

THE SENATE

Minutes

This paper presents the confirmed Minutes of the last meeting of the Senate held on Wednesday 1 April 2020 via Skype.

The Senate approved these minutes as a correct record at its meeting held on Wednesday 17 June 2020.

Dave Hall
University Secretary

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THE SENATE

Minutes of the meeting of the Senate held on Wednesday 1 April 2020 via Skype

PRESENT:

Professor Tim Blackman	Vice-Chancellor
Professor Josie Fraser	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Dr Liz Marr	Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Students)
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	Acting Executive Dean, Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
Professor Fary Cachelin	Executive Dean, Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies
Professor Denise Whitelock	Interim Director, Institute of Educational Technology
Professor Eileen Scanlon	Associate Director Research, Institute of Educational Technology
Mr Gary Elliot-Cirigottis	Director of Library Services
Mr Nicholas Barratt	Director, Director, Learner and Discovery Services

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS)

Dr William Brown	Dr Elaine Moohan
Dr Jovan Byford	Dr Sarah Crafter
Dr Richard Heffernan	Professor John Wolffe
Dr Deborah Drake	Professor Nicola Watson
Dr Alison Penn	Dr Karen Hagan
Mr Matt Staples	

Faculty of Business & Law (FBL)

Miss Carol Howells	Dr Kristen Reid
Dr Caroline Clarke	Mike Phillips

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

Dr Stephen Burnley	Dr James Hague
Dr Janet Haresnape	Mrs Diane Butler
Dr Magnus Ramage	Dr Rachael Luck
Professor David Rothery	Dr Leonor Barroca
Dr Robert Brignall	Dr Hayley Ryder
Dr Helen Fraser	Dr Mark Slaymaker
Professor David Johnson	Professor Simon Green
Dr Jon Hall	Dr John Baxter

Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies (WELS)

Mrs Anna Comas-Quinn	Dr Verina Waights
Professor Jan Draper	Mr Jeremy Wilcock
Ms Tyrrell Golding	Dr Elodie Vialleton
Dr Kristina Hultgren	Dr Jackie Watts
Ms Susan Kotschi	Mr Andy Rixon

Institute of Education Technology (WELS)

Mr Chris Edwards

Associate Lecturers

Dr Tim Parry

Mr Jim Gillen

Dr Catherine Halliwell

Dr Linda Walker

Dr Sylvie Serpell

Mr Rob Parker

Mrs Frances Chetwynd

Students Appointed by Open University Students Association

Ms Cath Brown

Ms Cinnomen McGuigan

Ms Alison Kingan

Billy Docherty (alternate)

Sandra Summers (alternate)

Dr Barbara Tarling

Academic-related Staff

Mr Derek Sheills

Mrs Rukhsana Malik

Mr Billy Khokhar

Mrs Gemma Maldar

Ms Julia Barkans

Dr Caitlin Adams

Mr Toby Scott-Hughes

Ms Elaine Walker

Mrs Maria Crisu

Mrs Selena Killick

Mrs Tracy Lawson

Mrs Kate Signorini

Co-opted members

Ms Susan Stewart

Mr Christopher Turner

Mrs Louise Casella

Mr John D'Arcy

Dr Claire Baines

In attendance

Mr Jake Yeo, Deputy University Secretary

Dr Laura Lauer, Head of Governance

Ms Becky Sexton, Senior Manager, Governance

Anna Barber, Director of Strategy

Observing

Caragh Molloy, Group People Director

Arlene Hunter, Director, Student Support

Kym Gosling, Branch Secretary, UNISON

APOLOGIES:

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

Dr Karen Olsson-Francis

Dr Toby O'Neil

Students Appointed by Open University Students Association

Mr Rory Powell

Mrs Stephanie Stubbins

1 REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

- 1.1 The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Tim Blackman, welcomed members to the meeting. He also welcomed Mr Dave Hall, University Secretary, to his first meeting of the Senate. The Vice-Chancellor reported that, following an internal recruitment process, Dr Liz Marr had been appointed Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Students) and Professor Nick Braithwaite appointed as the Executive Dean, STEM Faculty.
- 1.2 The Vice-Chancellor updated the Senate on the University's coronavirus pandemic planning. The Emergency Management Team (EMT) and its subgroups had made decisions at pace regarding prioritisation of work, implementation and the impact on major programmes. Great efforts had been made to consult with different areas of the organisation where possible. Externally, the OU had also engaged with governments and regulatory bodies.

- 1.3 Reporting on other activities taking place across the OU in response to the pandemic, the Vice-Chancellor highlighted that an EU grant had been awarded to Professor Alani and a team of OU researchers, to track the spread of misinformation about coronavirus on social media platforms. The OU had produced hand sanitiser for healthcare professionals in Milton Keynes. Professor Martin Weller and his colleagues had also been providing online teaching support. It was also noted that there had been an increase in the traffic to OpenLearn.
- 1.4 When discussing the Vice-Chancellor's report, Senate members sought clarification on the membership of EMT and its subgroups, discussed some of the necessary changes to assessments and the ways in which academic standards were maintained, and communications to staff.

