

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

SENATE

9th November 2016

MINUTES

Present: Professor Sir David Eastwood (Vice-Chancellor and Principal, in the Chair); Professor K Armour (Pro-Vice-Chancellor); Professor J Arthur (Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Staffing)); Professor S Becker (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Ms R Bennett; Dr R Brandstaetter; Professor C Bunce; Dr S Conner; Dr A Davies; Dr D Fuller; Dr J Gilson (Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience)); Professor J Green; Professor A Guariglia; Professor D Hannah; Professor M Hannon; Dr N Hotchin (Director of Postgraduate Studies); Professor T Jones (Provost and Vice-Principal); Professor P Kraftl; Ms N Ma; Mr K Nelson; Professor P Kumar; Dr T Lockwood; Professor F Lough; Professor P Lumley; Professor M Mahlberg; Professor I Mandel; Professor U Martin; Dr D Moran; Dr C Needham; Professor M Nimmo (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Professor Z Pikramenou; Dr J Pritchard; Professor J Rowe; Professor K Rowlingson; Professor A Schofield (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Professor D Shepherd; Professor T Softley (Pro-Vice-Chancellor); Professor M Sterling; Professor M Whitby (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Ms C White; Dr N Wilkin and Mr C Wilkinson (Education Officer, Guild of Students).

Also present: Mr C Campbell-Kelly (Governance Officer); Ms C Gilbert (Director of External Relations) (for Minute 16/43); Mr S McAuliffe (Academic Registrar); Ms C McDonough (Assistant Secretary); Mr L Sanders (Registrar & Secretary).

Apologies: Professor D Adams (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Professor P Kearns; Professor R Mason; Professor J Martin; Professor H Mehanna; Professor P Moss; Professor C Ross; Professor M Simmons; Dr G Timmins; Dr H Yusuf.

Absent: Dr D Bailey; Professor H Draper; Dr K Voelz; Professor G Watson.

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

16/38 Membership and Terms of Reference

Noted: the membership of Senate for 2016/17 and its terms of reference (SEN.16.11.01).

Resolved: to co-opt six members of Senate on the recommendation of the Vice-Chancellor as set out in Paper SEN.16.11.01.

16/39 Minutes of previous meeting

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on 8th June 2016 be approved (SEN.16.11.02). There were no matters arising.

16/40 Vice-Chancellor's Items

Considered: a report from the Vice-Chancellor (SEN.16.11.03).

(1) Higher Education and Research Bill

Reported that:

(a) the Higher Education and Research Bill was expected to move to the House of Lords

- before Christmas, with the aim of receiving Royal Assent by April 2017;
- (b) the University was working closely with Universities UK to address key concerns about the Bill, including drafting amendments.

(2) Nobel Prizes

Noted: that three former Birmingham academics had received Nobel Prizes in October 2016 in recognition of work that they had undertaken whilst at the University. Professor Mike Kosterlitz and Professor David Thouless had been awarded the 2016 Nobel Prize in Physics, whilst Professor Sir J. Fraser Stoddart had been awarded the 2016 Nobel Prize in Chemistry. This brought the total number of Nobel Prize Winners from the University to eleven.

(3) The University 'Futures' Curriculum

Reported that:

- (a) the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) had undertaken a 'Big Conversation' in November 2016 to engage with students, alumni, staff, employers and other stakeholders regarding the development of a distinctive, innovative and sector leading curriculum for the University;
- (b) a further update would be provided at the next meeting of Senate in March 2017.

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

16/41 Research Grants Performance 2015/16

COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE

Considered: the research grants performance information for the 2015/16 financial year ending on 31st July 2016 (SEN.16.11.04).

Reported:

- (a) to (j) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

16/42 **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

16/43 2016 and 2017 Recruitment Cycle Updates

Considered: a summary of the recruitment position towards the end of the 2016 cycle and early performance for the 2017 cycle (SEN.16.11.06).

(1) 2016 Recruitment Cycle Update

COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE

Reported that:

- (a) to (f) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**
- (g) arrangements for Clearing had been successful, closing by noon on A Level Results Day;
- (h) Senate thanked all those who had contributed to the successful recruitment outcome for 2016.

