



The  
University  
Of  
Sheffield.

University  
Secretary's  
Office.

## Minutes Meeting of the Senate

**Date:** 13 October 2021

**Present:** The President & Vice-Chancellor in the Chair  
Professor W Baird, Dr R Bellaby, Professor S Bhaumik, Professor A Bingham, Dr L Bingle, Professor R Blakeley, Professor G Brown, Professor C Buck, Dr J Burr, A Cantrell, Revd Dr J Clines, Professor D Coca, E Croxford, Professor C Deery, Professor H Dobson, Professor R Finn, Professor S Fitzmaurice, Professor A Fleming, Professor J Flint, Dr D Forrest, Dr J Forstenzer, Professor G Gee, Professor V Gillet, Dr S Hale, L Hall, Dr V Halliday, S Hanson, Professor S Hartley, Professor J Hodson, Professor R Horn, Professor S Jones, Dr W Kitchen, Professor J Litster, Dr C Majewski, Dr M Malek, Professor S McIntosh, Professor N Monk, Professor T Moore, Dr N Murgatroyd, Dr S D North, Professor D N Petley, Dr B Purvis, Dr S Rushton, R Simpson, Professor N Sims, Dr S Staniland, Professor C Stokes, R Sykes, Professor C H Tan, Professor R Timmers, R Tomlinson, Professor G Valentine, Dr D Vessey, Dr T Walther, Professor C Watkins, Professor L Wilson.

**Secretary:** Dr T Strike

**In attendance:** Professor H Askes, M Borland, N Button, K Clements, A Davison, D Lodge, E Reynolds, D Swinn, L Wild.

**Apologies:** The Senate received apologies from 19 members.

### Welcome

The President & Vice-Chancellor (P&VC) welcomed members to the meeting, including three representatives from the Students' Union:

- Evie Croxford – President
- Savannah Hanson – Education Officer
- Rebecca Tomlinson (School of Languages and Cultures)

Dr Jennifer Burr was attending her first Senate meeting in the role of Chair of the Research Ethics Committee. Deborah Lodge was noted as in attendance for item 9.

### 1. President & Vice-Chancellor's Report

The President & Vice-Chancellor (P&VC) presented the report and provided updates:

- (a) Government Reshuffle: Gavin Williamson MP was removed as Secretary of State for Education and replaced by Nadhim Zahawi MP. Michelle Donelan's

new ministerial role was Minister for Further and Higher Education and she would attend Cabinet. George Freeman MP was the new Minister for Science, Research and Innovation at BEIS.

- (b) Admissions: UG home recruitment was expected to exceed target. There was anticipated to be a shortfall regarding PGT recruitment and reduced numbers were expected for PGR recruitment. The admissions numbers were not yet finalised and registration was continuing.
- (c) Northern Gritstone: A new investment company had been established jointly with the universities of Manchester and Leeds to attract venture capital to the north of England. The Board included Lord Jim O'Neill, an alumnus of the University, as Non-Executive Chairman.

In response to a submitted question regarding academic staff turnover it was outlined that for the period March 2020 to September 2021, effectively the period of the pandemic, the turnover rate for all academics was 10.9%. The figure for September 2018 to February 2020 was not materially different at 10.2%.

During discussion, it was clarified in relation to Covid that the University's own contract tracing team had continued to contact trace for all confirmed cases of Covid-19 on campus. A Level results determined by teacher assessment had led to a significant increase in the number of top grades awarded, however it was not known if any University departments had been disproportionately affected by this.

## **2. Declaration of Conflict of Interests**

No conflicts of interest were declared:

## **3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 June 2021**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2021, having been circulated, were approved as an accurate record, subject to amendment to refer to "foundation years" in paragraph 3 of page 6.

## **4. Matters Arising on the Minutes**

The Minute for this item was not approved at the subsequent meeting of Senate.

## **5. Matters Requiring Approval**

Senate received and noted a summary of the matters for which Senate's formal approval was sought.

## **6. Education Planning 2021-22**

This item was deferred.

## **7. Annual Academic Assurance Report**

Senate considered the Annual Academic Assurance Report, produced by the Senate Academic Assurance Committee (SAAC), and approved its submission for consideration and approval at Council's meeting, noting that a Joint Sub-Group of Council and Senate will be convened in the intervening period to discuss the report. Submission to Council was subject to minor rephrasing to be clear that laboratories had not yet fully reopened due to the pandemic.

Attention was drawn to the traffic light summary of the level of assurance for each of the eight themes the Committee had examined in the previous academic year. The University was fully compliant with the relevant external regulatory and/or statutory requirements pertaining to academic quality and standards as set out by the appropriate bodies, and was either meeting or exceeding its own internal standards.

During discussion, the clarity of the report was commented upon positively and it was noted that further thought would be given to the presentation of the traffic light summary to aid accessibility. It was noted that disaggregation of data in relation to BAME students would be beneficial, but that there were challenges in doing so as a consequence of how the data was collected. The Committee would consider at its next meeting a suggestion that it have representation from the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee and the Senate Research and Innovation Committee.

## **8. REF2021: Reflections and Next Steps**

Senate received and noted the Report, which summarised and reflected on preparations for the Research Excellence Framework 2021 submission and identified next steps in reviewing the University's performance. Attention was drawn to the scale of the REF submission process and that REF 2021 would provide a benchmark regarding research quality, which would also have financial implications. Staff were thanked for their work on the submission. Initial reflections from the Vice President for Research on the submission included: the importance of a research strategy for departments; inequality, with 64% of impact case studies led by a male member of staff; and data collection methods could be enhanced.