2 STUDENT AND STAFF MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY S-2020-02-01

- 2.1 Members of the Senate welcomed the paper and the inclusion of both students and staff, including taught and research postgraduates, within the strategy. A member commented that the document is focused on individuals but did not include how to address systemic stressors. Members also asked how the strategic objectives within the strategy would be achieved. The Executive Dean, Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies (WELS) explained that the strategy is an external facing document and a starting point for this work. It is designed to collect a baseline, commit resources and raise awareness. The proposed action plan and associated measures would be created to implement the strategy and the proposed solutions are systemic ones. The plan will take a whole University approach and will identify owners of actions and the associated resources.
- 2.3 Clarification was sought as to the oversight of the strategy by the Health and Safety (H&S) Committee. It was explained that consultation with the H&S Committee had been impacted by industrial action during the process, but the committee, alongside PVC Students would be involved in the implementation stage.
- 2.4 It was suggested that the OU Club should be publicised and made available to staff in all locations, including those who are permanent home workers. It was also suggested that any learning from the recent pandemic around stress during crisis situations, could be scoped into the strategy.
- 2.5 In response to a question around providing professional training for line managers, to enable people to better support staff and students, it was agreed that additional training could be investigated, such as Mental Health First Aid training and introducing mental health champions.
- 2.6 Clarification was requested on how it would be possible to take a proactive approach to supporting students and staff at risk of poor mental health, if the issues and the lack of mechanisms are not yet understood (strategic objective three). The Executive Dean (WELS) explained that the document was designed to be future orientated, to bring the conversation to the foreground and to reduce stigma. Further insight would then be gained into the key areas outlined in the strategy, enabling the improvement of the mechanisms used to understand and measure the impact of objectives on student and staff behaviour and success.
- 2.7 Members of the Senate were thanked for their contributions, which would be picked up by the steering group. The Senate **approved** the Student and Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

3 STUDENT LEARNING AND ADJUSTMENT STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Senate considered a paper outlining the action plan for the Student Learning Adjustments Strategy. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Students (PVC(S)), explained that the actions would need to be updated in light of the current pandemic, but there were teams of people across the University focussing on the workstreams.
- 3.2 Members of the Senate raised concerns around how the engagement with stakeholders had been received and it was noted that there had been some anxiety within particular groups on receipt on the initial emails. The PVC(S) explained that the implementation had not been as successful as hoped, with 46% of students satisfied, but 10% of students dissatisfied, so further improvements would be made. In response to a question around the process of students providing evidence, the PVC(S) noted that it is an incredibly complex issue and conversations with students would need to take place.
- 3.3 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Students, explained that the delivery of materials for students would be prioritised and methods of providing materials to print at home would be investigated. The University would be in contact with every single student to establish their preference for materials before the warehouses open. It was agreed that confirmation around the inclusion of any new activity within the plans would be provided in matters arising.

Action: PVC Students

4 ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE REVIEW

S-2020-02-03

- 4.1 Members of Senate welcomed the recommendations within the paper. It was asked if the proposed workstream groups would be representative of the diversity of the Senate. Jan Draper, Chair of the AGAG, clarified that the groups would be drawn from the Senate, but that the key principle was for the groups to have a broad set of skills and experience. It was also clarified that Director representation on the English side is covered by the University Secretary, who has delegated responsibility from the Vice-Chancellor as the accountable officer for compliance with the OU's principal regulator, and the English regulator, the Office for Students. The Chair of the AGAG also added that the aspiration of the group was for the Senate to have confidence in the workstreams to successfully undertake the implementation and in a way that would represent all constituencies and Nations.
- 4.2 The Senate statement of purpose was discussed. It was noted that similar statements of purpose for Council and other groups had been touched upon by the advisory group and it would be taken into discussions during the implementation stage. In response to a question around the University's oversight of data governance, it was confirmed that it had not been within the scope of the Academic Governance Review and that the question of data governance would be addressed outside of the meeting.

Action: Deputy University Secretary

- 4.3 A member of the Senate sought assurance that by accomplishing the "quick wins", completion of other areas of implementation would not be negatively impacted. It was explained that the quick wins had been identified practically and the advisory group had been careful not to overstep their remit into implementation, so the actions could now be planned in and executed successfully.
- 4.4 The Senate **approved** the recommendations in the paper.

