THE SENATE

Minutes

This paper presents the confirmed Minutes of the last meeting of the Senate held on Wednesday 16 October 2019 at The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes.

The Senate **approved** these Minutes at it's meeting on Wednesday 22 January 2020.

Jonathan Nicholls
University Secretary

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THE SENATE

Minutes of the meeting of the Senate held on Wednesday 16 October 2019
in the Hub Theatre, The Open University, Walton Hall

PRESENT:

1) Ex officio

Professor Tim Blackman	Vice-Chancellor
Professor Josie Fraser	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Acting)
Professor Kevin Hetherington	Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research, Enterprise and Scholarship)
Professor Ian Fribbance	Executive Dean, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Professor Devendra Kodwani	Executive Dean, Faculty of Business and Law
Professor Nicholas Braithwaite	Executive Dean, Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (Acting)
Professor Fary Cachelin	Executive Dean, Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies
Professor Denise Whitelock	Director of the Institute of Educational Technology
Professor Eileen Scanlon	(LTI Director, Research) (Co-Acting)
Ms Ann Davies	Director of Library Services (Interim)

Appointed

2) Central Academic Units

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS)

Dr William Brown	Dr Elaine Moohan
Mr Matt Staples	Professor John Wolffe
Dr Karen Hagan	Professor Nicola Watson (remote)
Dr Alison Penn	Dr Richard Heffernan (remote)
Professor David Johnson	Dr Deborah Drake

Faculty of Business & Law (FBL)

Miss Carol Howells	Dr Kristen Reid
Dr Caroline Clarke (remote)	

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

Dr John Baxter	Dr James Hague
Dr Janet Haresnape	Mrs Diane Butler (remote)
Dr Magnus Ramage	Dr Rachael Luck
Dr Ann Walshe	Dr Leonor Barroca
Dr Robert Brignall	Dr Hayley Ryder
Dr Toby O'Neil	Dr Mark Slaymaker
Dr Stephen Burnley	Dr Jon Hall

Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies (WELS)

Mrs Anna Comas-Quinn	Dr Aravinda Guntupalli
Dr Jackie Watts	Dr Verina Waights
Ms Tyrrell Golding	Mr Jeremy Wilcock (remote)
Dr Elodie Vialleton (remote	Ms Susan Kotschi (remote)
Mr Andy Rixon (remote)	Professor Jan Draper

Learning and Teaching Innovation (LTI) (Academic)

Mr Chris Edwards	Professor Eileen Scanlon

3) Associate Lecturers

Dr Walter Pisarski (alternate)	Dr Sylvie Serpell
Mr Jim Gillen	Mr Rob Parker
Mr Tim Parry	Mrs Frances Chetwynd
Dr Catherine Halliwell	

4) Students Appointed by Open University Students Association

Ms Cath Brown	Mrs Stephanie Stubbins
Ms Cinnomen McGuigan	Dr Sandra Summers (alternate)
Ms Alison Kingan	Dr Barbara Tarling

5) Academic-related Staff

Mr Derek Sheills	Mr Toby Scott-Hughes
Mrs Rukhsana Malik	Ms Elaine Walker
Mr Billy Khokhar (remote)	Mrs Maria Crisu
Mrs Gemma Maldar (remote)	Mrs Selena Killick
Ms Julia Barkans	Mrs Tracy Lawson
Dr Caitlin Adams	Mrs Kate Signorini

6) Co-opted members

Mr Phil Berry	Mr John D'Arcy
Ms Susan Stewart	Dr David Knight
Mrs Louise Casella	Mrs Claire Baines

In attendance

Mr Jonathan Nicholls, University Secretary
Mr Jake Yeo, Acting Deputy University Secretary
Dr Laura Lauer, Head of Governance
Ms Sue Thomas, Senior Manager, Governance

Observing

Mr Nicholas Barratt, Director, LDS
Mrs Lisa Harris, Head of Academic Strategy
Mrs Dagmara Rochowski, Head of Strategic Planning
Mr David Knowles, AL member of VC Appointment Panel
Ms Philippa Costello, Graduate Programme (part of induction)
Mr Adam Gledhill, Strategy Office (for Minute 10)
Hannah St Leger Harris, Strategy Office (for Minute 10)

APOLOGIES:

