

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF SENATE
Held on Wednesday 4th December 2019

22. ATTENDANCE, APOLOGIES AND ABSENCES

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed Senators and observers to the meeting. For a full list of attendees and apologies, see the attached list.

23. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

24. MINUTES AND ACTIONS

a) Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 16th October 2019 were approved as an accurate record.

b) Actions List

There were no actions outstanding from the previous meeting.

25. MATTERS ARISING

There were no additional matters arising.

REPORTS

26. VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT TO SENATE

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE FRAMEWORK (KEF) AND HIGHER EDUCATION INNOVATION FUNDING (HEIF)

The Vice-Chancellor gave a presentation on the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) and its link with Higher Education Innovation Funding (HEIF).

QUESTIONS FOR THE VC

A number of questions had been received for the Vice-Chancellor, the answers to which were noted in the report.

There was one follow up question relating to T accounts.

Original Question:

The question we have heard colleagues ask is related to the new policy that came into effect before it was communicated, namely with regard to the distribution and use of overheads on grants. This is related to a concern that had already arisen in the past couple of years regarding T accounts being reset to zero at the end of each financial year. As a result, it has become impossible to build up medium- to long-term spending plans because no accumulated funds would survive for more than 12 months. This not only makes it impossible to develop research programmes or manage facilities such as the Observatory, it also leads to disillusion among the account holders and may remove incentives for them to seek income as it will evaporate in front of their eyes. The University thereby shoots itself in its own foot. It may be understood that the University prefers money not to sit within a large number of distributed accounts, and rather wishes access to these monies for investment. But why can the University not operate in a similar manner as banks, which also use the total of account holders' capital but without denying access by the account holders to their own share.

Written Response:

It has been a long-standing policy at the University that T-Account balances should normally be spent in-year. This is to avoid cash-flow issues at a University level and ensure that large balances are not accumulated, that can not later be met. The changes in the approach to the allocation of research overheads is intended to provide a more strategic approach to the spending of the research overheads accumulated from research grants. Medium to long-term spending plans are not to be made through the use of T-Accounts, but should be developed through the annual three year budgeting process. By aggregating research overheads at a Faculty level, this can allow for the Faculty to be more strategic in its deployment of resources, which should facilitate more medium to long-term planning than the previous T-account approach.

Follow Up Question:

The author highlighted that the question noted the perception that the changes had been introduced by stealth and the key underlying issue was that the impact of the change was to discourage staff from seeking external funding as it was of limited life.

Response:

The Vice-Chancellor noted the feedback regarding the communication of the change and confirmed it had been echoed in other fora. It was highlighted however, that the principle of the policy was unchanged as it was always expected large balances would not be accumulated. The changes in the approach were to address accounting practicalities and issues of scale as, whilst in some cases it was possible to absorb the impact of honouring small accumulated balances, if Faculty budgets were tight this could be difficult and larger scale balances were unlikely to be able to be honoured without impacting core activities.

Heads of School were encouraged to look at ways to allocate funds differently and to incentivise small reward within the year.

Professor Wastling echoed the need for flexibility regarding issues such as conference attendance and highlighted that in Natural Sciences, funding had been able to be used for strategic projects and to increase studentships.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor confirmed that the largest research areas at Keele had always used the current approach and there was no desire to disincentivise, however, the practice of accumulating large balances needed to be avoided.

VC REPORT

The remainder of the VC report was taken as read.

In relation to the section on the EHRC report into Racial Harassment, it was queried whether the University would consider implementing an anonymous complaints policy as there was evidence to suggest this would improve disclosure rates.

The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that the University was in the early stages of considering updates to the People Strategy. Professor O'Neill confirmed changes to the existing complaints policy could be considered and he would feed this back to the REC Self-Assessment group for further consideration.

ACTION: Professor O'Neill

Regarding the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, it was noted that there were plans to appoint Champions to steer the implementation. Clarity around the expectations of this role was requested as it was noted that it can sometimes be unclear what is required and leave appointed Champions demoralised. The Vice-Chancellor noted the need for clear expectations to be in place to provide substance to the role.

