



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF SENATE

Held on Wednesday 8th March 2017

For a record of apologies and absences, please see the attached list.

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed Senators to the meeting, noting that the agenda for the meeting was extensive. Senators were reminded that whilst discussion was welcome, there was a need to ensure progress through the agenda to ensure there was time for full consideration of all items.

48. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

49. MINUTES AND ACTIONS

(a) Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of Senate on 7th December 2016 were agreed as an accurate record.

(b) Actions List

It was noted that all matters on the actions list had been completed.

50. MATTERS ARISING

Senators queried when the evaluation of the Lecture capture pilot was expected and whether it would be coming back to Senate. It was confirmed that a paper would shortly be presented to ULTC and then an update would be brought to Senate at the next meeting, in June 2017.

51. QUESTIONS FOR THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

It was confirmed at the meeting of Senate in December 2017 that a new standing item would be introduced to allow members of Senate to submit written questions in advance of the meeting. The purpose of the item was to allow members to raise business that would not otherwise be covered on the agenda.

One written question was been received in advance of the meeting of Senate, as below:

Question:

If Keele is awarded Gold in the upcoming TEF it will, as I understand, be eligible to raise its tuition fees. What are Keele's intentions in this regard and, should it decide to raise its fees, how is this compatible with its commitment to Widening Participation and NCOP (recently reiterated at your University Update on 1st February), both of which seek to encourage university enrolment by

young people from economically disadvantaged areas – the very group which has repeatedly been demonstrated to be highly debt-averse (Maringe, Foskett and Roberts, 2009; Callendar and Jackson, 2008; Pennell and West 2005 inter alios). In the words of one study ' [those] who are least debt-averse are more likely to go to university than those who are anti-debt; the latter include those from the lowest socio-economic groups and certain black and minority ethnic groups.... Even when such students do take this risk, they are more likely than their more affluent peers to experience financial difficulties while studying, which affects their academic performance and achievement as well as the chances of completing their courses successfully' (Callendar and Jackson 2005).

Question submitted by: Robin Bell, Elected Member of Senate (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences)

The Vice-Chancellor thanked Ms Bell for her question and confirmed that, fees for 2017/18 entrants were already confirmed. It was noted that the current political climate was uncertain with a desire from Government to introduce a competitive market but with doubt from the House of Lords. The implications of a change, particularly if there was a move towards uncapped fees, would require thorough consideration.

In terms of widening participation, significant work was already underway as part of the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP), coordinated by Keele, demonstrating the University's continued commitment to widening participation and improving access. The aims of NCOP were to address the knowledge and information barriers (as identified by the research quoted) to students accessing a University education, by promoting an understanding of what it means to go to University.

It was also noted that the University's Office for Fair Access (OFFA) Agreement required additional effort to be applied to widening participation activities if fees were to be further increased and over the last year, thirty percent of the income generated by increased fees had been spent on widening participation activities. It was noted that the type of activity is also important, in that, it was not sufficient to offer only financial support when in fact, practical support for students when they arrive was much more beneficial, alongside ongoing support for example during transition periods. In light of this, the University had committed to providing the appropriate long term support for students when they arrive and not just to get them here.

The need to monitor the external environment was noted, to ensure the University was aligned with selected peers. It was highlighted that by increasing fees for new students only, this created a 'cost' in that income was reduced and that this would impact on the University's competitive advantage for example, in relation to staff costs.

In summary, it was confirmed that all these factors would be assessed and a balance needed to be struck between making the University as attractive as possible requiring a competitive edge, whilst ensuring that what was being offered was financially feasible for students. The timescale for any decisions in this area were contingent on the passage of the current Higher Education Bill through parliament.

PART 1 – STRATEGIC DISCUSSION ITEMS

52. PORTFOLIO AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT PROJECT AND TIMETABLING UPDATE

PORTFOLIO AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor introduced the paper and confirmed that, as it was almost a year since Senate discussed the Portfolio and Curriculum Development project in detail, an update on

the first phases of the project was being provided. Thanks were noted to the Associate Deans for Learning & Teaching for their input and challenge within the process which had been invaluable.

The aims and context of the project were explained specifically around the changes in demand from students between Single and Dual Honours programmes and the complexity of the current portfolio, impacting on marketing and accessibility of information about popular programmes. The benefits of simplifying the curriculum were noted, both from an academic and efficiency point of view.

