

THE SENATE

Minutes

This paper presents the confirmed Minutes of the last meeting of the Senate held on Wednesday 5 April 2017 at The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes.

The Senate is **approved** these Minutes as a correct record of the meeting on 7 June 2017.

Jonathan Wylie
Acting University Secretary

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THE SENATE

Minutes of the meeting of the Senate held on Wednesday 5 April 2017
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	Executive Dean, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Professor Rebecca Taylor	Executive Dean, Faculty of Business and Law
Professor Josie Fraser	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
Ms Rosie Jones	Director of Library Services
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 Naoko Yamagata
Professor Ole Grell

Dr Elaine Moohan
Professor John Wolffe

Faculty of Social Sciences

Dr Jovan Byford
Dr Deborah Drake
Dr Anastasia Economou (remote)

Dr Helen Kaye
Dr Troy Cooper
Dr Richard Heffernan

Faculty of Business & Law (FBL)

Miss Carol Howells
Dr Kristen Reid
Mr Mike Phillips

Dr Devendra Kodwani
Dr Sharon Slade

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

Dr Karen Olsson-Francis
Professor Claire Turner

Mathematics, Computing and Technology

Dr David Bowers
Professor Andy Lane
Dr Toby O'Neil
Mr Brendan Quinn
Dr Magnus Ramage
Dr Leonor Barroca

Dr Stephen Burnley
Dr Jon Hall
Dr Hayley Ryder
Dr Ann Walshe
Dr Gareth Williams

Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies (WELS)

Education and Language Studies

Ms Annie Eardley (remote)
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 (remote)

Professor Eileen Scanlon

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

Ms Lorraine Adams
Miss Claire Smith
Mr John Murphy

Dr Barbara Tarling
Ms Danielle Smith
Mrs Nicola Simpson (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

Mr Christopher Turner
Mr Rob Humphreys
Mr John D'Arcy

Ms Susan Stewart
Dr David Knight
Mr Tony O'Shea-Poon (for part)

In attendance

Mr Jonathan Wylie, Acting University Secretary
Mrs Dawn Turpin, Head of Governance
Ms Sue Thomas, Senior Manager, Governance
Miss Teresa Coyle, Manager, Governance
Mr Steve Hill, Director of External Engagement

Members of the Council in attendance

Mr Richard Gillingwater, Chair and Pro-Chancellor
Professor Bill Stevely, Vice-Chair
Mr Bob Spedding
Dr Greg Walker
Ms Sue Unerman
Mrs Rachel Lock
Ms Ruth Girardet
Dr Sue Dutton

Members of the Senate also attending as members of the Council

Professor John Wolffe
Dr John Baxter
Dr Toby O'Neil
Mr John D'Arcy
Professor Jan Draper
Dr Clare Spencer
Mrs Frances Chetwynd
Mrs Nicola Simpson (alternate)
Dr Barbara Tarling

Observing

Ms Kathryn Baldwin, Vice-Chancellor's Business Manager
Mr Lucian Hudson, Director of Communications
Mr Stephen Conway, Director of Research, Office of the PVC RAS (minutes 10,11)
Professor Iain Gilmour, Associate Dean, STEM (minutes 10,11)

APOLOGIES:

Appointed

2) Central Academic Units

Faculty of Arts

Dr Cristina Chimisso
Professor David Johnson

Faculty of Social Sciences

Dr Catriona Havard

Faculty of Mathematics, Computing and Technology

Dr Rachel Hilliam

Faculty of Health and Social Care

Mr Mick McCormick

Other Central Units

Dr Liz Marr

4) Students Appointed by Open University Students Association

Mr Chris Pane

6) Co-opted members

Professor John Domingue

In attendance

Mr Keith Zimmerman, University Secretary
Mr Andrew Law, Director, Open Media Unit

1 WELCOME AND THANKS

- 1.1 The Vice-Chancellor, Mr Peter Horrocks, welcomed Professor Josie Fraser, Executive Dean, Faculty of Science, Technology and Mathematics (STEM) and Mr Christopher Turner, co-opted graduate representative, to their first meetings of the Senate.
- 1.2 Mr Horrocks also welcomed members of the University Council as observers to the meeting. This was the first meeting of the Senate with Council members in attendance.
- 1.3 Mr Horrocks also reported that the University Secretary, Mr K Zimmerman was unable to attend the meeting on this occasion and Mr J Wylie, Director, Academic Services was deputising for him.

