This paper presents the unconfirmed Minutes of the last meeting of the Senate held on Wednesday 13 October 2021 via Teams.

The Senate approved these Minutes as a correct record at its meeting held on 26 January 2022.

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University Secretary

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Attachments:
S-2021-04-M Minutes of the meeting of the Senate held on 13 October 2021
THE SENATE

Minutes of the meeting of the Senate held on Wednesday 13 October 2021 via MS Teams.

PRESENT:

Professor Tim Blackman  Vice-Chancellor
Professor Josie Fraser  Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Dr Liz Marr  Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Students)
Professor Kevin Shakesheff  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
Professor Fary Cachelin  Executive Dean, Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies
Professor Denise Whitelock  Director, Institute of Educational Technology
Gary Elliot-Cirigottis  Director of Library Services
Nicholas Barratt  Director, Learner and Discovery Services

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS)

Dr William Brown  Professor Elaine Moohan
Professor David Johnson  Dr Deborah Drake
Dr Alison Penn  Dr Donna Loftus
Dr Andrew Griffiths  Dr Richard Heffernan
Dr Emma Barker  Dr Karen Hagan
Dr Janine Liladhar  Professor John Wolffe
Professor Nicola Watson

Faculty of Business & Law (FBL)

Carol Howells  Dr Kristen Reid
Dr Caroline Clarke  Eleanor Howie
Mike Phillips

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

Dr Helen Fraser  Dr Lucia Rapanotti
Dr Janet Haresnape  Dr John Baxter
Dr Magnus Ramage  Dr Leonor Barroca
Professor David Rothery  Dr Hayley Ryder
Dr Robert Brignall  Dr Mark Slaymaker
Dr TC O’Neil  Dr Fiona Moorman
Dr Andy Hollyhead  Dr Jon Golding
Dr James Bruce  Dr Kaustubh Adhikari
Donald Edwards

Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies (WELS)

Dr Anna Comas-Quinn  Andy Rixon
Dr Severine Hubscher-Davidson  Jeremy Wilcock
Susan Kotschi  Dr Elodie Vialleton
Professor Joan Simons  Dr Jackie Watts
Dr Kristina Hultgren  Dr Carol Azumah Dennis
Professor Jonathan Rix
1 REMINDER OF THE SENATE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

As this was the committee’s first meeting of the academic year, Senate members were reminded of the Statement of Purpose and Terms of Reference for the Senate and confirmed they had read the Code of Conduct and the Conflict of Interest Policies.

2 MINUTES

2.1 It was agreed to clarify in minute 10.3 that the Honorary Degrees Committee would be asked to look at the Honorary Degrees criteria and their application.

2.2 Senate noted that in relation to minute 5.3, the university had no intention of moving away from its commitment to face-to-face teaching as part of the mixture of teaching methods.
Subject to the above changes, the Senate approved the minutes of the meeting of the Senate held on 23 June 2021 for approval.

3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 The Senate noted the responses to the matters arising from the minutes of the meeting of the Senate held on 23 June 2021 (S-2021-03-M).

3.2 On the Gender Critical Research Network discussion (para 3.8) actions following the meeting had included; progression of the new centre and networks policy, meetings between the Dean for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research, Enterprise and Scholarship), ongoing review of the people policies and wellbeing and mental health support put in pace for staff and students.

3.3 As an update to minute 3.4, regarding ‘local presence’, Senate noted that work was being undertaken on what that might look like, as well as taking learning from practice in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. A report would be brought back to Senate.

Action: Director, The OU in Scotland

4 REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

4.1 The Vice-Chancellor welcomed members to the meeting. He updated the Senate on the recent changes in the UK Government and upcoming meetings with key individuals. He explained that some significant announcements were expected for HE in the Comprehensive Spending Review on 27th October and that there were various policy reviews underway in all four nations.

4.2 It was noted that employers and unions had not been able to reach agreement about either pay or pension reform and that University and College Union (UCU) was balloting its members about industrial action. Information would be made available to all staff and students about the pay and pension offers, and the context.

4.3 On the big change programmes, the Vice-Chancellor explained that Core Systems Replacement (CSR) had been separated into ERP (the new finance, payroll and HR systems) and the work on student systems. He noted that the technical team working on the replacement of student management systems had been redeployed to support the AL Contract, which had created an important opportunity to re-visit what was needed from student systems. On the AL Contract Programme, he thanked all those who had worked to successfully make the technical changes needed to pay ALs by FTE from October and thanked those affected for their patience. A new support team was trained and ready to help answer questions from ALs about pay.