It was noted that the review of modules was due to commence imminently, with a three to four month window to finalise the revised offering. Input from Programme Leads and Heads of School was key to this process which would consolidate work already being undertaken. The changes in module structure were expected to add a balance between maintaining student choice but also freeing up staff time, including by rationalising the number of modules available. It was noted that in 2016/17 approximately ten thousand module choices had had to be activated by staff and there was a need to reduce this dramatically.

Concern from the Language Centre regarding the impact of the changes on the number of students able to take up language modules was noted, specifically around whether the changes to the credit system allowed sufficient flexibility. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor reiterated previous assurances that the implications had been considered carefully, in consultation with the Head of the Language Centre. It was confirmed that the increase in single honours programmes was expected to maintain the flexibility to allow students who wished to study a language to do so.

Senate discussed the review of modules and noted that whilst the majority of staff had been persuaded, in principle, of the benefits of making the changes to the credit structure, there was concern that in practice there could be less academic diversity. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor confirmed that final decisions would be made based on academic judgement having carefully considered the data.

Senate asked whether changes to the process to bring forward the student ballot for elective modules had been considered. Dr Galbraith confirmed that this was under active consideration, although it may not be possible to make any changes for the upcoming cycle. She also noted that, whilst there was a compelling case to bring the timing of module choice forward, this would also require an earlier timeline for related processes, such as module change and approval.

In terms of next steps, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor would liaise with Planning and Academic Administration, Deans and Associate Deans to take forward the module review process over the coming months. In terms of the Postgraduate Taught Portfolio in a particular, it was noted that the external environment would be a driver of the nature and timing of future change, as the University would need an innovative and rational portfolio to compete effectively in a changing market.

TIMETABLING UPDATE

Dr Galbraith summarised the main drivers for the review, mainly around optimal use of available space and responding to the significant issues experienced in September 2016. Feedback from both staff and the NSS also highlighted the need for urgent improvements to the process. It was confirmed that the review was aimed to be informed by better data to allow more responsive modelling, which in turn would be enabled by system improvements. System changes were currently at the pilot stage.

In terms of process improvements, a process review had been supported by external consultants and a review report was expected shortly with recommendations and a road map for change. A

key aim was to build the timetabling process into an integrated and coherent academic planning cycle.

A new Timetabling Steering Group had been established and was due to meet for the first time on 9 March 2017, there would also be an operations group overseeing the new developments. Dr Galbraith thanked colleagues who had engaged with the process so far noting that feedback on the case for and approach to review had been very positive.

PROTOCOLS

A coherent set of timetabling protocols were felt to be fundamental in underpinning the University's future approach to timetabling. The proposed protocols were a foundation for further work and would form the guiding principles to work towards optimal use of space and a consistent and efficient process aligned with other priorities. Senate's feedback was being sought along with endorsement of the protocols to allow the project to progress.

Senators highlighted that some of the protocols would be challenging to achieve, this was noted.

Discussion took place around Wednesday afternoon timetabling. The need to avoid using Wednesday afternoons, where possible, was acknowledged and supported. The KPA Representative highlighted that this was a particular issue for Postgraduate Taught Students as a significant number of their timetabled activities were on Wednesday afternoons. However, it was accepted that the current focus was on avoiding core timetabled teaching on Wednesday afternoons for undergraduates.

Issues around access to specialist rooms were acknowledged as were the practical implications of room moves. Senate discussed the teaching day and it was emphasised that there was no expectation that staff would work constantly from 9am to 7pm. It was highlighted that there were currently periods within the timetable that were under utilised, in particular Friday afternoons, so there was a clear need to ensure that available time was used optimally which could mitigate the need for evening teaching. It was also noted that other aspects of the PCD project were aimed to improve flexibility for staff and release time for other activities. The need to ensure consideration of wider equality and diversity issues around teaching hours was noted.

Senate asked whether staff could decline to teach during the evening. It was confirmed that, as already explained, the intention was to minimise the requirement for evening teaching as much as possible.

Senate noted that as the University was looking to grow and the number of modules being offered was to reduce, class sizes would increase making the need for appropriate space crucial. This was acknowledged and it was noted that construction of a large lecture theatre was on the capital programme, it was anticipated that it would be operational by 2019.

Senate queried the outcome of the Equality Impact Assessment that had been undertaken. Dr Galbraith confirmed that the process had been undertaken successfully and correspondence with the Human Resources department had taken place. It was stressed that the protocols presented were broad and were intended to allow an appropriate degree of flexibility in local arrangements.