2 MINUTES

S-2017-01-M

- 2.1 The Senate **approved** the minutes of the meeting of the Senate held on 27 January 2017 subject to the inclusion of the following amendments:

Minute 3.1 (amendment in *italics*)

In response to a question, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Academic Strategy) and Deputy Chair of the Academic Staff Promotions Committee (ASPC) confirmed that the guidance on the new scheme would be published imminently. *This would include guidance specifically for staff tutors and regional/national academics and would be available in February.* He also confirmed that the report to Senate on promotions during 2017 would be presented to the Senate at the January 2018 meeting and a report on promotions in 2016 would be presented following consideration by the ASPC.

Minute 13.4 (amendment in *italics* and deletions in ~~striketrough~~)

A member referred to ~~a slide in~~ the earlier presentation on the external research environment and expressed concern that ~~the phrasing~~ *the institutional investment in research used was presented as incompatible with the Student First strategy and as an inappropriate way to spend 'students' money'. The member argued that references in the presentation to the subsidising of research at the University from students fees* this position ~~income confused value and cost and he believed it was essential to clarify that institutional funding was used for essential investment in the curriculum and added this position overlooks the distinctive value to that research adds to student experience, the University's range of qualifications, reputation, and the quality of its curriculum.~~ He also urged the University *not to refer to investment as 'students' money' unless it does so consistently, for instance when justifying the investment in MOOCs, or when discussing the costs of university restructuring, or the failed GTP implementation* ~~to reconsider investment in other areas such as group tuition or massive open online courses (MOOCs) but not to use terminology implying subsidy for such essential investment~~

Minute 13.11(amendment in *italics*)

Another member commented upon the reference in the draft strategy to the importance of building communities and suggested that the position of regional academic staff who had expressed concerns over isolation be considered in relation to the strategy. Another member urged the University not to stifle diversity across the University and to take full advantage of the breadth of its staff. *He welcomed*

reference in the paper in paragraphs 16 and 17 to the development of an Equality analysis and requested that the EIA (Equality Impact Assessment) be carried out as stated.

- 2.2 The Vice-Chancellor reminded members of the Senate that the purpose of the minutes was to provide an accurate, impartial and balanced internal record of the business transacted at meetings. It was not the practice of the University to record comments verbatim, the aim was to provide a distillation and summary of the views expressed. Mr Horrocks stated that in future only material changes or inaccuracies to minutes would be accepted.

3 MATTERS ARISING

S-2017-02-01

The Senate **noted** the responses to matters arising from the minutes of the meeting of the Senate held on 27 January 2017.

4 REPORT FROM AND QUESTIONS TO THE CHAIR

University successes

- 4.1 The Vice-Chancellor opened his remarks by sharing some recent successes at the University. He congratulated all those involved and drew attention to:
- Awards in two categories at the Guardian University Awards - International Project for TESS-India and Business Partnership for the True Potential Centre for the Public Understanding of Finance (PUFin). The OpenStudio project was also a finalist for the Digital Innovation award.
 - Success for colleagues in the Institute of Educational Technology in Learning and Teaching (Academic) with a bid to the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission for ten Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholarships for citizens of developing Commonwealth countries to study IET's Masters in Online and Distance Education
 - Success for colleagues in the Faculty of Arts and Social Science (FASS) with their Development Policy and Practice (DPP) bid to the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, with the award of five Scholarships, allowing an extension to postgraduate teaching in Uganda.
 - Award of Catalyst Funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) for the Student Safeguarding Training Development project.
 - An initiative to offer free level 1 courses to 150 prisoners a year as part of a three-year pilot scheme supported by a grant of £600,000 from the Garfield Weston Foundation and £300,000 from the Open University Students Educational Trust charity

Regional locations

- 4.2 The Vice-Chancellor paid tribute to those staff in Leeds and Oxford, where the offices would be closing on 27 April 2017, and to staff in Birmingham where the office closed at the end of February 2017. Mr Horrocks thanked them for their service and wished them well for the future.