Regarding funding to support research travel and conference activities in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, it was clarified that the Faculty had invested significantly into expanding the faculty research hub, which offered support to develop and submit externally funded grant applications, and this was having a significant impact. In 2020-21, compared with 2019-20, there was a 67% increase in external research grant funding applications, and a 102% increase in research grant awards.

## **9. Research Security: Current Issues in Research Collaboration**

Senate received and noted the Report, which outlined the current external situation with respect to current and forthcoming guidance and legislation, and presented the University's approach and policy. During discussion it was clarified that a plan of engagement within the University was being developed

## **REPORTS FROM STATUTORY BODIES**

### **10. Report on the Proceedings of the Council**

(Meetings held on 12 July 2021)

Senate received and noted the Report on the Proceedings of the Council.

## **REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES OF THE SENATE**

### **11. Report of the Research Ethics Committee**

(Meeting held on 15 September 2021)

Senate received the report and approved the following:

- (a) Senate approve a proposal requiring staff and students undertaking research involving human participants or personal data to complete three online Information Security training courses before commencing an application for ethics approval.

Attention was drawn to the five-yearly review of the Ethics Policy; the annual monitoring process; investigations of ethics complaints.

During discussion, it was clarified that the rationale for not making the training courses proposal mandatory for all students was to prevent unnecessary work being undertaken. The Committee believed that the additional work required by relevant staff and students was outweighed by the risks related to a lack of understanding amongst these staff and students..

### **12. Report of the Senate Academic Assurance Committee**

(Meeting held on 21 September 2021)

Senate received and noted the report, including the Business Plan 2021-22, which covers digital education, knowledge exchange; award gaps and REF2021. The Report also included unchanged Terms of Reference.

During discussion, it was suggested that the Committee also explore award gaps for students from lower participation neighbourhoods and for LGBT students and this would be discussed at the Committee's next meeting in November.

### **13. Report of the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee**

(Meeting held on 16 September 2021)

Senate received the Report and approved the following:

- (a) Senate approved an update to the Committee's terms of reference to remove reference to the "Learning and Teaching Strategy" and to replace this with reference to the Education Pillar of the University Vision.

- (b) Senate approved the ceasing of extra-curricular activity verification for inclusion in the University's official transcript/diploma supplement (HEAR) for undergraduate students and a move to the extended use of the MySkills portfolio tool.
- (c) Senate approved changes to the General University Regulations (XIV) and General Regulations for First Degrees (XV) to introduce the overarching term 'International Exchange Programmes' in place of 'Erasmus' and 'Study Abroad', and to replace occurrences of 'register' with 'enrol'.
- (d) Senate approved new, significantly amended, and discontinued programmes, and title changes and new exit routes approved by Faculties between 28 April 2021 and 6 September 2021.

Following a submitted question requesting an update from the UEB Implementation Group it was clarified that the work of the UEB Implementation Group was ongoing and consultations with staff had only recently taken place. It was planned that information would be shared by the UEB Implementation Group as soon as it was possible to do so.

Discussion covered how departments, faculties and the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee were involved in the process that resulted in programme proposals being presented to Senate. It was clarified that the reason for the suspension of UG archaeology programmes was that it would not be fair to applicants to continue to recruit to the programmes.

#### **14. Report from the Chair of the Senate Research and Innovation Committee**

(Including meeting held on 12 May 2021)

Senate received and noted the Report from the Chair and the Report of the Senate Committees May 2021 meeting which had been deferred from Senate's June meeting. These included an update from the Open Research Advisory Group on open access; an update on commercial activities; and research awards for 2020-21.

During discussion, it was agreed scoping work would be undertaken to explore what data the University possessed regarding the effect of caring responsibilities during the pandemic on writing grant proposals.

#### **15. Report of the Senate Nominations Committee**

(Business conducted by correspondence)

Senate received the Report and approved the appointment of Senate Representatives to the Research Ethics Committee.

### **OTHER MATTERS**

#### **16. Provisional Senate Business Schedule 2021-22**

Senate received and noted the report.

## **17. Returning Officer's Report**

Senate received the report and approved the appointment of the candidate who finished in second place in the Professional Staff election in May 2021 to serve on Senate, subject to willingness to serve, to replace the candidate who finished first who had since left the University before taking up their place on Senate.

Senate also noted the outcome of the election of a Senate member to serve on Council.

During discussion, it was clarified that the Senate Standing Orders and the election rules were both silent regarding a member of Senate leaving the University before taking up their place on Senate. In response to submitted questions, it was outlined that there were the following vacancies in the Senate membership: one Faculty of Engineering elected member, one Faculty of Social Sciences elected member; one Professional Services elected member; three Students' Union representatives. The approximate cost of rerunning an election out of cycle included a small financial cost for the software. Call for nominations for vacant elected academic places and vacant elected professional staff places are made annually in the spring of each year, with elections following when required.

## **18. Report on Action Taken**

Senate received and noted the report.

## **19. Major Research Grants and Contracts**

A Report listing major research grants and contracts awarded since the last meeting of the Senate was received and noted.

## **20. Any Other Business**

The intention was to hold future meetings of Senate in person, subject to government advice in place at the time of the meetings. Mitigation measures for the meeting included using a larger room and keeping every third row clear to allow microphones to be passed directly to the member of Senate wishing to speak. Feedback on the meeting would be welcomed.