SENATE

Minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2016

Present: The Vice-Chancellor (Chair)
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), Professor D Smith
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching, Learning & Students), Professor J Robinson
Dean (Sciences), Professor B Fulton
Dean (Social Sciences), Professor S Bell
Director of Information Services, Mrs H Fraser-Krauss

Dr R Aitken
Professor I D’Amico
Professor E Annandale
Professor K Atkin
Ms M Beach (SU President)
Dr E Brown
Professor D Bruce
Professor G Currie
Dr D Efird
Dr A Field
Professor M Goddard
Dr T Helgason
Professor A Higson
Mr M Hodges (student rep)
Professor C Hunter
Dr R Ibrahim (GSA President)
Professor R Jacobs
Ms M Lewis (student rep)

Professor J MacBryde
Professor N Mackay
Dr J Moir
Professor K Mumford
Professor M Nazarov
Dr F Polack
Professor E Prettejohn
Dr G Richardson
Professor J Schofield
Mr T Shutt (student rep)
Professor L Stewart
Professor Q Summerfield
Professor J Swaffield
Professor S Thompson
Professor J Timmis
Mr G Wall
Dr R Waites
Dr A Wood

In attendance: Registrar & Secretary, Dr D Duncan
Academic Registrar, Mrs K Dodd
Governance Officer, Dr P Evans
Dean of Graduate Research School, Professor T Stoneham
Chair of Standing Committee on Assessment, Dr S King (for M15-16/57)
SU Academic Officer, Ms T Laycock

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Apologies for absence were received from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor B Doherty, Professor I Graham, Professor M Hodson, Dr G Hurst, Dr O Lisagor, Professor T Sheldon, Dr B Szcepek Reed and Dr R Vann.

15-16/38 Membership

On behalf of Senate, the Vice-Chancellor thanked those members who were attending their last meeting.

15-16/39 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2016 and the report on business circulated in May 2016 (5.15-16/37) were approved.

15-16/40 Statement by the Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor reported the following matters:

- The recent UK referendum vote to leave the European Union (EU) would generate a period of political and economic turmoil, with current indications that Article 50 (the trigger to begin exit negotiations) would not be invoked until a new Prime Minister was in post. Given the potential impact on all international students (not just those from the EU), a process of direct messaging to such students had begun, including confirmation that current EU students and those starting their studies in 2016 would continue to have access to loans from the Student Loans Company (as recently confirmed by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills) and that participation in Erasmus exchange schemes would continue as planned. As regards continued access to EU research funding, there was already some initial anecdotal evidence of detrimental effects for, and potential bias against, UK researchers. A response to such developments would be submitted to the European Commission via the Russell Group. Some HEIs were also reporting withdrawal of job applications from overseas academics (e.g. from the US) in response to the uncertainty caused by the referendum outcome.

- In terms of the University’s own response, the University Executive Board (UEB) had taken a series of actions, including modelling different financial scenarios, planning a PR campaign in mainland China, starting a telephone conversion process with offer holders, developing appropriate advice and guidance via the University website and mobilising political supporters in both houses of parliament and

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local/regional government. As part of the range of support being provided for EU nationals and other international staff, arrangements would be made for the reporting of any incidents of racial harassment or hate crimes.

- As regards the passage of the HE Bill through parliament (M15-16/41 below also refers), the government minister for universities (Jo Johnson) had recently confirmed his firm intention to press ahead with its second reading before the start of the summer parliamentary recess (22 July 2016).

- UEB continued to monitor implementation of the University Strategy on a quarterly basis, with recent secondment of a dedicated project manager to support this process.

- Thanks were offered to Professor Hilary Graham (former Head of the Department of Health Sciences) for her comprehensive report on student mental health issues, the recommendations of which had been formally accepted by UEB. Work to implement the recommendations would be taken forward in collaboration with the relevant local agencies which were currently re-organising their service provision.