External context

- 4.3 Mr Horrocks informed the Senate that a number of external developments emphasised the importance of the University delivering on its strategic objectives. Firstly, in its recent preliminary assessment of the University via the Annual Provider Review, HEFCE commented on retention and progression rates, and asked how the University would be seeking to improve them. It was essential therefore that the University could demonstrate to its main regulator that it could deliver significant improvement. Secondly, the Government's decision to delay by one year the introduction of maintenance loans for students studying at a distance has been attributed partly to the University's high rates of non-completion. Mr Horrocks commented that this signalled an increased external awareness of the challenges the University faced in relation to retention and progression and which it committed to address in its Students First strategy.

Academic Strategy

- 4.4 The Vice-Chancellor reminded the Senate that its focus at the meeting was the Academic Strategy which would set the academic direction and priorities of the University for the future. Mr Horrocks emphasised that he believed the strategy would provide students with an even higher quality and more consistent student experience through excellence in learning and teaching and a more focussed approach to curriculum, research and scholarship. He considered it to be a key component of the University's ability to deliver its purpose and create education opportunities and social mobility for all who wish to realise their ambitions and fulfil their potential. He also considered that the strategy would serve as an important guide to the OU Redesign project, making the Redesign process much clearer. Approval from the Senate would endorse its purpose as a key determinant of future academic prioritisation. Mr Horrocks commented that without such approval, the Council would need to consider the recommendations of the Redesign project without guidance from the University's academic body.

Questions and comments

- 4.5 A member drew attention to another successful bid to the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, with the award of ten scholarships for the Environmental Management MSc programme in partnership with the African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS) in Kenya. It was the third time in the last three years that the Environmental Management programme has won this funding from the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission. The Vice-Chancellor offered his congratulations to all involved.
- 4.6 A member drew attention to results from the recent Staff Survey and in particular a decline, since a similar survey last year, in the support for senior management of the University to manage major change initiatives. He asked what actions were being taken to address low morale in the University and whether it was felt that this was due to a lack of confidence in the senior management. The Vice-Chancellor emphasised that the senior management team was clear of the direction in which the University needed to be moving. He urged all colleagues to fully participate in the numerous opportunities offered to express views and engage with initiatives.

5 STRATEGIC PLANNING AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

S-2017-02-02

The Senate **noted** the unconfirmed Minutes and Confidential Minutes from the meeting held on 27 February 2017.

6 ACADEMIC QUALITY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE S-2017-02-03

The Senate **noted** the minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2017.

7 RESEARCH COMMITTEE S-2017-02-04

The Senate **noted** the minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2017.

8 EDUCATION COMMITTEE S-2017-01-05

The Senate **noted** the minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2017.

9 SENATE WORKING GROUP: LOCATIONS S-2017-02-06

9.1 A member commented that she did not consider that the integration of associate lecturers (ALs) into Student Recruitment and Support Centres (SRSC) was proceeding well. She was concerned that systems were operating under pressure and were not sufficiently resourced. She reported that she was aware of colleagues who were stressed as they were not able to complete the volume of their work and she believed operations were close to crisis management. The member asked for the Working Group to receive an update on the funds released from the programme of regional centre closures and whether this funding had been directed to support for students.

9.2 The Director, Academic Services responded that he had received positive feedback on the establishment of SRSCs and offered to attend a future meeting of the Working Group. The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that there would be a post-implementation review of the SRSC Programme and the results would be shared with the Senate.