The KeeleSU representative welcomed the protocols which they felt were a solid foundation to make real improvements to the process.

Senate **resolved:**

That the protocols presented be endorsed as a basis on which to move forward with the project.

It was noted that dialogue would continue as the project progressed and it was confirmed that Senate would receive updates on progress.

PART 2 – REPORTS

53. RESTRICTED BUSINESS

54. STUDENT OFFICER REPORTS

(a) Report of KeeleSU

Ms Horsfall presented her report and confirmed that the turnout in the recent elections had been the highest ever recorded at Keele and also well in excess of the national average, representing a significant achievement. Thanks were noted to the Estates Directorate for their support in improving social spaces. It was also reported that the launch of World Festival had been very well attended. KeeleSU were closely monitoring the progress of current legislation going through parliament including around Voter Registration, TEF and the NSS Boycott.

(b) Report of the President of Keele Postgraduate Association (KPA)

Mr Smith presented his report and confirmed that progress was being made with identifying overnight study spaces for use over the summer. Thanks were noted to the University for involving the KPA in recruitment activity, particularly the recent process to recruit a Postgraduate Officer. Key projects currently ongoing included work to develop social activities both within the clubhouse and elsewhere and work to maintain the newly established national networks.

55. LEARNING AND TEACHING UPDATES

Professor Cownie presented her report and confirmed that the majority of information could be taken as read. There were three key areas for discussion as outlined below:

(a) Module Evaluation Policy

Ms Ross-Simpson confirmed that some minor amendments had been made to the questionnaire following the last discussion at Senate and the results were being presented ahead of the pilot of the new process in semester two. It was confirmed that the key change was to move from words to numbers to mirror the NSS more effectively and the aim of the process was to allow module leaders an opportunity to reflect on practice. Questions could be changed if approved by the relevant Associate Dean for Learning and Teaching.

A small number of Senators expressed concern that asking students to evaluate every module was excessive and ran the risk of diluting the feedback provided. This point was acknowledged, however, there was a strong feeling that evaluation in this way was required to maintain an overview. It was emphasised that the expectation had always been that all modules would be evaluated, therefore, this was not a change in University policy and given that each time a module is delivered is different there was a clear need to maintain oversight.

It was agreed that response rates during the pilot would be examined closely to in order to assess the impact and this information would be fed back.

Senate **agreed** the new format for piloting in Semester Two.

(b) Extenuating Circumstances Policy Decisions

Dr Herbert reported that the Extenuating Circumstances Sub-Committee had been established in 2015/16 as part of the changes to the Extenuating Circumstances process and the move towards electronic submission. The role of the Sub-Committees was to oversee the application of the Extenuating Circumstances process to ensure fairness and consistency, however, in its first year of operation, the group had also picked up operational matters with regard to the new system and its implementation.

Following a review of the operation of the new arrangements in their first year, a number of policy changes had been recommended to address areas of concern within the operation of Extenuating Circumstances and to improve the University's approach in this area.

(i) Renaming of the process to **Exceptional** Circumstances

It was felt that this name change better reflected the types of circumstances that could be considered, reinforcing an important distinction between long term pre-existing conditions that, from 2017/18 would be dealt with under the Support to Study Policy and unforeseen exceptional circumstances, covered by the EC procedure.

(ii) Extenuating Circumstances for Passed Modules

Current practice allowed students to submit an EC claim for a completed assessment. If the assessment was passed, the student could choose whether or not to take re-assessment. There were a number of issues with the application of this policy, as noted in the paper. Most significantly, the current process required Level 6 students to make a decision on re-assessment, affecting their graduation date, before they were aware of their results. It was proposed that the University continue to accept claims for completed assessments but that these were only approved in the event of failure. If the assessment had been passed, the claim would be retained on file for consideration should the student fall within the borderline criteria.

(iii) Exceptional Consideration of Student Cases by the Examination Board

It was noted that historically the University had maintained a provision for exceptional consideration of student cases at the examination board. As documented within the paper, the application of this process was problematic. It was proposed that this provision be removed.

(iv) Extension Requests Capped at a Maximum of Four Weeks

The data on the operation of the new EC process indicated a huge volume of claims. Investigation of the reasons behind this was ongoing but early indications were that a significant proportion of claims were as a result of follow up extension requests, where the initial extension deadline had not been met and a further extension was required. To mitigate this, it was proposed that extension requests be capped at a maximum of four weeks following which, or in cases where it was known that the extension needed to be for longer, the outcome of the claim would be to allow a re-assessment at the next opportunity.