- Following completion of the medium-term planning (MTP) process with academic departments, the budget for 2016/17 had been finalised for consideration by the University Council. The University’s relatively high exposure in certain financial risk areas (e.g. net liquidity and borrowing levels) was being addressed to provide some degree of buffering against potential financial shocks. Academic departments were thanked for their forbearance during the budgeting process in the context of challenging targets and cost-saving measures (e.g. as regards staff recruitment).

- Reviews had been undertaken of the marketing and finance support functions to address imbalances in capacity across academic departments and better to support financial improvement initiatives. A similar efficiency and effectiveness review would also be undertaken of admissions practices.

- The University Council had approved an amendment to the University Strategy as regards implementation of the institutional pedagogy, with roll-out to PGT programmes postponed by one year (updated wording: “By 2017-18, the pedagogy will be operational for all programme design, revision
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and review, with current programmes confirmed as compliant except where an extension of up to a year has been allowed.”)

➢ All applications for voluntary severance/early retirement (79 in total) had been approved by UEB and the scheme had now closed.

➢ Two capital projects had been approved by UEB during the current year (IPC building and extension to Psychology). A master-planning process for the whole campus would take place over the next six months, with architects commissioned to draw up options, timescales and investment requirements for an overarching and cohesive campus plan. This process would help to define the requirements of future financial strategy.

➢ Following two days of strike action by UCU members on 25 and 26 May 2016, the union intended to continue its action by means of work-to-rule and action short of a strike.

➢ Academic colleagues were encouraged to participate in the celebration of student graduation the following week (13-16 July 2016).

15-16/41 Government White Paper

Senate considered a report on the government White Paper, Success as Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice (S.15-16/38).

The Vice-Chancellor commented that, following extensive consultation with the sector, the White Paper and consequential HE Bill represented a clear statement of the government’s policy for higher education. The following were noted as the three principal elements:

➢ opening up the market to new providers via relaxation of the requirements for granting degree-awarding powers and university status;
➢ introduction of a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) to drive up teaching standards and reward the institutions who achieved this (via inflation-linked fee increases);
➢ a new regulatory framework via creation of the Office for Students (OFS) and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) to replace the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

During discussion the following comments were noted:
(a) Some aspects of the new, more unregulated market in higher education, together with other emerging initiatives (e.g. credit/course transfer between institutions), were similar to the US system.

(b) Although there were evident sector-wide risks from allowing new, unproven institutions to enter the market and moving control of such matters from the Privy Council to the OFS, there was no longer much headroom for lobbying against such developments as the required primary legislation passed through parliament.

(c) The Russell Group (RG) had adopted a clear position on the TEF, including expression of its concerns regarding the proposed use of proxy measures for teaching quality. Such concerns were, however, unlikely to have an effect on the government’s clear ideological commitment to further market deregulation.

(d) The purported intention of the TEF was to provide students as consumers with enhanced market information regarding the “offer” being made by different institutions (e.g. in respect of degree outcomes, employability etc), a development which was now being followed closely by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA). It remained unclear how this would affect the current culture of a partnership relationship between students and their chosen institutions.

Following discussion the Vice-Chancellor confirmed that there would be further communication to staff and students when the situation was clearer regarding the timescale for passage of the HE Bill.

15-16/42 Statistical Analysis of Degree Outcomes

Senate considered a statistical report on undergraduate/taught postgraduate outcomes and postgraduate research submission rates (S.15-16/39).

Presenting the first report, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (TLS) highlighted the following main findings:

- percentage of good undergraduate degrees awarded by York had dropped by 1.3% to 80.9% (2013-14: 82.2%);
- general upward trend among RG institutions continued (up 0.9% percentage points to 82.5%);
considerable undergraduate variation at departmental level (from 59.8% to 98%);

percentage of PGT students who achieved their course aim unchanged from 2013/14 (87.8%, 1% below the RG average);

considerable PGT variation at departmental level (from 66.7% to 95.9%).

It was noted that resource constraints in the current year had prevented the “deep” analysis being undertaken which linked outcomes to entry tariff/route and other factors. Given the variability across departments and the data effects caused by large cohorts, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor encouraged individual departments to consider the data carefully in the context of their competitor groups.