1) Ex officio

Dr Liz Marr, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Students)

Appointed

2) Central Academic Units

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS)

Dr Jovan Byford	Dr Sarah Crafter

Faculty of Business & Law (FBL)

Mr Mike Phillips

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

Dr Helen Fraser   Professor Simon Green
Dr Karen Olsson-Francis   Professor David Rothery

Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies (WELS)

Dr Kristina Hultgren

3) Associate Lecturers

Dr Linda Walker

4) Students Appointed by Open University Students Association

Mr Rory Powell

6) Co-opted members

Mr Christopher Turner

1   WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

1.1   The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Tim Blackman, welcomed members to the meeting and expressed his delight at being appointed as Vice-Chancellor of the University. He thanked those members who were completing their terms of office for their contributions and service to the Senate and wished them well in their future endeavours.

1.2   The Vice-Chancellor informed the Senate that following an innovative suggestion from a Senate member at the Climate Forum held at the University the previous day, the Secretariat were experimenting with projecting the meetings' papers on to a screen. He urged members to consider their requirements for hard copies of papers and hoped that this experiment would be helpful and initiate a more sustainable approach.

2   MINUTES   S-2019-03-M

The following comments on the minutes from the 26 June 2019 meeting were received:

Minute 5.1: Minute 2: Matters Arising
2.1   In a discussion about the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Students) recent communication on recording/non-recording of tutorials, the point was made that in some modules only one tutorial was offered at a given time; and even when more than one tutorial was available, they did not necessarily cover the same material.

Minute 7.1: Education Committee
2.2   The Deputy Vice-Chancellor agreed to provide to the Senate information on the costs and benefits of changing the referencing policy.
                                                                                   Action: Deputy Vice-Chancellor

The following correction was requested:

Minute 9.6: Institutional Performance Report
2.3   The minute would be amended to reflect that the decrease in the gender pay gap from 14.9% in 2017 to 3.3% in 2018 was due to differences in data collection and analysis and not as stated in the minute.

2.4   The Senate **approved** the minutes of the meeting of the Senate held on 26 June 2019 subject to an amendment to minute 9.6.

3   MATTERS ARISING   S-2019-04-01

The Senate **noted** the response to the matter arising from the minutes of the meeting of the Senate held on 26 June 2019.

4   REPORT FROM AND QUESTIONS TO THE CHAIR

Report from the Vice-Chancellor

4.1   Professor Tim Blackman welcomed members to his first meeting as Vice-Chancellor and Chair of the Senate. He thanked his predecessor, Professor Mary Kellett, for fostering an atmosphere of openness and trust that he felt fortunate to inherit and upon which he intended to build. He reflected on the responsibilities of the Senate in relation to the academic work of the University and expressed his gratitude for the time and expertise that members of the Senate and its subcommittees devoted to their roles.

4.2   Professor Blackman also considered the importance of the University's role in advancing not only academic work such as teaching and research as stated in its Charter, but also

how it operated and how more students could succeed in their aims. He emphasised his commitment to the University being a movement for positive change in the world in different spheres such as removing barriers to learning or ending plastics pollution. The agenda was therefore for planned growth as that provided the means and credibility to make a difference in society. This could be challenging and as an example attention was drawn to the statement members of the Senate had received from the PVC (Students) regarding issues with the provision of study materials in alternative formats. The Vice-Chancellor assured the Senate that work was continuing in order to resolve the issues.

4.3   Turning to senior appointments, the University had welcomed Dr Claire Baines as Director of Academic Services and Ms Caragh Molloy as Group People Director. Mr Paul Traynor would join as Chief Financial Officer in November 2019. Applications for the role of University Secretary had closed and the next stage of the recruitment process would commence shortly.

4.4   Reflecting on external developments, the Vice-Chancellor reported that the Government and External Affairs Team were continuing their lobbying work, attending the Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat conferences. The Team had recently co-ordinated the University's response to the Government Consultation on Higher and Technical education in England. The Vice-Chancellor had met the recently re-appointed Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation, Mr Chris Skidmore who urged the University to strengthen its economic arguments for the benefits of part-time study. Professor Blackman also emphasised the importance of improving student outcomes but also persuading governments and regulators that student success can also relate to credit attained and not always a qualification.