4.4 It was noted that student numbers were down by nearly 20% against the 20J target for new students, mainly due to underestimating the effect of Covid. The 20J recruitment still demonstrated growth compared to 2019, however, and the University had achieved a sustained improvement in retention and the level of student satisfaction had also been maintained.

4.5 The Vice-Chancellor explained that The Office for Students (OfS) had approved the OU’s 2019/20 Monitoring Return with no issues, but there were continuing challenges with the awarding gap between black and white students. The University had also received a TEF Provisional Award from the OfS, which would increase the headroom to keep student fees in line with inflation, if chosen to do so, because a TEF award meant a higher fee cap.

4.6 The OU had recently launched its annual Business Barometer report, reflecting the behaviours and struggles of the UK’s organisations across different sectors, regions and nations. A new short course on FutureLearn called ‘Union Black: Britain’s Black cultures and steps to anti-racism’ had also been launched, which was available for free to staff and students across the Higher Education Sector in the UK. Members of
Senate congratulated the Dean for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and her team on the development and delivery of the course, which renewed and invigorated the OU’s commitment to social justice.

4.7 The Vice-Chancellor highlighted some of the awards and recognitions taking place within the University, including; Prof. Giles Mohan and Emeritus Professor Kath Woodward in FASS who had been made Fellows of the Academy of Social Sciences; Professor June Barrow-Green who had been awarded the Wilkins-Bernal-Medawar Medal by the Royal Society; Open University nurses in Wales who had been named winners of Skills at Work award at the Inspire! Awards and 11 colleagues who had been promoted to Professor. The OU had also been shortlisted in two categories at the Times Higher Education Awards, University of the Year and Knowledge Exchange/Transfer Initiative of the Year.

4.8 In response to a question around the use of the chat function or rapporteurs in Teams meetings, the University Secretary explained that the suggestions would be taken away and the Standing Orders examined, but that there had to be a managed debate. It was suggested that the face-to-face arrangements should also be reviewed to ensure they were as inclusive as possible, whilst still being manageable.

**Action:** University Secretary

5 **ANNUAL QUALITY REPORT**

5.1 Senate noted that improvements had been made to the Annual Quality Report, but further changes were needed next year to focus on student voice and the areas that had been less successful.

5.2 Senate noted that the appended report would be used as the annual report on institution-led review submitted to the Scottish Funding Council. Senate recommended to the Council that it approve the statement of assurance required by the Scottish Funding Council.

6 **UNIVERSITY STRATEGY 2022-27**

6.1 The Director of Strategy updated the Senate on the overall strategy development, including work to develop success measures. She explained that recent feedback from Council had been for the strategy to be less internally-focused and to reflect how the strategy would respond to the external environment.

6.2 It was commented that the priorities were clear enough to guide choices and decisions, but the challenge was how to tackle structural or operational barriers to implementation. For the goal to extend reach for example, the Curriculum Portfolio Panel (CPP) had identified challenges around accommodating diversification of demand across the curriculum from increasingly fragmented markets. The Vice-Chancellor explained that the strategy would be used as a framework for the yearly business development. There would be work specifically on how more flexible working could be achieved and how it would fit in with the University’s business models and systems.

6.3 Questions were raised around when the experimentation with different working patterns would take place and what measures would be used to determine what has worked well. It was also asked whether the carbon footprint of home working would be considered when trying to establish whether New Ways of Working (NWOW) would help to meet the 2050 goals. It was explained that NWOW had a bottom-up approach and the learning around what was most operationally effective from across different units would be reviewed. Some test and learn activity had already started to take place in Faculties and the Recovery Group continued to meet to monitor the national situation. The measures for NWOW would be approached from different angles, including sustainability, wellbeing & mental health, productivity and EDI.
6.4 It was asked whether there was a tension between the focus on growth within the strategy and student success, in terms of the resources to achieve both. The Vice-Chancellor noted that both growth and student success could be achieved, as had been demonstrated over the last year. The challenge was not around resources, but the planning and execution, which the University would continue to work to get right.

6.5 It was clarified that ‘design our courses to be accessible to as many students as possible’ meant that the standard OU materials were as accessible as possible whilst continuing to provide special materials where needed for individuals.

6.6 It was agreed that the Director of Strategy would consider the suggestion that the strategy should be more explicit in expressing where the OU intends to go with digital pedagogy in the future, which would help to address the QAA recommendation.

