

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

SENATE

8th June 2016

MINUTES

Present: Professor Sir David Eastwood (Vice-Chancellor and Principal, in the Chair); Professor D Adams (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Professor K Armour; Professor J Bale (Pro-Vice-Chancellor); Professor S Becker (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Professor M Calvert; Ms R Evans; Dr E Fulton; Professor J Green; Professor A Guariglia; Professor D Hannah; Professor M Hannon; Professor P Kumar; Ms I Lenga (Vice-President of the Guild); Professor P Lumley; Professor J Martin; Professor U Martin; Professor R Mason; Professor C Miall; Dr D Moran; Ms M Parvaz; Dr A Phillips; Professor Z Pikramenou; Dr S Quigley; Dr C Ray; Professor C Ross; Professor J Rowe; Professor K Rowlingson; Ms M Salama; Professor I Sansom; Professor A Schofield (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Professor D Shepherd; Professor T Softley (Pro-Vice-Chancellor); Mr R Sowden; Ms L Tulley; Dr K Voelz; Professor M Whitby (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College) and Dr N Wilkin.

Also present: Professor J Arthur (Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Staffing)); Mr B Bailey (Acting Director of Academic Services); Ms R Bennett (Guild Postgraduate Officer 2016/17); Ms C Gilbert (Director of External Relations) (for Minute 16/23), Ms C McDonough (Assistant Secretary); Mr L Sanders (Registrar & Secretary); Mr C Wilkinson (Guild Education Officer 2016/17).

Apologies: Professor T Arnall; Dr D Fuller; Dr J Gilson (Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience)); Professor S Hunston; Professor H Mehanna; Professor P Moss; Professor M Nimmo (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Professor M Simmons; Professor A Tickell (Provost and Vice-Principal); Dr G Timmins; Professor G Watson.

Absent: Dr D Bailey; Professor H Draper; Dr D Ghica; Professor A Lymer; Professor G Schaffer.

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

16/21 Minutes of previous meeting

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd March 2016 be approved (SEN.16.06.01). There were no matters arising.

16/22 Vice-Chancellor's Items

Considered: a report from the Vice-Chancellor (SEN.16.06.02).

(1) Teaching Excellence Framework Consultation

Reported: that the University was formulating its response to the Teaching Excellence Framework Consultation. This had to be submitted by 12th July 2016.

(2) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

16/23 Recruitment and Admissions Update

COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE

Considered: the expected position with regard to home undergraduate recruitment and the predicted position for Confirmation and Clearing. The report also briefly outlined the current situation for overseas undergraduate and home and overseas postgraduate taught and research (SEN.16.06.03).

Reported that:

(a) to (f) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

(g) planning for the new student intake was in hand, including arrangements for residential accommodation provision.

16/24 Higher Education Review Report

Considered: the University's Higher Education Review report (SEN.16.06.04).

Reported that:

- (a) the University had received two commendations - the highest rating available - for both the quality and the enhancement of student learning opportunities. The University was also judged to have met UK expectations in relation to academic standards and the information provided about learning opportunities. Furthermore, the QAA reviewers made no recommendations for improvement, identified no affirmations, and highlighted nine items of good practice;
- (b) as of 25th May 2016, HER outcome reports had been published for 35 universities (excluding colleges, specialist institutions and alternative providers) in England and Northern Ireland since the HER process was introduced in 2013-14. So far, Birmingham was:
 - (i) one of only two universities to have received two commendations;
 - (ii) one of only two universities to have received nine items of good practice (no universities have received more than nine);
 - (iii) the only university to have received no recommendations and no affirmations;
- (c) the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) and the team responsible for the University's Higher Education Review were congratulated on this outstanding achievement;
- (d) as a result of this successful review, the University would receive a rating of 'meets expectations' for level one of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) scheduled for implementation in 2016-17. This meant that the University would be eligible to increase undergraduate tuition fees in line with inflation (RPI) with effect from 2017-18. The University could also continue to display the QAA Quality Mark, indicating to UK and international students that the University meets national expectations for academic quality and standards;
- (e) the technical consultation on the TEF had recently opened. The University was developing its response which would include reference to the importance of placing greater emphasis on the outcomes of Higher Education Review (in terms of commendations, recommendations, affirmations and items of good practice) as a measure of academic quality.

16/25 Quality Assurance

Noted: that the new operating model for quality assessment to be implemented from 2017/18 included a responsibility for governing bodies of higher education institutions in terms of providing assurance of academic standards and quality. Given that Senate was the supreme academic body of the University with responsibility for quality assurance, the reporting

relationship between Council and Senate would be key to ensuring that Council could provide assurance of the University's academic standards as required. The University was therefore planning to further enhance this reporting relationship by introduction of an annual assurance report from Senate to Council on quality assurance.

(1) UG/PGT Annual Review 2014/15

Considered: a report on the outcomes of the University-wide annual review process pertaining to undergraduate and postgraduate taught provision in the academic year 2014/15 (SEN.16.06.05).

Reported that:

- (a) the vast majority of annual review summary forms had been completed well, demonstrating good engagement with the process, providing useful summaries of Schools' provision and performance and raising no significant concerns;
- (b) the best examples of good practice and educational enhancement identified through the annual review process would continue to be collated and disseminated in an annual summary report;
- (c) a mapping exercise was currently being undertaken to compare the final undergraduate degree classifications of students with their entry tariff. The outcome would be initially considered by UEB before Colleges were invited to comment on the findings and identify where interventions in terms of learning outcomes or value added measures were required.