4.5   Reporting on news from the nations, in Ireland, the Department for the Economy had confirmed there would be no reduction in the University's grant allocation for 2019/20. In Wales, the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCW) had announced plans to reinstate innovation and engagement funding which would allow the University to develop further its research, outreach and public engagement activities. In Scotland, the University hosted the very successful 9th Pan Commonwealth Forum at Murrayfield Stadium, with over 500 delegates from 61 countries.

4.6   As part of the University's 50th celebrations, the University's research was being showcased during October 2019. This included an exhibition in the Digital Archive and a specific focus on the University's PhD students and their work. Professor Blackman also reported on two projects which had been shortlisted for Times Higher Awards 2019; the OUAnalyse tool and the Open Arts Objects project. Dr Barbara Kunz, STEM, had also been shortlisted in the Outstanding Technician of the Year category. The Senate was also informed that a team of researchers led by Dr Matthew Soman in the Centre for Electronic Imaging had received £1 million from the UK Space Agency for work on the design of new sensors to study space weather. The University was also embarking on training future experts for the nuclear energy sector as a partner in the £6.2m Centre for Doctoral Training in Nuclear Energy Futures funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council. The research would also underpin a new apprenticeship scheme for the nuclear industry. It was also reported that Professor Enrico Motta and Dr Alessio Antonini, KMI were part of a consortium for the Gatekeeper project, which had received funding of £730,000 from the European Union on assistive robots.

4.6   In updating the Senate on student numbers, the Vice-Chancellor reported that student registrations for the 19J presentation had exceeded the 18J presentation at the same point last year. Undergraduate new registrations were at 112% of target and undergraduate continuing students were at 101%. In relation to the National Students Survey (NSS) which published its results in July 2019, the overall satisfaction rate was 87% which maintained the University's position from 2018. In Northern Ireland the University was rated the top

university for student satisfaction for the 15th consecutive year, and second in Wales (with an improvement of 1%) and in Scotland the University had consistently been placed in the top three every year since the survey began.

4.7 Professor Blackman also advised the Senate that the University was subject to six-yearly QAA Quality Enhancement Reviews (QERs), which covered all awards and credit bearing modules including collaborative provision and research degrees. The next QER visit was scheduled for March 2021. Academic Leads would be appointed, and a Review Reference Group established, chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Students (PVC(S)).

4.8 Professor Blackman then invited questions.

4.9 In response to a question regarding the appropriate governance route for proposals to revise degree classification algorithms, the Vice-Chancellor confirmed that the proposals would be scrutinised by the Qualifications and Assessment Committee and Education Committee before being presented to the Senate at its meeting in January 2020.

4.10 Members raised concerns about delays in providing study materials in alternative formats and the distress and anxiety these delays caused students. There was some discussion about the optimal format of materials to support students' learning. Members wanted to understand better the reasons behind requests for alternative formats, how they were processed and whether appropriate support was in place for the students.

4.11 Members of the Senate sought assurance that the Inquiry being established to examine the difficulties in provision would be totally independent and suggested ways to achieve this, including the appointment of an external chair. Members of the Senate should also be involved in the Inquiry. It should not look to apportion blame but explore the root causes of the problems. Its relationship to the Task and Finish Group was also unclear from the statement issued to Senate members. Concern was also expressed over the status of the second mailings of materials and whether these would be similarly delayed.

4.12 The Director, Academic Services, assured the Senate that the relevant teams were aware of the impacts on students. Colleagues were working very hard to resolve the issues and a further report would be brought to the Senate. The second mailings of materials were currently on track for despatch on time.

Action: Director, Academic Services and PVC Students

5   ACADEMIC QUALITY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE   S-2019-04-02

The Senate **noted** the confirmed minutes of the meeting of the Academic Quality and Governance Committee held on 1 July 2019 and the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 September 2019.

6   RESEARCH COMMITTEE   S-2019-04-03

Minute 11: Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021 Update
6.1 Concern was expressed that the University might be behind other institutions with preparations for the REF 2021. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research, Enterprise and Scholarship) (PVC RES) assured the Senate that this was not the case. The University had conducted a two-stage mock REF exercise and had a clear schedule for future work associated with the REF 2021.