   **Action:** Director of Strategy

6.7 The Director of Strategy thanked Senate members for their input. Senate noted that whilst the content of the draft strategy was near to final, work would continue on the presentation of the strategy document before a final draft was presented to University Council in November.

7 **BROADCAST STRATEGY**

7.1 Caroline Ogilvy, Head of Broadcast & Partnerships, presented an overview of the OU’s partnership with the BBC, which had reached its 50th anniversary in 2021. The two key purposes of the partnership were to reach and inspire, thereby supporting the OU’s social mission, and to create audio visual and digital assets for use in OU teaching and learning, thereby enhancing student experience. The partnership enabled the OU to work across all BBC channels and platforms.

7.2 It was noted that there were approximately 30 projects per year, the majority for television and iPlayer, followed by radio, podcasts and digital content. It was explained that the OU’s broadcast strategy was to adapt to the BBC’s focus on digital diversification and extend the reach to younger audiences, including social platforms. An example of extending digital reach was the new service for students to view OU/BBC programmes, which in the first year had achieved over 5000 OU students viewing programmes, by following the links from faculty qualification sites.

7.3 The Broadcast Strategy also focused on ways to amplify the partnership, including OU branding on television and online, the new OU broadcast websites (https://connect.open.ac.uk/) and opportunities to extend partnerships to other organisations. It was explained that the partnership was measured in a number of ways, including content (measure of Audience Appreciation Index and Viewing and Listening events), engagement and participation (visits into OU website from OU/BBC content, print requests) and the use of partnership content. It was noted that all OU/BBC content supported and was defined by curriculum and research priority areas identified by the faculties.

7.4 Comments on the presentation included:

   a) The need for regular reporting to the Senate on the broadcast strategy.

   b) In terms of the level of contributions from OU academics on screen, the aim was to highlight academics where possible and where people were available, particularly through radio and podcasts, as there were restrictions around on-screen contributions alongside behind-the-scenes contributions.

   c) Regarding the cost-benefit analysis of the free printed materials, it was explained that ‘reach’ was factored in, as well as costs. Alternatives were being explored, considering the right medium for engagement and the cost benefits for each format.
d) In answer to a question around how the OU could exercise control where there was dissatisfaction with a project, it was explained that there were key points of academic input in the process. The aim was for feedback from academics to be taken on board, but the final editorial control was with the BBC.

7.5 Senate were encouraged to contact Caroline Ogilvy directly for any questions or issues in relation to the broadcast strategy.

8 **INSTITUTIONAL PERFORMANCE REPORT TO SENATE**

The Director of Strategy introduced the Institutional Performance Report. The following comments were discussed:

a) Senate noted the encouraging results of the 2021 National Student Survey (NSS) and highlighted the need for further data on student satisfaction, student voice and other student feedback, in order to continue improvements across all areas of the student experience. It was noted that the Student Satisfaction Improvement Working Group, including student representatives, were looking at the NSS data and creating a new Student Satisfaction Action Plan, alongside the work of the Student Analysis team and the brand tacker team.

b) Senate noted the plan to integrate AL data within ‘dynamic and inclusive culture, as soon as the data would allow and the more appropriate measures for the new strategy have been designed.

c) On the risks, it was agreed that ‘To be confirmed’ should not be used for target dates in future reports. Further work was needed on how the mitigating actions were communicated to Senate.

d) It was agreed that the target date for the risk ‘Insufficient focus on the quality and development of research and enterprise could threaten our reputation as a research university’ (risk 6, page 11) should be reconsidered.

  **Action:** Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research, Enterprise and Scholarship)

e) It was suggested that the measures for ‘Technology that Enables Success’ for the new strategy, should include lower-level incidents that impact on staff performance.

9 **ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE REVIEW**

9.1 It was suggested that the Academic Governance Review implementation work should be integrated with the University’s New ways of working (NWOW) programme, to support effective engagement and consultation and ensure staff do not feel distanced from decision-making. It was noted that there would need to be testing and learning from the experiences of NWOW, to explore ideas from colleagues, rather than imposing solutions. The importance of face-to-face meetings for Senate and other committees was acknowledged, particularly regarding the sense of belonging for student members. The inclusivity of different types of meetings would be explored.

9.2 It was agreed that removal of the Education Committee could take place before the outcome of the Faculty governance review work, but that it would be reviewed as planned in 2022. The business of Education Committee would be conducted elsewhere in the current structure and further delegation of responsibility to faculty governance should actually further alleviate the need for some middle-tier committee responsibilities.

