



The  
University  
Of  
Sheffield.

University  
Secretary's  
Office.

## Minutes Meeting of the Senate

**Date:** 16 March 2022

**Present:** The President & Vice-Chancellor in the Chair  
L Abnett, Professor W Baird, Professor S Beck, Professor A Bingham, Dr L Bingle, Professor R Blakeley, D Boufidis, Professor G Brown, Professor C Buck, S Calderwood, A Cantrell, A Clements, E Croxford, Professor S Cussen, Professor R Finn, Professor A Fleming, Dr J Forstenzer, Professor G Gee, Professor V Gillet, Dr S Hale, L Hall, Dr V Halliday, Professor R Hand, S Hanson, Professor S Hartley, Professor J Hodson, Professor R Horn, Professor N Hughes, M Jones, Professor S Jones, Dr Simon Keegan-Phipps, Professor J Kirby, Dr W Kitchen, Professor J Litster, Professor M Marshall, Professor M Mayfield, Professor S McIntosh, Professor C Newman, Dr S D North, Professor J Oakley, Professor George Panoutsos, Professor D N Petley, Dr E Poku, Dr B Purvis, Dr S Rushton, R Simpson, Dr S Staniland, Professor C Stokes, R Sykes, Professor C H Tan, Professor R Timmers, R Tomlinson, Professor G Valentine, Dr D Vessey, Professor M T Vincent, Dr T Walther, Professor C Watkins.

**Secretary:** Dr T Strike

**In attendance:** M Borland, K Clements, B Cook, A Davison, S Gopalahrishnan, D Lodge, M Stannard, L Wild.

**Apologies:** The Senate received apologies from 21 members.

### Welcome

The President & Vice-Chancellor (P&VC) welcomed members to the meeting, including two new members of Senate

- Professor Michelle Marshall (Medical School), as a Head of Department nominated by the Vice-President and Head of Faculty for Medicine, Dentistry & Health.
- Professor Jeremy Oakley (School of Mathematics and Statistics), as a Head of Department nominated by the Vice-President and Head of Faculty for Science.

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

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

- (a) Levelling Up White Paper: Government had published a Levelling Up White Paper. At the centre of an approach to tackle regional and local inequalities were 12 national Missions to be achieved by 2030. Mission 2 was focused on R&D funding and aimed for domestic public investment in R&D outside the Greater South East to be increased by at least 40% by 2030, and by at least one third over the Spending Review period. Given changes to overall R&D public funding the impact may be relatively modest.
- (b) Government response to Augar Review: The policy headlines included:
- (i.) The maximum tuition fees for undergraduate degrees will be frozen, up to and including academic year 2024/25, at £9,250
  - (ii.) For new student loan borrowers from September 2023 onwards the repayment threshold will be £25,000 and the number of years over which repayments are made before any outstanding debt is written off will be 40 years, rather than the current 30 years.
  - (iii.) Government will not be pursuing a policy of post-qualification admissions.

Government also announced it was consulting on:

- (i.) Student Number Controls, with different approaches that could be taken including a basic sector-wide cap on all providers and subjects through to more granular outcome-based judgements about what provision should be capped and at what level.
- (ii.) Minimum eligibility requirements. Government was consulting on the principle and the specific level at which any requirement could be set. The levels suggested were anticipated to have only a marginal impact on the University's student numbers.
- (iii.) Foundation year fees. Government proposed reducing the fees charged for foundation years to align with current Access to HE diploma fees.

The University was examining the proposals and would work with mission groups in responding to the consultation.

- (c) Social Mobility Targets: The Government and Office for Students (OfS) have set new widening access and social mobility targets for universities in England and universities will have to rewrite their Access and Participation Plans. The plans should include ambitious targets for increasing the proportion of student studying degree apprenticeships, higher technical qualifications, or part-time courses. Universities will also be required to reduce drop-out rates and to help local schools and colleges improve education outcomes for disadvantaged students. Written guidance will be published and the University's Access and Participation Plan will be amended accordingly.

With regard to three questions submitted in advance about the potential consequences of changes to the USS pension scheme to the university's approach to attracting and retaining international academic talent, the University was mindful of the potential consequences and Senate would be informed about any necessary steps that the University might take if this became a significant issue.

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

No conflicts of interest were declared.

## **3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 8 December 2021**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2021, having been circulated, were approved as an accurate record. A question had been submitted in advance regarding item 4, Matters Arising on the Minutes, requesting inclusion of the results of the vote on admitting a proposed item to the Senate agenda. It was agreed to include the number of votes in the December Minutes.