(2) 2017 Recruitment Cycle Update

Reported that:

- (a) to (b) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

- (c) a high degree of volatility existed at this stage of the cycle and the recruitment position could change markedly week by week;
- (d) to (e) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

16/44 Teaching Excellence Framework Update

Considered: a briefing paper on TEF2 (SEN.16.11.07).

Reported that:

- (a) the Higher Education White Paper published in May this year outlined the Government's intention to introduce a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). Year One of the TEF (TEF1) would be an automatic one-year award based on existing QAA assessments;
- (b) the second year of TEF (TEF2) would have three levels of assessment (Bronze, Silver and Gold), noting that the University was aiming for the highest assessment of Gold;
- (c) assessment would be metrics led, supplemented by qualitative institutional submissions with a 15 page limit. An initial assessment of TEF level would be based on performance across six 'core' metrics (NSS teaching and feedback, NSS assessment and support, NSS academic support, non-continuation, employment and highly skilled employment), which were then 'split' by a number of student characteristic sub-groups (e.g. Age, Disability);
- (d) the deadline for submissions to TEF2 was noon on 26th January 2017;
- (e) the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) was leading the University's TEF preparations, supported by a TEF Group, convened by the Academic Registrar. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) and the Group had already met to consider initial themes and content, and would work closely with the College Directors of Education, as well as representatives from the Guild, in developing the narrative for the University's submission;
- (f) Birmingham's very strong Higher Education Review outcome earlier this year would be a key element of the narrative for the submission;
- (g) institutional submissions and metrics would be published alongside TEF2 outcomes. A brief statement from the TEF Panel setting out the reasons for the rating would also be published.

16/45 National Student Survey Results 2016 and Strategy for 2017

COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE

Considered: a report summarising the National Student Survey (NSS) results for 2016 and actions arising for NSS 2017 (SEN.16.11.08).

Reported that:

- (a) the University was currently ranked equal 7th in the Russell Group for overall satisfaction, with the score returning to 89%, having fallen 1% last year; The 'Teaching on my Course' remained the University's highest scoring area, although its Russell Group ranking had decreased from equal 3rd to equal 7th;
- (b) the inclusion of new questions for the NSS in 2017, would make direct comparisons difficult when comparing the data with that of previous years. The optional bank of questions that students would be asked as part of the survey in 2017 had been agreed, in consultation with the Guild of Students;
- (c) the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) had met with all School Heads of Education and College Directors of Education to establish a new approach to NSS action planning **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**. College Directors of Education had also been given a more clearly defined role in the support and development of School Heads of Education;
- (d) addressing the University's performance in the area of 'assessment and feedback' for the NSS in 2017 was a major priority.

Considered: the annual report on teaching quality and standards, in accordance with a new requirement introduced by HEFCE, called the 'Annual Provider Review' (SEN.16.11.09).

Reported that:

- (a) the new requirement was for the Council to review the annual report and sign off an assurance statement on teaching quality and standards in the University's Annual Accountability Return;
- (b) successful completion of the Annual Provider Review was a prerequisite of entry into the TEF;
- (c) under the University's legislation, it was the Senate which had responsibility for teaching, quality and standards. This was a very important point of principle in universities like Birmingham. Therefore, this report was being considered first by Senate, for recommendation to Council;
- (d) the University's academic quality and standards had recently undergone external scrutiny as part of the QAA Higher Education Review. This robust independent process awarded the University two commendations – the highest rating available – together with 9 features of good practice that mapped across the quality of its academic offer. Exceptionally, the University also received no recommendations for improvement. This was the best outcome achieved by any university that had been assessed through this process. Council could take significant reassurance from this very strong result;
- (e) Council already spent significant time considering the University's education performance.

Resolved: that the annual report on teaching quality and standards be approved as set out in Paper SEN.16.11.09.

Recommended: to Council that it provide assurance and confirmation to HEFCE as a part of the University's Annual Accountability Returns that:

- (i) the governing body has received and discussed a report and accompanying action plan relating to the continuous improvement of the student academic experience and student outcomes. This included evidence from the provider's own periodic review processes, which fully involve students and include embedded external peer or professional review;
- (ii) the methodologies used as a basis to improve the student academic experience and student outcomes are, to the best of our knowledge, robust and appropriate;
- (iii) the standards of awards for which we are responsible have been appropriately set and maintained.

