

THE SENATE

Minutes

This paper presents the confirmed Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Senate held on Thursday 16 July 2015 at The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes.

The Senate **approved** these Minutes as a correct record of the meeting on Wednesday 14 October 2015, subject to the correction of Minute 1.13 (S-2015-05-M Minute 1).

Fraser Woodburn
University Secretary

Sue Thomas
Working Secretary to the Senate
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Faculty of Social Sciences

Dr Troy Cooper

Mr Matt Staples

Institute of Educational Technology

Dr Anne Adams

Mr Chris Edwards

3) Associate Lecturers

Dr Tricia French (alternate)

Mrs Frances Chetwynd

Mr Bruce Heil

Dr Walter Pisarski

Ms Janet Dyke

Dr Clare Spencer

4) Students Appointed by Open University Students Association

Miss Ruth Tudor

Mr Jeferson de Oliveira

Mr Josh Brumpton

Mr John Murphy

Ms Alison Kingan

Mr David Humble

5) Academic-related Staff

Dr Donna Smith

Mr Michael Street

Mr Jake Yeo

Dr Christina Lloyd

Ms Clare Riding

Mrs Joanne Smythe

Mr Phil Berry

Mr Simon Horrocks

Dr Victoria Crowe

Miss Barbara Poniatowska

Mr Mike Innes

Mrs Gill Smith

6) Co-opted members

Mr John D'Arcy

Dr David Knight

Mr Rob Humphreys

In attendance

Mr Fraser Woodburn, University Secretary

Mrs Dawn Turpin, Head of Governance

Ms Sue Thomas, Senior Manager, Governance

Miss Teresa Coyle, Manager, Governance

Observing

Mr Lucian Hudson, Director of Communications

Ms Susan Jackson, Internal Communications Manager

Ms Kathryn Baldwin, Vice-Chancellor's Business Manager

In attendance

Mr Andrew Law

APOLOGIES:

1) Ex officio

Professor Musa Mihsein, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
Mr Jeremy Roche, Dean, Faculty of Health and Social Care
Mrs Nicky Whitsed, Director, Library Services