Minute 12: Teaching opportunities for postgraduate research degree students (PGRs)
6.2 The President, OU Students Association welcomed the opportunity for post graduate research students (PGRs) to benefit from more consistent access to teaching opportunities provided they received appropriate training and that the quality of the student experience

was carefully monitored. The Senate was informed that the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) had offered these opportunities very successfully for some time and it was important that this initiative did not become stifled by administrative bureaucracy.

6.3 The PVC RES reported that the Director of the Graduate School had established pilot schemes and had been in dialogue with the OU Students Association over this initiative.

6.4 The Senate **noted** the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting of the Research Committee held on 3 July 2019 and the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held by correspondence between 15-23 July 2019.

7	**EDUCATION COMMITTEE**	**S-2019-04-04**

The Senate **noted** the unconfirmed Minutes of the last meeting of the Education Committee held on Wednesday 10 July 2019.

8	**CENTRAL DISCIPLINARY COMMITEE**	**S-2019-04-05**

The Senate **noted** the report from the Central Disciplinary Committee for 2018-19.

9	**SPECIAL APPEALS COMMITTEE OF THE SENATE**	**S-2019-04-06**

9.1 The decrease in the number of appeals considered by the Special Appeals Committee was remarked upon; the reason for this was unclear. It was suggested that the reduction appeared to coincide with the introduction of changes to the procedures. Concern was expressed that the changes may have resulted in it becoming very difficult for students to have appeals considered. The Director, Academic Services explained that the Code of Practice for Student Discipline would be subject to review in due course.

9.2 The Senate **noted** the report of the Special Appeals Committee of the Senate for 2018-19.

10	**INSTITUTIONAL PERFORMANCE REPORT TO SENATE**	**S-2019-04-07**

10.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor introduced the report and confirmed that following comments received at the last meeting, various improvements had been made to the presentation of the data. The report on the changing nature of the University's student base was appended to the report. Professor Fraser hoped that with these improvements in place, the Senate would be able to focus on key issues within its remit, for example, student success and measures relating to teaching and research.

10.2 Attention was drawn to the headline statistic in Appendix 2 to the paper that the Open Degree had reduced in absolute and proportional terms. It was suggested that this reflected how the data had been compiled and not the fact that 20% of OU graduates graduated with the Open Degree qualification. The University was urged not to lose focus on this key qualification which was not linked to one Faculty and overseen by a small team. In response to a question the Deputy Vice-Chancellor confirmed that data on degree classifications would be presented again to the Senate in future reports.

10.3 The positive indicators of student success amongst undergraduate students was welcomed but disappointment and concern was expressed over the fall in the proportion of students passing their postgraduate module in 2017/18. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor agreed that the University needed to examine the data on postgraduate completions in more detail to understand it fully.

10.4 Members considered the increase in the staff sickness absence indicator and possible reasons for this. The staff figures did not yet include ALs, but they would be included

following the implementation of the new contract. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor confirmed work was underway to produce this data in due course. The use of data from the Learning Events Management (LEM) system to analyse attendance rates at tutorials was questioned as this was known to be unreliable. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor acknowledged the issues when using data from the LEM system, but it had been used purely to provide an indicative direction. The source of data on disability was queried and concern was expressed that the qualitative data collected was from a small sample of ALs. The Senate was informed that data on disability was sourced from the University's data records as recorded by individual students. ALs and a range of stakeholders were interviewed in the compilation of the report on the student base to provide a richer picture of the student body. Attention was also drawn to disability rates amongst students rising and whether provision for student support had increased correspondingly. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor offered to provide this information outside of the meeting.

Action: Deputy Vice-Chancellor

10.5   The decrease in major incidents associated with technology was welcomed but members still considered that University systems were overall unreliable, and this contributed to increased stress levels amongst staff. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor assured the Senate that the Vice-Chancellor's Executive was aware of incidents and frustrations relating to the University's systems and this had led to the significant investment in the Core Systems Replacement Programme.

10.6   The Vice-Chancellor thanked Senate members for their comments and reiterated the importance of thorough scrutiny of the report by the Senate. He agreed to reflect on the focus of the report to ensure the Senate was able to concentrate its attention on key areas within its remit.