16/47 **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

16/48 Examinations – Future Strategy and Arrangements for 2016/17 and 2017/18

Considered: the arrangements for accommodating examinations in 2016/17 and 2017/18 and for a review of the University's assessment strategy (SEN.16.11.11).

Reported that:

- (a) there had been a significant increase in the number of examinations sittings in recent years with 96,500 sittings predicted for 2016/17. The planned closure of the Munrow Sports Centre and the decision that the new Sports Centre would not be available to accommodate University examinations, together with the refurbishment of the Old Gym, meant that a five week examination period would be insufficient to effectively schedule and accommodate the number of sittings forecast for the 2016/17 and 2017/18 examination periods;
- (b) the arrangements for accommodating examinations in 2016/17 and 2017/18 approved by UEB were:

- (i) the relaxation of practice to re-introduce Saturday examinations for the 16/17 academic year;
- (ii) an event-management approach to Saturday examinations to ensure that the relevant support, resources and facilities are available for students to access;
- (iii) the hire of high-quality marquees to accommodate the expected number of examinations sittings in the 2017/18 academic year;
- (iv) the removal of School requested examination constraints in order to optimise the time and space available for examination sittings;
- (c) whilst the lack of examination space should not be the main driver for reducing the number of formal written examinations, the increase in the number of students who require alternative examination arrangements, the opportunities afforded by developments in technology, and the need to ensure that the University's curriculum was inclusive meant that it was timely to review the University's assessment strategy. UEB on 17th October 2016 commissioned a review of the University's assessment strategy to determine whether the University's approach to assessment remained appropriate and what opportunities exist to develop a more inclusive assessment strategy that takes advantage of technological developments and supports students to perform at the highest level. The recommendations of the review would be submitted to Senate in due course;
- (d) members of Senate highlighted the importance of:
 - (i) providing students with early notice of their examination dates, especially in view of the re-introduction of Saturday examinations;
 - (ii) ensuring the marquee environment was optimised for examination sittings (for example, temperature and sound).

Resolved: that Senate endorsed the arrangements for accommodating examinations in 2016/17 and 2017/18 and for a review of the University's assessment strategy as set out in Paper SEN.16.11.11.

16/49 PGR Quality Assurance

Considered:

- (a) the PGR Submission and Completion Rates 2002 to 2014 and resulting actions;
- (b) Research Progress and Awards Sub-Panel Decisions 2014/15;
- (c) PGR examination results 2014/15;
- (d) External Examiners' for Postgraduate Research Degrees Summary Feedback, January to December 2014;
- (e) the PGR Annual Review Report which identified areas of best practice and key issues, with mitigating actions (SEN.16.11.12).

(1) PGR Submission and Completion Rates 2002 to 2014 and Resulting Actions

Noted:

- (a) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**
- (b) that the issues reducing both submission and completion rates were the same as in previous years (for example, high numbers of leavers amongst part-time PGRs and a proportionately high number of extensions in some Schools);
- (c) to (d) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]** (
- (e) that the Graduate School would be reviewing this data in terms of parameters other than mode of study (for example, source of funding, age, gender) to identify whether any of these factors also impacted on submission and completion rates.

(2) Research Progress and Awards Sub-Panel Decisions 2014/15

Noted: **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

(3) PGR Examination Results 2014/15

Noted: that the overall University performance was strong with over 70% of theses receiving a straight award or requiring only minor corrections and over 95% being awarded the qualification aimed at. **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

(4) External Examiners' for Postgraduate Research Degrees Summary Feedback, January to December 2014

Noted: that the feedback had been generally positive and had not raised any significant issues with the thesis examination process.

(5) PGR Annual Review Report

Noted that:

- (a) the School and College Annual Review Reports had identified a number of areas of good practice and issues arising which had been addressed by the GSMB;
- (b) the University was reviewing support for PGR students, including space and IT provision.