9.3 Senate noted that the Faculty Governance group would engage relevant stakeholders and draw on expertise as required including, ALs, student voice, faculty voice, quality and standards and Access & Open. A proposal would be brought back to Senate.

9.4 Senate approved the following initial AGR recommendations and ongoing work:
i) the focus on quality and standards for the annual meeting with Council members;
ii) the proposal for two on-line and two face-to-face meetings of Senate per year;
iii) the removal of Education Committee, subject to a review in 2022.

9.5 Senate noted the collaboration with the Council Governance Review and the improvement actions for implementation in Appendix 1 of the paper.

10 GROUP TUITION POLICY S-2021-04-06

10.1 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor Students (PVC-Students) introduced an overview of the work undertaken to assess the University’s current Group Tuition Policy (GTP). The following comments were discussed:

a) Regarding the timescales and responsibilities for the technical developments, further detail needed to be surfaced through collaborative discussions, including working with CSR to ensure effective alignment of the development of systems. Work on the use of Adobe Connect was ongoing.

b) There was a view that face-to-face tuition was underplayed in the paper yet was part of many tuition strategies. It was noted that the reassessment had fully embraced a blended approach to learning, including several suggestions about face-to-face teaching, but the focus had been on the principles rather than the delivery mode. Staff would be supported to make use of the delivery method for tuition they felt was most appropriate pedagogically. Regarding face-to-face exams, learning must be taken from the benefits that had been seen from online exams, before making any decisions.

c) It was explained that the reintroduction of face-to-face tuition had been challenging due to resources and the numerous different venues used by the OU. There had been more requests for exceptions than were planned for or could be met. The majority of tuition in the 21/22 academic year would remain online and resourcing had been planned to support requests as normal from 22J.

d) It was noted that the implementation phase would involve an open and transparent process, seeking views and providing regular opportunities for input, as well as having broad representation on the working group. Feedback was welcomed via the dedicated email address.

e) Students welcomed the paper, particularly in relation to the mention of accessibility and flexibility. Space for innovation had been created and it was important to capture that innovation.

10.2 Senate approved the proposed revisions to the Principles within the Group Tuition Policy and the recommendations for implementation during a second phase. Senate noted that there was further consultation to take place and any further recommendations would be brought back to Senate in the future.

11 MOTION: REPRESENTATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE AL CONTRACT IMPLEMENTATION S-2021-04-07

11.1 Dr Catherine Halliwell, AL Executive Chair, seconded by Dr Caitlin Adams, had proposed a motion, as set out in paper S-2021-04-07 and paragraph 5.2.

11.2 Senate:

a) reaffirms the crucial role of the ALA/ALE (Associate Lecturer Assembly/Associate Lecturer Executive) within university governance, representation and consultation
now and for the future, and the need for roles within the remit of the ALA/ALE to be filled only by that body;

b) states that for the duration of their existence the Organisational Design and Faculty Integration projects must have 1) significant and meaningful representation from the OU’s elected bodies and 2) AL and ST/SEM representation from Senate, elected by Senators, with regular reports required back to this body.

11.3 The AL Executive Chair expressed concerns around staff consultation for the next stage of the faculty integration. The University had created a democratic body of elected and trusted AL representatives, to feed into a decision-making structure on matters concerning ALs, but a recent call for expressions of interest from the AL Contract programme had asked for AL representation outside of that structure. ALs appointed outside of the democratic structure were not accountable to the AL community. She expressed that moving forward, within the University’s governance structures, the representative groups must be fully utilised.

11.4 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor opposed the motion, advising that it would limit constructive engagement with ALs. On the concerns raised in the motion over lack of effective staff consultation in the implementation of the AL Contract, she explained that there had been a diverse group of staff involved. There were AL representatives and members of UCU on the implementation Board, who had full access to the plans and milestones. There had also been important contributions from ALs outside of the ALA/ALE structure and the motion would result in that valuable input being lost in future.

11.5 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor explained that for phase two of the AL Contract implementation, expressions of interests had been sought, but as an addition to the seat for an elected ALE or ALA member. She acknowledged the importance of working with the ALA/ALE and UCU but stated that there was also an appetite from other ALs to be involved in consultation.

11.6 Senate heard from members who made the following points in favour of the motion:

a) A democratic process was in place for consultation of ALs and there had been a lot of investment in making that process a success.

b) Filling roles only by the ALA/ALE would guarantee that democratic process, engaging representatives with the authority of selection by their peers.

c) An established process was also in place to appoint representative ALs to groups/committees and paid staff to organise that process. Recruiting ALs from outside of that process had already caused issues for some ALs.

d) It was possible to recruit a diverse range of ALs from ALA/ALE as their membership was now more representative of the AL body.

e) There was a focus from ALA/ALE on the experience of students and the current elective structure would ensure those views continue to be represented.

