the strategy and the need to consult further so would defer consideration for approval until the meeting in April 2017.

14.3 A representative of the OU Students Association expressed concern that there still appeared to be confusion as to how an academic community was defined and how students were envisaged to fit into that community. She requested that a clear definition be provided. She thanked the PVC RAS for organising the workshops which had helped to shape the strategy so far and hoped that more would be organised to discuss the draft strategy further, ideally in the UK nations to ensure the wider student body could be involved.

14.4 Another student representative commented that it was disappointing that figure 3 on page 7 stated that the aspiration in respect of taught postgraduate students was simply to maintain satisfaction at 86% and not to improve it at all. Maintenance in such a way would not lead to an improvement in excellence. She reiterated the Association’s thanks for involving students to this point in the development of the strategy and requested that on approval students needed to be involved in its implementation. She felt that this was particularly important as faculties gained more autonomy as there may be differing interpretations of the aims and objectives.

14.5 A member expressed his concern that the strategy itself did not include any reference to achievement of equality objectives. He wished to see reference to enriching gender equality in the action plan for implementation. He also commented that whilst supporting the development of academic endeavour in a holistic way, teaching and research activities were not identical. Professor Hetherington commented that the strategy was aiming to focus on the emerging properties of combined elements of teaching and research and not implying they were exactly the same.

14.6 A member welcomed the strategy but sought clarity as to which would take precedence, the academic strategy or business strategy. He also felt that further acknowledgement should be given to the administrative element of an academic’s role at the University. He also enquired at what level cost effectiveness was required (paragraph 20) and whether that was at faculty or school level, or even in relation to individual members of staff. He also commented that in paragraph 21, academic communities could not necessarily be responsible for student success but would play a key role in student engagement.

14.7 A comment was made that the University should consider the impact on individual members of staff if the decision was taken to decommit from any academic areas. It would also be necessary to identify risks associated with such action including risks to the Graduate School and existing Strategic Research Areas. A member also commented that the strategy contained considerable high-level information but it was essential that
implementation was based on a receptive dialogue to avoid a repetition of the problems associated with the implementation of the Group Tuition Policy.

14.8 Another member was disappointed that the strategy did not do more to enthuse academic staff and she felt disappointed by a lack of ambition within it. She hoped it could become more aspirational in its approach. A member also commented that despite it being an academic strategy, he felt academic input to it as listed in the appendix had not been sufficient.

14.9 The PVC RAS assured the Senate that the development of the strategy was led by Professor Iain Gilmour, the academic lead. Extensive consultation with academic staff had taken place and engagement by other staff groups had also been welcomed. Academic staff would also be able to engage with developing faculty plans for implementation.

14.10 The Senate approved the proposals for further consultation on the draft academic strategy as set out in paragraph 14 of the paper.

15 **ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE ASSURANCE REPORT** S-2016-04-13

The Senate approved the assurance statement set out in paragraph 25 of the report on the effectiveness of the University’s academic governance arrangements in 2015/16, for reporting to the Council in November 2016.

16 **ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE REPORT** S-2016-04-07

16.1 A representative of the OU Students Association enquired as to what action was being taken to address the downward trend apparent from various measures identified in the report. The Vice-Chancellor explained that the extensive programme of institutional change currently underway in the University was aimed, amongst other things, at improving the indicators in the report.

16.2 The Senate noted the report on the academic performance of the University.

17 **CODE OF PRACTICE FOR STUDENT DISCIPLINE: REVISION** S-2016-04-14

This item had been withdrawn.

18 **ACADEMIC APPEALS PROCEDURE: REVIEW** S-2016-04-15

18.1 A representative of the OU Students Association thanked the Director of Academic Policy and Governance for providing a helpful insight into the policy at the meeting of the OU Students Association Senate Reference Group. She requested that an assurance be included in the policy that if a student was unable to adhere to the timescales set out in the policy to submit an appeal, consideration would still be given to accepting it. She also expressed concern that all changes to the policy must be approved within the governance structure of the University. Concern was also expressed that as students’ appeals never reached the Review Panel (SAARP) stage, this might be construed as misleading students and was it appropriate to maintain the Panel if it never met.

18.2 The Director of Academic Policy and Governance responded that an assurance over timescales and acceptance of appeals would be included in the policy. He explained that all changes to the Appeals Policy itself required governance approval but that changes to the procedures were management responsibilities and would be actioned outside of the University governance structure. In respect of the role and existence of the Review Panel, it was currently too early to review the procedure but the point would be included in a future review.
18.3 The Senate **approved** the changes to the Academic Appeals Procedures as set out in the paper subject to the inclusion of the additional amendment agreed in minute 18.2 above.

19 **VISITING ACADEMICS POLICY**  

The Senate **approved** the amendments to the Visiting Academics policy to ensure compliance with rules set out by UK Visas and Immigration.

20 **THE COUNCIL**  

The Senate **noted** the reports of meetings held on 12 July 2016 and 19 September 2016.

21 **ACTION BY THE CHAIR**  

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

22 **FUTURE ITEMS OF BUSINESS**  

The Senate **noted** the list of potential items for the agenda for the meeting of the Senate on 25 January 2017.

23 **DECLASSIFICATION OF PAPERS**  

The following confidential papers to remain classified as Highly Confidential:

- S-2016-04-02B: SPRC Confidential Minutes
- S-2016-04-10: Teaching Excellence Framework

24 **DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS**  

- Wednesday 25 January 2017
- Wednesday 5 April 2017 (tbc) – joint meeting with the Council
- Wednesday 7 June 2017

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