Clarification was requested on the reference in the strategy to development of workload principles for academic staff. Professor O'Neill confirmed that the Academic Staffing Strategy Group were currently at an early stage of developing the guidance. It was noted that the current guidance was still accessible though it was known that it was not well used. It was highlighted that a model can't address the amount of work but the new approach aimed to encourage balance and to acknowledge sector practice in this area. The guidance would be brought to Senate later in the year when it had been more fully developed.

One Senator suggested that the strategy was quite student focussed and staff input would be required, especially when considering workload. Consideration of the inclusion of a trade union representative on the Healthy University Group (HUG) was also requested. The benefits of continued consultation were highlighted, particularly in terms of ensuring the needs of a variety of groups were considered, for example in relation to resilience. The Vice-Chancellor noted the feedback, highlighting that other feedback had suggested the strategy was quite staff focussed which indicated this was a matter of opinion. It was also highlighted the risk that HUG membership would become too large and it was intended to be a strategic steering group, no guarantee of extended membership could be given but the feedback was noted.

The Vice-Chancellor thanked Senate for their comments and confirmed they would be fed back to the Healthy University Group. It was also noted that the Strategy would be formally launched in January to coincide with the conclusion of the Row Britannia Event.

27. STUDENT OFFICER REPORTS

i) Report of KeeleSU

Amy Holden presented the report and highlighted positive feedback had been received from the recent Keele 100 event which had been well attended. The campaign to keep Wednesday afternoons free was confirmed as ongoing, recent feedback concerned the Foundation Year and the School of Nursing and Midwifery. Foundation Year issues had been discussed and hopefully resolved for semester two. The issues in the School of Nursing and Midwifery were being explored further. Heads of School were encouraged to contact KeeleSU if classes were due to be scheduled on Wednesday afternoons in semester two. The success of other recent campaign activity for Alcohol Awareness week was highlighted as noted in the report.

It was confirmed that the current focus of KeeleSU activity was around the general election with a successful hustings event for local candidates held on 3 December 2019. Given that Newcastle-under-Lyme was a marginal seat, there had been a focussed campaign to encourage students to register to vote. Particular thanks were noted to lecturers who had published the voter registration website at the start of classes and allowed students time to complete the online process if they wished to.

It was noted that some feedback had been received regarding the recent KeeleSU by-election where the role of gender equality officer had not been filled despite there being only one candidate. It was confirmed that SU ballots always included the option to re-open nominations (RON). There had been a campaign among students to vote RON which had been successful, therefore the process would be re-run.

Finally, Senate were asked to note the table regarding student voice representatives in the report. Schools who had vacancies were asked to encourage students to stand.

The Vice-Chancellor congratulated the elected officers on the hustings event held on the previous evening.

The motion from the Union General Meeting (UGM) regarding assignment submission time was highlighted and it was confirmed staff had also received feedback from students that the time was inconvenient as it was difficult to get on to campus and the previous approach where deadlines were spread throughout the day had been more flexible.

Professor O'Sullivan confirmed that the standard time had been agreed primarily in response to student feedback and in agreement with the previous elected officer team. It was noted that not all assignments could be submitted electronically but where they could, the time should not present an issue. It was confirmed that the University was happy to change the time in response to recent student feedback but the implications of a further change needed to be fully thought through before the new

time was decided. It was also noted that another driver for the introduction of a set time was to ensure consistency and clarity as the lack of standardisation had been a noticeable cause of appeals in the past.

ii) Report of the Keele Postgraduate Association (KPA)

Katie Charlton presented the report and noted that the KPA had welcomed a new International Officer, Archit Tamboli, following a recent by-election. It was highlighted that the KPA had received increased feedback from PGR students regarding supervisory issues, individual cases were being considered, however, the Keele Doctoral Academy (KDA) would be key in helping to address the issue more broadly. Feedback from PGT students had also highlighted that they feel increasingly under prepared for the transition from UG study, workshops were being developed to help address this. A working group had also been established for PGR students who could fulfil the role of student voice representatives.