5 AL CONTRACT UPDATE

- 5.1 The Senate considered an update on the Associate Lecturer (AL) Contract Programme. It was asked by a member of the Senate how individuals turned down for AL Voluntary Severance would be supported. The Group People Director assured members that the ALs would be given the appropriate support by the University. In response to a question on the potential impact of the AL contract to individuals' cash flow, it was noted that the team was aware of the issues and were working to resolve them.
- 5.2 Members of the Senate raised questions around what the risks might be to the experience of students with the possible loss of further ALs and what the mitigations would be. It was clarified that the numbers of ALs would not be reduced in areas of need or where there would be an impact on student experience or success. It was also noted that concerns had been raised at the March Council meeting regarding the identification of risks for the University if many experienced tutors were to apply for voluntary severance.
- 5.3 Attention was drawn to the fact that the percentage of ALs opening and reading papers is higher than Staff Tutors/Student Experience Managers (ST/SEM) and it was asked how engagement could be improved. The Group People Director noted that improving engagement is high on the agenda and there were currently monthly seminars taking place, as well as a recent ST/SEM Conference, with over 200 attendees.
- 5.4 It was noted that some of the benefits of the new AL contract would be different ways of working. In response to a question around the progress being made with the cultural change and engagement process, the Group People Director explained that a workstream is in place. It would be an ongoing piece of work, beyond the implementation of the AL contract. A member asked whether evidence of cultural change principles on workload would be shared. It was explained that work had been taking place on the new arrangements. The final submission of the University's Access and Participation Plan had also recently been made.
- 5.5 The Senate **noted** the update.

6 APPOINTMENT PROCESS PVC-RES

S-2020-02-02

- 6.1 The Vice-Chancellor explained that Professor Kevin Hetherington's term as Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Research, Enterprise and Scholarship (PVC-RES) would end on 31 December 2020. The Senate were asked to consider and recommend to the Council the proposed appointment process, in order for the process to begin as soon as possible. The intention would be to have a PVC-RES in post by January 2021, recognising that there may be challenges during the Coronavirus pandemic.
- 6.2 In response to a question regarding the geographical location of the role, the Vice-Chancellor confirmed that it was an operational requirement for the role to be based in Milton Keynes, with other members of the Executive Team. It was also asked whether the role could be undertaken as a job-share. The Vice-Chancellor noted that it would be taken into consideration, but there are some roles where job-share arrangements were more appropriate than others.
- 6.3 Clarification was requested on the proposal to run a concurrent internal and external process, as nurturing internal talent was a recommendation of the Critical Review. The Vice-Chancellor explained that the rationale for advertising to OU staff and to the sector more widely was to recruit the best candidate and to help with diversity in senior management.
- 6.4 The Senate **agreed** to recommend to the Council the process for the appointment of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research, Enterprise and Scholarship).

- 7 **HONORARY DEGREES COMMITTEE: AWARD OF FELLOWSHIP** **S-2020-02-08**
- Minute 7.1 to 7.7 is recorded as a confidential minute (S-2020-02-CM).
- 8 **MINUTES** **S-2020-01-M**
- The Senate **approved** the minutes of the meeting of the Senate on 22 January 2020.
- 9 **MATTERS ARISING** **S-2020-02-06**
- It was **agreed** to defer the discussion on this paper until the June 2020 meeting.
- 10 **ACADEMIC QUALITY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE** **S-2020-02-07**
- The Senate **noted** the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting of the Academic Quality and Governance Committee held on 10 February 2020.
- 11 **PROCESS FOR THE RESCINDING OF AN HONORARY DEGREE** **S-2020-02-09**
- It was **agreed** to defer the discussion on the process for the rescinding of an Honorary Degree until the June 2020 meeting.
- 12 **INSTITUTIONAL PERFORMANCE REPORT TO SENATE** **S-2020-02-10**
- 12.1 The Vice-Chancellor introduced the Institutional Performance report. Attention was drawn to the rise in the gender pay gap figures under the 'Dynamic and Inclusive Culture' section of the report. Clarification was sought on the reasons for the rise and whether it was due to the quality of the data. Staff sickness provisions for ALs was also raised as a matter for clarification. It was agreed for both questions to be referred to the Group People Director and addressed through the Matters Arising paper in June.
- Action: Group People Director**
- 12.2 The Senate **noted** the institutional performance update.
- 13 **ACADEMIC PROMOTIONS REVIEW: UPDATE** **S-2020-02-11**
- It was **agreed** to defer discussion on this item until the June 2020 meeting.
- 14 **REVISED APPOINTMENT PROCEDURES, DIRECTOR, KMI** **S-2020-02-12**
- 14.1 The Vice-Chancellor introduced the proposed procedures for the appointment of the Director, Knowledge Media Institute. In response to a query regarding the selection of panel members, it was noted that the Executive Dean, as Chair, would oversee arrangements for the appointment of panel members.
- 14.2 The Senate **agreed** to recommend to the Council for approval, procedures for the appointment of the Director, Knowledge Media Institute.
- 15 **THE COUNCIL** **S-2020-02-13**
- The Senate **noted** the unconfirmed Minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 4 February 2020 and 10 March 2020.
- 16 **CHAIRS ACTION** **S-2020-02-14**
- The Senate **noted** action taken by the Chair since the last meeting of the Senate.

17 EMERITUS PROFESSORS

The Senate **approved** the recommendation from the Chairs Subcommittee that the title of Emeritus Professor is awarded to:

- a) Professor Jan Draper, Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies; and
- b) Professor Elizabeth McKellar, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

18 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 17 June 2020

Dave Hall
University Secretary

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