



## **Minutes                      Meeting of the Senate**

**Date:** 28 June 2023

**Present:** The President & Vice-Chancellor in the Chair

Professor S Beck, Dr B Birdi, Professor R Blakeley, Professor G Brown, Dr J Burr, Professor M Carre, A Clements, Professor J Cordiner, Professor C Deery, Professor J Derrick, Professor N Dibben, Professor S Fitzmaurice, Professor A Fleming, Professor G Gee, Professor M Gilbert, Professor V Gillet, Dr L Gray, Dr S Hale, Dr V Halliday, L Hand, Professor S Hartley, Professor J Hodson, Professor N Hughes, Professor G Jewell, M Jones, N Jones, Professor R Lawthom, Professor J Litster, Dr S Marsh, Professor Matthew Marshall, Professor S McIntosh, Professor E Milne, Professor T Moore, Dr C Nic Dháibhéid, Dr S D North, Professor J Oakley, A Patterson, Dr E Poku, Dr B Purvis, A Romaine, H Sadiq, Professor C Stokes, Professor M Strong, R Sykes, Professor K Taylor-Jones, Professor M T Vincent, Dr N Walkinshaw, Professor L Wilson.

**Secretary:** J Strachan

**In attendance:** M Borland, K Clements, A Colley, B Cook, A Davison, M Lourido Moreno, K Sullivan, C Woods.

**Apologies:** The Senate received apologies from 30 members.

### **Welcome**

The President & Vice-Chancellor (P&VC) welcomed members to the meeting, including Professor Geraint Jewell attending his first Senate meeting. Maria Lourido Moreno, Students' Union Education Officer elect was attending as an observer.

Members of Senate were reminded of the purpose of Senate. The statutes are clear that Senate subject to the control and approval of Council, oversees the teaching and research of the University and admission and regulation of students. The remit of Senate is teaching, research, admissions and regulations.

### **1. Declaration of Conflict of Interests**

Dr Sam Marsh declared a conflict of interest in relation to some of the questions submitted in advance and his role with the Sheffield University and College Union.

No other conflicts of interest were declared.

Senate noted these conflicts but it was not necessary to exclude any member from the meeting, acting only in their capacity as members of Senate acting in the University's best interests.

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

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

- (a) International students: The Government's desire was to reduce net immigration numbers and international student numbers were included in those net numbers. Government had announced restrictions on international students as set out in the report. The focus on international student numbers and associated policy was likely to continue as net migration figures showed a continuing increase. The University would continue to call for international students to be removed from net migration figures.
- (b) Free Speech: The Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill had received Royal Assent and the Government had outlined that it expected all the measures contained within the Act to come into force before the 2024/25 academic year. The University was making preparations to ensure it was meeting current obligations and would meet future obligation, including a review of internal policies. Senate would be kept updated on the preparatory work.

In response to a submitted question regarding the University addressing issues raised by international students, it was stated that the incoming Deputy Vice President for Education, will have the role of champion for international students and chair the Student Support Committee, a sub-committee of the Senate Education Committee, to align support for international students. The Students' Union International Officer is an ex-officio member of the Education Board and international student issues have been discussed at each meeting, resulting in a programme of work for the next year focussed on inclusion and group work.

In response to a submitted question regarding the sustainability of the funding model for higher education and the impact of this on the student learning experience, it was highlighted that the University was driving consistent practice so that students had a fair student experience and considerable additional funding had been directed to hardship funds to help those students most in need.

In response to a submitted question on University activity to demonstrate its impact on society, it was highlighted that much of the University's marketing and communications, political engagement and partnership work focused on the University's civic impact. It was planned to commission an update of the Economic Impact Assessment on the benefits the University brings to the UK and the region. Work would continue to champion the impact of the University and the wider sector on society.