Discussion followed, where it was highlighted that staff turnover had a particular impact on PGR supervision and the University had been through a period of significant turnover recently. The limitations of six monthly progression reviews as a means to highlight issues were also noted. Professor Amigoni confirmed that there were known areas of inconsistency in current practice and echoed the point already made regarding the establishment of the KDA to bring consistency of practice and help to ensure that students had clear expectations from the process. It was confirmed that progression panels included an independent member and there was an opportunity for students to raise issues with them outside of the meeting. The PGR Code of Practice also included clear guidance on how to raise issues with supervision.

28. RESEARCH UPDATES

Professor Amigoni presented the report and began by drawing Senate's attention to the table at Annex C showing a RAG rating for the 17 potential Units of Assessment for the forthcoming REF submission. It was highlighted that by December 2020 the submission would have been made. The table had been put together following the mock REF carried out in November and thanks were noted to colleagues who had contributed to the exercise, another of which was due to take place in spring 2020. Programmes of work were in place to ensure preparedness and it was confirmed that the University planned to be as ready as possible by summer 2020.

The updates from Research Committee were noted and the increase in research grant applications made in 2018/19 was highlighted. Congratulations were also noted to all those who had successfully secured grant funding, with an updated list provided in the report.

It was highlighted that the Excellence in Research HR award application had been submitted in November 2019 and the Academic Lead for Research Integrity and Improvement was now in post. Dr Jim Grange from the School of Psychology would lead on finalising and implementing the action plan to meet the conditions of the revised Concordat to Support Research Integrity.

Professor Amigoni confirmed that subsequent to the production of the report to Senate, c. £470k of Research England funding had been secured for policy related research which was expected to provide some fluid resources for training and development.

It was confirmed that the KeeleDeal|Health had been formally launched in November, this was the third Keele Deal with a fourth around social inclusion being developed for launch in 2020. The Keele Deals constituted partnership arrangements in support of the Civic Universities agenda.

It was also noted that the Keele Institute for Global Health would be formally launched in early 2020.

Discussion followed and an issue experienced by the School of Social, Political and Global Studies in preparing a REF impact case was highlighted. The visit of the Office of Product Safety and Standards was also queried in relation to the Nagoya Protocol. It was agreed both these issues would be addressed outside the meeting.

Finally, it was confirmed that work to establish the Keele Doctoral Academy was well underway and a manager had been appointed who would take up post in January 2020. The position of Academic Director was currently being advertised. The KDA would be formally launched at the Postgraduate Conference in 2020.

Senate was asked to approve revised terms of reference for Research Committee, Faculty Postgraduate Research Committee and Research Degrees Committee to reflect the establishment of the KDA in governance structures.

Senate resolved:

That the changes to the terms of reference for Research Committee, Research Degrees Committee and Faculty Postgraduate Research Committee **be approved**.

Senate resolved:

That the establishment of the University Doctoral Academy Committee and the terms of reference proposed **be approved**.

29. EDUCATION UPDATES

Professor O’Sullivan presented the report and highlighted that since the establishment of the Widening Participation Sub-Committee approved at the last meeting of Senate, the group had met and decided to change their name to the Student Access and Advancement Sub-Committee. This change was welcomed as a much clearer title, articulating the role of the group and its core activities very well.

The following items were proposed for Senate Approval.

(a) Regulation E1- University Qualifications Framework

Professor O'Sullivan confirmed that changes had been made to the University Qualifications Framework to better reflect the distinction between taught and MRes masters' programmes.

Senate noted that there was a reduction in the minimum number of taught credits for MRes programmes and queried how many programmes were affected. Professor O'Sullivan confirmed that the changes presented reflected sector norms. It had been noted that there were a number of existing programmes and some still being developed that could not immediately move to the new structure. In these cases, it was expected that the change would be made at the time of the next full programme review.

Senate **resolved:**

That the changes to Regulation E1- University Qualifications Framework **be approved.**

(b) Induction Week

Professor O'Sullivan introduced the proposals and confirmed their development had been led by Rafe Hallett, Director of KIITE and Anne Loweth, PVC Students. Senate had been notified in June 2019 that the project was underway and since then the formal proposals had been developed and widely consulted on through the Education Committee structure.