As regards the PGR report which tracked on-time submission, the Dean of the Graduate Research School drew specific attention to the following:

- further year of continuous improvement at institutional level to 81% of full-time research students submitting within 4 years (all three Faculties now over 75%);
- overseas students slightly behind Home/EU but showing strong improvement (63% to 77%);
- analysis by gender showing no consistent pattern over the period and rough parity in the most recent cohort.

It was noted that the detailed statistical data was available via the Management Information Gateway and that individual departments significantly below the institutional average for PGR submission would be asked to comment on this in their Annual Programme Review.

15-16/43 Review of Faculty Structure

Senate considered a report on a review of the faculty structure undertaken by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the Registrar (S.15-16/40).

Presenting the report, the Registrar noted the following:

- the useful comments received from Senate members during the review process;
- the further delegation of powers to Deans and new faculty sub-committees approved by UEB since original approval of the faculty structure in 2014;
the decision not to take forward faculty-level promotion, rewards and nominations groups at the present time;

no recommendations for further development at this stage, but a further review planned in two years.

During discussion the following comments were **noted**:

(a) Although there was no consensus among the comments received from Senate members, there were nevertheless a number of valid observations and insights which would be considered by the Deans.

(b) Other than a similar review in two years, it was difficult to apply the principles of cost/benefit analysis to such evolving academic structures.

(c) Greater clarity regarding decision-making roles and responsibilities would emerge as the new structure bedded in.

Following discussion the Vice-Chancellor commented that the Deans would continue to work collaboratively with academic departments to enhance the new faculty structure.

### 15-16/44 Rules on Compensation

Senate **considered** a proposal (S.15-16/41) for revision of the rules on compensation for undergraduate awards, namely that compensation be allowed to operate down to a mark of 10% in up to 40 credits in the award year.

Presenting the proposal, which had previously been considered by Teaching Committee and the Standing Committee on Assessment (SCA), the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (TLS) outlined the principles of compensation by which higher marks in some modules could redress marks below the pass threshold in others. It was noted that in some disciplines, especially those involving mathematical techniques, it had been proposed that deeper application of compensation was appropriate and would prevent otherwise able students being obliged to take re-sits in some modules in their final year, thereby missing the opportunity to graduate in that year (with serious consequences for taking up employment etc). It was reported that this suggestion had been supported by external examiners in the affected disciplines. On the other hand, it was noted there were also a number of counter-arguments relating to the necessity of learning outcomes being achieved in all contributing modules and the important role of re-sits in bringing students up to the

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required level. Senate noted the modelling and testing of different assessment rules and scenarios that had been undertaken, which had confirmed that the effect on retention of the proposed change was minimal.

During discussion of the proposed change the following points were noted:

(a) As regards Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) accreditation for certain programmes, it was noted that such requirements had always allowed for a degree of variation in the modular scheme (e.g. in nursing/midwifery), and this would remain the case.

(b) Although some HEIs allowed students to graduate pending confirmation of re-sit results, this had not been proposed as a solution due to legal concerns about maintaining students’ registration on a programme from which they had nominally graduated.

(c) The proportion of students falling into the category under consideration was relatively small.

(d) Application of deeper compensation in progression years did not significantly affect the number of students failing to progress. When atypically large numbers of students fail, the normal QA processes address any potential issues relating to the curriculum, examination or teaching quality. The SCA would also be considering the possibility of repeat years which might help with the retention of students.

(e) Some concern was expressed at the volume of failure that could be carried by final-year students, and how this might appear on transcripts to interested parties outside the University as regards the integrity and standards of its degree programmes. A possible solution, which it had not been possible to model given resource constraints, might have been to consider allowing compensation down to 10% in only 20 credits.

(f) The drawbacks of the current situation on individual students were strongly emphasised, with their main focus understandably being on the overarching final classification of their degree. Student representatives supported this view, drawing attention to the fact that such failed modules tended to represent an anomalous performance by otherwise good students who would pass their degrees.
(g) It was suggested that the proposal might undermine the consistency of the modular scheme and the institutional pedagogy by allowing such variability in the final year. In response it was noted that one solution for certain programmes might be for departments to identify those modules for which compensation was not allowed.