In response to a submitted question about student involvement in the visit of Bridget Phillipson MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Education, it was clarified that the visit included undergraduate students, postgraduate students and apprentices and generally students have been included in visits by other policymakers. Through the Students' Union

there were opportunities for students to lead their own engagement with politicians and policymakers and the University would support that where it could.

In response to a submitted question on student involvement in the Mental Health Strategy work, it was clarified that the Students' Union was already an active stakeholder in this work. The SU President acted as Student Lead for the self-assessment of the mental health charter work and the assessors' visit. Both the Welfare and Community Officer and the Wellbeing and Sports Officer were members of the One University Mental Health Strategy Group.

### **3. Matters Requiring Approval**

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

### **4. Degree Algorithm**

Senate received and noted a presentation on the degree algorithm, including a summary of changes to the regulations, an update on current activity, the current algorithm, the new algorithm, the scale and impact of mixed level study, and FHEQ related issues.

During discussion, it was clarified that the data regarding the FHEQ level recorded against a module was accurate in the vast majority of instances. There was a potential equity issue where in some instances a module with the same content could be studied at different FHEQ levels, and discussions would take place with Faculty Directors of Education on how to approach this issue. From modelling undertaken there would be very few students with a different degree classification under the new algorithm. With regard to students appealing their result and not all students feeling confident in doing that, it was clarified that where additional support or information was required by a student then that would be provided, wherever possible.

### **5. Senate Questionnaire Results**

Senate received and approved a report and:

- a) Noted the Senate Questionnaire results.
- b) Recommended to Council that it consider the following issue when initiating the next governance effectiveness review in 2023-24: i) How the University can enhance the understanding of Senate's role by the academic community. Noting that some actions can be taken immediately to make progress, but that consideration of best practice from other institutions and how to best address this issue for the University would be helpful.
- c) Endorsed:
  - (i.) Expanding the induction programme for members of Senate so that the induction event takes place a number of times across the year.
  - (ii.) Establishing an information session for members of Senate to take place immediately before a Senate meeting.

- (iii.) The University Secretary consider and implement approaches to address the operational issues identified in the Senate Questionnaire and report back to Senate.

Attention was drawn to the significant improvements in the responses to the survey compared with the response to the 2018 survey. Understanding of Senate's role by the academic community was perceived to be low, as was the opportunities for professional development to assist with Senate-related responsibilities.

During discussion, it was clarified that PowerPoint slides for any presentations could usually be shared with members of Senate after the relevant meeting. Agreement to share the slides would be sought from each presenter.

## **6. Governance Matters**

Senate was provided with the context for this item, namely that a number of improvements had been made in recent years to support members of Council fulfil their responsibilities. Many of the changes in approach taken for Council could benefit Senate members in fulfilling their Senate responsibilities.

### **6.1 Senate Code of Conduct**

Senate considered a proposed code of conduct that would aim to assist new members of Senate to understand their obligations and responsibilities.

In response to a submitted question on consultation with members of Senate, it was clarified that consultation had not taken place on the contents of the proposed code because the contents were not new, but rather were a codification of what already existed based on the University's Charter, Statutes, Regulations, Charitable status and the need to ensure the University had high standards of governance.

During discussion concerns were expressed regarding the framing of section 5.2, the level of specificity, and perceived potential constraints on free speech. However, the development of a Senate Code of Conduct was welcomed as it would be useful to have one.

Senate approved:

- a) In principle, to have a Senate Code of Conduct
- b) The establishment of a small Working Group to propose a Senate Code of Conduct to a future meeting of Senate, that would:
  - (i.) be consistent with other guidance
  - (ii.) be consistent with the University's Charter, Statutes and Regulations
  - (iii.) provide further clarification on the issues raised

### **6.2 Senate Pairing System**

Senate approved the establishment of a non-compulsory Senate Pairing System for new Heads of Departments on Senate, new elected members on Senate, and student representatives on Senate.

### **6.3 Conflicts of Interest in Decision Making**

Senate noted the University's Conflicts of Interest in Decision Making Procedure.