9.3 The Senate **noted** the report of the meeting held on 8 March 2017.

TEA BREAK

10 ACADEMIC STRATEGY S-2017-02-06

10.1 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Academic Strategy) (PVC-RAS) introduced the Academic Strategy and reminded the Senate that the Strategy articulated how the University would achieve the Students First objective of Academic Excellence in pursuit of the University's mission, and how it would also provide crucial support for the success of the other five Students First objectives. Following the discussion at the January meeting of the Senate and as a result of comprehensive consultation undertaken across the University, Professor Hetherington reported that the Strategy has been substantially revised. It was now presented in a clearer format, with a more positive and aspirational tone, and clarified the Strategy's purpose to benefit students and champion the strengths of the University. Appendix 4 explained the detailed changes made to the draft Strategy since it was previously discussed.

10.2 The vision for the Strategy was outlined against the four 'Open to' elements of the institutional mission, with each of these elements directed towards delivery of the Students First Strategy. Professor Hetherington explained that the Strategy articulated how the academic community would contribute toward achieving the Students First Vision of reaching more students with life-changing learning that met their needs and enriched society. It focused on ways in which the University could build on existing strengths in teaching and learning, research and scholarship and

external engagement and set out the main characteristics of the sustainable academic communities on which Academic Excellence depended.

- 10.3 Professor Hetherington recognised the work so far in engaging with the Academic Strategy from the Senate, the OU Students Association and the Associate Lecturers Executive (ALE). These contributions had been valuable in helping to define the Strategy and clarify its role and meaning for students. He also acknowledged the assistance he had received from the Staff Tutor Liaison Group in relation to the teaching pathway referred to in the Strategy and advice from Associate Deans (Research) from all faculties.
- 10.4 Professor Hetherington explained that the Senate needed to demonstrate leadership during a time of change and challenge for the University. He acknowledged that the Academic Strategy incorporated some challenging aims but Senate's support of it would enable the University to articulate the academic voice in re-design processes emanating from the OU Redesign project. Professor Hetherington affirmed that the Academic Strategy would play a key role in driving forward the University's mission in which he knew colleagues strongly believed and was central to their roles.
- 10.5 The Vice-Chancellor reflected that as the Academic Strategy was such an important item to discuss, he intended to structure contributions to ensure that all constituents of the membership of the Senate were able to contribute. He invited the Senate members on the Council and to express their views firstly.
- 10.6 A Senate member of the Council considered that the revised Academic Strategy presented to the meeting was much stronger and clearer than previous versions. She acknowledged the extensive work undertaken to incorporate views expressed at the meeting of the Senate in January 2017 and urged members to support the Strategy. She expressed her concern that if the Strategy was not approved by the Senate, there would be a clear void as the University progressed with proposals from the OU Redesign project.
- 10.7 Another Senate member of the Council hoped that the Senate would approve the Academic Strategy. He expressed his support for the opinions recorded in the minutes of the recent meeting of the Research Committee (S-2017-02-04, minute 9.5) on the need for a stronger statement on research in the 'open to ideas' section of the Strategy to affirm the continued importance of research to the University.
- 10.8 A representative of Associate Lecturers (ALs) on the Council welcomed the aspirations of the Academic Strategy to increase the integration of ALs into Schools and Faculties. She was however disappointed that there were few references to this integration in Appendix 1 which set out plans for implementation. She emphasised that proposals for increasing engagement of ALs required additional resources and she was concerned that this was not specified sufficiently clearly in Appendix 1.
- 10.9 The Acting President, OU Students Association welcomed the desire to involve students in academic communities of the University and also emphasised the requirement for this to be adequately resourced. Another representative of the OU Students Association welcomed the revisions made to the Academic Strategy and believed it was significantly improved since the previous version. She was concerned however that the proposal for the University to move to be being "Digital by Design" as referenced in the pre-Senate workshop on the OU Redesign project could be misinterpreted.