It was clarified that the Minutes of the October 2021 meeting had been confirmed, with the exception of item 4, Matters Arising on the Minutes, the text of which had not been agreed at the subsequent meeting of Senate in December.

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

- (a) Following a request at the previous meeting for the Minutes to be circulated within a week of the Senate meeting, the University Secretary had been in correspondence with the member who made the request. Whilst a due diligence process had to be undertaken for each set of Minutes it was acknowledged that there was a significant gap between the June and October meetings of Senate and the June Minutes would in future be circulated within 12 weeks of the meeting.
- (b) The Executive Director of Academic Services reported back to Senate regarding the action under Item 6, Financial Results 2020-21, to explore the issues raised in relation to reports of delays in students being able to access support. Investigations identified some delays were outside of the control of the University. Internally, student access to the learning support system via Disability and Dyslexia Support Services (DDSS) without having previous referrals could be improved. Working practices would be adjusted so that an intervention could be made where someone had a "probable" diagnosis rather than waiting for the full formal outcome from an external process. There had been no breaches of the maximum waiting time of 30 days this term to date. It had regrettably been breached on 5 occasions in term 1. Waiting times for appointments with the faculty-based Wellbeing Service remained low with a maximum wait of 5 days this term. Greater signposting had been provided to all staff who support students. A public facing dashboard of key metrics was anticipated to be in place in DDSS from September 2022, with the intention to roll out across the rest of the 2022-23 academic year. Additional service delivery information can be viewed via the [Student Support Committee reports hub](#).
- (c) A question had been submitted in advance regarding the report of the UEB Archaeology Implementation Group. Senate was assured it would be consulted if Council were required to make any further decisions in relation to the implementation. Council was not currently considering further constitutional change (such as changing the title of the Department), and Senate had not been further consulted by Council. If the work of the Implementation Group were to result in decisions that fall within the terms of reference of Senate then these will be brought to Senate at the appropriate time. For these reasons, there was no reason to circulate the report of the Implementation Group to the Senate. The Report has however been shared with all staff in the Department, as well as the cognate Departments of History and Biosciences in addition to campus Trade Unions. The Vice-Chancellor, as chair of UEB and of the Senate, may from time to time include in his report to Senate 'for information' updates on the work of the UEB Implementation Group.

## **5. Matters Requiring Approval**

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

## **6. Russian Sanctions and the Impact of the Conflict in Ukraine**

Senate received and noted an update on the current position and actions in relation to Russian sanctions, and the war in Ukraine. The focus of the update was on support for students and staff, UK sanctions compliance, and the longer-term strategic consequences. Senate was updated on the position of students who had been in Russia at the time of the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

Discussion focussed on the University's future energy supply, sustainability and support for students and academics fleeing Ukraine or Russia. Gas is supplied to the University by Gazprom and it was clarified that the University was investigating options regarding its fixed price contract, which was scheduled to run until 2025. It was noted that gas supplies were currently not subject to UK sanctions. The UEB Sustainability Steering Sub-Group was leading on longer-term work, including how the University could reduce reliance on fossil fuels. With regard to the creation of a fund to support students and academics fleeing Ukraine or Russia, the University's response had initially focussed on its own staff and students and an announcement would be made shortly on support for students and scholars affected by the war in Ukraine. The University was engaged with the Council for At-Risk Academics (CARA). The University was pulling together a package of support for students that would include scholarships. Senate was updated on the position of students who had been in Russia at the time of the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

## **7. Research Excellence Framework (REF2021) Update: Communicating our Results**

Senate received and noted an update report on plans for communicating REF2021 results. Attention was drawn to the timetable, an external campaign, the approach, and internal communications.

Senate received and noted a presentation updating on REF lessons learnt. It was highlighted that the process involved a wide consultation with colleagues and there would be a Lessons Learned report to UEB making recommendations for a future approach. The key findings included a desire for clear, early guidance; the need for a clear remit and appropriate time allocation for UOA leads; and systematic collection of data. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion aspects of REF were also covered

## **8. National Student Survey 2021 overview**

Senate received and noted a report and a presentation on the NSS results, strengths and weaknesses, and the proposed plan of action. Attention was drawn to the impact of the pandemic and the University's year on year results were down across each National Student Survey (NSS) theme. The University's Russell Group position was maintained and in general, the University compared favourably to the

sector average. The theme areas where improvements were required had not changed.

During discussion, it was outlined that pandemic had shown how much learning took place beyond the classroom and the significant amount of work that had been undertaken during the pandemic with the aim of maintaining student outcomes and satisfaction. Results for the PGT NSS pilot would be shared at the appropriate point, if the pilot status allowed for that.

