

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

SENATE

14th November 2012

MINUTES

Present: Professor D S Eastwood (Vice-Chancellor and Principal, in the Chair); Dr D Bailey; Professor J S Bale (Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor); Professor P K Byers; Dr M Calvert; Ms I Chis; Dr T Dafforn; Professor S P Ellis; Professor I F Fairchild; Professor M Freer; Dr S Forcer; Professor B V Ford-Lloyd; Professor P J Fryer; Dr E Fulton; Mr S Furse; Dr D Ghica; Dr J Green; Professor J K Heath (Pro-Vice-Chancellor); Professor E Jenkinson (Acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Dr S Kita; Professor D Lee; Professor P Kumar; Dr H Laville; Professor P Lumley; Professor A Lymer; Dr R May; Ms R Myatt; Dr K Nightingale; Professor K O'Brien (Pro-Vice-Chancellor); Mr. S Parsons; Professor E W Peck (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Professor T Ponman; Dr C Ray; Professor J E Rowe; Professor C Ryan; Professor A Sanders; Dr D Shepherd; Professor M C Sheppard (Provost and Vice-Principal); Dr A Siniver; Professor P M Stewart; Professor A Tickell (Pro-Vice-Chancellor); Professor M Webber, Professor M Whitby (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College)

Also present: Mr B Casey (Director of Academic Services); Dr S J L Gower (Assistant Secretary); Ms T Lancaster (Director of External Relations); Ms V Pargetter (Assistant Registrar); Mr L Sanders (Registrar and Secretary)

Apologies: Professor K Armour; Mr B Aylott; Professor J K Chipman; Dr J Phillimore; Professor M C Press (Pro-Vice-Chancellor & Head of College); Professor M D Stringer

Papers: The minute book contains copies of all written papers or reports to which reference is made below unless indicated otherwise.

12/29 Membership and Terms of Reference

Received: the membership of the Senate for 2012/13 and its terms of reference (SEN.12.11.01).

12/30 Minutes of previous meeting

Agreed: to approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 13th June 2012 (SEN.12.11.02).

12/31 Matters arising not addressed elsewhere on the agenda

There were none.

12/32 Vice-Chancellor's Items

Received: a report from the Vice-Chancellor on a number of items for information (SEN.12.11.03).

(i) Research Grant Capture

Reported: that there had been an increase of 50% since last year in new research awards. This was an outstanding performance at a time when the environment for research finding was particularly challenging.

(ii) League Table Performance

Reported: that the University's performance in the Sunday Times University League Table, rising from 25th to 13th place in one year, had been particularly pleasing. Work continued to ensure that this success was replicated on other League Tables.

12/33 Recruitment 2012 and 2013

(COMMERCIAL – IN CONFIDENCE)

Received: a paper (SEN.12.11.04).

12/34 Curriculum Review – Progress Update

Received: a report on progress from Professor Karen O'Brien (SEN.12.11.05).

Reported: that

- (a) since the summer further workshops and College road shows had taken place, at which there had been good attendance and engagement. Student workshops were also being run and there was a continuing on-line consultation;
- (b) there was an emerging consensus that the University needed to reduce the assessment burden and to ensure that feedback was provided to students at more appropriate times. Each School would undertake a major review of its assessment portfolio with a particular focus on reducing the volume of summative assessment at module level. Schools would continue to investigate whether there were ways of moving from didactic lectures towards more interactive forms of delivery;
- (c) other areas of potential development included the possibility of delivering a significant additional student opportunity in the final two weeks of the Summer Term to all first year students; the creation of a University accredited Academic Skills Award (comprising for example, languages, mathematical modelling, academic writing); internationalising the curriculum; and further opportunities for students to undertake supplementary study and again additional GPA credits.

12/35 NSS Results 2012

Received: a paper from Professor Karen O'Brien (SEN.12.11.06).

Noted: that

- (a) the University's overall satisfaction score had again risen this year to 88%, the highest score it had yet achieved. Scores for all individual questions were better than last year;
- (b) Feedback and Assessment, Learning Resources and Organisation and Management continued to be the key areas of concern, though it was recognised that student perceptions of improvements might change only slowly;
- (c) a number of departments were achieving consistently high scores, but more needed to perform at this level, particularly those with large programmes;
- (d) the overall target score at 88% for overall satisfaction would remain unchanged for 2013, whilst aiming to ensure that all subjects were at least above half way in scores for their discipline. The intention remained to increase the overall target to 90% in 2014; there would be a special focus on raising the performance in the larger subjects.

12/36 Key Information Sets: Analysis

Received: a paper from Professor Jeff Bale (SEN.12.11.07).

Noted: that

- (a) the Key Information Sets (KIS) aimed to provide comparable sets of standardised information about undergraduate programmes. They were designed to provide information to prospective students and are published on university and college web sites, as well as nationally on the Unistats website;
- (b) information on "scheduled learning and teaching" and institutional accommodation costs – the only data institutions were able to amend – had been carefully reviewed at key points in the last three months and action taken to ensure that information on contact hours had been recorded accurately. It was likely that, unless other institutions also reviewed upwards their contact hours, only one programme from this university would fall in the bottom quartile;
- (c) a monitoring group would review datasets as they were published over the coming year to check the position of our programmes and to make amendments as appropriate. The group would also monitor intelligence from prospective students to establish the use made of the KIS to inform decisions on applications.

Agreed: to thank Professor Bale and his colleagues for their work on the KIS.

12/37 Grade Point Averages

Received: a paper from Professor Karen O'Brien (SEN.12.11.08).

Noted: that the University remained in the vanguard of a group of universities that were committed to advancing the project though timescales remain unclear.

12/38 Options Appraisal of Physiotherapy

(COMMERCIAL – IN CONFIDENCE)

Considered: a paper (SEN.12.11.09)

12/39 Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Dual Degree Arrangements

Considered: a paper (SEN.12.11.10).

Agreed: to approve in principle proposals for the introduction of undergraduate and postgraduate taught dual degrees, as outlined in the paper, noting that committees of Senate would undertake further work on procedures and related regulatory issues and report to Senate later in the year.

12/40 Report of the Nominations Committee

Considered: a report from the meeting of the Nominations Committee held on 23rd October 2012 (SEN.12.11.11).

Agreed: to approve the recommendations as set out in the paper.

12/41 Proposed Reconfiguration of the Research and Knowledge Transfer Committee

Considered: a paper (SEN.12.11.12).

Agreed: to approve proposal for the creation of a Research Committee and a Knowledge Transfer and Engagement Committee to replace the former Research and Knowledge Transfer Committee as set out in the paper.

12/42 Term of Office of the Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor

Considered: a paper (SEN.12.11.13).

Agreed: to endorse a recommendation for submission to Council that Professor Ian Grosvenor's term of office as Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Cultural Engagement) be extended to 31st July 2013.

12/43 Reports from Heads of College

Received: reports from the Heads of College regarding recent developments (SEN.12.11.14).

12/44 Report from the University Education Committee

Received: report from the University Education Committee (SEN.12.11.15).

12/45 Report from the University Quality Assurance Committee

Received: report from the Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (SEN.12.11.16).

12/46 Any Other Business

Date of next meeting

Noted: that the next meeting of Senate would be held at 2.00 p.m. on Wednesday 13th March 2013.