- 10.10 The PVC-RAS commented that the Academic Strategy was now more strategically focussed around research and concentrated on how the University could use its resources to best advantage. He emphasised that the University and its students benefited from research and that the Academic Strategy would provide a sense of priority to fully engage with ALs and students. He drew attention to an ongoing commitment to research through the establishment of the Graduate School and explained that the University would continue to develop strategic initiatives to support research. In response to the reference to “Digital by Design” Professor Hetherington commented that the University aimed to use the optimum pedagogy to help students learn and further work would be undertaken on using digital media to achieve this.
- 10.11 The Vice-Chancellor invited the Vice-Chair of the Council and a member of the Strategic Planning and Resources Committee to comment on the Academic Strategy. Professor Stevely thanked the Senate for the opportunity to attend the meeting. He congratulated the team that had produced the Strategy and was confident that solutions to the challenges facing the University would be developed by its talented academic staff. The Council would support the Senate in enabling those solutions to materialise.
- 10.12 The Director, OU in Wales, commended the process of consultation and engagement in the development of the Academic Strategy. He believed it would help the University to optimise its performance in a harsh external environment. He supported the strength of the external engagement theme running through the Strategy and believed this would help the University to become more outward looking. He considered the Strategy captured the opportunities offered by the Four Nations as significant points of strength. He urged the Senate to approve the Strategy as it was essential it was in place for the future.
- 10.13 The Executive Dean, Faculty of Science, Technology and Mathematics (STEM) expressed her support for the Strategy and the opportunities for a strategic focus to research activities.
- 10.14 A member of the Senate expressed his support for the revisions that had been made to the Strategy but wished to see a further change to Aim 4, and requested that the second “and” in the aim should read “and/or”.
- 10.15 A Senate member of the Council commented that he felt uncomfortable with the structuring of the debate with the speakers repeatedly persuading the Senate to be favour of the Strategy. However he expressed his support for the Academic Strategy and emphasised that it was essential to provide the clear direction the Council required in the light of the OU Resign project. He added that he was rather disappointed not to see any references to “social justice” in the Strategy and remarked that it appeared to have been replaced by references to “social mobility”. He considered “social mobility” was a reflection of the current political climate and he felt that the University in its mission addressed much more than that and regretted that the broader concept of “social justice” was not included.
- 10.16 Another member acknowledged the revisions made to the Academic Strategy but was concerned over some of the detail provided in the appendices. He drew attention to a reference in Appendix 1 to the Human Resources Director being assigned responsibility for the development of academic career pathways framework and revision of promotion criteria. He considered that the Academic Staff Promotions Committee on behalf of the Senate should retain oversight of such areas.

- 10.17 In responding to the points raised, the PVC-RAS assured the Senate that a holistic approach had been taken to the importance of external engagement and it reflected a wide range of different opportunities. In response to the specific point relating to the wording of Aim 4, he confirmed that wording would remain as “.....sustainable curriculum and where it is (or expected to become) substantially internationally excellent”. Professor Hetherington recognised that some areas may require development but it was essential that research supported the needs of students. Staffing strategies were the responsibility of the Council with academic promotion being the responsibility of the Senate via the Academic Staff Promotions Committee. He hoped the new pathways would help more staff to achieve promotion and result in the University having the right balance of successful staff having been provided with equal opportunities to succeed.
- 10.18 The Executive Dean, Faculty of Business and Law (FBL) commented that the revision of the Academic Strategy was an excellent example of a team being responsive to comments and producing a much more enabling Strategy. She reported that the FBL was already working towards the aims of the Strategy by encouraging teaching career pathways for academic staff and offering sabbatical programmes to support research aims. Strong links had been established between research and curriculum in new centres such as the True Potential Centre for the Public Understanding of Finance and the Centre for Policing Research and Learning and Professor Taylor reported significant reputational benefits for the University through these initiatives.
- 10.19 A member observed that one of the “Big Shifts” (number 8) identified in the OU Redesign workshop reflected Aim 4 of the Academic Strategy, yet it had been identified as low priority in terms of achieving financial sustainability for the University and maximising student success. He felt this ranking did not correlate with the intentions of the Academic Strategy.
- 10.20 Another member stated that he did not share the enthusiasm for the Academic Strategy expressed thus far. He acknowledged the revisions made since January had improved the Strategy but he still considered that it missed an opportunity to create a platform for academic excellence at the University. In particular, he did not consider that Aims 3, 4 and 5 were sufficiently clear and gave no commitment to subject or discipline based research. He supported the views of the Research Committee and the suggested rewording (S-2017-02-04, minute 9.5) and he considered there to be a reluctance in the Strategy to acknowledge that subject-based research was a key element of the overall student experience. The member also commented that he considered too much emphasis had been given in the Strategy to teaching careers and pathways. He was also concerned that the University’s senior management team would have responsibility for implementing the Strategy and thus defining the University’s curriculum strategy. He considered this to be an unacceptable position and feared the decisions taken could have serious implications for the future of research at the University. The member was concerned that colleagues felt they needed to support the Strategy in the light of the OU Redesign project and that this might ultimately result in decommissioning from research at the University.
- 10.21 The PVC-RAS disagreed with that view and said he believed very strongly that the Academic Strategy presented an opportunity for the Senate to guide future work in the OU Redesign process. The Academic Strategy gave a commitment to sustain a broad research base aligned to the curriculum. Professor Hetherington commented that he wanted research to be of increased benefit to students and also achieve success in future Research Excellence Frameworks (REF).