11   ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE REVIEW: REPORT   S-2019-04-08

11.1   The Vice-Chancellor introduced the Report and reminded Senate that periodic reviews of governance were standard practice. He thanked colleagues across the University who had contributed to the Review and consultants from Advance HE who had compiled a thorough and forward-looking report from their observations. In the paper, the Senate was being asked to agree the establishment of an Academic Governance Advisory Group which would consider the recommendations from the report in detail and develop an implementation plan and timescale to be presented to Senate in January 2020 for discussion.

11.2   The Vice-Chancellor welcomed Professor Paul White, Advance HE, to the meeting. Professor White explained that requirements from the Office for Students as the University's principal regulator were more rigorous than those of the University's previous regulator. Robust governance was therefore essential to ensure effective accountability and assurance. The report presented to the Senate for consideration had taken a holistic approach and included reflections on the University and the context in which it operated. It had not provided prescriptive recommendations but had asked the University itself to initiate dialogue about a new governance roadmap for the institution to give good foundations for the next phase of the University's development under a new leadership facing sectoral challenges.

11.3   Members of the Senate welcomed the report and considered it established a positive approach for the University to consider. The University was however urged to take time to consider the recommendations carefully and be cautious over adopting "quick win" solutions without fully evaluating the consequences. It was suggested that workshops could be held to help the Senate work through the recommendations in depth.

11.4   Members welcomed recommendations relating to establishing clarity over the future strategic role of the Senate and the relationship between the Senate and the Council.

Several ideas were proposed including examining the size of the Senate, changing the times of meetings, establishing a forum to enable members to communicate outside of meetings and consideration of the most appropriate chair. Members emphasised the importance of the Senate not simply being seen as a quarterly meeting but having a continuous role with improved communications. In reflecting on recommendations relating to communications, it was suggested that to help the University community understand the role and function of the Senate, a short summary of decisions should be issued straight after the meetings, with detailed minutes following.

11.5 In relation to Faculty governance, further attention to the role of Boards of Study and a focus on ensuring that any recommendations took account of the changes that would arise out of the implementation of the AL contract was suggested.

11.6 Recommendation 32 – broadening the diversity of student voices in academic governance – was welcomed. The OU Students Association was reviewing student representation on governance committees. It was suggested that consideration be given to arranging meetings at times when students were able to attend, and to ensuring that technology was sufficiently robust to enable remote participation. The suggestion that questions be submitted 24 hours in advance of meetings of the Senate could have an impact on meetings of the Senate Reference Group so required careful consideration.

11.7 The Vice-Chancellor drew attention to the proposal in paragraph 9 of the paper that an Academic Governance Advisory Group be established to consider the recommendations in the Report and develop an implementation plan for consideration at the next meeting of the Senate in January 2020. He proposed that Professor Jan Draper chair the Group and that the Head of Governance also be a member; additional members of the group be selected from across academic governance stakeholder groups including the Senate to ensure the group benefited from a wide range of experience.

11.8 The Senate welcomed the establishment of the Group but requested that its membership be elected not selected. The PVC RES proposed that the membership of the Group should include both elected and appointed members. This would ensure broad representation across academic governance stakeholder groups, including students. The Vice-Chancellor also assured the Senate that the Advisory Group would be tasked with evaluating the recommendations as part of its remit.

11.9 The Senate **agreed** the next steps in taking the recommendations from the report of the Academic Governance Review forward as set out in paper S-2019-04-08 including the:

a) establishment of an Academic Governance Advisory Group to be chaired by Professor Jan Draper with elected and appointed membership
b) evaluation of recommendations and development of an implementation plan for discussion at the next meeting of the Senate on 22 January 2020

TEA BREAK

12 ANNUAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW OF ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE S-2019-04-08A

12.1 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research, Enterprise and Scholarship) introduced the report and explained that at its meeting on 16 September 2019 the Academic Quality and Governance Committee (AQGC) had agreed, based on the overall satisfaction rate from member surveys, to recommend to the Senate approval of the academic governance assurance statement for reporting to the Council at its meeting in November 2019. A full Annual Effectiveness Review (AER) had not been undertaken due to the planned, and then postponed, external Academic Governance Review (AGR) (S-2019-04-08). The recommendation had unfortunately been omitted from the minutes of the meeting of AQGC

in error but the PVC-RES, as Chair of AQGC confirmed that the Committee had agreed the statement for recommendation to the Senate. The minutes of the meeting of AQGC were currently unconfirmed and would be amended at the next meeting to record this decision.