## **9. Standing Orders Annual Review**

Senate considered a proposed amendment to the Senate Standing Orders. In section 4.3 regarding voting decisions Senate approved the deletion of “voting on any issue will be by a show of hands when in person, with the University Secretary acting as teller, or by equivalent and appropriate digital means if the meeting is not in person” and the insertion of “voting on any issue will be conducted anonymously, using appropriate digital means, with the University Secretary acting as teller”.

During discussion, it was agreed that only members of the Senate present at a meeting should be entitled to participate in any vote. It was clarified that the software used enabled the University Secretary to see which members had voted, but not how they had voted. The role of teller was necessary and had involved, for example, checking if those members who had not taken part in a vote had done so intentionally. Two other members of the University Secretary’s Office were involved as counting agents in any vote.

It was asked how Senate might have an input into the shape of the next governance review. Discussions would take place with the University Secretary to find an appropriate place for this item on the Senate Business Plan, in line with the timetable for future reviews. [See agenda item 7 for Senate’s 22 June 2022 meeting.]

## **REPORTS FROM STATUTORY BODIES**

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

(Meeting held on 22 November 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 9 February 2022)

Senate received and noted Report, including: an update on the on-going review of the Research Ethics Policy; findings of the Research User Journey Project; the annual report of ethics breaches of ethics approval requirements, and other ethics concerns, for the period 01.09.20-31.08.21.

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

(Meeting held on 8 February 2022)

Senate received and noted the report, including the Committee's discussion of award gaps. The discussion was informed by a panel of colleagues and a student representative, along with a range of background papers. It was highlighted that the Committee welcomed the refreshed governance structure and strategic approach to Access and Participation. The committee welcomed the commitment to a data-informed approach to the Access and Participation Strategy Group's work. The challenges included: mapping and assessing the interventions in place; support for departments on the interventions to implement, and how to monitor their effectiveness; recognising the importance to academic performance of a sense of belonging, preparedness, wellbeing, safety, and inclusion in every aspect of a student's association with the University.

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

(Meeting held on 10 February 2022)

Senate received the Report and approved the following:

- (a) Changes to Regulation XVI, General Regulations for Higher Degrees, Postgraduate Diplomas and Postgraduate Certificates relating to the eligibility for a Post-Graduate Diploma for students with insufficient credit for a Masters Degree.
- (b) A revised Policy on Partnership Provision (Taught Programmes).
- (c) A new policy statement regarding oversight of apprenticeship subcontracting arrangements, as an addition to the existing Apprenticeship Policy in order to meet Education, Skills and Funding Agency requirements.
- (d) New, significantly amended, and discontinued programmes, and title changes and new exit routes approved by Faculties between 1 November 2021 and 11 February 2022.

Following SLTC's Chair's Action, Senate approved:

- (i.) The significant amendment to the BA International Relations and Politics programmes.
- (ii.) A new apprenticeship programme to be offered by the AMRC: "Nuclear Scientist and Nuclear Engineer (integrated degree) apprenticeship incorporating qualification: FDEng and BEng Top up in Nuclear Manufacturing".

Attention was drawn to new expectations regarding access and participation; Office for Students consultations; and the update on portfolio review.

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

(Including meeting held on 3 February 2022)

Senate received the Report and:

- (a) Approved an updated Research and Innovation Committee Terms of Reference.
- (b) Approved an updated Good Research and Innovation Practices (GRIP) policy.

- (c) Noted the appointment of a Research Governance Sub-Committee Deputy Chair.
- (d) Approved amendments to Regulation XVI, General Regulations for Higher Degrees by Research.

Attention was drawn to the update from the University PGR Committee and to the Report of the Open Research Advisory Group and specifically the new UKRI Open Access Policy.

## **OTHER MATTERS**

### **15. Students' Union Annual Report: Complaints and Discipline 2020-21**

Senate received and noted the report.

### **16. Student Formal Procedures Cases: Report to Senate 2020-21**

Senate received and noted the report.

### **17. Annual Report of the Library 2020-21**

Senate received and noted the report.

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

Senate received and noted the report.

During discussion, it was queried whether the Chair's Action to extend the existing suspension of recruitment to undergraduate programmes in Archaeology for September 2023 entry should have been a decision for Senate to make. It was explained that the decision was taken as Chair's Action due to timings. The University has a duty to provide accurate and timely information to potential applicants and Chair's Action enabled exclusion of these programmes from the 2023 print prospectus. The pause in recruitment to these programmes had initially been made for one year when a two-year pause would have been more appropriate.

### **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**

There was no other business.