Senate were supportive of the proposals and welcomed the clarity being provided. Concern was expressed regarding whether 'Exceptional' captured circumstances arising as a result of mental health problems. It was confirmed that it would capture unforeseen issues but not day to day management of needs arising from a long term condition, as the EC process was not the place for this and there was a need for students to be directed to the most appropriate support mechanism.

Concern was also noted regarding the inconsistency of the current algorithm with regard to borderlines. Dr Galbraith confirmed that PAA would investigate this issue. Issues of the possible impact of personal circumstances on GPA and transcripts were also highlighted, this was noted.

Senate **resolved:**

That the proposed policy changes be approved for implementation from the 2017/18 academic year.

- (c) Exceptional Circumstances Code of Practice
In support of the policy decisions recommended above, a Code of Practice had been developed to clearly define the operation of the EC process. The draft code of practice was being presented for discussion. Comments were welcome either as part of the discussion or to be provided to Laura Harrison (l.harrison@keele.ac.uk) by 9th April 2017. The final draft would be presented to Senate in June for approval.

Senate requested that Funeral Orders of Service be reinstated to the list of acceptable evidence for bereavement claims. This was supported.

- (d) Learning and Teaching Technologies Committee
Professor Shardlow confirmed that since his appointment as Strategic Lead for learning Technologies, he had also taken up the position of Chair of the LTTC. The Committee had met held an initial meeting to review operation and membership following a hiatus after the departure of the previous chair. Initial priorities were a review of the VLE and to raise the profile of learning technologies among students and staff. Relevant updates would be provided to Senate as the work progressed.

56. RESEARCH MATTERS

(a) Research Update and Research Strategy

Professor Amigoni presented his report and highlighted that it included the revised Research Strategy for approval. The new strategy set out ambitious targets and expected outcomes but also added measures and context around this to allow improvement and performance to be monitored. In support of this, minor amendments had been made to the operation of Research Committee, as set out in the paper, to allow a clearer link with the Strategy. The Research and Innovation Support and Enhancement (RAISE) initiative was also being launched to support the implementation of the strategy.

It was noted that the Strategy talked a lot about teaching activities, however, it was felt that this reflected the University's commitment to research led teaching and so was not a negative thing.

Senate **resolved to recommend to Council:**

That the Research Strategy be approved.

(b) Postgraduate Research Code of Practice

Professor Amigoni confirmed that the Code of Practice had been comprehensively updated, it was noted that this was long overdue and significant developments had been required to ensure the new version was consistent with existing practice and compliant with external regulatory requirements. Thanks were noted to Jo Sylvester from the PAA Governance team for leading on this work, which had included a complete overhaul of forms and accompanying guidance alongside wide consultation with stakeholders to ensure that the draft was comprehensive.

Discussion of the draft was invited. Professor Amigoni confirmed that Senate was being asked to approve the Code of Practice. If this was not possible, they were asked to delegate authority to the PGR Strategic Development Group to approve any requested amendments.

Senate asked that the wording of paragraph 7.8 be amended to include explicit reference to the supervisor being involved in decisions regarding changes in supervisory arrangements. This was to take adequate account of the role of the supervisor and the sense of ownership of projects that was required, to change the supervisor without their input was felt to be unreasonable. It was stressed that the expectation was that the supervisor would be involved in the discussion and there was no intention that they would be routinely excluded.

Concern was also expressed regarding the lack of provision for early career staff to be able to supervise projects. Again, it was stressed that this was not the intention but it was agreed that the wording would be reviewed to make clear that this was possible, as long as appropriate mentoring was in place for the supervisor.

Professor Amigoni noted these points, emphasising that there was a need to ensure that the new Code of Practice was pitched at an appropriate level to mitigate the need for regular amendments. In support of this, the need to ensure operational issues were captured via the guidance documents was stressed. It was agreed that the points raised were noted and would be fed back to the PGR Strategic Development Group for a decision.

Senate **resolved:**

That the revised PGR Code of Practice be approved, subject to consideration of the points raised in the discussion. Authority for the approval of these minor changes was delegated to the PGR Strategic Development Group. Once these changes had been made, this Group would ensure communication of the final Code.

Dr Mark Bacon- Director of Engagement and Partnerships attended for this item.