12.2   The PVC-RES also informed the Senate that in providing this assurance to the Council, it would be important for the Council to be aware that further consideration would be given to refining the arrangements for academic governance following receipt of the report of the Academic Governance Review in October 2019.

12.3   The Senate **approved** the following statement to be reported to the Council at its meeting on 26 November 2019:

"The Senate assures the Council that the University's academic governance arrangements have been effective during the 2018/19 year."

13   ANNUAL QUALITY REPORT   S-2019-04-09

13.1   The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research, Enterprise and Scholarship) (PVC-RES) introduced the report which has been scrutinised by Academic Quality and Governance Committee (AQGC). In making this assessment, AQGC reviewed evidence from its 2018/19 meetings and those of other bodies relating the effectiveness of the University's management of quality and standards. The Senate would be asked to recommend to the Council that it endorsed the two statements of assurance required by the Scottish Funding Council and Office for Students (paragraphs 97 and 98). Professor Hetherington drew attention to the summary of the report which stated that from the evidence provided the University's quality assurance processes relating to taught provision were robust and operated effectively.

13.2   Concern was expressed that the statement in paragraph 98 requiring signature by the Chair of the University's Council and submission to the Office for Students, referred to an accompanying action plan which was not appended to the report. The Vice-Chancellor explained that the University had plans in place for the improvement of the student academic experience and student outcomes and that these should be referenced in the Report.

13.3   Attention was drawn to paragraph 21 where it was felt that some wording was omitted in relation to the apprenticeship provision inspected by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted).   It was also noted that in paragraph 87, reference was made to the strong feedback reported in the National Student Survey (NSS) in relation to assessment and feedback to students. It was hoped that the introduction of the new End of Module Assessment (EMA) system would be carefully assessed to ensure there would not be any negative impact on this key metric for the student experience.

13.4   Clarification was sought as to how the difficulties being experienced with the provision of materials in alternative formats could be raised as an issue of quality and standards. The PVC RES explained that such issues would be raised through the Quality Monitoring and Enhancement (QME) process from Boards of Study and then considered by the Academic Quality and Governance Committee.

13.5   The Senate:

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

b)   **recommended to the Council** that it endorse the two statements of assurance required by the Scottish Funding Council and Office for Students (paragraphs 97 and

98) subject to the inclusion of an Action Plan as required in the statement in paragraph 98.

14 ASSOCIATE LECTURER CONTRACT: UPDATE   S-2019-04-10

14.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor introduced the report.   The University was still in a collective bargaining process with the Universities and Colleges Union (UCU) with progress being made across the Programme's workstreams.   A new Transitions Group was being established to provide strategic oversight and prioritisation guidance on operational work areas of the transition from the current to the emerging future state. A new Culture Change and Engagement workstream had also been established and would consider the institutional changes required to ensure full integration of the new contract.

14.2 Attention was drawn to the risk register, where some members felt that risks to the quality of the student experience had not been sufficiently prioritised. For example, if significant numbers of experienced ALs took voluntary severance or retired, services or quality could deteriorate.   Concern was also expressed that the first phase of the Voluntary Severance scheme had opened in September 2019 before the skills audit pilots had commenced.   Members were concerned that if applications to the Voluntary Severance scheme was high, modules might not be fully staffed, and those ALs wishing to leave might not have their applications approved. The situation was complex as many ALs worked over different areas and in some cases, for example on level 3 modules, the pool of suitable tutors was small.   The Deputy-Vice-Chancellor explained that the timing of the first phase of the Voluntary Severance scheme had been agreed specifically to enable ALs who did not wish to be included in the skills audit pilots to submit applications.

14.3 Assurance was sought on how quality would be assured during the operation of the pilot schemes.   Clarity was also sought on the guidance issued to heads of units to cascade on seeking approval for all AL-facing communications.   There appeared to be variations and delays in issuing this.

14.4 Attention was also drawn to the risk register and whether some of the risks were graded appropriately. The impact of the new contractual arrangements was likely to be wide affecting Faculties and module teams as well as ALs and staff tutors and it was essential this was acknowledged. Risks 1 and 33 related to Information Technology issues and an update on progress was requested.   The importance of appropriate staff development for staff tutors and student experience managers was also emphasised and it was suggested that this should be listed in the risk register as there could be implications for the student experience if staff were not fully briefed at the correct time.