- 10.22 The Executive Dean, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) expressed the view that the University needed an Academic Strategy. The environment in which the University operated was changing and the as a result the University needed to evolve to respond. He understood colleagues' concerns, but he saw the strengths as the development of teaching as a career, the establishment of strong academic communities and the opportunity to integrate ALs and students into these communities. He believed the Strategy provided the University with a framework for a broad base for research and he would be supporting the Strategy as presented.
- 10.23 Another member supported this view and acknowledged that the Strategy might mean difficult decisions for some academics, but as both the internal and external environments facing the University were changing, the University needed to respond. She considered the Strategy now presented a very positive approach emphasising openness, flexibility and adaptability which was empowering for Faculties and Schools. Referring to a previous point, she considered that decision making would be shared between the PVC-RAS and Executive Deans and this ensured an academic view point was heard within the Vice-Chancellor's Executive (VCE). She urged colleagues to trust that academic voice and support the Academic Strategy.
- 10.24 Another member expressed her support for the focus in the Academic Strategy on external engagement. She emphasised that her own faculty, WELS, had been pioneering such engagement in their work for some time and she envisaged a significant opportunity for the University in this engagement activity. Another member supported the Strategy but expressed concern that responsibility for a number of proposed measures of success in Appendix 2 still required assignment to owners or leads.
- 10.25 Another member expressed her support for the Strategy and thanked the authors for much greater clarity following the revisions. She endorsed the recognition of the importance of scholarship in enhancing teaching and learning and therefore student outcomes. Another member endorsed the opportunities the Strategy offered for increasing access and widening the University's reach.
- 10.26 Referring to the vision of the Strategy as being open, a member commented that the emphasis on the curriculum being designed for digital would affect how students learn and absorbed information and ultimately succeeded in their studies. She felt the full effect had not been sufficiently evaluated in the Equality Analysis in Appendix 3 and changes in design would impact upon many students not just those with disabilities. She requested that further work be carried out and the PVC-RAS offered to examine this aspect to ensure it was fully articulated.
- 10.27 Another member explained that he had submitted questions in advance but wanted to emphasise that academics wished to carry out research and he felt the Strategy needed to contain more positive statements on the value of research. He asked why the Academic Strategy did not refer to the University's vision to lead the part-time education market in the UK and internationally. He also enquired, if some current academic activity was redirected and/or reduced, what the impact would be on the academic community. The member also pointed out that it was estimated that approximately 30% of academic time was given to administration and management. This was not referred to in the Strategy and he enquired how such activity should be viewed within the Strategy and whether it should be minimised. He also expressed concern over the reliability of data relating to this percentage and whether risks to academic excellence were exposed by inaccuracies in the accounting systems for apportioning academic time to the various categories of activity. The PVC-RAS

responded that these matters would be examined during implementation of the Strategy. In response to another question submitted by email, the PVC-RAS explained that the Academic Strategy would provide a framework to assist Faculties in their decision making over curriculum and research.