Discussion followed and concern was expressed by a number of programmes with existing structured induction arrangements, either locally agreed or required due to professional body requirements, that these arrangements would have to change. Professor O'Sullivan confirmed that the proposals were a baseline and there was no intention to replace existing arrangements or requirements where they already operated well. It was highlighted that the key function of the proposals was to encourage students to get to know their cohort early on, to try to address the identified spike in leavers within a month of registration, many of whom cite feelings of isolation among their reasons for withdrawal.

Consideration of setting a sustainability based project was requested given the University's declaration of a Climate Emergency and existing specialisms in this area. It was noted as a clear opportunity for interdisciplinary study. Professor O'Sullivan welcomed the suggestion and invited the Director of Education for Sustainability to join the working group.

Senate **resolved:**

That the proposed changes to student induction, as set out in the paper **be approved.**

30. LIBRARY ANNUAL REPORT TO SENATE 2018/19

Mr Reynolds presented the report noting many positive achievements for the Library during the year including NSS results above the top quartile and in the top 25 institutions nationally. An improvement in PRES results was also highlighted, which reflected significant progress, though it was noted that there was still work to do. It was highlighted that the library staff had also received a team teaching

award from KeeleSU and achieved a Root and Branch award. Key developments had been made in exploring service development, including information literacy training within which the Escape Room had proved very popular.

It was also noted that the Library had faced a number of challenges during the year, some of which were ongoing in terms of the continued rise in the cost of academic materials which had seen a 5-10% increase despite low inflation. The effect of Brexit uncertainty on the value of Sterling was noted as a compounding factor. The issue of open access was also highlighted with the new approach of publish and read welcomed in terms of a single fee but concern was expressed around the affordability of the fees set by publishers.

It was noted that usage of the campus library building remained a challenge with pressure on space and the ageing fabric of the building, combined with increased student numbers and the physical impact of 24/7 opening presenting issues. It was highlighted that there had also been an increase in behavioural issues during the year, which, although small in number were a significant issue for staff to deal with. The key difficulty in this area arose from the building being seen as a social space despite efforts to address this in terms of education and provision of alternative space. Any input from Senators to help address this issue was welcomed.

It was queried whether any national negotiations were taking place to address publication fees post Brexit. It was confirmed that the issue had been mitigated to a degree with the two largest providers moving to charge in Sterling which helped provide a level of stability.

31. SECRETARY'S REPORT

Senate received the report and noted the approval of the Religion and Belief Policy by UEC.

FOR FORMAL APPROVAL BY SENATE

The papers detailing the Awards and Prizes associated with this minute can be found on the Senate section of the KLE. If you require sight of the paper and are not able to access this page, please contact the Governance Office in the first instance.

(i) Academic Awards

Senate **resolved:**

That the awards as set out in the papers, including the amendments to awards submitted to the Governance team between the time that the papers were circulated and the time of the meeting (details of the awards amended were outlined in the reserved minutes) be **approved**.

(ii) Award of Prizes

Senate **resolved:**

That the prizes set out in the papers, including the amendments to awards submitted to the Governance team between the time that the papers were circulated and the time of the meeting (details of the awards amended were outlined in the reserved minutes) be **approved**.

(iii) Codes of Practice

Senate **resolved:**

That the changes to the Collaborative Provision Code of Practice and the Postgraduate Research Degrees Code of Practice, as presented in the paper be **approved**.

(iv) External Examiners

Senate **resolved:**

That the nominations for examiners for taught and research degrees, set out within the paper, be **approved**.

(v) Conferment of Honorary Titles

Senate **resolved:**

That the conferment of honorary titles set out within the paper be **approved**.

32. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS

No further items raised.

33. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No further items raised.

A Ms Dorothea Ross-Simpson

Head of Academic Quality and Student Conduct,
Student and Academic Services

OBSERVERS

Filippo Nereo
Simon Clements

Associate Director- KIITE
Head of Projects and Service Assurance- Information
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