14.5 The Deputy-Vice-Chancellor assured the Senate that extensive mitigation was in place around IT issues with close collaboration between the project team and those working on the Core Systems Replacement (CSR) project. The continued focus was to ensure the complex implementation was correct and as a result an iterative approach was being taken with opportunities to test, learn and evaluate. The points raised in relation to operational matters would be referred to the project team.

14.6 The Senate **noted** the report.

15 FUTURELEARN UPDATE   S-2019-04-11

15.1 The University Secretary informed the Senate that significant activity had taken place with the development of micro-credentials as part of the wider strategic relationship between the University, FutureLearn, and the SEEK corporation. A Steering Group and Working Group was working on the rapid development of an OU micro-credential pilot on FutureLearn for launch in January–March 2020. This pilot would inform a full micro-credential strategy,

which would be presented for approval in 2020.   Productive meetings had been held with representatives of SEEK and the success of micro-credentials on FutureLearn was a significant opportunity for the University.

15.2   The Senate supported the development of the micro-credentials pilot with student representatives particularly welcoming the availability of smaller segments of learning. Clarity was sought on the appointment of module teams and markers for micro-credentials and the University Secretary assured the Senate that the Steering Group would be finalising arrangements for module teams and the marking of assessments as part of the pilot. The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences had initiated several successful short courses in the past and this expertise could be drawn upon to assist in the development of micro-credentials.

15.3   Clarity was also sought on balancing priorities between secondments for staff to develop micro-credentials and working on other University curriculum. Concern was also expressed that colleagues in Learner and Discovery Services were working to capacity already and it would be essential that demands for services were carefully balanced.   It was also hoped that staff who were not based in Milton Keynes would be able to avail themselves of opportunities in the Micro-credential Office which was based in Milton Keynes. It was also noted that micro-credentials would be offered in collaboration with institutions who were the University's competitors and further information was sought on this position.

15.4   The University Secretary explained that the Steering Group established by the Vice-Chancellor's Executive (VCE) had a small membership and those Executive Deans who were members would liaise with their colleagues. The intention would be for the micro-credentials project to benefit from previous work.   The model for production was a pilot and its aim would be to produce micro-credentials quickly without detriment to other functions. It would be carefully analysed and inform future investment.

15.5   A workshop for Senate members on micro-credentials, and the broader opportunities presented by the University's partnership with SEEK and FutureLearn had been arranged for 13 November 2019. Information on the development of the micro-credential strategy would be shared and Senate members would have the opportunity to contribute to the development of the strategy.

15.6   The Senate:

a)   **approved** the initial pilot for OU micro-credentials
b)   **noted** the update on activity

16   DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR ROLE   S-2019-04-12

16.1   The Vice-Chancellor explained that creation of a substantive Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) role had considerable advantages creating important officer capacity and capability including deputising for the Vice-Chancellor. It was therefore proposed to establish the DVC role as a substantive officer post for a five-year term and eligible for re-appointment for a further two years. The post would have delegated overall executive responsibility for academic delivery.

16.2   In accordance with Statute 16(5), **the Senate recommended to the Council for approval** the substantive role of Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

17   ACADEMIC PROMOTIONS REVIEW: UPDATE   S-2019-04-13

The Senate **noted** the report.

18   EMERITUS PROFESSORS   **S-2019-04-14**

The Senate **approved** the recommendation from the Chairs Subcommittee that the title of Emeritus Professor be awarded to Professor Simon Bell, Faculty of Science, Technology Engineering and Mathematics.

19   THE COUNCIL   **S-2019-04-15**

The Senate **noted** the unconfirmed Minutes of the Council meetings held on 16 July 2019 and 24 September 2019

20   CHAIRS ACTION   **S-2019-04-16**

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

21   FUTURE ITEMS OF BUSINESS   **S-2019-04-17**

The Senate **noted** the provisional items for the agenda for the meeting of the Senate on 22 January 2020.

22   DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

Wednesday 22 January 2020
Wednesday 1 April 2020 (Council members in attendance)
Wednesday 17 June 2020

Jonathan Nicholls
University Secretary

Sue Thomas
Working Secretary to the Committee
Email: sue.thomas@open.ac.uk
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