Appointed

2) Central Academic Units

Faculty of Arts

Dr Cristina Chimisso
Dr Ole Grell

Dr Naoko Yamagata
Dr Lynda Prescott

Faculty of Business and Law

Miss Carol Howells
Mr Mike Phillips

Ms Carmel McMahon

Faculty of Education and Language Studies

Dr Uwe Baumann
Mrs Annie Eardley

Professor Regine Hampel
Mr Pete Smith

Faculty of Health and Social Care

Mrs Sue Cole

Professor Jan Draper

Faculty of Mathematics, Computing and Technology

Dr Shirley Northover

Dr Rachel Hilliam

Faculty of Science

Professor Hilary MacQueen

Faculty of Social Sciences

Dr Jacqueline Baxter
Dr Anastasia Economou
Dr Catriona Havard

Dr Helen Kaye
Dr Deborah Drake

Institute of Educational Technology

Professor Eileen Scanlon

Other Central Units

Dr Liz Marr

3) Associate Lecturers

Mr Stephen Pattinson

5) Academic-related Staff

Ms Pat Atkins

Mr Billy Khokhar

6) Co-opted members

Professor Peter Scott
Dr James Miller

Mr Christopher Goscomb

1 FACULTY CONFIGURATION**S-2015-04-01**

- 1.1 The Vice-Chancellor welcomed members to the Special Meeting of the Senate. He thanked members for the constructive comments expressed at the last meeting on his proposals for changes to the academic structure of the University which had been very valuable in the development of the next stage of this work.
- 1.2 In introducing the proposals on the future configuration of Faculties in the University, Mr Horrocks explained that the paper before the Senate reflected feedback received during consultation with Faculties. The preferred option for consideration by the Senate consisted of four Faculties configured thus:
- a) A Faculty consisting of Science and Mathematics, Computing and Technology (MCT), headed by an Executive Dean.
 - b) A Faculty consisting of Faculty of Education and Language Studies (FELS) and Health and Social Care (HSC), headed by an Executive Dean.
 - c) A Faculty consisting of Arts and Social Science, headed by an Executive Dean.
 - d) A Faculty consisting of the School of Business and the School of Law, headed by a Dean.
- 1.3 Mr Horrocks explained that if the proposed configuration was approved further detailed work would start on the substructures within the new Faculties. Any proposals for changes to structures or departments which required approval by the Senate would be presented to the meeting in April 2016. Work was also commencing on developing greater agility and responsiveness to students' needs building on the *Curriculum Fit for the Future* strategy that was approved by the Senate in January 2015. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Academic Strategy) would be consulting on this during the autumn.
- 1.4 The Deans of Faculties described the consultations they carried out within their Faculties on the proposals for Faculty configurations which informed the responses submitted (Appendix 2 of S-2015-04-01).
- 1.5 The Vice-Chancellor invited comments from members of the Senate.
- 1.6 The President, OUSA expressed her support for changes to the academic structure of the University and commented that option C1: 3 Faculties had been OUSA's preferred option. She was concerned however as to the position of OUSA within the proposed new structure.
- 1.7 An Associate Lecturer (AL) member welcomed the reference in paragraph 14(c) of the paper to not marginalising the effectiveness of ALs and Student Support Teams (SSTs) in the new configuration. He was, aware however, that many ALs did not feel sufficiently integrated into SSTs and they feared that the new configuration would increase their marginalisation. He urged the University to integrate ALs further so it could benefit from their skills particularly across wide curriculum areas.
- 1.8 The Vice-Chancellor reaffirmed that his proposals signalled a clear intent to involve students and ALs in shaping the University. He hoped that current students could play a key role in developing curriculum for future students. The Director, Students commented that the restructuring of Faculties provided an opportunity to reconsider how OUSA was represented within Faculties and the University as a whole. The Student Engagement Project was exploring a number of areas and proposals would come forward for consideration early next year. Mr Zimmerman assured the Senate that the integration of ALs within SSTs was continuing work. It was also intended that the current negotiations

over a new contract for ALs would cover a wide range of employment issues for ALs and Faculties were being consulted on these.

- 1.9 A Senate member indicated that he believed certain disciplines within MCT would align well with the Faculty of Social Sciences and provide better visibility for students. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Academic Strategy) Designate commented that work would begin on examining future curriculum offers to support the work on configuring Faculties. It would be important for these two reviews to run concurrently and a consultation process would be established in the autumn with a view to presenting proposals for curriculum in April 2016. The intention would be to extend cross-disciplinarity to benefit both students and research activity.
- 1.10 A member expressed her support for the proposed configuration and particularly the proposed devolution to faculties. She also drew attention to the opinions expressed in the consultations over the significance of the triple external accreditation of the Faculty of Business and Law (FBL) and sought clarification over the proposed reporting line for the Dean of the FBL. She was concerned that an imbalance was being created which could have an adverse effect on cross-curriculum work. The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that the three Executive Deans and Dean, FBL would report directly to him and this was an entirely consistent approach.
- 1.11 A member drew attention to the stated purpose of the structural changes as increasing the academic voice within the University. He felt, however that appointing three Executive Deans to the Vice-Chancellor's Executive (VCE) would not achieve this aim as the Executive Deans would be managing large, new Faculties and would be remote from academic staff. He agreed there could be opportunities from restructuring within the University, but he did not consider that the proposed reconfiguration was necessary. The Vice-Chancellor assured the Senate that the Executive Deans would have a responsibility to ensure remoteness did not occur.
- 1.12 The Dean, MCT commented that the newly configured Faculties would take time to develop. The Acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Academic Strategy) commented that in his experience Pro-Vice-Chancellors demonstrated very strong academic backgrounds, maintaining their research records and he expected Executive Deans to be the same.
- 1.13 Another member expressed her support for the proposed configuration and the concept of Students First. Reflecting on the supplementary analysis which presented data on Q qualification students only, she urged the University as it implemented the changes to focus on all students and not to forget those students still studying on old qualifications frameworks.
- 1.14 Another member welcomed the proposed configuration. He felt the University faced a crisis as many staff were frustrated they were unable to pursue exciting projects and ideas and this led to a culture of blame amongst staff. He felt the configuration into bigger academic units with more independence was a very important first step in improving this situation but he believed the next stages of the implementation would be equally vital.
- 1.15 A member expressed his support for the proposals but queried how the proposals fitted into the new academic governance structures agreed at the last meeting of the Senate. He queried whether there would need to be changes to the new structures in the light of the creation of the Executive Dean role. In response, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Innovation) explained that work would commence shortly with Executive Deans to look at new structures where appropriate and would be reported back to the Senate in due course.