57. DIRECTORATE OF ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS ANNUAL REPORT

Dr Bacon presented his report and highlighted that since the last annual report to Senate, a significant proportion of the funding target for strategic investment projects had been secured with key initiatives being the Keele Deal, the Smart Energy Network Demonstrator (SEND), the Mercia Centre, Entrepreneurs in Residence, the Keele Business Gateway and the Healthcare Resource Centre.

Following successful revision of the University's approach to the HEBCIS return, the level of HEIF funding received had been improved. This proved fortuitous as it fell just before change in the approach to allocation.

Looking ahead to the coming year, it was noted that the Directorate had a broad remit and had been through a significant period of change, further changes in service delivery functions were planned, in support of the delivery of the RAISE programme and there was a noticeable shift in terms of how the Directorate was moving forward.

A REF Impact Group had been established to inform the Directorate in how to move forward on a day to day basis to support the University's preparations for REF 2021. The post of Head of Development and Supporter Engagement had recently been filled and would be taken up in April 2017, this was a key development to support activities in the area of the Directorate.

Planning for the Mercia Centre (IC6) was well underway with planning permission and funding being sought, it was hoped that work would commence in November 2018. It was noted that investment in this area was not a side activity, and represented an investment in academic activity and in provision to support Keele students as they move into employment.

In terms of HEBGIS and HEIF, it was highlighted that the last page of the report reflects the step change in this area from collaboration with the wider community towards value and ownership of the Science Park. The Knowledge Exchange Strategy had been submitted and though still subject to approval, it was hoped that HEIF funding was secure at the current level for three to four years. Spending of the current HEIF allocation was shown in the report across the eight key priorities.

It was highlighted that the report demonstrated how mainstream the activity within the Directorate was, in that the link between education and research activity was embedded and the work streams were key to the University achieving its strategic aims by 2020.

Discussion took place on spending of the HEIF allocation and whether the areas where funds were currently spent were the most beneficial. It was highlighted that initiatives such as KPAC and CASIC were key to deliver against HEFCE requirements and demonstrate the University's contribution to the local economy. It was also emphasised that DEP was not centralist and was looking to collaborate closely with the rest of the University and devolve activities where possible.

The Vice-Chancellor emphasised the political interests in this area and that the recent budget reflects how important these activities are to support the University's strategy and ambitions in the current climate.

58. INTERNATIONALISATION UPDATE

Professor Luther presented his report, confirming that it was the first of a regular paper that would update Senate on internationalisation activity. Key projects were currently being undertaken on addressing the attainment gap for international students by supporting staff to develop support for the students.

A teleconference had taken place with SEGi College to improve recruitment and due diligence was well underway on a new Chinese partnership.

59. SECRETARY'S REPORT

Dr Galbraith presented the report which included various items for approval as detailed below.

(a) FOR FORMAL APPROVAL BY SENATE

The papers detailing the Awards, Prizes and amendments to 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) University Prizes

Award of Prizes

Senate **resolved:**

That the award of prizes, as listed in the paper, be **approved**.

Amended Prizes

Senate **resolved:**

That the amendments to prizes and funds, as listed in the paper, be **approved**.

(iii) Academic Warnings Policy

Senate **resolved:**

That the amendments to the Academic Warnings Policy, as presented in the paper, be **approved**.

(b) FOR RECOMMENDATION OF APPROVAL TO COUNCIL

(i) Senior Appointments

Senate and **resolved to recommend:**

That the senior appointments listed in the paper be **approved**.

(ii) Amendments to Statutes, Ordinances and Regulations

Senate **resolved to recommend to Council:**

That the amendments to the University Regulations, as set out in the paper be **approved:**

(iii) External Examiners

Senate **resolved to recommend to Council:**

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

(iv) Award of Honorary Titles

Senate **resolved to recommend to Council:**

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

60. AMENDMENTS TO THE PROCESS FOR THE AWARD OF HONORARY DEGREES

Senate received the paper and accepted the proposals to:

(a) Establish a new joint committee of Senate and Council to oversee the awards of Honorary Degrees.

(b) Establish a new process for the award of Honorary Degrees.

(c) Establish a framework to revoke Honorary Degrees where deemed necessary.

Senate **resolved to recommend to Council:**

That the proposals be **approved**.

61. STUDENT CASEWORK MATTERS

Senate received the reports and noted the steps taken by the School of Nursing and Midwifery improve the handling of minor disciplinary matters at a lower level before the need to constitute a Health and Conduct Panel. It was also noted that UEC were considering the format of casework reports as to whether an annual report to Senate was the most appropriate way to oversee the process.

62. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS

No further matters raised.