(2) UG and PGT External Examiners Reports 2014/15

Considered: a summary of comments made by external examiners assigned to undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes for the academic session 2014/15 (SEN.16.06.06).

Reported: that the vast majority of comments made in these external examiner reports were positive in nature, confirming that the University's academic standards were consistent with those across the sector and represented a strong endorsement of those standards.

(3) Student Complaints, Appeals and Grievances to Council and Complaints to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator

Considered: data on complaints, appeals and grievances to Council and complaints to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) by students of the University for 2014/15 (SEN.16.06.07).

Reported that:

- (a) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**
- (b) future editions of Figure 1 of Paper SEN.16.06.07, Total Primary Appeal Submissions in 2014-15 and the last five academic sessions, would be adjusted to include the context of the overall size of each student population.

16/26 Research

(1) Research Performance Update

COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE

Considered: the research grants performance information for the nine month period from 1st August 2015 to 30th April 2016 (SEN.16.06.08).

Reported that:

- (a) to (e) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**
- (f) the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Knowledge Transfer) was leading a number of new initiatives to strengthen grant capture during 2016/17;
- (g) the priority of raising the research performance of the University;
- (h) members of Senate highlighted the importance of:
 - (i) increasing the volume of research grant applications, particularly larger grant applications and those submitted by mid-career academics;
 - (ii) raising the quality of research grant applications;
 - (iii) matching academics with the most suitable grant applications for their field.

(2) A New Approach to Securing Major Research Awards

CONFIDENTIAL

Considered: the implementation of a new approach to securing major research awards (SEN.16.06.09).

Reported:
[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]

16/27 University Strategic Framework Key Performance Targets

COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE

Considered: the Key Performance Targets Update (SEN.16.06.10).

Reported:
(a) that 11 out of the 16 KPTs had been updated. **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**
(b) to (c) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

16/28 Destinations of Leavers of Higher Education 2014-15

Considered: the analysis of the University's performance in the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) 2014-15 return (SEN.16.06.11).

Reported that:

- (a) the University's headline graduate employability figure had dropped for the first time in five years, from last year's highest ever point of 86.7% to 85.3%. Overall employability had also dropped, although not quite so steeply. This was still a very high graduate employability rate for a comprehensive university outside the Golden Triangle, and a full percentage point above the University's results from two years ago, but any decline was clearly a cause for concern;
- (b) at this stage, there was no comparative information to be able to assess whether the pattern experienced by the University would be replicated elsewhere, but the University was at risk of dropping out of the first quartile in the Russell Group;
- (c) a series of actions were already in train to address the outcome of the next DLHE return.

16/29 The Birmingham Student Survey Results 2016

Considered: the results of the Birmingham Student Survey (BSS) 2016 (SEN.16.06.12).

Reported that:

- (a) the University's performance had significantly improved over the last year. This was encouraging as the Survey was regarded as an early indicator of the outcome of the National Student Survey (NSS);
- (b) dissatisfaction with the 'Organisation and Management' scorings was mainly because of

- School level issues, e.g. cancellation of classes/changes to the timetable, clashes in the timetable and where there had been programme alterations arising from staff changes;
- (c) Schools and Departments were reviewing their performance in BSS 2016 and focusing attention on underperforming areas ahead of NSS 2017;
 - (d) the incoming Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) was planning to bring forward the process for reviewing the outcome of the Survey from 2017 onwards;
 - (e) the importance of increasing student participation in BSS 2017. The possibility of introducing promotional activities similar to those used for NSS 2016 would be investigated by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education).

16/30 Report from Heads of Colleges

Noted: the report from the Heads of Colleges regarding recent developments (SEN.16.06.13).
[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]

16/31 Report from the Nominations Committee

Considered: a report from the meeting of the Nominations Committee held on 4th May 2016 (SEN.16.06.14).

Resolved: that the recommendations for the award of honorary degrees be approved as set out in Paper SEN.16.06.14.

16/32 Report from the Research Committee

Noted: a report from the meetings of the Research Committee held on 15th March and 18th May 2016 (SEN.16.06.15).

16/33 Report from the Academic Policy and Regulations Committee

Noted: a report from the meeting of the Academic Policy and Regulations Committee held on 11th May 2016 (SEN.16.06.16).

16/34 Report from the University Education Committee

Noted: a report from the meetings of the University Education Committee held on 23rd March and 19th May 2016 (SEN.16.06.17).

16/35 Report from the University Quality Assurance Committee

Noted: a report from the meeting of the University Quality Assurance Committee held on 23rd March and 18th May 2016 (SEN.16.06.18).

16/36 Programme of Meetings 2016/17

Noted: the programme of meetings of Senate for 2016/17:
 Wednesday 9th November 2016 at 2.00pm
 Wednesday 22nd March 2017 at 2.00pm
 Wednesday 14th June 2017 at 2.00pm

16/37 Retiring Members

On behalf of Senate, the Vice-Chancellor thanked:

- (a) all members who would be retiring from Senate at the end of the session;
- (b) Professor Adam Tickell, Provost and Vice-Principal, who had been appointed as the next Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sussex;

- (c) Professor Jeff Bale, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) who would be completing his term of office and retiring from the University in July 2016.