### **6.4 Senate Standing Orders**

Senate considered revisions to its Standing Orders including: changing the order of business to start meetings with declaration of conflict of interests and have the minutes of the previous meeting at the end of the agenda; the removal of reserved business.

In response to a written question on whether the papers for meetings could be circulated by noon one week in advance of the meeting, it was clarified that it was not always possible to do this as not all papers were available for circulation by that time. Senate requested that where this was the case members would be sent an email by noon one week in advance of the meeting to notify them which of the meeting papers were available, and then sent a follow up email later that day to notify them when all the meeting papers were available.

Following detailed discussion on the risks and benefits of taking the minutes of the previous meeting at the end of the agenda, Senate approved the changes to its Standing Orders as proposed in the paper, subject to trialling at its next two meetings taking the minutes of the previous meeting at the end of the agenda.

## **REPORTS FROM STATUTORY BODIES**

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

(Meetings held on 24 April February 2023)

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

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

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

(Meeting held on 7 June 2023)

Senate received and noted the report including the Committee's discussions and level of assurance in relation to: the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF); research integrity; and unfair means and contract cheating services.

### **9. Report of the Senate Education Committee**

(Meeting held on 18 May 2023)

Senate received the Report and approved the following:

- a) That the Student Academic Engagement Policy and the (Tier 4) Student Route Attendance Monitoring Policy be replaced with a single, high level (2-page) attendance monitoring policy statement.
- b) A new Extenuating Circumstances policy for introduction at the start of the 2023-24 academic session.
- c) Changes to the General Regulations as follows:

- (i.) Regulation XV, General Regulations for First Degrees, paragraphs 8, 9, 10 and 11 for degrees with Study Abroad and Degrees with Placement or Industrial Placement new wording to reflect the revised University study abroad and placement offer.
  - (ii.) Regulation XV, General Regulations for First Degrees, paragraphs 17 and 18 minor wording changes to clarify points on registration for programmes and units.
  - (iii.) Regulation XV, General Regulations for First Degrees, paragraph 53(b) a correction to the requirements for the award of a Degree with Honours
  - (iv.) Regulation XIV, General Regulations for First Degrees, new paragraph 55 regarding change of status
  - (v.) Regulation XIV, General Regulations for First Degrees, paragraph 56(e) - addition of an exception to permit registration for students on a UKRI Centre for Doctoral Training or Doctoral Training Partnership programme to permit registration on a corresponding programme at a partner organisation
  - (vi.) Regulation XIV, General Regulations for First Degrees, reinstating terminology for “registration” rather than “enrolment” throughout
- d) Updates to the Policy on Partnership Provision (Taught Programmes).
- e) The new, significantly amended, and discontinued programmes, and title changes and new exit routes approved by Faculties between 30 January 2023 and 11 May 2023.

Senate noted an update on the impact on students of the marking and assessment boycott. All Examination Boards had not yet completed, but a significant number had met to enable a provisional assessment to be provided to Senate regarding the graduation of students this summer: 31 departments will be able to graduate students; 4 departments had flagged a risk to a total of 87 students being able to graduate; 3 departments had not identified any issues, but confirmation was awaited. All planned mitigations can be put in place within the current regulations. Approximately 80 students were anticipated to receive an interim pass, an unclassified degree, until such time as they could receive a classification. This would constitute a ‘reportable event’ and the Office for Students would be informed.

In response to a submitted question regarding the marking and assessment boycott, it was highlighted that the Student Protection Plan states the University’s commitment to students in the event of disruption to their studies. Students had the ability to make an individual or group complaint as per section 5 of the Student Protection Plan. In response to a submitted question regarding the marking of students’ work, it was confirmed that all marking had been undertaken by suitably qualified staff with relevant disciplinary knowledge. Marking had been to the programme and module learning outcomes, and the marking criteria, with all modules moderated. In response to a submitted question regarding lost learning being recouped, it was clarified that all instances of lost learning were tracked along with actions departments had taken locally to mitigate. UEB received regular reports. The effect of industrial action on students was discussed at Senate Education Committee in February and reported to Senate in March. A further report to the Senate Education Committee was anticipated in advance of a report to Senate.