(h) The reputational risk from potential negative media reporting of the proposed change was judged to be minimal, especially in the context of other HEIs arrangements for “condonement” (corresponding to compensation reaching down to 0, sometimes with the implication that failed credits were not counted in averages).

Following the above discussion, and acknowledging the range of arguments on both sides, Senate approved the proposal that compensation be allowed to operate down to a mark of 10% in up to 40 credits in the award year, subject to review after two years (by which point sufficient result data would be available to judge the impact of the change).

15-16/45 Business from Committees

Senate noted and approved business from the following committee meetings (S.15-16/42):

- Teaching Committee: 12 May and 16 June 2016
- Research Committee: 20 April and 15 June 2016
- Special Cases Committee: 25 May 2016
- Planning Committee: 19, 27 April and 1 June 2016
- Student Life Committee: 9 June 2016
- International Committee: 2 June 2016
- HYMS Joint Senate Committee: 27 January and 20 April 2016
- Arts & Humanities Faculty Board: 18 May 2016
- Sciences Faculty Board: 16 May 2016
- Social Sciences Faculty Board: 18 May 2016

15-16/46 IPC Board of Studies

Senate approved the establishment of a Board of Studies for the International Pathway College (S.15-16/43).
Appointments to Committees

Further to M15-16/34, Senate approved the following appointments to committees (S.15-16/44):

**Court**
- Dr John Schofield (Archaeology) *(re-appointment)*
- Dr Gerry Richardson (CHE)

**Special Cases Committee**
- Mrs Penny Broadley (Health Sciences) *(re-appointment)*
- Dr Louise Haagh (Politics) *(re-appointment)*
- Dr Paul Johnson (Sociology) *(re-appointment)*
- Professor Jo Swaffield (Economics) *(re-appointment)*
- Dr Phil Cox (Archaeology/HYMS)
- Dr Kathryn Asbury (Education)
- Professor Tracy Lightfoot (Health Sciences)

**Student Life Committee**
- Dr Penny Bickle (Archaeology)
- Dr Sam Hellmuth (Language & Linguistic Science)

**Teaching Committee**
- Professor Jacco Thijssen (Management) *(re-appointment)*
- Dr Richard Waites (Biology) *(re-appointment)*
- Dr Gill Chitty (Archaeology)
- Professor Dave Smith (Chemistry)
- Professor Gulcin Ozkan (Economics)
- Mr Joe Fagan (Education)
- Mr Ed Braman (TFTV)

[All appointments for a period of three years from 1 August 2016 until 31 July 2019]

Senate also noted that a ballot was currently being held for membership of the Academic Promotions, Equality & Diversity and Research Committees and that forthcoming vacancies remained on the following committees:

- **Court** (six members of Senate)
- **Health, Safety and Welfare Committee** (one academic member)
- **Nominations Committee** (two academic members, one from Sciences and one from Social Sciences)
Teaching Committee (one academic member, normally with experience of a leadership/management role in relation to teaching and learning)

Senate decided to delegate authority to the Vice-Chancellor to make appointments to the remaining vacancies.

15-16/48 Periodic Review Reports

Senate received for information periodic review reports in respect of the Departments of Computer Science and Social Policy & Social Work (S.15-16/45).

15-16/49 Academic Probation Policy

Senate received for information the revised Academic Probation Policy (S.15-16/46).

15-16/50 Policy on Research Degrees

Senate received for information a briefing note from the Dean of the Graduate Research School in respect of changes to the Policy on Research Degrees (S.15-16/47).

15-16/51 Dates of Meetings in 2016/17

The dates of Senate meetings in 2016/17 were noted as follows:

- Tuesday 18 October 2016
- Tuesday 31 January 2017
- Tuesday 9 May 2017
- Tuesday 11 July 2017

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