11.7 Against the motion, the following points were made:

a) Obtaining the widest possible views of staff was key and consultation only through the ALA/ALE would restrict that.

b) Members expressed a sense of exclusiveness of representation with the current structure and highlighted the danger that it would not necessarily include the voices of the most marginalised ALs.
c) An unintended consequence of the motion could be the impact on instances of valued collaboration already taking place outside of the ALE/ALA structure. For example, where areas of the University rely on the expertise of ALs to improve Student experience in their work, currently arranged through line-managers.

d) It had been important to have a representative structure for ALs in the past, but representation of other members of staff at every level does not exist. Thought would be needed regarding where AL representation would be appropriate in the future.

11.8 When all members who wished had expressed a view, the Chair opened the vote on the motion. The following votes were recorded:

- For: 32 (40%)
- Against: 38 (47.5%)
- Abstain: 10 (12.5%)
- Total Cast: 80

11.9 Due to the range of views shown by the vote, it was agreed that the motion would be reported to the Council at the 23 November meeting.

12 ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE ASSURANCE REPORT 2020/21

The Senate approved the assurance statement on the effectiveness of the University’s academic governance arrangements in 2020/21, to be reported to the Council in November 2021.

13 EDI COMMITTEE

13.1 Questions were raised around whether the membership of the proposed EDI Committee would ensure full representation of the OU community and staff network groups, including Students, LGBT+ representation and a representative from England. Marcia Wilson, The Dean for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion explained that the proposed composition of the EDI Committee was smaller than the previous Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group (EDI-SG), as it was moving from an advisory body to a formally constituted committee, whose membership needed to be able to action change. She highlighted the importance of hearing a variety of voices and explained that the EDI Committee would be informed by, and collaborate with, the other groups and networks within the University, such as the Access, Participation and Success (APS) Working Group and the numerous Staff Network Groups. Additional representation was not needed for England, due to the make-up on the committee and as well as a member of OUSA on the committee, there was a strong student voice on the APS group. It was noted that the committee membership also reflected the need for focused and purposeful conversations around the organisational priority to reduce the gap in good module passes for Black students, which is currently three times higher than any awarding gap.

13.2 The Dean for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion noted the feedback on the EDI Committee membership for consideration, including the addition of ‘A’ for Accessibility in the name and the use of elections to appoint the EDI representatives from the Faculties.

13.3 Support for the creation of the EDI Committee was unanimous. It was agreed that comments from Senate members on the composition would be considered and a revised paper would be discussed and agreed by the Senate via an online forum in advance of the proposal being presented to Council in November 2021.

14 ETHICAL RESEARCH REVIEW BODY

Senate approved the Terms of Reference of the Ethical Research Review Body to the Senate.
15 **OPEN COLLEGE OF THE ARTS (OCA) PROPOSAL**  
Minutes 15.1 to 15.3 are recorded as Confidential Minutes (S-2021-04-CM).

16 **EMERITUS PROFESSORS**  
The Senate **approved** the recommendation from the Chairs Subcommittee that the title of Emeritus Professor is awarded to:  
   a) Professor Maureen Macintosh, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS); and  
   b) Professor Hilary Macqueen, Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

17 **ACADEMIC QUALITY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**  
Senate **noted** the unconfirmed Minutes of the last meeting of the Academic Quality and Governance Committee held on 15 September 2021.

18 **EDUCATION COMMITTEE**  
Senate **noted** the unconfirmed Minutes of the meeting of the Education Committee held on Wednesday 7 July 2021, the unconfirmed Minutes of the Education Committee held between 9 August and 3 September 2021 by correspondence and the unconfirmed confidential Minutes of the meeting of the Education Committee held on Wednesday 7 July 2021.

19 **RESEARCH COMMITTEE**  
Senate **noted** the unconfirmed Minutes of the meeting of the Research Committee held on Wednesday 07 July 2021.

20 **CHAIRS ACTIONS**  
Senate **noted** the actions taken by the Chair since the last meeting of the Senate.

21 **THE COUNCIL**  
Senate **noted** the unconfirmed Minutes of the last meeting of the Council held on 13 July 2021.

22 **DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS**

   Wednesday 26 January 2022  
   Wednesday 30 March 2022  
   Wednesday 22 June 2022

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University Secretary

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