- 10.28 In reflecting upon the discussion, Professor Hetherington assured the Senate that if the Strategy was approved, the Implementation Project Team would work collaboratively with Faculties and other University business areas, AL and student representatives to scope and prioritise implementation activities. Regular update reports would be made to the Senate. Professor Hetherington commended the Academic Strategy to the Senate. He believed it was essential that the academic voice was clearly heard in the Students First Vision of reaching more students with life-changing learning. He urged the Senate to support the Strategy in the spirit of what the University wished to achieve for its students.
- 10.29 Following a vote, the Senate **approved** the Academic Strategy with 68 votes in favour, 11 against and 9 abstentions.

11 ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE REPORT

S-2017-02-08

- 11.1 A member drew attention to a possible error in the presentation of the data for Key Question 1 (b) in Appendix 1. A representative of ALs commented that she wished to see ALs included in the Academic Staff Career Stage Profile chart (Appendix 1, page 11). Another member wished to see the information in that particular chart analysed by gender. The PVC-RAS agreed to look into the points raised.

Action: PVC-RAS

- 11.2 Another member drew attention to Question 6 referring to the performance of Student Support Teams and noted that the percentage of requests closed in two days was still below target. He commented that students had still not been informed that Student Recruitment and Support Centres (SRSCs) were open until 8pm and suggested that this was because colleagues were using the additional time to clear the backlog of requests. He emphasised that students needed to be made aware of the extended hours and enquired when this information would be made widely available. The Acting Director, Student Support informed the Senate that the extended opening hours would be publicised by the end of May following clarification of the position in respect of students in the Nations.

- 11.3 A representative of the OU Students Association enquired whether any further information was available on the length of time calls remained unanswered over two working days. The Vice-Chancellor noted the Senate's concern over response times to students' enquiries and suggested that a more detailed examination of this area be included in a future report.

Action: PVC-RAS

- 11.4 The Senate **noted** the Academic Performance Report.

12 GROUP TUITION

S-2017-02-09

- 12.1 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching Innovation) (PVC-LTI) introduced the report and explained that it provided an update on the latest arrangements for Group Tuition. Professor Rymer drew specific attention to the positions in respect of timelines for 17J presentations, the review of the management of staff appointments and redundancy for 17J and ongoing work with the Online Rooms Project team. Professor Rymer also explained that paragraph 34 had been drafted inaccurately and that there were no planned changes to the staff tutor role. The paragraph should

have clarified that work was ongoing to avoid duplication and overlap in roles between staff tutors, cluster managers and ALs that had occurred during the 16J presentations.