- 1.16 The Vice-Chancellor, in response to a question, confirmed that the staffing numbers presented in slide 4 of the appendix to the paper did not include associate lecturers. This was because it was not always straightforward to allocate them to individual faculties. He hoped that the next stage of the configuration work would be of benefit to ALs. Mr Horrocks also emphasised that the reorganisation of VCE was just a small part of the wider proposals for change for the University. He had been very encouraged by the responses to the proposals and the speed in which they had been produced and he felt this was a very positive sign for the future.
- 1.17 A representative of OUSA enquired whether the appointment process for Executive Deans would be an internal process and be presented to the Senate for approval. It was confirmed that the interim appointments to Executive Dean posts would be overseen by the Vice-Chancellor and Acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Academic Strategy) and that the process for making the substantive appointments would come before the Senate in April 2016.
- 1.18 A member supported the proposals and hoped they would also present an opportunity to address anomalies of location of some academic colleagues. He requested that departments be asked where they felt they were best placed in the University. He also drew attention to the fears of colleagues, particularly those working in Deaneries, over the future of their roles. The Vice-Chancellor agreed that there were many different perspectives across the University and since arriving he had learned so much about academic identity. He acknowledged anxieties over the changes as Faculties were re-organised but the changes were a response to a number of issues that the University had to address to become more cost effective and efficient.
- 1.19 A representative of OUSA welcomed the proposals and hoped that as a result cross faculty collaboration would become much easier. Mr Horrocks explained that the intention was for Faculty budgets to be simplified to encourage the development of cross faculty curriculum.
- 1.20 An Associate Lecturer member supported the proposed changes but commented that very little reference was included in the paper to the substructures that would exist within the three Faculties. He asked whether there would be principles agreed for the creation of substructures or whether the Faculties would adopt their own ideas. He felt the existence of some general principles might help to provide assurance to staff. The University Secretary agreed that the creation of the three Faculties was a substantial task. A project team would be established to oversee this and there would be a set of principles to guide the work. These principles would be based on the premise that processes in Faculties would be the same unless there was a good reason to differ.
- 1.21 Referring to a previous point regarding attributing Associate Lecturers to individual faculties, a member commented that many ALs worked across different Faculties. They were usually attributed to one Faculty through a staff tutor who line managed them. The Vice-Chancellor commented that this was very helpful information but the fact there was so much uncertainty over AL data illustrated a point made earlier about the need to improve the integration of ALs.
- 1.22 A member requested, in the absence of the Dean, Faculty of Health and Social Care (FHSC), whether information could be provided on the views of staff in FHSC on the proposed configuration with the Faculty of Education and Language Studies (FELS). A member from FHSC commented that academic staff viewed themselves aligned to disciplines within the Faculty of Social Sciences, but others in the Faculty believed that as both Faculties delivered professional education an alignment to FELS was appropriate. Both these views were reported in the response provided in the paper before the Senate. The Dean, FELS, commented that both FELS and FHSC were very diverse Faculties. She

had discussed the position with the Dean, FHSC and further deliberation had taken place within FHSC since the response had been submitted. This had resulted in a greater acknowledgement of the benefits of merging with FELS. The Vice-Chancellor welcomed the dialogue that had taken place over these issues and the importance of balancing academic identities with the best options for the University and its students. An associate lecturer representative commented that as an AL on courses in FHSC, he was aware of students who experienced difficulties with English. He strongly supported the benefits of FELs and FHSC working together to develop curriculum to address issues such as this.

- 1.23 Another member acknowledged the significant amount of work that had gone into the proposals for configuring Faculties so far, and the work that was still required to implement the changes. She enquired whether any current University projects, for example the Locations Analysis would have to be stopped to allow capacity for the work. The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that such projects would proceed.
- 1.24 The Vice-Chancellor thanked members of the Senate for their very constructive views and comments.
- 1.25 Following a vote, the Senate **approved** the proposals for the future configuration of Faculties in the University by an overwhelming majority, with one vote against and two abstentions recorded.

2 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

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

Wednesday 14 October 2015
Wednesday 27 January 2016
Wednesday 13 April 2016 (tbc)
Wednesday 08 June 2016

Fraser Woodburn
University Secretary

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