16/50 University's Code of Practice for Research

Considered: proposed revisions to the University's Code of Practice for Research (SEN.16.11.13) for submission to Council.

Reported that:

- (a) changes to regulatory requirements and a series of complex cases of alleged research misconduct had led to a review of the Code of Practice for Research.
- (b) as well as being substantially edited for clarity, key changes include;
 - (i) the addition of an executive summary and glossary;
 - (ii) changes to ensure consistency with the University Code of Ethics.
 - (iii) clarification of responsibilities of students and their supervisors;
 - (iv) clarification of research misconduct reporting process (section 13).
 - (v) addition of statement that clinical trials should be registered on a publically available database and results made available (section 5.13);
 - (vi) clarification of responsibilities in relation to open access to research data, confidentiality of data and compliance with research related contracts;
 - (vii) clarification of intellectual property arrangements;
 - (viii) reference to relevant university policies and posts updated;
 - (ix) clarification of research ethics review requirements;
 - (x) requirement related to complying with export controls (section 10);
- (c) the proposed revisions incorporated the comments from HR, Directors of Research in the Colleges, Registry, Research and Innovation Services, Legal Services and Planning;
- (d) an implementation and communication plan for the revised Code would be developed by the Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity Committee. The Research Committee would be responsible for reviewing the Code on an annual basis and updating it should changes be necessary outside of this review cycle.

Recommended: to Council that the proposed revisions to the University's Code of Practice for Research be approved as set out at Appendix 1 to Paper SEN.16.11.13.

16/51 Annual Research Integrity Statement to Council

Considered: the University's Annual Research Integrity Statement to Council (SEN.16.11.14).

Reported: that the University had, by virtue of its membership of Universities UK, signed up to the commitments of the Universities UK Concordat to Support Research Integrity. The Concordat recommended that an annual statement be presented to the University's Council, including confirmation of actions taken during the year to support research integrity.

Recommended: to Council that the University's Annual Research Integrity Statement be approved as at Appendix 1 to Paper SEN.16.11.14.

16/52 Reports from Heads of College

Noted: the report from the Heads of College regarding recent developments (SEN.16.11.15).

16/53 Report from the Nominations Committee

Considered: a report from the meeting of the Nominations Committee held on 11th October 2016 (SEN.16.11.16).

Resolved: that the recommendations for the award of honorary degrees, appointment of a Public Orator, and appointment of a member of Nominations Committee elected by the Senate be approved as set out in Paper SEN.16.11.16.

16/54 Report from the Research Committee

(1) Report

Noted: a report from the meetings of the Research Committee held on 19th July and 20th September 2016 (SEN.16.11.17).

(2) Membership

Resolved: that the addition of the Guild of Student Postgraduate Officer as an ex-officio member of the Research Committee be approved with immediate effect.

16/55 Report from the Academic Policy and Regulations Committee

(1) Report

Considered: a report from the meetings of the Academic Policy and Regulations Committee held on 22nd June and 19th October 2016 (SEN.16.11.18A).

(2) Membership and Terms of Reference

Resolved: that the amendment of the membership and the terms of reference of the Academic Policy and Regulations Committee be approved with immediate effect, as follows:

- (a) expansion of the number of representatives from Heads of School on the Committee from two to three;
- (b) removal of the University Director of Alternative Modes of Delivery from the membership;
- (c) minor amendments to the terms of reference, including reflection of the Committee's role of overseeing, rather than reviewing, policy and academic regulations (SEN.16.11.18B).

16/56 Report from the University Education Committee

Noted: a report from the meetings of the University Education Committee held on 30th June and 18th October 2016 (SEN.16.11.19).

16/57 Report from the University Quality Assurance Committee

Noted: a report from the meeting of the University Quality Assurance Committee held on 12th October 2016 (SEN.16.11.**20**).

16/58 Programme of Meetings 2016/17 and 2017/18

Noted: the programme of future meetings of Senate:

2016/17

Wednesday 22nd March 2017 at 2.00pm

Wednesday 14th June 2017 at 2.00pm

2017/18

Wednesday 8th November 2017 at 2.00pm

Wednesday 21st March 2018 at 2.00pm

Wednesday 13th June 2018 at 2.00pm