- 12.2 A representative of the OU Students Association asked what level of confidence the PVC-LTI had that the University would be able to deliver tuition for the 17J presentations satisfactorily compared to the experiences of the 16J presentations. Another student representative enquired what support would be offered to students to help them become familiar with the new online room system. Professor Rymer confirmed that she was very confident in the delivery of tuition for 17J presentations. She explained that ALs were currently being trained on the facilities and pedagogy of the Online Rooms system and support materials were being written for students.
- 12.3 A representative of ALs commented that confidence in the delivery of arrangements for 17J presentations would be increased if Senate had access to the risk register for the project. He enquired when the report of the Business Performance Improvement (BPI) office on the Group Tuition Policy (GTP) would be published, and also whether there was a publication date for the report by KPMG. He considered the Group Tuition Policy to now be a toxic brand for the University and felt that a line should be drawn under its implementation and further effort should not be expended on reviving it. He urged the University to reflect upon restoring the bond between a student and their tutor which he considered to be severely damaged as a result of the policy.
- 12.4 The Chair, Associate Lecturers' Executive, expressed her disappointment over the reference in paragraph 6 that timelines had been agreed as she understood ALs were being given an opportunity to input ahead of finalisation. She was also concerned that there was a risk of an internal market being created in respect of AL availability following the classification of modules as referred to in paragraph 10. She was also concerned that employment opportunities for ALs may be affected if they were not able to confirm availability at specific points in advance of presentations.
- 12.5 A member referred to paragraphs 32 and 33 relating to the risks of not having full staffing in place within the AL Services team and enquired whether the teams were fully resourced now. The Director, Academic Services reported that recruitment was underway and there were still some current vacancies. If there was a shortfall, resources would be transferred to support the Team.
- 12.6 Another member commented that the purpose of the Group Tuition Policy was to improve the student experience. The progress report provided detail on implementation and processes which was helpful but she believed that the Senate should not lose sight of the principles of the Policy. She emphasised that work needed to be focussed on the pedagogy and quality of group tuition, and not simply focus on small parts of it. Another member considered that more attention should be paid to the phrasing of reports to Senate to avoid potentially alienating groups of staff who were working hard to make improvements for students. She believed that paragraph 34 caused considerable alarm amongst staff tutor colleagues and paragraph 6 needed to refer to many other groups of staff who had contributed to the delivery of presentations after 16J.
- 12.7 The PVC-LTI acknowledged that detailed reports of process were brought to the Senate but she felt this was necessary to provide confidence in the ongoing work to improve tutorial delivery. Professor Rymer emphasised that work was underway examining cluster patterns and module groups to strengthen relationships between tutors and their students. She explained that following approval of the Academic

Strategy work would commence on a strategy for Learning and Teaching for the University.

- 12.8 A representative of ALs commented that Faculties had consulted some ALs in the devising of their tuition strategies for modules and she hoped this proved helpful. However she felt this consultation needed to be carried out more extensively to ensure a wide range of views were obtained. The Executive Dean, FBL, assured the Senate that Faculties had taken this consultation very seriously and by means of an example, the FBL had contacted 600 ALs for their views.

- 12.9 The Senate **noted** the report.

13 CODE OF PRACTICE FOR STUDENT DISCIPLINE S-2017-02-10

- 13.1 A representative of the OU Students' Association reported that the Association had identified a number of points of detail in relation to the Code which required clarification. It was suggested that these be submitted to the authors for consideration after the meeting.

Action: OU Students Association

- 13.2 The Senate:

- (a) **approved** the Code of Practice for Student Discipline subject to consideration of points of detail as reported in minute 13.1.
- (b) **agreed** that Chair's Action would be taken on any amendments subsequently made to the Code following consideration of the points identified.

14 THE COUNCIL S-2017-02-11

The Senate **noted** the report of meeting held on 7 March 2017.

15 ACTION BY THE CHAIR S-2017-02-12

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

16 FUTURE ITEMS OF BUSINESS S-2017-02-13

The Senate **noted** the list of provisional items for the agenda for the meeting of the Senate on 7 June 2017.

17 FINAL REFLECTIONS

- 17.1 At the invitation of the Vice-Chancellor, the Pro-Chancellor and Chair of the Council, addressed the Senate.

- 17.2 Mr Gillingwater thanked the Senate for the invitation to observe and participate in one of its meetings. It was the first time members of the Council had observed the Senate and he was very pleased that this interaction had been initiated. Mr Gillingwater acknowledged the thoughtfulness and rigour of the discussions on the Academic Strategy and Group Tuition Policy and confirmed that those views would be extremely helpful in informing the Council in its own deliberations in future.

18 DECLASSIFICATION OF PAPERS

Post meeting clarification:

S-2017-02-02B: SPRC Confidential Minutes To remain confidential

19 DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

Meetings would be held on the following dates:

Wednesday 7 June 2017
Wednesday 18 October 2017
Wednesday 24 January 2018
Wednesday 18 April 2018
Wednesday 20 June 2018

Jonathan Wylie
Acting University Secretary

Sue Thomas
Working Secretary to the Committee