The impact on students was discussed and it was noted that the impacts were narrow, i.e. did not affect most students, but were deep.

In response to a submitted question regarding the proposed Student Attendance Monitoring Policy and data collection, it was clarified that work was ongoing with one of the pilot departments to draft student-centred communications to ensure that all students were clear about what data is collected and how it will be utilised. The intention was to ensure the University was meeting its regulatory requirements and to embed more effective systems of data collection so that it was both simpler for students and less workload intensive for staff. The University was extremely conscious of how communications in this area can be interpreted by students and the aim was to ensure an appropriate balance between being supportive and being clear about the requirements for data collection. Whether the live data could be made available to individuals would be explored by the Vice President for Education.

In response to a submitted question regarding updates to Regulation XXII: Regulations relating to the Discipline of Students, it was confirmed that the delay in bringing proposed amendments to Senate was due to the complexity of the project and the time required to work through the task.

In response to a submitted question regarding education awarding gaps for different ethnicities, this was an area of attention for the University. It was also known to be an area of interest for the regulator.

In response to a submitted question regarding international students not being included in the Access and Participation Plan or Widening Participation categories, it was agreed that further work was required and this would be taken forward by the Vice President for Education and Academic Programmes and Student Engagement.

**10. Report of the Senate Nominations Committee**

(Meeting held on 6 June 2023)

Senate received and approved the report, including approval of the appointment and reappointment of Senate representatives on University committees.

**11. Report of the Senate University Research Ethics Committee**

(Meeting held on 17 May 2023)

Senate received the Report and approved the following:

- a) revised sections of the Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue.

Attention was drawn to updates to guidance for departments when carrying out ethics investigations; data protection updates to the ethics application form; research ethics communications; an update regarding ethics follow-up check meetings; annual monitoring processes; potential breaches of the Ethics Policy; and complaints.

**12. Report of the Senate Research and Innovation Committee**

(Meeting held on 10 May 2023)

Senate received and noted the report including: an update on the Research Excellence Framework (REF); updates from a number of sub-committees; and an update on knowledge exchange (KE) and innovation.

## **OTHER MATTERS**

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

Senate received and noted the report.

### **14. Report on Action Taken**

Senate received and noted the report.

### **15. 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.

### **16. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

(Meeting held on 15 March 2023)

A query had been received regarding the accuracy of item 3, Minutes of the Previous Meeting (14 December 2022). Senate received a proposal and approved that item 3 of the March 2023 Minutes would read as follows:

“A request to amend the second paragraph of the “Welcome” section had been received. It was proposed to, and approved by Senate to amend the text to read:

‘A motion was submitted relating to the effects on academic matters of the industrial action over pay, pensions and working conditions. The University Secretary explained that pay, pensions and conditions were not within the remit of Senate however, the impact of the industrial action on the student experience was a matter for Senate and its committees. This matter was scheduled to be considered by the Senate Education Committee on 9 February 2023, with a report coming to the next meeting of Senate’

A request to amend the Minutes to include the full, original wording of a question submitted had been received in advance of the meeting. It was not proposed to amend the Minutes.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2022, having been circulated, and with the “Welcome” section amended as above, were approved as an accurate record.”

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2023, having been circulated, and with the amendment as above, were approved as an accurate record.

**17. Matters Arising on the Minutes**

There were no matters arising on the Minutes that had not been covered elsewhere on the agenda.

**18. Any Other Business**

The Chair thanked those members of Senate for whom this was their last Senate meeting, including Heads of Department, members who had come to the end of their term and student representatives.